

In the spring of 2008, **Bill Brosey** posted a Connection notice that teachers were needed for a summer campaign in Albania. I responded, and that was the beginning of a life-changing mission for Debbie and me. We were far from being trailblazers in this mission. During our early trips to Albania, we met future HVCOCers **Jim Fox and Woody and Gwen Byars**. God's purposes brought us together, along with numerous other people from across the U.S. and Europe. Debbie and I became part of the "family" in Tirana, and as our family grew, we began to spend 4 weeks teaching in the campaign, as well as encouraging former students.

**Where is Albania?** When I signed up to go to Albania, my knowledge of the country was minimal—mainly what I had seen in movies! I soon learned that Albania is strategically located—bordered by Greece, Macedonia, and Montenegro, sharing the Adriatic Sea with Italy. More significantly, I learned that Paul traveled to Illyricum (part of current Albania) to preach the gospel (Romans 15:19).

**How does the mission work?** Albanians have a great desire to improve their English, so they are attracted to the free lessons that include opportunities to speak English with Americans. Each teacher guides 5 or 6 students—one-on-one for 1 hour each day—through Bible and grammar lessons that use biblical examples. These studies (published by the **World English Institute**, printed by **Eastern European Missions**, and based on the **Easy-To-Read Bible**) begin with the creation story in Genesis and the simplest grammar lesson—the noun. In this setting, many of the students develop relationships that create and increase their desire to know God.

**Who are the students?** The students represent a variety of ages—from those as young as 11 or 12, to older adults. Some are on summer break from school, while others have full-time jobs. Most students have Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, or atheist backgrounds. Many students have little or no knowledge of God because the Communist regime forbade their parents and/or grandparents from engaging in any kind of religious activity.

**Do the teachers need to be experts in English and the Bible?** Not at all! However, teachers thrive because of their relationship with God. The Holy Spirit—not the teacher's ability—changes students' hearts! That powerful lesson was emphasized when a student who was an atheist told me that she was beginning to believe in God. The stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses—not my words—had revealed to her the love and the power of God!

Two of Debbie's students were baptized this year. One—the younger son of the preacher—was baptized at camp by his older brother. The other was a single woman, who had been studying the Bible on her own after she enrolled in the online course in 2014 but completed her first WEI lesson in person this summer.

**How does this mission change our lives and the lives of the people with whom we interact?** We have learned how God uses difficulties to help us focus even more on doing His will. Preparing to teach a blind student in 2019 challenged me to overcome my "addiction" to the printed page, to figure out a way to present God with only my voice, and to let the Spirit do His work! In 2024 and 2025, canes for the blind were provided by the Hardin Valley and Maryville churches, respectively. The Tirana church is showing Jesus to young Roma people (the "outcasts") in Tirana and in Fushë Krujë (a city about an hour's drive north of Tirana). In 2025, after Debbie's accident, our Tirana family provided meals (including a hospital ice cream party), transportation, language translation, and relationships with doctors, nurses, and therapists.

As we did two years ago, we planned one Sunday to worship with another congregation in Albania—this time the church in Berat. However, Debbie's accident prevented that from happening. However, after we finished teaching in Tirana, we were able to spend 4 days at the nation-wide church camp in the south of Albania, near the Greek border. Although our participation was limited because of some widespread illnesses in the camp, we were at the beach to witness two baptisms.

The September 2025 issue of *The Christian Chronicle* includes some good articles about the mission work in Albania. In "Finding peace 'when there is no peace'", Albania and other Balkan countries are mentioned. "Among outcasts, a church moves in" and "Despised people live 'at the heart of shalom'" describe what the church is doing in Fushë Krujë.

**How can you help?** If your heart is moved to travel to Albania, please visit with, email, or text **Ken or Debbie, Woody, or Jim**, or visit with HVCOC's "in-house" Albanian, **Eri Boraj**. **I encourage you to watch the Albania Mission video on the HVCOC website at <https://hvcoc.org/missions/> (A Word from the Martins)**. You may want to begin teaching the online WEI courses ([worldenglishinstitute.org](http://worldenglishinstitute.org)), and/or you may wish to contribute to this mission and others. Above all, please pray for the mission, for the churches in Albania, and for those of us who travel there to teach.

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