

UMC Albania



Tirana



Pogradec Lake Ohrid



Bishnica

United Methodist Church in Albania

May 2011

On a Path towards Freedom with Responsibility



Local elections - with hardly any media coverage in Europe - took place on May 8th in Albania. All cities, towns and villages elected their mayors. The election day was quite calm, overseen by several hundred OSCE and other official observers. There were however problems with the ballot counting. There were delays, controversy and suspicion of manipulation. Even one week later there was no announcement of the final election result in Tirana. Although politicians stressed they would respect the vote of the people, in the face of political defeat some changed their behaviour. What they had agreed upon was now questioned.

This is perhaps typical for Albania: Albania suffered for many years under a dictatorship and people were ordered around. Today the country is on a path to democracy. A modern constitution, civil law, criminal law and courts able to exercise the jurisdiction now exist. In the law books, everything is regulated. The models

for the new constitution come from other countries (USA & Germany) and are well proven. But even the best legitimate, democratic law is not worth much if the people do not hold it. Many say openly, that they they will not comply with the state laws. In many fields it is very difficult to implement these state laws, the reason being that life trails behind the rapidly introduced new legislation. In order to build a good legal system, the citizens have to agree with it, at least in the main parts. It has to be discussed, contemplated and disputed. Justice arises out of consensus and agreement which the citizens of a country can find and accept. Such a process takes time and to be fair, the Albanians should be allowed this time. Perhaps it leads to different results, because this society needs different rules.

The process of building a good legal system took a long time in other parts of Europe. It is going to take time in Albania as well to fulfil this difficult task.

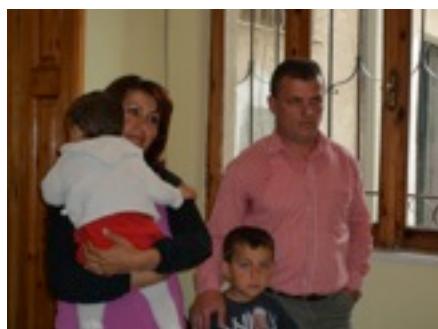


Easter in Tirana

„Zoti u ringjall!“ The Lord is risen - the call at the beginning of the Easter morning service began the celebrations of this special day. Easter in Albania is only visible in the Christian churches. We did enjoy the morning peal of church bells from the local catholic church!



Easter Sunday was a special day in the life of the Methodist church in Tirana - after completing the introductory course, 4 adults and 2 children were baptized and accepted into the congregation and into the membership of the UMC. Warm applause from the many people gathered in the church greeted each new member - and a few tears from the youngest. Her parents spoke the baptismal vow.



These were the first baptisms in Tirana, which is a young church in both senses of the word - the average age of those attending is under 30. A second group of young people will be baptized and admitted into membership on June 19th.

Pogradec

On a Wednesday after Easter we celebrated a service of Holy Communion in Pogradec. Although it was a mid-week service the church was filled with women, men, youth and children. Listening to the story of Emmaus and the disciples, and how Jesus encountered them as the risen Lord, the people were moved by the invitation to communion, not something to be taken for granted, but as a genuine invitation to accept God's forgiveness and fellowship as a sign of the presence of God in our lives.



The church in Pogradec is well known in the town. Mustafa Isufi, whose main occupation is teaching, is the local pastor. Since moving into the new building it is even more visible. It is on the main promenade by the lakeside.

Bishnica

There are Sunday worship services in Bishnica, the small community in the Mokra mountains, every two weeks. These are lead by lay preachers and members of the church in Pogradec who travel to Bishnica by bus. Women and children meet regularly during the week.

Women's Project

Since last summer, women from the church in Pogradec have been involved in a project, where they have learned to sew.



With the material provided, many attractive bags have been sewn and sold at various church basars. The aim of this project, from the beginning on, was to enable the women to work independently and contribute to the family income.



The Methodist church in Albania is growing, slowly but surely. It is a living fellowship of people who are prepared to join together in Christ and follow his example, inviting others on their way. We are very grateful for these developments and continue to enjoy working with the Albanians in the Methodist church in Albania!

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