



## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2014

*And the King will answer and say to them "Assuredly, I say to you, insomuch as you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it for me. Mathew 25 v 40 NKJV*

### A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

First of all on behalf of the trustees a big thank you to all those who support A2B. We could not continue the work without your generous giving and continued prayers .

We would like to apologise for the delay in getting this newsletter to you. There have been a number of changes and two separate visits by trustees and we wanted to make sure that we were up to date on everything that is happening. Thank you

## HAPPY 15<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY A2B



On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July 1999 a small group of people met in a cottage in Hessett, Suffolk to discuss the setting up of a charity to help feed street children in Elbasan Albania. Our founders Chris and Roy Debenham had been working in the town for some time and had got involved in helping thousands of Kosovo refugees earlier that year. However once they had returned to their country the building that had been used by N.A.T.O. for food and shelter became available and it was decided to set up a day centre. The rest, as they say, is history and too long a story to tell here.

It is with extreme gratitude that we say a big thank you to Chris and Roy and all the other visionaries that started out the work back then. We of course also thank God for His faithfulness to us through what, at times, has been a very challenging fifteen years. Many of the needs back then are still with us and we look forward to the continuation of the work in whatever form that may take.

Please continue to pray for the trustees and staff of A2B.



### A NEW TEACHER For The Kindergarten

Nilda Agalliu is the new teacher of "Another Life". She started to work with A2B in May 2014. Nilda was born in a small Town called Erseka and is 31 years old. Nilda finished University in Elbasan in 2005. She is married to Julian and they have two beautiful twin daughters called Malia & Sasha.

Nilda is very excited to be working with A2B and especially with children in need! "I am amazed what a wonderful place A2B has prepared for these children. They are so happy and enjoy every minute staying here at "Another Life". They often don't want to go back home!". She is full of love and care for each of these children and is a welcome addition to our team.

**Alketa Hasani** Day centre manager

## **Partnerships in Health**

One of A2B's strategic objectives is to see an improvement in the overall health of our beneficiaries. Many live in difficult environments which are not conducive to their overall well-being, they have little opportunity to access medical care and they also lack personal awareness on managing and improving their own and their children's health situations.

Last year we were pleased to work with 'Marine Reach' Dental Team who provided comprehensive dental checks and treatment for all of our elderly folk and children. This year, at the end of May, in partnership with the ABC Health Foundation in Tirana we have provided general health screenings. Dr Rovena Murati kindly volunteered to coordinate the medical visits on behalf of A2B and the ABC Health Foundation provided four doctors over a three day period to perform health checks for a total of sixty seven patients. Everyone, especially parents of the children, were extremely happy to have the opportunity for a complete assessment which identified a number of concerns in individuals which are now in the process of being followed up.

In addition, we are jointly planning a series of community health education activities which will cover areas identified from these screenings and tailored for family health as well as specific education aimed at the elderly and for the children of Another Life Kindergarten. Training to cover topics such as diabetes, high blood pressure, flu and use of antibiotics, smoking and alcohol will be undertaken.

Please do pray for this work, the partnership with ABC, and that we would see an overall improvement in the health situations of those who benefit for these activities.

**Tim Purver** Development Manager



### **My first visit to Albania by David Ayrton (Trustee and Treasurer)**

It was my first visit to Albania and I was learning a new meaning to the phrase "Living by Faith". The traffic in Elbasan is very busy and chaotic, the roads are wide, and crossing them is a daunting task. Although there are many striped crossings painted on the road the cars seem to take no notice and you could stand there all day waiting for the traffic to stop.

I soon learned that pedestrians and cars seem to have equal rights on the road. There is an unwritten law that they won't deliberately run you over, and if they really can't avoid it they will at least hoot to give you a chance to get out of the way. It takes faith to believe it, but you step out into the stream of traffic and weave in between the vehicles as they negotiate their way along, everyone trying to decide how much they can push through and how much they need to give way.

If you're driving it's further complicated by the fact that unexpected hazards can appear, like the ancient walls they have uncovered and are excavating in the middle of a busy shopping street, and so some parts are two-way, some are one-way (unless the other side is blocked) and some are full of holes that cause the cars to divert round them without warning. There are no signs of course; you just have to expect the unexpected.

What makes it all work is the fact that the cars can't speed, it's too busy, so you just have to slowly blend in to the whole moving stream, tacking across the flow in one direction or another until you get to where you want to be. Then, if you can't park at the kerbside, you double park and add to the fun.

Aid to the Balkans (A2B for short) started officially in 1999 but I have only been a Trustee and Treasurer for about a year. I had never been to the country, so it was about time to put that right. What started as a compassionate response to homeless refugees has become an established charity with a day centre where older people get a hot meal 5 days a week, a kindergarten for children whose family circumstances prevent them accessing education, and a family support programme providing essential food supplies and other emergency aid to families that are below the breadline. Cont'd >

Although my main purpose was to introduce a new accounting system to Elona who keeps the books, I also took the opportunity to visit a family that Chris (my wife) and I support. They live in a small village about 30 minutes out of town, in a small room that looks more like a domestic garage than a house. Mother had left some years ago and the 4 children were being brought up by dad and grandma, a Mediterranean-looking lady with a brown, lined face that had seen many summers and winters. Yet still her eyes sparkled.

The room was about the same size as our dining room at home, with one window and one door, two couches, an ancient TV and a small cooking ring. I didn't see any heating, but fortunately it was a lovely, warm spring day, I don't know how they manage when it is winter. At night Dad and two children sleep on one couch and Grandma and one daughter sleep on the other. Sadly the fourth child, a son, is in juvenile detention for killing another boy. He should be able to be released soon because he is a minor but his family cannot afford the legal representation to seek his release and without it nothing will happen.

Their income is too small to live on, just a small pension for Grandma and whatever the family can make from scavenging. Unemployment is very high, there is no development in the village, and dad is very lucky if he gets occasional temporary work for a day. When we arrived Grandma had been out picking very ordinary looking leaves (they looked like dandelion leaves) and was drying them in the sun to take to a herbalists and get the equivalent of a few pence for them. Through our interpreter she said they could not survive without the food supplied by A2B, and they were very grateful.



On Saturday morning they come with other families to town to collect their food. They come to the day centre and are invited to a social time where they play a few team games, sing some worship songs and hear a short talk. Old and young together are singing, laughing, listening and participating, all in a similar situation and all enjoying the kindness and support that is freely offered. Forgetting their hardships for a little while, they hear about the extraordinary love of Jesus that reaches out to them.



Many families get in touch and ask for help, or are referred by the equivalent of the local Social Services, and many have to be turned away or put on a waiting list because the funds will not stretch that far. Albania is a land where some are rich and getting richer and others have only what was given to them at the end of the communist era and are gradually slipping further behind. They need education, health care and work, but they don't know how to change their situation.

You probably know the story of the little boy who was going along the beach after a tidal wave, throwing starfish back into the sea. When told there was no point because the task was too big for him to make any difference, he answered as he threw one more back, "At least I helped that one". A2B is changing things for a few people at a time by helping them survive and introducing them to Jesus. The dedicated Albanian staff that work at the day centre will not give up, and it is our joy to support and help them do the work they know God has called them to do. I was very privileged to meet them and I commend them and the work they do to your prayers.



### **Mario Graduates**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> May Marion Peqini graduated from the "Christ For The Nations" bible college in Pogradec. Mario and his family were in a very desperate situation when A2B started to support him and his mum. He was often in trouble and living in very poor conditions.

One day he was invited to a meeting at the "Jesus Brought Us Together Church" by A2B staff and after a short time committed his life to Christ. Mario then had a desire to attend bible college and learn more about his new found faith and with the help of A2B sponsors he has now achieved his qualifications.

*"It is amazing to see how much God has changed the life of a person who without the help provided by A2B could be made a danger contingent for himself and society" Alketa Hassani*

## INTERNATIONAL FAMILY DAY by: Alketa Hassani

We gathered together those persons who A2B helps in three programs; Family Link, The Day Centre and Another Life Kindergarten. This was to celebrate the Albanian annual International Family Day The oldest one was Dhimiter Toci 93 and the youngest was Aleksandra Serica 11 months old.



There were a total of about 62 persons, 27 elderly, 20 Mothers and 15 children. "The relationship between the generations"- was the theme of this meeting. Participants were divided into three groups: elderly, middle age and children.

Each group discussed with each other the various problems in family relationships. They all made very interesting presentations at the end of the meeting demonstrating the tensions that can exist between the generations as well as each generation's need for each other, within the family and in society.

## We really want your email address!

We now have 46 contact names on our email list and are sending out a regular monthly prayer letter to them all. This gives up-to-date news of what is happening and specific things to pray about and praise God for. For us this is a wonderful way of getting prayer support at the time it is needed and we would love to include you. For you it will keep you in touch and aware of what is happening right now at A2B.

Please send an email to me at [david.ayrton@a2balbania.org](mailto:david.ayrton@a2balbania.org) and let me know you would like to join the list. We won't pass on your name to anyone else and you can remove your name at any time if your situation changes. Why not do it now before you forget and be part of our praying team!

### *Are you a regular supporter?*

If so, thank you very much, you are a key person in our organisation.

### *Have you altered your standing order to our new bank account yet?*

If not, please make it a priority to do so as soon as possible. Our treasurer is longing to have just one bank to deal with, and one where we can see our finances online. So be nice to him and make his life a little bit easier. He will be so grateful he might even do a little jig when the old account is finally closed!

### **CAN YOU HELP US? Volunteer Roles**

A range of roles and tasks exist to help A2B to operate in the UK. If you think you can help us please write to us giving details of what you can offer to the address below:

We need help with:

- administration,
- supporter relations,
- communications and fundraising.
- raising awareness of A2B's work within home churches

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**Website: [www.a2balbania.org](http://www.a2balbania.org). Facebook: A2B Albania**