

NEWSLETTER MAY 2010

Dear Friends ...

I signed off my last report, nearly one year ago with these words:

“I’m delighted to let you know that my 2009 visit to Korce is already planned, and the flights are booked! I will be there between the 24th and 31st August...Wish you could be there to hear the songs resonating around the Korce church neighbourhood... but then again, if you have a sound system with CD player – you can!”

And I do hope that those of you who have a copy of *Our Vision* have had many inspiring moments as you’ve listened and absorbed a little of the music that so powerfully expresses the ‘heart’ of this community.



Where to begin? For certain, I’ve rarely arrived for a visit such as this with a combination of such sadness and yet such expectation for all the week would bring.

One hour into the journey from Greece to Korce, we received a phone call in the car from Ian Loring who was back in England. In a deeply sorrowful conversation he needed to inform us that earlier that day, two young members of the church, Elisi (20) and Kristi (14) had drowned in an awful accident during a youth trip away.

Needless to say, in a sense, this changed the atmosphere around this visit to Korce completely. The first meeting with old friends the next morning was all about shock, tears, silence, and shared sorrow. Yet

somehow, right there amongst all this pain, I knew, as I have before, that we were here in Korce at exactly the right time. That this is what friendship is all about – to be beside your friends in grief, doubt and anger as well as joy, hope and expectation.

To ‘rewind’ a moment. It was with such delight that The Coverdale Trust agreed to sponsor a dear friend, Rachel Bunce, to join me on this trip. Her role was, primarily, to film and photograph as much of the ingredients of this visit as appropriate. And also, because she’s a very sensitive musician, to participate in the work wherever possible. The photos in this newsletter are just a ‘snapshot’ of the whole, and we are delighted to be offering you a copy of the completed DVD – details elsewhere in the letter. This material is, of course, being made available

to our partners in Korce, and I’m convinced that this record of the work in a wide variety of situations will have so many applications, both for increasing awareness and for training purposes.

Rachel’s own report will follow mine...it’s so good to have a different perspective on this work.

So, back to ‘day one’ and Rachel and I find ourselves joining a funeral procession for Kristi at the beginning of the day. It was

so very moving – and yet such a privilege to be there at such a time.

It became immediately clear that we would need to be very proactive about the week ahead in the light of all this. And I have to say that what followed over the coming six days was without question the fullest – and somehow the most fulfilling of all my trips to Korce.

A new contact was made with an orphanage,



and this became the first ‘event’ of the week. Rachel and I visited two of the village youth gatherings that Albana (Paul Alkazraji’s wife) has established over the years, and we had a wonderful time with them, connecting through the language of music. We had a beautiful time back with our dear friends in what I have come to call the ‘House on the Hill’ – formally known as the ‘Handicapped Orphanage’ – but such an inadequate description of who is actually there. Here we were movingly reunited with Romi...(Remember? See previous newsletters if you’ve kept them!)

We had a very special visit to the Kennedy Children’s centre. We spent time with the children from the ‘Safe House’



Rachel writes ...



Being asked to write only a page about my experience in Korçe is like being asked to choose only *one* sweet in a sweet shop – not very easy and I don't know where to begin!

So much happened in this week, both to the community in Korçe and surrounding villages and the many people I came into contact with that had an immediate and lasting effect inside me. As I think back I feel the emotions all over again, the emotions of other people's pain, tragic loss and ongoing struggles. And the joy – the joy I saw pass through Adrian's work, joy I saw in people's faces as they felt loved through music and found a new way of connecting and communicating. The week really turned out to be the most intensely beautiful, distressing and enriching week of my life so far...

On day one we arrived to the news that two young boys from the local church had drowned on a trip to Flora. We were still on our five hour car journey through Greece, not even in Albania when we heard the devastating news. We spent our first morning greeting people at the Kennedy Centre, people whose lives had just been shaken upside down, people crying, shaking, their eyes filled with desperate questioning and sadness. I felt useless. I felt intruding. I felt like I shouldn't be there. And I felt instant love for them. We went to one of the boy's funerals, Kristi, and it was overwhelming. Over 200 people turned up only 24 hours after the incident – quite something to see these people crowding the streets

around his family's home. People parked and stood in the street, holding each other, crying, standing in silence, howling in pain, tears streamed down my face and I felt their pain – I hadn't ever met Kristi – but he was clearly very dearly loved.

This set the tone for the week, we had arrived in a broken community, and we had a choice. We either sat back and let people grieve and perhaps worked with some people here and there. Or we threw



ourselves in and went through the pain with them, in hope that we could somehow be a part of the puzzle pieces that would bring God's hand back to the situation. The choice was a no-brainer!

One experience (of many) that stood out for me was travelling to a nearby village with Albana to participate with her bible study

class and film a session of Adrian's work with them. I can only speak the words 'falaminderit' and 'seya' - of which I cannot spell! But it is amazing how

easy it is to connect with people when there is the will and desire. These children we spent the morning with come from very troubled broken homes, they had the most beautiful smiles and their welcoming trusting affection was like none other. During the study class, two girls came by outside but were not allowed to enter, as their Grandfather had strictly forbidden them. Adrian saw that they were missing out and that they clearly wanted to join in, so he took his guitar and walked out to them as we carried on with Albana's session inside. I leaned back on my chair and took the photo that hopefully you can see in this newsletter. This captures a moment that I personally believe means an awful lot. As

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project. And I was able to have a lovely session with Cindy – the young girl with Cerebral Palsy who I've worked with before.

Very meaningfully, we also had a dinner to mark the finished CD project that we worked on last year. This was due to be a full celebration, but given the events that so shaped the emotional context of the week, we had a simpler, though just as lovely, time together in gratitude for the completed work.

It is also with great delight that I can let you know I will be returning to Korçe this year, August 23rd-30th and, very happily for me, I shall be returning with my daughter, Carla, and Rachel (who is also her best friend!) All three of us will sing and work together, Rachel will film and photograph, and we will, without doubt, have the most



enriching time amongst folk who've become so important to us over these last years.

With all of my/our hearts, thank-you, once again, for making all of this possible through your generosity. I am so very much looking forward to you seeing the DVD and please let us hear your responses. Sometimes pictures really do speak louder than words!!

Adrian





Adrian sang to them, they stood and enjoyed his every word without any understanding – they were made to feel special and loved – and it was a joy to behold .

In the same session, a very disturbing scene took place. Adrian and I were playing a song to the children, it was a lovely moment, the children were joining in with various instruments and it was a very calm and very joyful moment. This was until one of the children's grandfathers appeared in the room and started questioning Albana quite aggressively. He was waving his hands and speaking sharply, he wanted us to stop. The children all stopped their playing and their faces fell in a way I had not seen before. One child reached out to stop Adrian playing guitar in an attempt to avoid conflict, they were all clearly full of fear. I personally felt scared too and it was simply a horrible feeling. He was eventually calmed down, Adrian even managed to hug him (!) but we had to stop and leave. I found this very upsetting, and especially to see his granddaughter so upset afterwards. I had no words to offer, I wanted to take her away with us and keep her safe. But how could that help? All I could do was offer my hugs and a bracelet of mine, a sign of hope and love – but nothing secure and nothing constructive. Again, I felt so useless.

The week was an eye-opener to say the least. I have learnt so much about the world, about myself and about what I want to get out of life. I want to thank those of you from the Trust who made this week possible, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It meant so much to me, and will always stay with me – for the rest of my life. I hope the DVD I am making will be valuable to you the way it is to me. I am very blessed by you all and hope to return one day soon to see these beautiful people again.

Rachel

Paul's report ...

Damien Hirst recently said, 'Art is a great way to look at the darkness without having to look at it directly, because the real darkness is ****ing unbearable.' Perhaps most self-consciously of my generation, Hirst looks at the absurdity of life in the face of death and oblivion. How different it is to make art knowing Jesus Christ is the light of the world, and that "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

JUBILATE

Jubilate (which comes from Psalm 100 and means 'shout with joy!') was the title for my new show of abstract painting, held at the Air Gallery in Mayfair in December. It was a celebration of God's creation; a glorious riot of colour, taking its inspiration from natural forms – plants, water, fire. and light reflected through glass. There were some architectural patterns and emblems too, inspired by churches and cathedrals.

See the website page www.arthobbs.com/jubilate.php for images.

The private view was well attended and it was lovely to share this work with so many of my friends. Nathan, my 4 year old son, even managed to sell a painting of his own and was featured in the local paper and on ITV's 'The West Country Tonight'! As for myself, I was pleased to get a mention in the *Church Times*! Sales were reasonably good, especially of the giclee prints.



Overall, it was great to show in London again and to get such a positive response. Predominant comments were how beautiful and uplifting the work was. Stewart Henderson, poet and broadcaster wrote, "Many thanks for the Jubilate! evening – it was very special; and how the walls shone with creativity and the glory of God's endless narrative."

EVANGELISTIC EXHIBITIONS

May:

Pembroke College Chapel, Cambridge
It was a special pleasure to be invited back to my old college to take my Holy Ground installation. It was well received by students and staff alike, and I spoke about the exhibit at the Ascension Day service.

June:

St Mary's Church, Devizes
This was a large, evangelistic show of my work. The Bishop of Ramsbury wrote, "It is hard to find words to express all that the exhibition of your paintings and Holy Ground installation meant to all of us who came and lingered. It was a very powerful experience on many levels which proclaimed the gospel & only used words when absolutely necessary, just like the injunction of St Francis...Thank you for a profound encounter with God."

June:

Tunbridge Wells

A weekend arts event at a local arts centre included a mini exhibition of my Trinity work. I also led two workshops which were part of a series on the Trinity done with dance, drama, gospel singing, film workshop et al, and culminated in a worship service on the Sunday night.

July:

Guildford Cathedral

The Holy Ground installation occupied the west end of the nave for a week. It was greatly appreciated by all who saw it, especially those who work at the cathedral. Many onlookers commented on how profoundly moving it was. Both the talks I gave ended with the group standing around the exhibit, praying for the

SCHOOLS

Magdalen College School

I led workshops with Sixth Formers and Year 7 on the theme of utopia, starting with a look at my own work. It was an opportunity to do some quiet witnessing.

Cranleigh School

Not content with being invited back to my old college, I managed to get an invite to my old school too! I addressed two principal teenage concerns regarding belief in God -

sex and suffering - as well as serving the needy, God's love for us and his forgiveness. A lot in 30 minutes!

The Blessed George Napier School in Banbury

The Head of Art invited me to design a three part hanging for use in school worship. The children loved the process and outcome, and worked hard to finish it well.



Pupils at The Blessed George Napier School

OTHER WORKSHOPS

Cotswold Farm Workshop

Under the title 'Engaging Faith through Art', I led two practical workshops on art as worship and art as prayer, working in 2D and 3D.

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

I have a number of evangelistic church exhibitions this year. And I plan to make more conceptual work. Unlike the abstract paintings, this will not be a commercial venture, and I will be exploring using secular spaces i.e. arts centres and galleries to show it as a witness to the general public, and as a statement of faith in an increasingly cynical art world.



Participants at work at the Cotswold Farm Workshop

A big thank you for supporting me in all this. If you would like to become a prayer supporter for my work, please contact me or the Trust.

Paul

THE GIFT OF MUSIC



The enclosed DVD was filmed by Rachel Bunce (see her article in the Newsletter) on Adrian's visit to Albania in 2009. The Coverdale Trust trustees were very impressed by the way in which Rachel has captured some of Adrian's deeply moving music therapy sessions and thought that all who support the Trust should receive a free copy so that they can have a taste of the value of the Albania visits. If, however, you would like to respond by sending a gift, then can we suggest a donation of £10, and a promise from the Trust that every penny will go to the Albania projects as seen on the DVD. Thank you.

Support for Adrian in Albania: 23rd-30th August 2010

I hope you have read with interest and indeed emotion about Adrian's visit to Albania last year and I am sure his visit in August with his daughter Carla and Rachel will be just as meaningful and important. These visits mean so much to everyone but not least those in the church, the orphanage at the Kennedy Children's Project.

It is a privilege for the Coverdale Trust to support Adrian financially but we do need support so if you can help, that would be marvellous. Please make cheques payable to 'The Coverdale Trust' and send to the address at the bottom of the page.

Thank you.

Geoff Bishop, Chairman

Gift Aid and Standing Orders

If you pay tax and would like to **Gift Aid** your donation, please let Geoff Bishop know. The Trust can claim an extra 25p for every £1 given and the Government will pay an extra 3p until 2011.

Standing Orders are also a very helpful way of giving regularly so please ask for a form if you are interested.

Donations from overseas can be made direct to the Trust account. Please request details via the contact page.

The Korce, Albania music CD

Copies of the excellent 'Our vision' CD of worship songs referred to in Adrian's article can be obtained by writing to the Trust at the address at the bottom of this page.



The cost is £10 including postage and packing and all profits will go to the Korce church. Please make cheques payable to 'The Coverdale Trust'.

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www.thecoverdaletrust.org