



## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2015

*"Poverty is not natural, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings"*  
Nelson Mandela

From Our Chairman John Selley,

In Matthew 25 verse 31 we read 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat...' and it goes on to mention thirst, hospitality, clothing, healing and visiting the prisoner. When Jesus was questioned 'but when did we see you...' and it goes through the list again. What a lovely reply Jesus gave 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'

At A2B we have, in a very small way, been doing just that. So thank you all for your support over the years which has enabled us to live out Jesus' instruction and to be assured we do it for Him. As we approach the Christmas season may we remember that the best part of Christmas is not the presents we receive, but the presence of God with us.

May God continue to bless us and all those we love.



### The FOODBANK Story by Arjan Emini A2B Foodbank Regional Coordinator

The TV news stations kept on reporting all week long about the major floods that hit Southern Albania in February 2015. 7,000 acres of farmland were flooded and 850 Families had been evacuated from their houses. 42,000 affected families had lost their winter food reserves and their livestock as well as their home furniture and electro domestic devices. The Albanian Government had mobilized the State Police, the Military Units, and the Emergency Teams which were assisting the affected families in high-risk areas, especially in the evacuation of people and livestock, mostly to relatives and friends. Food packages and bottled water were being distributed to the most vulnerable families with the support of private companies, Churches and N.G.O.'s. It was at this time that A2B had a call for help from a partnering organisation **Foodbank Albania** to send Volunteers in for a public campaign to collect food at a large supermarket in Tirana. A2B gathered together a team of twelve people from church and the Cafe New Youth Group and traveled to Tirana to be divided into three teams/shifts at the entrance of CARREFOUR. Equipped with Foodbank T-shirts and flyers we asked buyers to help the families that had been flooded in the south of Albania by buying some extra food items and to donate it to Foodbank. This campaign was a great encouragement for all the team and we found out that Foodbank within that week had gathered one ton of food which was given to the emergency units to be distributed immediately to the affected families. It was such a great blessing to see in the evening news that the food parcels were being given to the families and that our contribution had helped them somehow. Following this experience together with A2B



Leaders and the youth group we decided to run a similar campaign to help poor families in the Elbasan area. The campaign was done in two days prior the summer's day Festival 14th of March (very popular in Albania especially in Elbasan as the city of origin). In this campaign joined some young people from other churches as well. The volunteers were passionate to contact people and ask them to help feed the poor. The reaction from people was various, some were skeptical but most of them donated with a smile. The interesting thing was that those who were not "rich" were the ones that donated more to help the poor. From this campaign in the Supermarket ORTI we collected 360 kg of Food from which we prepared twenty-eight food parcels which were given to families that A2B had on their waiting list from the municipality. For Easter we did again this campaign in another Supermarket and we could collect about 245Kg of food to help more families in need. We will continue to do this again towards the end of the year and for Christmas.

### Awareness raising in schools

Another great thing that we have been doing alongside the campaign of the Supermarkets has been raising the awareness of the young generation in schools about the real situation of poverty in the Elbasan area and throughout Albania. Initially we have meetings with the school director and the students government. Through a brainstorming process members of the students government identify the basic needs of people and highlight Hunger as the most urgent of needs for survival.

Many children are surprised about the facts about the poverty level and wonder how a family could survive with just only one euro a day. They were also sensitised about the food waste and junk food they eat every day at school. As a finalization of the training students government replicated the training in every classroom and organised a 1-2 Week campaign of encouraging every child and teacher to bring food from home to help the poor.

This awareness raising campaign was done in eight schools in Elbasan. One hundred and twenty students from the student's governments received the training and replicated it to their peers. About two thousand seven hundred students and teachers from these schools were involved to bring food, make parcels and distribute it to the poor. Some schools decided to distribute the food parcels directly to poor students of other schools. This awareness raising campaigns in schools as well as the campaigns on the supermarkets were covered by local media, which amplified the impact of the campaign on the wider public. For more information please see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN4AtWmD0z0>

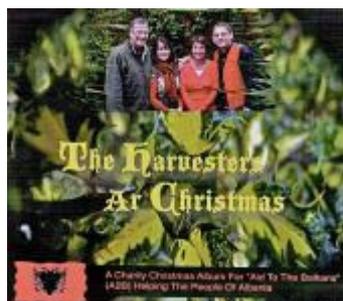


### Winter Fuel Appeal

We are so fortunate in this country that the Government gives all older people an allowance to make sure they can heat their homes when the weather turns cold. We would hate to think of any of our elderly friends or relatives shivering in a cold room unable to light a fire or turn up their heating. The need to look after older people is even greater in Albania. Some of the families that we support live in houses with no insulation, leaky roofs, draughts everywhere and unreliable heating. They have no government allowance to help them stay warm, and we would love to be able to improve their situation. If you feel you don't need all the money the Government gives you, perhaps you would consider giving some of it to A2B. We will use it to warm up some of our supported families at Christmas and throughout the cold season. And if there is any money left over we will use it in the general work of A2B.

You can send us a cheque, make an online bank transfer or give via our website. More details are available from the Treasurer on 01359 231586 or by email to

[david.ayrton@a2balbania.org](mailto:david.ayrton@a2balbania.org)



**Once again we are offering the opportunity to purchase this lovely Christmas album. Featuring many of your favourite festive songs and carols.**

**All the proceeds from the sales goes to support our work. Just £5.00 + 50p p+p**

**Please send a cheque payable to A2B to Elm House, Drinkstone Road, Hessett, Suffolk, IP30 9AU.**

**The album can also be downloaded from I Tunes, Amazon and Tesco. The Harvesters At Christmas.**

## Use your mobile phone to support A2B!

There's a new mobile network provider that aims to help you support the charity of your choice. It's called 'The People's Operator' and it was founded on the idea that mobile could be used to change lives for the better, so they give 10% of your bill to the charity you nominate - and that could be A2B. Not only do they have high ideals, they also offer a top-notch phone service:

- They use EE, the biggest 3G network in the UK
- Their PAYG charges are cheaper than most others, and their bundles are great value too.
- You can keep your phone number

As your Treasurer, I have changed to TPO and I can recommend it!

You can find out more by visiting [www.thepeoplesoperator.com](http://www.thepeoplesoperator.com) . Just specify your charity as 'Aid



to the Balkans Forward Trust (A2B)' when you sign up for a SIM card. **David Ayrton**

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## A Visit To A Family by: Andrew Davies Family Sponsor (Trustee)

Having known about and supported A2B for many years and more recently starting to jointly sponsor one of the Family Link families, an opportunity arose to go out to Albania to visit A2B in operation. When we heard that our church leaders were going out to help at the church weekend, my wife simply said to me "why don't you go out as well?" Now not being a globe-trotter, traveling to foreign climes was quite a big deal. All the silly practical concerns like



worrying about inoculations, not drinking the local water and not forgetting the Imodium, took over my thinking! However, at that moment the words "why not" came out of my mouth before I realised I had said anything. Also a total sense of peace resonated throughout me and I knew God was saying "Go." Who am I to say no to that!

A group of five of us went out in early September. With one of those being Paul Heffer I knew I had someone who knows all about the setup there as well as being a valued friend. Sights and sounds bombard you when you first arrive. Staying at a lovely hotel in the old castle in the middle of Elbasan was a real

treat, not the basic run down affair I was expecting. Then off to the Day Centre where the A2B operation is based. Again not the run down shack I was expecting. It was well built, immaculately clean, presentable and so well organised. People outside waiting to go into lunch smiling and waving at us as we arrived. Where's the need then? It was only when I had spent a little time there did I understand that behind first impressions there is a real need that is being met. The meal they were waiting for may be the only meal these elderly people receive that day. They walk in fair distances from in and around Elbasan, having often left homes that you wouldn't leave you garden equipment in, unable to afford basic necessities.

I then had the privilege of visiting the Sponsor Family I'm supporting. The journey to the house was interesting to say the least, good job we had the 4x4! The was a mother and 3 children, living with her mother-in-law. The building was basic and this family only used one room, to live, sleep and cook in. The walls were damp with no flooring and everything was so basic. Bearable in the

summer but how could anyone live there in the winter with no heating, as fuel is so expensive? What could I do? It was then that I realised that I could do something. I could and did affect this family. I could show Jesus's love. I could show them that someone cared. I could show them they were valued. That's why God had opened doors for me. had given me peace and why I was there.

Not for me to feel good about myself and how I'm doing my bit, but for me to meet this family and be Jesus to them. Yes I had brought out a few items from the UK as personal gifts from my family to this family, which were received with smiles and thanks but what really impacted them was the work A2B do. Monthly food parcels, fuel, and basic items of need keep these families going. What a privilege it was to be able to see this family face to face and see what an impact A2B and Family Sponsorship has on real people.

Also seeing Alketa and Elona and all their team working (and many volunteering) at the Day Centre, interacting with the children at the nursery and the families was just awe inspiring. They are such truly lovely people filled with such faith and living that faith out every day, not only in the project but in their own lives as well. I felt truly humbled by them. And oh didn't we have fun and laughter, but that's another story.

So what started out as a somewhat distant relationship with "those people in Albania" and what I could do for them, turned into a real personal relationship with some truly lovely people who love Jesus, and yes I will go back!

***We Have Many Families Awaiting Sponsorship If You Would Like To Help Please Contact Us.***



### **A New Project**

New Partnership,  
New Hope

A visit was made a few months ago to the A2B day centre by Monika Pfeifer from The Paul Ritzau Foundation based in Germany, She was impressed by the work being done by "Another Life" Kindergarten run by A2B. In Albania many impoverished families do not send their youngest children to school as they often use them for begging or collecting rubbish to sell to help the family income. This means that the children do not reach a basic education level in order for them to enter state schools. The kindergarten helps the children to reach this level and often help and encouragement is given to the family to allow their children to attend. As need well outstrips the current provision there is a need to expand. Monika has now said that her foundation is willing to fund the expansion and a building has been found for this purpose. The rent and running cost will be met by the foundation but there is an urgent requirement for help with the conversion work that is needed. Effectively materials will be provided by the foundation but help is needed with kitting out the kitchen with white goods, cookers and cooking utensils, reforming the building from an office warehouse into a school and provide some kind of heating. A team from Bagly Baptist church are going out to assess what is needed and if you would like to help please contact: **Sam Whitmarsh** 07799 286698 and [sam.whitmarsh@a2balbania.org](mailto:sam.whitmarsh@a2balbania.org)



### **Christmas Cards And Gifts**

Once again this year we will benefit from the sale of Christmas Cards and Gifts Available From Gospel Cards (See enclosed) 20% of their Christmas Card Sales and 5% of the sale of other items will be split between thirty- one charities including ourselves. Please remember to mention Aid To The Balkans (A2B) when ordering. Thank you. Please see their website to order **[www.gospelCardsEtc.com](http://www.gospelCardsEtc.com)**

