

Director's Report
Albanian Bible Institute
by Lee Bradley
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It has been awhile since I have written you a report, but wanted to let you know that we are still moving forward and having a very good time in the process. These last few months have been a busy time, but a time that really has been encouraging in almost every way.

The students

The students we have this year have the best attitude of any group we have seen in a long time. We are thrilled with their teachability and their concern for the lost. This year on two occasions we have been able to give a generous offering to ABI graduates who serve in Turkey because our students have given a sacrificially. Believe me. These students are not rich, but they are very generous. Sometimes when I see that offering bag that we have, I know that there are some gifts like the widow's mite in there.

This semester we have organized a couple of Saturdays for street evangelism on the boardwalk of Durres. Actually, I did not plan for us to do this but one time, but after the students did it one time and had such a good time doing evangelism together, they asked, "Can we do this again?" Who was I to tell them that they could not go witnessing again? So, we did it again. Altogether, after two Saturdays of street witnessing, the students have talked with about 30 individuals about their relationship with the Lord. There have been a few people who have been open to the gospel and some follow-up is being done.

Sometimes I cannot believe this group that we have. There have been opportunities for them to go home early on Friday, but they have chosen to stay on campus and spend the night here so they can have fellowship with each other. Some attend classes even when they don't have to go, simply because they want to learn more. I really like this attitude.

The courses

People sometimes ask me what we teach our students at ABI. I often give a very general answer that we teach Bible, theology, hermeneutics, missions and church planting. Sometimes they understand what this is all about. Sometimes they don't. I'd like to give you specifics of some of the courses the students have had this past semester:

1. Preaching...Students organized and preached two original sermons during the course.
2. Angels and Demons...Students learned the Biblical information about angels and demons and how their activity can affect Albanian church life and Christian ministry.
3. Principles of Hermeneutics...Students learn how to interpret the Bible within a historical context. This is so important since much Bible teaching in churches tends to be propogandistic and out of context. Groups like Jehovah's Witnesses have this approach, but so do too many of the Evangelical churches. Other churches teach the Bible at a very superficial level that focuses only on knowing facts about a story, rather than drawing out major points and ways of application.
4. Introduction to Worship...Students learned how to prepare worship services and even directed two of the Wednesday night chapel services using the outline they prepared for the course.
5. Chronological Bible Teaching...Students in the church planting track taught two lessons from the Firm Foundations material, which is designed to help people with little or no knowledge of the Bible to understand the plan of salvation from Genesis to the Resurrection.
6. Small Group Bible Studies...Students learned to write a lesson plan and discussion questions in order to lead a small group Bible study. They used these lesson plans and led two small group Bible studies during the course.
7. Perspectives in Global Missions...This course is sometimes referred to as the KAIROS course. Students got a taste of the challenges and needs in each continent of the world and were challenged to consider being missionaries or being involved to a greater degree in international missions.

The teachers

I am thrilled with the good job our teachers have done this year. There are four good men on our staff who teach regularly: Adam Roseboom, Brandon Clark, Pellumb Ranxha, and myself. All of these men are highly committed to the task of teaching and investing in the lives of students. They often stay after class and spend time with the students. Our teachers and some of their wives help with the discipleship of the students. Even our school secretary, Ornela, is spending time discipling one of our female students. This investment of time and heart is paying off as our students are growing spiritually, as well as in knowledge and skills.

We have also been blessed to have guest teachers come in and help us with some courses. Some of these guest teachers have been foreign missionaries who live and work in Albania. Others have been Albanian church leaders who are now getting more experience and proving their abilities in teaching. Two or three of these who have taught are ABI graduates. It is good to see the reward of yesterday's work coming to realization as we see these men come back and teach for us. Applause to those who taught these guys so many years ago and wondered if they would ever get this far.

Out and about

In the last semester our teachers have been out among the churches preaching and doing seminars. During the third weekend of November, a group of five of us went up to Kosova to do seminars in three different churches. We are also doing more seminars this semester. We are making every effort to get out in the churches and become more useful to them. We also hope this will result in more students attending ABI in the future.

The newest adventure...Lay Church Planters School

It has been a thrill to see what God has done with the vision of my Korean colleagues who have had a vision for more church planting and church planting training in Albania. This past year they approached us with a vision for starting a Lay Church Planters School. At first this seemed like something that would be too much additional work for me. Still, I felt prodded by the Lord to do it. To be honest, I wasn't even sure that many people would be that interested. I now see that God was challenging me to have greater faith.

After months of preparation, meetings and prayer (the most important part), this new school began on January 8th. We were encouraged to see 19 students come for the first weekend course, which was on personal evangelism. It was quite an exciting weekend. We had students from four different cities and five different churches.

In the Lay Church Planters School, students must DO a practicum with each course they take. No tests. No essays. Just practice what is taught. Nothing is fully learned until it is applied.

This weekend, we picked up two new students and had a couple of guests who will possibly come again as students. We have courses every other weekend, from Friday afternoon at 5pm till Saturday at 4pm.

Each week over 1,000 people across the globe pray for the lay church planters school. Perhaps you are one of those. How we thank God for you! When people pray together, God does big things. Thank you for being a part of this new opportunity to train church leaders in Albania.

The building

The heating system was finally installed in December, bringing phase two of our building campaign to a close. As so happens many times, the costs were higher than expected. Still, God's people provided all we needed. Thank you for giving to this. It is nice to sit here and write you this from a warm office. The students are quite pleased as well.

Closing thoughts

These have been encouraging days. It has been a joy to serve in this place and to see rewards from our labors and prayers. God is faithful. We thank him for this and thank him for calling us to serve at Albanian Bible Institute. Thank you so much for all you do to help us, both financially and through your prayers. We know we are not doing this alone.