

Serving Christ in Albania

Shaun and Jennifer Thompson, March update 2010

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Dear Friends,

Have we ever told you how interesting a place Gjirokaštër is to visit? There are ancient theaters and castles and many beautiful mountain villages (some with Byzantine era churches) while the



town itself is internationally known as a *museum city* for the well preserved Ottoman architecture in the Old Town, including houses, shops, mosques and a magnificent bazaar quarter with cobble streets. The coast is not very far away from Gjirokaštër and neither is the Greek border.

Jen writes....

During the last two months I've been busy making invites, preparing music and buying dresses for the wedding of (team member) James and (church member) Lori, coming up at Easter. How exciting!

I'm giving a talk at the student meeting tonight, using a presentation I gave at Women's Day based on butterflies and the need for transformation. The Women's Day event (6th march) was very encouraging. Shirley and I used a local restaurant as a venue and ran it on the theme of new life. A lot of women came along, including eight for the first time.



Two of the ladies have since been to church on a Sunday.

I gave a similar talk at the women's event in the town of Memaliaj (8th March), where there is a small church with an active witness in that community.

I'm going to the youth club in Tepelena on Saturday to do a craft with the girls. I've been doing quite a few crafts recently, which is a good way of getting girls and ladies together.

Another good way of getting people together is food - one Sunday I did a big pot of soup and invited everyone from church. We quite often invite smaller groups for meals.

I've been helping a couple of young women put together an anti-abortion seminar at the university. Unfortunately, abortion is seen as a form of birth control, and there is virtually no information available to make an informed choice.

Gjirokaštër church

Our co-workers Geoff and Shirley write: "The church meetings have been encouraging with most Sundays a full house! We rejoice in those who are coming faithfully, believers and seekers alike. Pray for the power of the Word of God to touch and change hearts."

Our children

Summer has a loud voice and is at the stage of asking lots of why questions. She has two stick horses, which she rides simultaneously round the house.

George got into the habit of biting his nails (and fingers), which we think may be linked to him feeling out of place in *kindergarten*, but a man-to-man talk seems to have helped him curb the habit.

Joy has been having graded tests at school (she's in Year 3), which is a change from the stars and flags she used to get. She was in tears the other day because a student teacher told her school class that man came from monkeys.

Interested in short term missions?

We feel it would be very positive to have someone come over, who wanted to help with the educational needs of the children and get some first-hand cross-cultural experience too. Please get in touch if that is you.

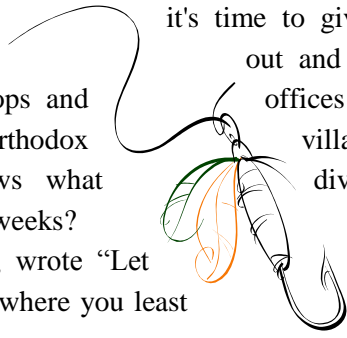
Further news on Joy - She's not been well this last week - a tummy virus and urine infection it seems. I (Jen) went to the state hospital to get a test done for her, but after struggling with hospital bureaucracy for two days found a private clinic, got the test done and had the results in my hand within 90 minutes.

Joy doing her homework (lots of it!)



Fishing with a newspaper

We distributed thousands of our evangelistic newspapers over Christmas and New Year and now it's time to give out our Easter edition. It's good to get out and meet people, not only in the market, shops and offices of Gjirokaster, but in Moslem and Orthodox villages and in other towns too. Who knows what divine appointments may await us in coming weeks? The Roman Poet, Ovid, wrote "Let your hook be always cast; in the pool where you least expect it, there will be a fish."



From Creation to Christ

At the beginning of the year, I taught the kids from Joy's class (that come to the **children's club on Friday**) about Creation. They challenged me with their perceptive questions: Does the Garden of Eden exist today? What would have happened if Adam and Eve ate of the tree of life? Do angels have wings? Now that we've moved onto the Easter story (tomorrow's lesson will be on the Cross) I'm wondering what questions they will come up with next.

I've also been going through the gospel account of Easter with the **youth club in Tepelena**. We are going to invite the teenagers there to an Easter service organized by Dutch missionaries who have moved in to the town.

Other things coming up

Easter

Everyone celebrates Easter on the same date this year - which is a shame, because I quite like having two Easters to do special events. Anyway, I'm trying to get together the men of the church to learn some Easter hymns. It could be the first Christian male choir in local history!

Wedding

One Easter event that a lot of planning has gone into is James and Lori's wedding. It's scheduled to take place on Easter Saturday in Saranda. It promises to be a bit of a church re-union - with lots of students that used to be in the Gjirokastër church coming together again.

Summer Outreach

We are planning various summer projects, including children's summer clubs in June, village evangelism in July, and camps in August. Volunteers are needed! And sponsorship for these projects.

We are planning to start camps on the 10th August, running for three weeks, God willing. The first two camps will be evangelistic, aimed at young teenagers, and the third week a family camp. The camps have opened a lot of doors for us to get the gospel into the community and we pray that we will see further progress this year.



Bits and pieces

I recently got stuck the other side of a landslide which closed the main road between Gjirokaster and Tepelena. There was nothing for it but to sit and wait for the diggers to turn up to get the road open again. Continuous heavy rainfall has caused floods and landslides throughout the country this winter. The plus side to this is that the dams are full and our electricity supply has been better than for a long time.

Talking of rain, the drain covers disappeared from our road last week. Maybe they got washed away? We have street lights, but they don't always work, so I imagine it's only a matter of time before someone falls into one of them. I heard in one town that stolen man-hole covers were being sold back to the local government, who bought them off a middle man because it was a lot cheaper than getting new ones! Normally speaking, second hand man-hole covers get processed by the scrap metal industry. In a country of high unemployment (with no benefits to speak of) people can get creative when it comes to making ends meet.

May the Lord help each of you as you face challenges on your own mission field. Have faith in the gospel!

Shaun and Jen



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