

Burns

BULLETIN

Serving the Gospel
in Macedonia

January 2010

Happy New Year! New Year's Day is a big holiday here in Macedonia, and New Year's Eve had as much fireworks activity as any Fourth of July celebration. Under Communism, Christmas—along with anything religious—was discouraged, so New Year's Day became a non-religious Communism-friendly alternative. The Muslim populations in Yugoslavia also celebrated New Year's with lights, decorations, and even presents from Dedo Mraz (literally "Grandfather Frost," NOT Saint Nick). While looking for Christmas cards, we could not find any that said "Среќен Божиќ" ("Merry Christmas"), only cards that said "Среќна Нова Година" ("Happy New Year"). We did find gift tags that said, "Feliz Navidad!" (I am not joking; they were imported from Spain.)

However, with the fall of Communism almost 20 years ago, Christmas is being celebrated in Macedonia again. We haven't experienced Macedonian Christmas yet; because the Macedonian Orthodox Church observes the old Julian calendar, Christmas is January 7. So you might hear about some Macedonian Christmas customs in our next newsletter!



Lydia, Johnny, Rob in the city square

Early in December, I (Rob) had the opportunity to visit a church in a village outside of Skopje with a Macedonian pastor currently overseeing it. The service was in a small, functional room with a woodstove and motley chairs. The pastor brought his own guitar and overhead projector. There is a great need for the Gospel in the smaller cities and villages like this one. There is also a need for work. As the pastor said, "The economy is not just poor here. The economy is dead here." Macedonia currently has about 40% unemployment and is one of the least developed countries in Europe. We need to pray for the Gospel for peoples' hearts and work for peoples' hands.

We continue learning the language. We are really looking forward to being able to speak with people at length about the things that matter to them. Until then, we are thankful for the people we've met who know a good amount of English. For example, Lisa and I met a man named Zoran and had a long conversation with him, including spiritual things. It turns out Zoran knows one of the national church pastors in a southern city and really likes him. Zoran acknowledged that all of us working with the Evangelical Church of Macedonia (our partners here in Macedonia) are "working for Jesus." Pray that Zoran may be awakened to his spiritual need for Him. A Macedonian believer, a businessman, told me, "We're glad you're here. This is a spiritually deprived country." Thank you for your support so that we could be here to serve the God who put on human flesh!

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46, NIV)

praises

God gave us a great celebration of Christmas, both with our family and our teammates here in the Balkans. We had wonderful fellowship and fun on that day with our family away from family!

Our CMA teammates in Gjilan, Kosovo have wonderful news: God provided graciously for the national church there to purchase a building for use as a church. In a mostly Muslim country such as Kosovo, this is big! Praise God!

please pray

Pray for

Christmas outreaches that will occur around Christmas on January 7.

Please continue to pray that the kids will adjust well to school here.

Please pray that God would give each member of our family at least one good friendship here.

Please pray that God would more and more burden our hearts for this country, and these people. May we see a people movement here in Macedonia!

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Thank you!!