

## **Kosovo and Congo, April 2008**

We've had Bible Basics and other literature in Albanian for some years, and have enjoyed response from Albanian speaking people world-wide, including Kosovo. It was our pleasure to visit Kosovo again and to baptize D, the first Christadelphian to be baptized in Kosovo so far as we know. A former Moslem, he converted to Christ and was baptized by a church, but on understanding the truth about the nature of Jesus and how the trinity is a pagan idea, he chose to be re-baptized. He's a wonderful and highly committed young brother- shown not least by his being baptized in very cold mountain water

Conversion from Islam is hard, especially in the tradition-centred villages of Kosovo, where family and identity as Islamic are so fundamental to society. Less than 1% of the population are Protestant and they face discrimination at every turn. Kosovo is newly independent but one of Europe's poorest countries, still recovering from the devastating war against Serbia. In such a situation it's quite natural that we should seek to mediate the love and grace of Christ not just in our Biblical teaching, but in practical entry into the lives of others. There's very little employment for most people, the economy is in ruins and survives on Western aid, and there is continued ethnic strife in some areas. In the Serb areas we visited, the NATO KFOR forces are patrolling every few minutes in armoured vehicles; checkpoints are frequent; and many Serbian churches are under constant armed guard due to Moslem attacks and vandalism.

*Photo: Serbian church in Gracanica under guard by Swedish KFOR soldiers*



We took with us about 20 kg of clothes for distribution. Brother D introduced us to a lovely family in great need, who had turned to Christianity but had had a negative experience with a church. The mother has died, and the father, Tefik, a very loving man, has had a break down - pictures of her are all around the home and he keeps looking through albums of pictures of his wife whom he loved so much. The children are lovely- the three eldest girls would all like to be baptized, as would Tefik. We felt it was still early and left them to continue their Bible studies with a view to soon being ready.

*Photo: Tefik and the children showing us pictures of their late mother / wife*



*Photo: The family- from left to right Egona, Tefik, Himoza, Shkelqimi, Agnesa*



The children show some signs of malnourishment- they were very grateful for the clothes, but said their biggest problem is getting enough to eat. We went out and did a shop for them which again they appreciated, although they feel ashamed at having to receive such aid. The girls really run the home as best they can and all are very unworldly and earnest to learn more about God and Jesus. Please, amidst this world of need, try to remember them in your prayers.

Tefik has had some major heart operations and needs ongoing medication. Carelinks will do their best to help out. However we see that the needs here in Kosovo are significant and are going to be ongoing. We have over 70 people studying Bible Basics with us already. Moslem persecution, general poverty, and a poverty stricken nation to reach out to are all invitations for us to respond with the grace and generosity which the Father and Son have shown to us. We have therefore begun the paperwork in registering "Carelinks Kosovo" as a NGO [Non Governmental Organization] in Kosovo. We've also begun setting up a website at [www.carelinkskosovo.org](http://www.carelinkskosovo.org)

Carelink readers may recall the chicken projects we started in Bosnia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe- the idea being to set up intensive chicken raising whereby day old chicks are bought and exposed to 24/7 intense lighting, heat and constant feeding. After 30 days of this they grow to a good size, and they can then be sold, some eaten by the families, and the project then restarts for another 30 days. You can see reports of our previous chicken projects at <http://www.carelinks.net/care/sar1507.htm> and <http://www.carelinks.net/care/sar1808.htm>. This is a tried and tested project we've run before, and there are a number of families in Kosovo waiting to start up.

## **CONGO**

Further to our report about the needs here, we're pleased to say that we found out that the Meal A Day fund have kindly provided some assistance in providing carpentry equipment and support for orphans in the Bukavu area; and the CBM are paying for the rental of a meeting place for the ecclesia. Given the instability in the area, it seems that purchasing property isn't a wise move just at the moment. The needs are so great in the ecclesia, however, that no single organization can really do justice to them. So Carelinks will continue with our efforts to get aid directly to the brothers and sisters. As most of the ecclesia are lacking Bibles, we're wondering if anyone would be able to look after buying some Swahili Bibles for them and mailing them out there? This can probably be done online- we're happy to let you have the ecclesial address so you can ask the bookseller to mail directly out there. We've also heard from a local brother that none of the ecclesia in Goma were affected by the recent plane crash there.

**With love from your brothers and sisters of CCM**