

Spring 2020

You can email Richard and Linda at :
squelched77@yahoo.com

Please pray for :

- Diku, Marsida & Merkes
- Eli
- Jorgo & Lena
- Eva & her partner

Albania *focus*

THE WORK OF RICHARD AND LINDA WELCH IN ALBANIA

Dear Friends,

Although I am writing this to you from Yorkshire, it's good to be able to share some topical news from Albania - and beyond.

INTERRUPTED?

For many of us, normal life has been, or still is, on hold. There can be a degree of comfort in knowing that many of us are in the same boat, but recent events, both personal and global, feel like an unwelcome interruption in my life. "Please Lord, when I next be alongside our Albanian partners?"

Something C.S. Lewis wrote has been helping me in this respect: 'The great thing, if you can, is to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's "own" or "real" life. The truth is of course that what one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life - the life God is sending one (or us) day by day.'

SENT WITH YOUR LOVE



One of the images we've enjoyed receiving from Eli in Saranda is of a grateful young beneficiary of a food parcel, made possible by the generosity of you, our faithful supporters. How kind that you should look to the needs of others, way beyond our own borders, to help them within their own acute financial problems. Thank you very much!

A strict lockdown throughout Albania helped to hold back the spread of Covid 19, so it was with sadness that we learnt of the first confirmed case in Saranda, brought down by somebody travelling down from Tirana, at the end of May.

At the time of writing, some aspects of Albanian life are returning to normal, though schools will remain closed until early autumn. Our church communities have generally remained in close contact with each other, sharing words of encouragement, prayer requests and short accounts of how things have been going for them.

SUPPORTING The work of RICHARD & LINDA



If you would like to support the work of Richard and Linda on a regular basis we can send you out a standing order and gift aid forms. Address and contact details are shown below.

Direct payments can be made to the following bank account:

Lloyds TSB Sort code:30-92-33
Account: 05629646
Reference :

- "Albanian Support" to support the general work of Richard and Linda or
- "Richard & Linda" to support Richard and Linda's living costs or
- "Jorgo and Lena" to support them as church leaders in Chooka

Cheques should be made payable to Mosaic Church and marked on the reverse with the reference above.

“BE STILL.....”

During one of the On Line meetings, we were joined by two Albanian missionaries working in Turkey, one of whom is a relative of a Saranda church member.

Despite finding themselves in a challenging place, they had a radiance about them and spoke about the merits of keeping things simple. In a short reflection on Psalm 46, their calm certainty of purpose shone through: "Be still...and know that I am God." Eva, not her real name, said, "We may not always know how to reach out to others, but we can always offer to remember the other person in our prayers."

Personally, I am not always "Still" inside, especially during times of crisis, so Eva's words were helpful. How remarkable too, that a country that once officially banned God now has Christian missionaries leaving it's shores. On a Sunday afternoon in Springtime how inspiring to hear God's word being lit up and broadcast back into Albania - and into the U.K. too!

FINDING LIFE BY COMING TO THE CROSS.

A story we enjoyed sharing with our Albanian partners dated to the fourteenth century on the edge of a Midland village called Alverley.

In 1349 the world was being attacked by Bubonic Plague, or The Black Death. Accounts vary on the immensity of worldwide devastation it brought, from 70 million to 200 million deaths. In Alverley 60% of the population lost their lives and the village went into quarantine. Any food had to be brought in from the outside. The village still has a boundary marker comprised of a column of rock with a Maltese Cross carved into it and it was there that essential food supplies were deposited. Once the coast was clear, someone from within the quarantined village community collected the food and life was sustainable.



Although these were desperate times, with echoes of what some people have the misfortune to be experiencing today, I am drawn to the symbolism of this true story: by coming to the cross life was given.

Many of our friends across the water responded positively, with one saying, "The walk to the cross is one that we should take daily."

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Your prayers for our Albanian partners are appreciated. In praying for our Albanian leaders to become increasingly able to take the work of our mission forward, in remembering "Eva" and her partner bravely reaching out in love to the Turkish people, in asking God to lead others to the foot of the cross, in enjoying the photograph of a new life and thinking of Diku and his wife, Marsida, some words that I read this morning are good to keep in mind. They come from William Barclay: 'Prayer is not a way of making use of God; prayer is a way of offering ourselves to God in order that He should be able to make use of us.'

May God's grace be with you.

Richard.

DIKU BECOMES A FATHER

Some of you may remember, perhaps even met, Diku. He was an overweight schoolboy with whom I began to run early mornings when Joanne, Linda and I lived in Borsh village. We became good friends and one day climbed the highest mountain in the area together, leaving the words of Psalm 121, written in Albanian & English, under a big rock on the summit. We remain in touch, sometimes reminding each other that God's word is symbolically above everything else in that region. Now living in Canada, and married to an Albanian girl, Diku has recently become a father. He talks of being nostalgic for his village days, and wants me to pass on his love and encouragement to all of my friends, i.e. you.



In the photograph you can see 1 month old Merkes dressed appropriately for the times we are living through.