

A2B

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2017

“Glory to God in the highest, peace and goodwill on earth to mankind” Luke 2 14-27

From The Trustees

As we draw to the end of another year we would like to take the opportunity to once again thank those of you who so faithfully give to our work in Albania. Once again it has been a year of blessing and of growth for the organization. We are also very grateful to God for His goodness and answers to prayer.

As you will read below the new year brings with it fresh challenges, especially with on going finance needs but we know that God is faithful and will provide as He has always done over the past seventeen years. We would like to wish you a Very Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.

Sam, Paul, John, David, Andrew and Tracy (The Trustees of A2B U.K.)



One of the priorities of A2B is the support of a child's education. In this new academic year, among other things, we have provided school bags and other equipment for all children who have had such needs!

We are grateful to Paul Ritzau- German Foundation, "Passi and Beyond," Volunteer Organisations from Malta & Raiffeisen Bank Albania who have provided finance and support for our children.

Our three kindergartens continue to run very successfully providing education for young children who, for a number of reasons, would not be able to attend state schooling, poverty being a major factor (Below a picture of the inside of a child's home) Every new school year, among other things, A2B staff introduce the parents to the methods we use to run the centres. There is no better way than to listen to the parents themselves about the way the projects are run.

It warms our hearts when we see that we are impacting their lives too through the children. All parents are so thankful for all the activities that their children enjoy.

How beautiful was the day when we looked at the happy faces of the children who started the new academic year: In September this year we started the educational program, at the "Another Life" kindergartens in Elbasan and Peqin. We registered seventy-five children, aged 3 - 6 years. All the children are selected from the families who are in the most need in both cities. Many of these children have serious social and economic problems and consequently their parents have no chance to support them in their schooling and they do not even understand the importance of education for their children.



**Alketa Hasani Director
A2B Albania.**



THEN and NOW AN APPEAL: by David Ayrton Treasurer

When A2B first started the priority was to bring relief to refugees who were fleeing the war in Kosovo. Generous support from friends and others in the UK helped to establish a soup kitchen and a place to live while the refugees started a new life. Many were helped at that time, but as the flood of refugees slowed so A2B began to change and grow.

A Day Centre was established to provide a hot meal every day in warm and clean surroundings. Then Family Link began to help struggling families who had little or no income and could not survive without food parcels and other practical help. A kindergarten followed for children who were likely to miss out on school education because of lack of home support.

Two more kindergartens have been established, and the latest initiative is a 'House of Opportunity' for young people who have no family and who have reached the age at which the state no longer provides for them.

God has blessed A2B, and new partnerships are enabling expansion of the work into new and much-needed areas. But one unintended effect of this has been that the original Day Centre has not received the increased funding it needs to keep pace with increased costs and the impact of the falling pound exchange rate. There are two main reasons for this

- New A2B supporters tend to become sponsors of 'Family Link' and although we are extremely grateful for this because the need for support is always great, it means that the Day Centre no longer receives enough to cover its running costs each month.
- Many long-term supporters have not increased their giving to keep up with inflation. It is so easy to forget this but of course just as our own expenses keep on going up, so do those of the Day Centre.

Nowadays the "Bread Of Life" Day Centre (our first centre) is a hub of activity. Beside the meals provided, it gives a place for older people to socialise. On Saturdays it hosts a club where families enjoy activities together and hear a talk from God's word. It is a distribution centre for the food parcels, and provides office space for the food bank and other projects. We have a general fund that pays for this, and also the running costs of the A2B vehicle, and some staff salaries. It is the general fund that now needs a boost. Just under £3500 is needed every month, and the regular support from UK donors currently amounts to around £2200 (including Gift Aid reclaimed). We have been using our reserves and occasional generous one-off gifts to subsidise the shortfall, but we are now at the point where this will no longer be possible without a change in our income.

There are some practical ideas that could help:

1. **Without the General Fund other projects could not function properly. They need admin support, transport and storage. So if you are giving to any of A2B's projects, remember the General Fund as well.**
2. **If you are a regular donor to the General Fund, take a minute to review your giving. Has God increased your income? Could you do the same for A2B?**
3. **Make sure that A2B is benefitting from Gift Aid where possible. Gift Aid adds 25p to every £1 you give if you are a taxpayer, and just requires a simple form to set it up.**
4. **Is there another way to do some fundraising? Could it be a sponsored walk, a run or a sky-jump? Maybe a tea-party or a bike ride? Maybe just a conversation with a friend that gets them interested.**
5. **Could you get your church or home group to support A2B? Both prayer and financial support are equally welcome.**

Whatever you do, even if you can't make any changes at the moment, please keep praying for A2B and bringing the need to God. He has been always been faithful and generous, and we are sure he will continue to do so.



Give As You Live

Here's an easy way to raise funds for A2B that won't cost you a penny! The money comes from retailers who pay a commission when shoppers are referred to them. So all you have to do is go to your favorite website via the 'Give As You Live' web page and they will share their commission with your favorite charity – which, of course, is A2B. They will pay up to 1.5% of what you spend into our account without you having to do anything more.

Here is the web page where you can sign up and get started:

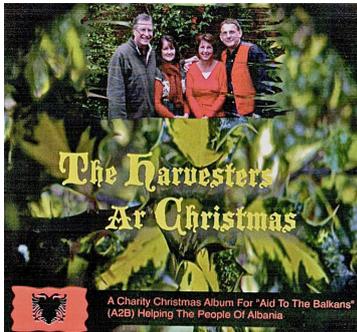
www.giveasyoulive.com/join/aid-to-the-balkans-uk-a2b

If you sign up now all your spending on Christmas shopping could raise funds for A2B, and then you can go on supporting us every time you buy anything on the Internet. What a great idea!

Works with Amazon, M&S, John Lewis, ebay and many others

Christmas Open House Saturday December 9th 2017 from 12pm – 6pm.

Come and visit 600 year old Elm House beautifully decorated for Christmas. All donations and profits will go to the work of A2B. Enjoy a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie and browse our range of Cakes, Cards and Crafts that will be on sale. Elm House, Drinkstone Road, Hessest, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9AU (A2B Office)



The Harvesters At Christmas

This lovely Christmas C.D. has been made to raise funds for A2B. Made by folk group **The Harvesters** it brings together a mix of both traditional carols and festive songs. The album features David Fitzgerald (Iona, Kendrick, Snell) on flutes and saxophones. Please send a cheque made out to A2B for £5.50 inc. p+p to our office address. The album can also be downloaded on I Tunes, Amazon, Tesco and other download sites. A great way to get into the festive spirit.



The House Of Opportunity Opens

For the first time in Elbasan, a centre for housing teenagers who leave the nursing institutions for children without parents opened on 11th October.. Dubbed "Home Of Opportunity" and conceived as such, this is a programme that aims to offer young people an opportunity for education, skills for life, employment and welfare.

A2B has been heavily involved with this project working closely with the F.S.C.I. (Part of the Trussel Trust). charity based in Bulgaria. This organisation has a number of these homes and because of the reputation of A2B asked us to be involved in finding suitable buildings and staff in Elbasan. The project is funded by them but A2B will be involved in the management and day to day running of the home.

Many months of hard work by volunteers has enabled the building to be bought up to living conditions from near dereliction. Ormela Stoja an experienced manager has been taken on to run the project but it is hoped that a "live in" couple may be employed in the future,

The Mayor was present in the inauguration said *"I hope this project will be successful and that it will be a place of love and warmth for these young people who have not experienced it, The house of opportunity" breaks the abandonment cycle by helping young people earn skills for an independent life in order to become dignified members of society"*

When they turn eighteen the young people living at the home should go on to live independently with the right support. It is very difficult for those young people who have not had strong family background. It has been the case for many adults in institutions that as soon as they come out of them they end up on the streets and often fall prey to wrong actions. The staff of A2B are very excited about this project and ask for prayer for both staff and for the teenagers living there. (Photos Courtesy Of [Elbasani News](#))



Summer Events

Over One hundred and twenty children participated in each of the four weeks of summer camps, Jesus name was proclaimed and much fun was had and mess created. Partners from Malta and the JBUT church supported the summer camps and many volunteers gave up their holidays to serve others.

Also A2B gave opportunities for very poor people linked with our programs to go on holiday, many for the very first time and many had not left Elbasan. We are grateful to the Eden Christian Centre in Tirana for helping us to accommodate and feed the seventy people who went.



Christmas Cards and Christian Gifts that assist our ministry

Once again this year we shall benefit from the sale of Christmas cards and the other cards and gifts available from *Gospel Cards*

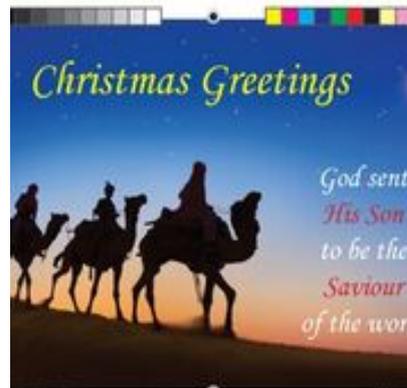
20% of their Christmas card sales and 5% of the sale of other items will be given to 22 Christian missions including A2B

Please see the enclosed catalogue for details, and please remember to mention our name if you place an order - thank you.

Full details of the cards, etc. are on their website www.GospelCardsEtc.com

or

Tel. 01656 647551, or write to Gospel Cards, 15 Brackla Street Centre, Bridgend, CF31 1DD



A Concert For Christmas
Saturday 2nd December At 7:45pm
ST PETER'S CHURCH, Hospital Road, Bury St Edmunds
Featuring:
THE HARVESTERS Folk Group
DAVID FITZGERALD Sax/Flutes/Whistles

The Harvesters have been performing Christmas concerts for many years playing traditional and modern festive folk songs.

David Fitzgerald is a professional musician with four solo albums. He has made many T.V. appearances and supported many well known artists.

£5.00 Adults £3.00 o.a.p.'s and children under 16.
On The Door.
All profits go to A2B. (Aid To The Balkans) working with the poor in Albania

One again we would like to thank our friends “The Harvesters” and David Fitzgerald “ for their willingness to give up their time for both rehearsal and performance at the above concert. The Rev Nick Alexander and his wife Julia from St Peter’s church visited Elbasan with Paul Heffer one of our trustees back in March. They were very moved and challenged by what they saw and wanted to do something to raise funds. This will be a wonderful evening of Christmas music and readings with lots of audience participation. All profits will go to help the work of A2B. There will also be a stall selling cards, calendars, C.D.’s and more.

