

Director's Update
November 25, 2011
By Lee Bradley

The semester has begun and we are now a little over half way to the end. The time has passed very quickly for both the staff and students. These are good signs. If things were going badly, the last two months could have felt like two years. Instead, we celebrate this Thanksgiving season with joy that God is doing great things in our midst.

First, we are thankful for the students that God has given us this year. We started the semester with eleven students. After two months of classes, we still have ten of them. Unfortunately, one of them had to leave the country and find work since the joblessness problem in Albania is now taking a turn for the worse. We hated losing this student, but he did not have many options. Over the course of the semester, five other students have come for individual courses we have offered, thus adding more input in the class discussions and giving more people the opportunity to be taught the word of God at a deeper level.

Second, we are thankful for the attitude of our students. Each of them works in the marketplace. They leave work at 4 or 4:30 p.m. and arrive at the school for classes at 5 p.m. They are in class from 5 p.m. until 7:45 p.m. That is a long time. They do this three nights a week. They come with smiles on their faces. They leave with smiles. That is pretty remarkable. I did not always go to my own seminary classes with the kinds of smiles our students have. While they are in class, they are very engaged in the discussions and have good questions. They are keeping up with the assignments that we are requesting of them. They are working hard and giving maximum effort. I am really proud of them. They make all our preparation for the classes seem worthwhile.

Third, we are thankful for expanding opportunities. This past weekend I went to Prishtina, Kosova, to meet with two men there about theological training. I explained what would be required and it looks like I will be traveling up there every three weeks to do an Old Testament Survey course with them for the next three months. Another part of this expanding vision is the new school that we will start in the city of Lushnje in March 2012.

Fourth, I am thankful for our former students who are serving the Lord in missions. We have several who want to serve as missionaries in the future, but so far God has not yet opened the doors for them to go. They still have ministry to finish here before going abroad with the gospel. Two weeks ago about 10 of our ABI family gathered to worship the Lord and pray for missions. We started the worship and prayer time at 7:00 and ended at 11:30 p.m. We prayed for the persecuted church. We prayed for missions needs in Swaziland, Northern Iraq, Turkey, Iran, North Korea and Albania. It was exciting to have some of our Albanian missionaries present who just returned on furlough. It was good to hear them share what God is doing in the

country where they serve. How great it was to hear three of them singing a gospel song in the language of their people group! Just twenty years ago, missionaries came to Albania to start mission work. Now we have people from this country going out as missionaries. I believe that many of the people that we have trained at ABI will one day go to the mission field. God has a perfect time for this. They will go when he is ready.

Fifth, I am thankful for our former students who **are working faithfully here in this country**. There is nothing more seemingly thankless than doing God's work day in and day out. Plodding along does not seem too glamorous to most of us, **but God has a very high opinion of it**. Many times there are hardships and demands that seem too difficult for the normal person to bear. Fatigue, stress and despair are not uncommon experiences for some of these who do the yeoman's work of serving small churches. Some of our graduates work in isolated towns and there is not much fellowship or support. Many of them work with inadequate financial support. In some places, the churches are complacent or in a spiritual coma. Some of the best lay leadership has immigrated to the cities or out of Albania. STILL, our former students who lead these churches keep working and serving. I admire them and their commitment, which is just as impressive as that of those who serve abroad in missions.

Lastly, I am thankful that God is showing Himself faithful by providing for our needs. Our financial situation has been a lot tighter this year than in the past. Right now we have an annual gap of \$34,000 to fill. Although that seems quite large to us, it is not insurmountable. In the last week we have received a sizable gift of \$1395 from one of the churches in the USA. We also received a commitment from a new church for monthly support starting in 2012. These are all good signs. Certainly, we still have a big gap to fill and several more donations are going to be needed to fill the gaps, but we are confident in the One who is going to provide for us. If you would like to be one of those God uses to bridge the gap, your gifts can be sent to us through the International Mission Board. The address is I.M.B. (SBC), Attention: Special Gifts, PO Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230. Please designate your gifts "for ministry of Albanian Bible Institute." The IMB will make sure these gifts are quickly channeled to us.

Thank you for praying for our ministry and supporting us as you do. Without prayer, we are operating in the flesh and everything we do will be in vain. Please pray for us! I cannot emphasize this enough to you. I also appreciate very much your letters and emails. I would love to hear from any of you anytime. My email address is jibrad_62@hotmail.com. God bless you for what you do to encourage us.