



## Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

Albania it is the ancient Illyricum of the Bible (Romans 15:19). It has been inhabited by different civilisations over time, but after being under Ottoman rule for nearly five centuries, Albania declared its independence in 1912. It was conquered by Italy in 1939. Communist partisans took over the country in 1944. Albania allied itself first with the USSR (until 1960), and then with China (to 1978). In 1967 the government of Albania started a war against religions and faiths and in 1976 the Republic of Albania declared that was the only atheist country in the world.

In the early 1990s, Albania established a multi-party democracy. The transition has proved challenging as successive governments have tried to deal with high unemployment, corruption, a dilapidated infrastructure, powerful organised crime networks, and combative political opponents. Albania has made progress in its democratic development, but deficiencies remain. International observers judged elections to be largely free and fair however, there have been claims of electoral fraud in every one of Albania's post-communist elections. Albania joined NATO in April 2009 and it is a candidate state for EU accession. Although Albania's economy continues to grow, the country is still one of the poorest in Europe.

There are hundreds of thousands of people who have been presented with the Gospel during the last three decades after the fall of communism in Albania. There are so many precious souls that have been saved through the power of the gospel.

A young girl from our church who is a university student and very young in faith was walking on the street and suddenly she saw near the feet of a lady that was begging a pamphlet that our church members use to share the gospel with people, the 'Father's love letter', that had been thrown away. Quickly she thought that the lady who was begging didn't have any interest in the gospel. She felt in her heart to talk with the lady about this.

"Hello dear! Did you have the opportunity to read this short letter? Do you know that there is an important note of love in this letter for you?"

When the lady heard the questions she remained silent and few seconds later she said, "I can't read, I have never learned to write and read due to poverty."

For a while it was silent again and then the student with a gentle voice said, "Would you like me to read this letter for you? I would really love to do this!"

The old lady just moved her head and without thinking twice said, "Can you really do this for someone like me?"

The student sat beside her on the sidewalk and started to read slowly so that every single word from the letter would speak to the woman.

Words of love from The Heavenly Father were touching this beggar's soul in such a way that she was totally silent. The reading came to an end and the student asked the old lady, "Can I pray for you now?"



**As of the 2011 census these are the religious groups in Albania:**  
 Islam 56.7%  
 Christianity 16.9%  
 (Roman Catholic 10.3%,  
 Eastern Orthodox 6.75%,  
 Evangelicals 0.14%,  
 No denomination 5.49%)  
 Atheist 2.5%  
 Unclear 16.24%

And out there, on Tirana's boulevard, in public, she put her arms around her and started to pray and ask The Heavenly Father to pour His love in to her life. The old beggar started to weep and suddenly the student wept too. What an amazing moment of God's love. Time was passing very quickly and our church member had to continue her journey to reach university for her lecture. She realised that something deep had just happened, and not only in the life of the beggar. For sure, for the first time in her life this woman was presented with the love of God. Something true and deep had happened in her own life too. As she was walking towards the university she knew that she was carrying on her clothes the tears and odour of the beggar. She was experiencing such joy in her heart. And for the first time she felt the responsibility of sharing the gospel with everyone. And the best way to do that is to sit with the people, identify with them, and feel their pain and grief.

I decided to share this true story with you with the hope that today you will be encouraged. Be encouraged to love the people in your neighbourhood with God's love, and please, I urge you to share the gospel with everyone. Take your responsibility and let The Lord do the rest. He is still searching to find the lost sheep and waiting for the return home of the prodigal.

### Prayer needs for Albania

1. Revival in the churches.
2. More boldness to share the gospel with everyone.
3. Equipping disciples and starting new churches in the towns and communities where there is no church.
4. That the Lord will meet our needs
5. For financial provision for a new church premises in Tirana

### Update:-

There are currently 3 cases that we have heard of where Christians are under attack for speaking out biblical truth concerning gender and same sex marriage issues. Our author, Pastor Akil Pano is accused of hate speech in Albania after defending the words "mother" and "father" and rejecting "parent 1 & parent 2". In Malta, Matthew Grech has been accused of promoting 'gay conversion therapy' and in Ireland teacher Enoch Burke has been removed from his job after refusing to call a transitioning pupil by a new name and 'gender neutral' pronouns. Also, the case of Päivi Räsänen in Finland, continues; after being acquitted for expressing her views based on the Bible about sexuality and marriage, she is again having to defend her views at the Court of Appeal.

### Additional Prayer Points:-

1. As we mark Holocaust Remembrance Day this week, let's pray that the reality of the holocaust will be accurately remembered by the younger generations, whose knowledge of this tragic event is sometimes inadequate.
2. As western nations give the go ahead to sending tanks to Ukraine, let's pray that Russia's response will not lead to the deaths of many innocent civilians.

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