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Seasons greetings  
to you  
from Rachel  
in Albania



Dear friends,

It's the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2006, I have the day off and there is electricity all day toady so I'm maximising on the opportunity and doing a long over due newsletter! Trust this finds you all well. 2005 brought some difficult, frustrating and challenging times. But in them all I saw the hand of God helping and sustaining me.

Mid January we saw our prayers answered as we signed a 3 ½ year contract for a multi-functional hall, in which we divided off office, storage space and meeting/class room; and I moved into a small apt' above the hall.

At the same time Diftjon Dibra (Albanian Christian guy) joined team as Shkëndijë's IT, written translator and computer teacher.

We were all set for big advancements and new projects when, 2 weeks after we took hold of the new premises, Valentina was stopped from coming to work. She was my only children's worker, so it was like a bomb. The full weight of the children's work –weekly visits & worksheet handouts and the meetings, all came back on my shoulders, hence immensely hindering the start of new projects.

I thank the Lord that he kept me encouraged and strong, and all the children's activities continued as normal through to the summer.

In March the new computer course started, as a means to serve the community and reach out even further. We were able to buy 8 new computers in Tirana, and started by offering basic beginner's courses whilst Diftjon went through examination with Microsoft and others. Now we offer 4 types of courses. We've had some XX students, both children and adult attending the courses, so far.

Unfortunately, like last year, the English course has not run, due to us still not having an English teacher; except for me doing a weekly conversational course with a small group of more advanced students which ran January to June.

On May 21<sup>st</sup> in Lezhe Square, I, along with three pastors in Lezhe, organised a type of

"March for Jesus". Many churches from all over the north of Albania and Lezhe citizens joined in the march and watched the presentation. A message of unity amongst the churches was proclaimed as well as the gospel. I taught eight girls from our children's work, a choreographed flag dance for the presentation. All went very well with large attendance and good weather.

This year we received two summer teams. One in July from Austria, lead by Gowen Wheeler and one in August from the UK Scouts, lead by my ex-LightForce team leader, Tim Miles. Both went well doing very different things and were received warmly and openly by the Shengjin community. The Austrian team of 15 were involved with street evangelism, youth outreach and children's programmes. A lot was achieved during their 5-day mission. Tim's scout group of 14 was on a practical mission in the local Shengjin school. They worked hard in very hot weather to renovate the library and a drama/arts room.

The LightForce children's camps ran through the summer again. I did the evening programs and ran two weeks of day camps, one of which was for my regular Shengjin children. I introduced a new 'personal devotion and small discussion group' slot into the camp program. Every child was given a bible. It was great to see them opening the scriptures for them selves. I have had on my heart, for a few years, to run 'full on' Christian children's camps for the children of the Northern Evangelical churches. I have entered into conversation with George Ridley about the possibility of using the LightForce base and facilities to run 4 weeks of camp for two age groups next summer.

I returned to the UK for three weeks in September. My dad had some pain in his side and was sent for bone scans in light that he'd had treatment for throat cancer 1½ years prior. The results came back, showing that the cancer had spread to his bones and he'd only 2 months to live. My dad faced it positively, but in my heart I sensed it wouldn't be long. On my return to

Albania I didn't re-launch the weekly children's program after the summer but did things I could cut free from. It was only three weeks later that he was admitted to hospital. I got the early flight out on Wednesday, met my brother at Heathrow, and was by his side that evening. 6:30 the following morning the hospital called; we got there quick and by 7:55 he'd passed away. It was all very quick but I thank the Lord for his grace and mercy. My prayer throughout was "God, save him & take him quick so not to suffer long and make me strong for the family." Even though my dad was seated when I spoke to him for the last time and prayed with him, I feel the Lord was faithful there were many positive signs, in and the lead up to his death. I stayed for 10 days after the funeral to help sort and clear my dad's house.

On returning it was only 4 full weeks to Christmas, so started drama and song practice with the children ready for a big children's out reach on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a family meeting with cocktails on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Both meetings went very well with good turnouts. It was the first time that we've done a Family meeting. Robert cook spoke from the Ishull Lezhe church plant and there was lots of positive feed back, which I'll be following up in the next couple of days with visits to all the families.

Shkëndijë has now produced it's second children's praise and worship album in Albanian, which was available the week before Christmas and is already being played on 'Radio 7' in Tirana, which also transmits to a number of Albania's larger towns.

All in all it's been an unusual year with many up and downs. I thank God that He is unchanging in the midst of them and is faithful to the end. I look forward with great anticipation to all that God has for me and Shkëndijë throughout 2006.

Once again my sincere thanks goes to all who faithfully pray, support and uphold this mission. Please take time to take in our prayer needs on the insert, with love and blessings through this New Year, Rachel