

Stamatis Status – July to September, 2008

It is Friday night at the end of a long first week of the first full term after our summer break. I should be in bed but my heart is too full and my mind is racing into high gear. It is 1:00 a.m. and I am sitting on our balcony watching the bright moon gliding in and out from behind the clouds. I am almost chilled by the cool breeze from the Adriatic caressing the beach with a gentle lap of waves. God has graced me with an ideal environment for thinking, meditating and praying.

Our last newsletter was the end of June. We were “gearing up” to return to the States to report to some of our financial partners, to share our story with those that might want to partner with us and to possibly rest our minds and bodies if time allowed.



IBIA ended on a positive note on Friday, July 4th. Our international day's focus was the churches of Christ in the United States. Deborah took the lead in the kitchen assisted by Rita and Neta. They prepared fried chicken, corn, mashed potatoes, salad, yeast rolls and iced tea. It whetted my appetite to get back to the States and enjoy some food from my homeland.

Our departure from Albania was frustrating. Altin (our IBIA translator), Deborah, Molly (our Irish Setter) and myself arrived at the airport gate at 4:15 a.m. only to be told that our Lufthansa flight had been cancelled. For too many reasons to get into in this report, it ended up that Deborah and Molly caught a later flight that day to Munich. They would spend the night there and wait until we arrived from Tirana the next day. So, about 10:00 a.m. Altin and I headed back to Durres with our bags so we could repeat the entire early morning process the following day. We arrived the next day at 4:15 a.m. checked in and waited and waited and waited. Our flight departed Albania 35 minutes late. In Munich we only had 50 minutes from touchdown to our international flights take off. After a mixture of worrying, running, more waiting and eternal security checks, Altin and I were ushered onto the flight 25 minutes late with the door being shut immediately after our entrance. As we were landing in Chicago, the back tires of the plane touched down and then the pilot immediately gave full power to the engines and we were rocketed back up into the air to loop over one of the Great Lakes again as we were informed that due to a strong tail wind we would not have had enough runway to make a safe landing. Our second attempt was successful. Oh the pleasures of air travel.

We rented a vehicle and drove to Searcy, Arkansas. That 10 ½ hour trip enabled Altin to see the “bread basket” of America. It was a great re-entry for Deb and myself also.

We were able to visit with, share our mission and report what God is doing through us to preachers, elders, mission committees and congregations in Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma. We are grateful to each of you for your encouragement, graciousness and hospitality.

Deborah and I were able to see our parents. My mom was in the hospital when we arrived and is making a slow recovery. Deb was faced with some fears as to her mother's health when we arrived in the States, but with further medical explanations we are encouraged. Please pray for the health of our families and that we stay strong and steadfast being so far away.

Altin stayed with us in our home in Arkansas for four weeks and then returned to Albania with some travel adventures of his own. Because of some airline pilot strikes he was granted the opportunity to see Sofia, Bulgaria and Skopje, Macedonia.

Three days before Deb and I returned to Albania we had to make a very difficult and emotional decision to euthanize our beloved fifteen year old Irish Setter – Molly. For those of you that are animal lovers, you understand the grief we are continuing to go through.



Steve Byrne (missionary to Fier, Albania) was teaching a one week seminar on "Ethics" when we arrived back in Albania. About three days before we returned to Albania we were told of a newly married couple (university graduates) that wanted to attend IBIA.

Though we are already half way through the first year, I made the decision to allow them to attend IBIA as full time students. So, before the first day of classes for the new term began, we had to prepare the facility to accommodate our married couple. We moved Ilir (our 48 year old) into the room with the three young men (ages 19 – 24). The room that had been his is now Niri and Lindita's.



We were thrilled on Monday morning with 20 in attendance for our morning devotional. It was our 6 full time students, 4 staff members, 5 A.I.M team members, and 5 members of the Durres congregation. Our first course of the day – gospel of Mark - has 9 students. They are our 6 full timers, Dan and Darrin (the 2 young A.I.M men) and Deborah.

Adding in the two new students, our food and stipend expenses have risen. With their addition, our budget needs have increased about \$200 per month. Your prayers about this need would be greatly appreciated.

As I have recently been reminded in Mark 4, God's Message has the purpose, the power and the potential to accomplish His Mission. I am simply called to be faithful and available to proclaim the Message. May God in His grace grant us what we need to accomplish His will for His glory.

