

From The Trustees

As we draw to the end of another difficult year, we would like to take the opportunity to thank you all again for so faithfully supporting A2B. We are all amazed at the generosity of God's people in finances and prayer supporting the work in Albania. The A2B team continue to do amazing things, loving the community and speaking up for those who don't have a voice. On behalf of all the A2B staff and particularly our clients, we want to say a huge thankyou for your giving and your prayers.

Andrew, David, Nicola, Paul, Sam and Tracy (Trustees, A2B UK)

An Albanian Christmas Paul Heffer, A2B Trustee

Albanian families celebrate Christmas but in many ways it is different to what we do here in the UK. They do not really have Santa Claus as we would know him but rather they tell stories of St Nikolaus of Myra a historical figure from Turkey who Albanians call Babagjyshi. The majority of the children A2B support live in poverty and their families cannot afford Christmas presents. A2B tries to make up for this by giving gifts to them. It is interesting to note that the smallest gift brings great joy and happiness to so many children, unlike the demands of most children here in the UK.



Albanians are now heavily influenced by western culture and the giving of cards is now common but the giving of gifts normally happens at New Year when their Christmas dinner will comprise of mainly fish and vegetables and a special cake made with nuts and honey. This is prepared at the A2B day centres and enjoyed over the Festive season.

Many of the thirty two families A2B supports do not know much about Christianity and Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to tell them about Jesus. The centres also provide a place of warmth and fellowship for the sixty or so elderly people who come. If they cannot make it to the centre the staff will visit them with gifts of food etc to bring a bit of Christmas cheer to what is often a very cold and lonely home. Due to the gap caused by the pandemic situation, poverty has deepened and vital needs such as food and medicine have become even more difficult, making the life for the elderly even more harder

During November the staff get together with the family link clients to make Christmas/thank you cards for their sponsors in the UK and elsewhere. This has become quite a tradition for them. The children also learn Christmas songs and dramas to present to the elderly and guests at the day centres. This is very much enjoyed and brings a touch of Christmas magic to their lives.



As you sit down to eat your Christmas dinner please join with us and pray for all those the A2B support. Life is not easy for them but they are always so thankful for the love and compassion shown by our staff and all those who support our work. As you will read elsewhere A2B is running short of funds in the new year so your financial support would be appreciated. On behalf of all our staff and clients we wish you all a very joyful and bless Christmas.

Bread of Life Day Centre

Alketa Hassani, A2B Director

The Bread of Life Day Centre continues to serve elderly people in Elbasan. This is one of the most vulnerable group in Albanian society. They are poor, neglected, forgotten and can feel abandoned by family and society. For many their monthly income varies from £20 to £60 and they can struggle to meet even basic needs such as food, utility bills and medication.

But A2B has not forgotten about these people—they are loved by Jesus. Since the pandemic started through to September 2021 the day centre has been closed to reduce transmission risks for this group. A2B have



served the elderly at their homes through its door-to-door service every day. We have cooked food, and provided fresh vegetables & fruits donated by Food Bank, medicines and detergents. We have talked with them and shared in their loneliness and isolation in the pandemic. It is also very sad but true to say that compared to other years, a relatively high number of elderly members of the Day Centre have died, many due to Covid -19. We miss them all and pray for friends and family who are grieving.



September 2021 was a month of great joy for us as we started all the services, back in person at the Day Centre. You will not believe it but they cried the first day when we started because they missed each other and us and all activities. They kept saying: "This is our family - our home and you are our true sons and daughters! It is wonderful that we returned to our home once again!" for many the day centre is the only place where they feel comfortable, accepted and safe!

At the Day Centre there is heating, quality food, tea & coffee, care and love from the staff, newspapers to read and a TV to watch. Most of the time the clients pay games with each other, talk, laugh and cry together. During the winter, many are waiting when we open the Day centre doors at 8am and are still there at 3 pm because the conditions in the centre are much better than where they live.

So... What are the two biggest challenges in this Project?

- Recent staff resignation as people have moved away from Albania for work or to get married has left gaps in enough people to serve and care for the elderly.
- The pandemic has increased the needs of this group of people, poverty has deepened and access to vital needs such as food and medicine has become even more difficult.

It is a privilege to serve our clients they have so much wisdom and many stories to tell. We share Jesus and the bible with them and there are always people available to pray with them with them and encourage them with eternal hope. We are so grateful to God and to all our supporters who have shown love to these people over nearly 20 years—what a gift to so many elderly people!



How has Covid affected A2B's income?

David Ayrton A2B Treasurer

Like many organisations, during lockdown we lost a few of our regular donors, but most people were wonderful in their support and the regular payments kept coming in. Of course, inflation doesn't just affect this country, it affects Albania too, so each year we increase the monthly grant we are sending to help them cope with it.

Then there is the exchange rate. Since Brexit the rate has been in the doldrums and although things improved a little during this year, we are still nowhere near what it was a few years ago. That means A2B Albania get a real-world cut despite us increasing the grant that we send to them.

We benefited from your generosity during an appeal made 2 Christmases ago that enabled us to build up a reserve, and we have been using that to supplement the money that comes in each month, so that Alketa and Elona don't suffer fluctuations in income. Most months our income is about £1000 short of our grant, and our reserve is now down to about £3000, so we really would like to build it up again. We are praying about it and God had never let us down yet, so we believe he will supply all our needs for the future.

One way you can help is to sign up to 'Give As You Live' which will enable A2B to earn a commission on things you buy. Get more details online [here](https://www.giveasyoulive.org) or contact david.ayrton@a2balbania.org. Another way to help would be if everyone reviewed their giving in the light of annual inflation. That would mean a small adjustment each year, instead of a big one if it is left for years. Why not make a note to do that whenever you get your inflation increase (for instance pensions go up in April)? That would be a great help. And don't forget to pray with us for God to open his storehouse and give us his bounty, pressed down and running over!



It's Wonderful! David Ayrton A2B Treasurer

After Virgin Money Giving closed in November 2021, we have moved to an organisation called [Wonderful.org](https://www.wonderful.org) and our website has been updated to show their logo. You may not have heard of them, but they have been chosen by some big organisations such as Cancer Research UK, The Church of England and Amnesty International. Transfers are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and all the key banks have signed up to participate.

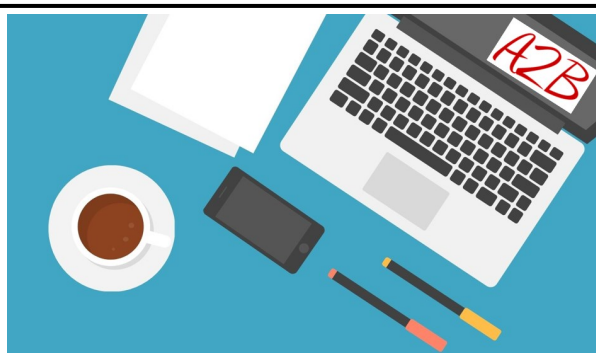
The big advantage for us is that there are no fees, so every penny you give will come to us. And, if appropriate, we can collect Gift Aid as well. In addition to this new way of making payments, you can still transfer money online from your bank account to ours, or you can send a cheque to the Treasurer. We like online payments best because we don't have to go to the bank to process them, but whatever way suits you best is OK with us!



Zoom Prayer!

Join us to pray together on Zoom for A2B and Albania on **Thursday 2nd of December 2021 7.30 – 8.30 pm**

We will join together with the A2B Albania directors: Keta and Elona and partner churches from all over the UK and Albania. Keep an eye out for further meeting details that will be shared in separate emails.



Family Link Alketa Hassani, A2B Director

The Family link project brings families together. Sponsors in the UK provide prayer and financial support for families in Albania who are very poor. Families often find themselves in these circumstances following a tragedy, such as death of a parent or partner or onset of debilitating physical or mental illness. We provide food and necessities, medication, training in basic skills such as cooking and support children to return to education.

We also provide events for the family link clients throughout the year. In November, all the client families were invited to write a Christmas and a thank you card to the UK families that support them each day of the year. They have their photo taken and we gift them a copy to keep for themselves. In December, we will gather and celebrate the birth of our Saviour together as family link! Church leaders in Elbasan come and share the message of hope we have in Jesus! There is music and dancing, delicious food and we give shoeboxes full of gifts to all the children as a symbol of the gift that is Jesus.



Gospel Cards, etc.

Inspirational cards that celebrate the real meaning of Christmas, and Christian gifts and cards for all occasions.



*All orders received by 23rd December 2021 will qualify for a **MYSTERY FREE GIFT***

See page 5 for our 40th Anniversary Special Offers.

Every purchase supports 25 Christian ministries

Visit www.gospelcardsetc.com or request a catalogue to see our full range of cards and gifts.

For ... given

*Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.
Acts 10:43*

Wishing you all the Love, Peace and Happiness that the true meaning of Christmas brings

10 Cards - 6" x 4" Ref: CC135 — £3.99



Could you share your Winter Fuel payment with a family in Albania?

David Ayrton, A2B Treasurer

If you are retired, this year you will appreciate your winter fuel payment from the Government even more than usual because the price of energy is going up (a lot!). If you are part of a low-income family, you will need it more than ever.



But what if you're not? Maybe you are locked into a low rate for gas and electricity that means you won't be affected by the price rises till your contract ends? Perhaps your good fortune could be turned into a blessing for a family in Albania that is struggling to manage.

Send it to us, because we know which families need help to stay warm, and we will channel your gift to where it's needed most. You can send it by bank transfer, make a 'Wonderful' payment, or write a cheque, and we will do the rest.

A2B Lifting Dignity,
Restoring Hope

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A2B is a registered charity in the UK (1168468) and a registered Foundation in Albania