

Chris and Debbie Carter

Thank You So Much For Enriching Our Lives!

May 2020



www.bmsworldmission.org/cdcarter

This is our last prayer-letter. As we come to the end of our Mid Term service in Tirana, we want to give thanks to God for seven things that we have encountered on our journey:

Resilient Students

The vast majority of the students we have taught are TCK's – Third Culture Kids – who are being brought up in a culture other than that of their parents' or the culture of their country of nationality. They came from a wide variety of places, North America, South America, South Korea, various European countries, including the UK. Many of them had come because their parents had felt called to serve as missionaries. They had unusual experiences, seeing real poverty up close, going through earthquakes, being apart from extended family by thousands of miles for months and sometimes years. Often confident and able to communicate in many languages, they are passionate about their identity as a school, seen in their dedication to sporting and cultural events. Disrespect towards staff is rare. Motivation to succeed is almost a given. The students were a pleasure to work with. Many of them we will remember for years to come. Here's an example: Junha, aged thirteen, fell and badly broke his arm during a PE lesson last October. His parents decided he needed to travel back to Korea to have the operation to have it set, so he went back for three weeks with his dad. He returned in time for the November earthquake and the further disruption that resulted from that. All throughout he was a keen and dedicated student, who was a delight to teach.



Amazing Community

The GDQ community comprises the staff, parents and students of GDQ – and it's a lot more than the normal Parent Teacher Association you find in most schools in Britain. The vast majority of parents have made huge sacrifices in responding to a call to work in ministries that work with Albanian communities, to share the good news of Jesus Christ in all its fullness. They, the staff and students come together time and again to support one another in events that solidify the bonds of unity, through encouragement at sporting fixtures, public performances and times of giving to those in need. There is a generosity of spirit in wanting to see GDQ succeed. We felt incredibly encouraged by the way we were given our on-line farewell Zoom meeting, just prior to flying back to the UK at the end of April. We were invited to the homes of some of our students and blessed by the ways that we felt supported. For example, when our son Matt came to perform in a charity concert, the GDQ community turned out to help raise £1000 for the work of Tek Ura.

Godly People

We thank God for the many Albanian people we feel privileged to call our friends. We will miss Fredi and Gjystina who led the local church we attended during our time. Fredi, miraculously converted from a Muslim background during the early days of the country opening up in the 1990's is a great teacher, linguist and pastor, with a passion for promoting the gospel that liberates from fear, especially in relation to the issue of 'blood feud'. His wife, Gjystina is an uncompromising lawyer, who battles prayerfully against some of the unfairness of the legal world. Then there is Beni, a humble Christian, again from a Muslim background, whose ministry in one of the outlying villages quietly helping children to speak English and learn about Jesus is so easy to underestimate. We will never forget Eda, Rezi, Denisa, Xhulio, Miranda, all Albanian colleagues who have served GDQ as teachers for years. We continue to pray for Xhina, Yuri, Megi, Matilda and the team at Tek Ura who have made such incredible efforts to feed and support the forgotten community they serve during the pandemic. They have made an indelible imprint on our lives.

Seeing God at work

We are thankful for being able to see the many ways in which God is at work in Albania today: there was something special at seeing people publicly give a testimony or be baptised in a country in which, thirty years ago it was still illegal to do so; Chris was able to attend a huge Will Graham rally last September; we both saw a remarkable outpouring of practical help from the churches to families whose homes were devastated by the earthquake; we attended Albanian weddings at which the gospel was important; we met pioneering medical workers introducing palliative care to a country that knew nothing of it until recently; we saw the presentations of a charity seeking to introduce the alien practice of fostering into Albanian culture; we saw lives genuinely changed and faith growing in a land that is a melting pot of ideas, with Christianity competing with consumerism and Islam to become the guiding

philosophy. Somehow, it was all the more sharply in focus to us, knowing the history (we visited the museums documenting the cruelty of the old regime) that led to the first so-called atheist state in the 1960's. God is at work and He has not finished yet!



Beautiful Land

Albania is a gorgeous country to visit. In truth, we probably only managed to sample some of its delights: the tranquil empty mountainous district of Fushë Lurë in the North with its lakes; the history of Skanderbeg's home base of Krujë with its castle; the huge expansive beaches of Vlorë; the cable-car trip up Mount Dajti, on the outskirts of Tirana, with its panoramic views over the city; the stunning beauty of Berat, our favourite place to stay. The fruit and vegetables, easily the best we have ever tasted, always fresh and available from a myriad of vendors, until late every night. The pandemic may have halted the Albanian tourism industry temporarily in its tracks, which is a shame for the country's economy. But in time, its reputation as the jewel that it is, a truly delightful place, may become cemented in the hearts of travellers. We were so privileged to enjoy staying there for two and a half years.

Being able to make a (small) difference

The guiding hope that led us to embark upon the challenge of teaching in Albania, was in order "to make a difference". We have seen this prayer answered as we have become a part of GDQ, providing educational opportunities for our students, and thus indirectly allowing their parents to continue to work and serve

Albanian communities. So, we have done what we know we are able to do, teach Music and Science and this has led to a number of results: IGCSE classes taught; initiatives in environmental science introduced such as the annual trip to Banje hydro-electric power station and the practice of regular composting; the trialling of a Healthy Eating Day; the deployment of good, teaching resources that stimulate learning and understanding; the establishing of practical music-making as a norm; the fostering of musicianship in worship by the students; public performances including students taking part in international choir festivals; being able to offer one-to-one peripatetic music lessons; having a pastoral input in the lives of Middle and High School students in the leading of small groups; being able to give input during High School chapel on a weekly basis.

We trust that these normal contributions to the life of the school have made a difference, along with the ways we have been able to support our colleagues in BMS and the local church in Tirana. We have depended on God to do so, and He has helped us.

The support of BMS

We give thanks for BMS for gently guiding us through all the processes of testing a calling, training and service with wise advice born out of many years' experience. Our supervisors have been available to keep us focussed and to back us up in times of testing, of which there have been a number in the past twelve months. BMS have given us the opportunity to share in the work that Jesus instituted in the Great Commission. We have

met remarkable people who have given much of their working lives to minister in remote places on the earth. We have never felt alone. We are genuinely grateful for what BMS is doing and has done for us.

Give thanks:

For the things we have listed above.

For the apparent success of the strict and swift lockdown in Albania (very few reported deaths from Coronavirus.)

For the Lord Jesus who has been with us for this exciting journey.

Prayer points:

Please pray for the ongoing work of BMS in Tirana, principally through the Tek Ura ministry in the wake of the pandemic.

Please pray for the uncertain future of GDQ as the government closure of schools continues in Albania.

Please pray for us as we adjust to life back in UK, as we find new ways to serve and as we wait to reconnect face-to-face with our family

Chris and Debbie

If you would like to support Chris and Debbie Carter by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



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