



SPANIARDS SHARE GOSPEL WITH THE

If you had the opportunity to take a team on a mission's trip, where would you take them? There is obviously an unlimited choice of destinations but where better than the newest country in the world – Kosovo. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia on 17th February this year. It has been a long road of war, suffering, loss of life, loss of possessions, fear etc. but now the future looks different. Trying to put the past behind is not easy but peace and hope are words used by many of the Albanians in Kosovo.

It is interesting that these words are at the heart of the gospel message but very few have heard it or accepted it. There are amazing testimonies, of course, of those whose lives God has reached and transformed. Gani Smolica is the pastor of the church in Peja (and native of the city) and he was one of the first Albanians to accept the Lord.

A team of 8 from the FIEIDE churches in Spain spent two weeks in Kosovo and Albania during July (14-30th). It was an opportunity to begin to understand what has really happened in this part of the world and serve the people in practical ways. This mission trip involved listening, observing, questioning, serving and sharing the gospel.

What could a team of Spaniards do? We got involved in practical projects serving the community. In a tiny agricultural village on the outskirts of Peja we worked in the local school lifting the wooden floor boards in the class rooms and left them ready for the next stage of the project. One of the teachers invited the team back to his home for lunch. We were

received into this Muslim home, treated as special guests,



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provided with a wonderful lunch from the little they had. Their hospitality was wonderful. Their home had been rebuilt because it had been burnt, like 80% of the homes in the area, by the Serbians during the war. The team learnt the importance of building relationships as a way to share the gospel in this Muslim country.

We cleaned the gardens in the local hospital. The gardens were a dumping ground for the visitors to the hospital. They just threw the rubbish out the windows! Even while we worked we were stunned as we witnessed this with unbelief. While we worked, the pastor made contact with people, security men, etc.

We did other practical work, but listening to the testimonies of the people really impacted the members of the team. One girl described it as seeing the 'creativity of God in reaching people'. The amazing stories of lives once touched and ruined by the cruelty of fellowman and then transformed by the saving power of the gospel was fantastic for the team to hear and see.

The team also spent one week in Albania. This was a return trip for some. It was great to see improvements in the infrastructure. We saw people cleaning the streets, collecting the rubbish, and there were even new litter bins placed around the city. Electricity and water cuts were fewer than last year but there is still a long way to go in development within the country.

We were involved again in cleaning projects in the streets, parks, beaches etc. We had media attention again and interviews went out on three different TV channels. The team had opportunities to learn Albanian, try out new food, learn about the cultural and religious background; but the best experience was sharing the gospel with the people.

The team was able to share the gospel with children every day in the church in Lushnje. Children were invited and with the help of translators the team was able to touch the lives of 70 children every day and 40 children one day in a village through games, songs, Bible verses, Bible stories, giving prizes etc. It was probably the first time for most of the children to hear the gospel. Most of them were from Muslim or Orthodox backgrounds.

It also helped the church renew its vision for the children and they plan to continue with the children's work in September.

This is missions! Experiencing travelling conditions and delays, using the 'toilets', eating the food, coping with the weak infrastructure are all part of a mission's trip but sharing the gospel, touching lives with God's word was the highlight.



Pray for the team. Some feel challenged about overseas ministry. Pray that the purpose of these mission trips would be fulfilled – seeing Spaniards offer themselves for fulltime service overseas and who knows, maybe even amongst the Albanians!

Pray also for the believers in Albania and Kosovo. ■

'But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ'.

Ephesians 2:13

Laura Sanlon



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