

Stamatis Status – June 14



This is IBIA's last term before our "Summer Break". We are looking forward to a break from the intensity of our schedule. Our last day of classes for this term is Friday, July 4th. This will also be our "International Focus Day". We will learn about and pray for the church in the United States. The students will be challenged to use this break to practice what they have learned among their family and friends.

Deborah and I will return to the States to continue our work with IBIA (reporting and fund raising). We will also make some time to restore and renew our minds and spirits for our return to Albania in September.

One of our graduates (also serving as IBIA's translator) is Altin Koçi. He has been granted a visa to visit the U.S. He will be with us from July 8th until August 6th. He is coming to assist us in raising additional needed funds for the school and his own support. If you are interested in becoming involved or more involved with IBIA or Altin please contact us and let us arrange a time to be with you. The available Sundays are:

July 13 – Forsythe, MO

July 20

July 27 – Sponsoring congregation in Bartlesville, OK

August 03

If you would like to visit with us about partnering with us please contact us soon so we can make our travel plans.

Last term we accepted a new student. Ilirjan "Ilir" Kura is 47. He and his wife, Vera, have two teenage children. His family lives in the city of Elbasan. Ilir stays at the school during the week and travels home on weekends and during our break weeks to be with his family. Ilir was in Albania's equivalent of the U.S. CIA. He has been a great addition to the school with his positive attitude. Our four full time students are quite a varied but loving and united group.



Our last "International Focus Day" was Mexico. We enjoyed learning about the nation and how the Lord's body is growing. We had a great Mexican meal with Deborah leading the way and being assisted by IBIA's cook, Rita; our secretary, Antoneta; and her daughter Ida (a music student who is attending university in the States).



We had our second “Expanding the Kingdom” seminar. The congregation in Lushnje graciously allowed us to use their facility. We had 38 attend the seminar from six congregations – Lushnje, Fier, Poliçan, Kucove, Magjat and Ure Vajgurore. Our last seminar for this year will be held in Elbasan on Saturday, October 4. This time we will be inviting the congregations from Korçe, Pogradec and of course Elbasan. We appreciate your prayers on our behalf during these seminars. Our intent is to encourage and challenge Christ’s redeemed to be involved in God’s Mission to reach the lost.

We pray that God is able to work more through us than in spite of us in our endeavors with IBIA. Though there are many ongoing adjustments and frustrations as there are in any place, we are grateful to be able to see first hand what God is doing in Albania. We were encouraged when over a year ago God planted a new congregation in Durres through the Alfred Zike family. Alfred was a student in the school in Athens, Greece while I taught there. It is good to see one of IBIA’s first graduates go to work with Alfred in the Adriatic congregation.

It was also encouraging on June 10 to be able to be part of the birth of another new congregation in Albania. God worked through the Alfred Dimçe and Kristofor Findiku families to begin a new congregation in the capital city of Tirana – a city of over 400,000 people. Alfred Dimçe was also one of the students of the school in Athens, Greece while I taught there.

It is my dream and prayer that in a few years we will begin to see graduates of IBIA being used by God to plant new congregations of Christ’s redeemed disciples.

Deborah was able to attend a “Come Before Winter” retreat in Sarajevo, Bosnia during the IBIA break week – June 2 – 6. The primary purpose for her attending was to have a chance for spiritual renewal. A secondary purpose was to have opportunity to make contact with congregations in the Balkans. Our intent and desire is to find students from all the Balkan nations. We hope to be able to follow up on the contacts she made.



We appreciate each of you that are partnered (through prayers, funding, teaching, etc) with us in our endeavor with IBIA. Though our finances have been good, we are beginning to struggle financially. This is due to several factors: the devaluation of the dollar (from 98 cents when we arrived to 78 cents yesterday – a loss of 20%); inflation in Albania; and the expanding involvements of our work with IBIA.

Each of the activities we are involved in is necessary to establish a healthy foundation the school can grow on for years to come – 1) Recruiting Trips; 2) Seminars; and 3) Preachers' and Wives' Retreat.

Please help us find new partners. We rely heavily on “word of mouth” in our raising of funds. We thank you for allowing God to use you in the powerful way He is. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Steve