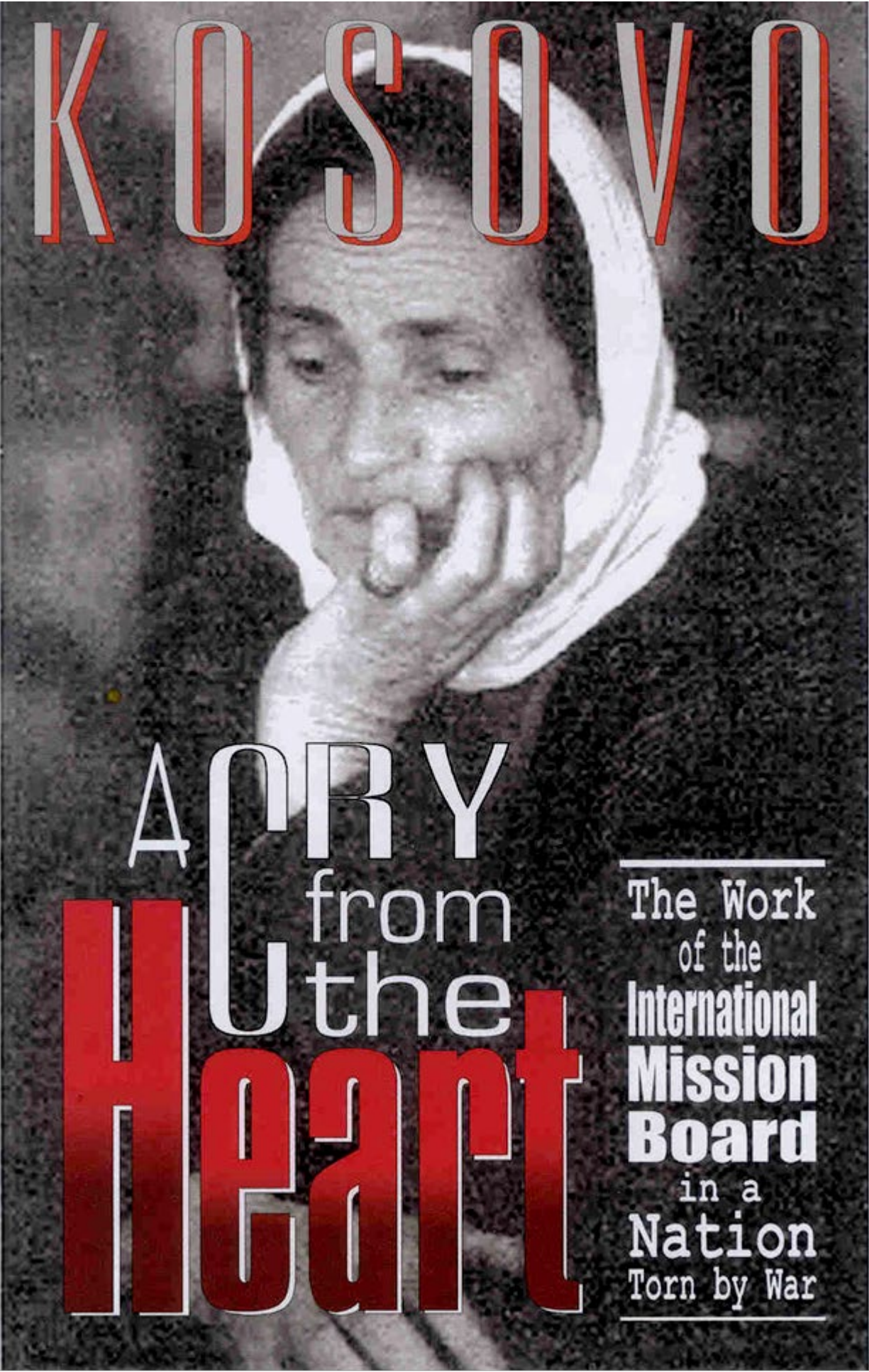




KOSOVO

APRY from the **Heart**

The Work
of the
International
**Mission
Board**
in a
Nation
Torn by War



KOSOVO

A Nation Torn by War

War erupted last year in Kosovo, plunging the already troubled region into "one of the most publicized crises of the decade." Hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees abandoned their homes and fled into neighboring countries, seeking haven from so called "ethnic cleansing" at the hands of their Serb oppressors. As NATO bombs were raining on cities and military positions in Serbia and Kosovo, the International Mission Board (IMB) was responding to this very difficult situation by feeding, clothing and ministering to thousands of fleeing refugees in Albania. IMB missionaries developed relationships, and sometimes friendships, with many refugees, particularly those refugees, who had fled Kosovo from Peje (Peje is the second largest city in Kosovo, but it is known internationally as Pec).

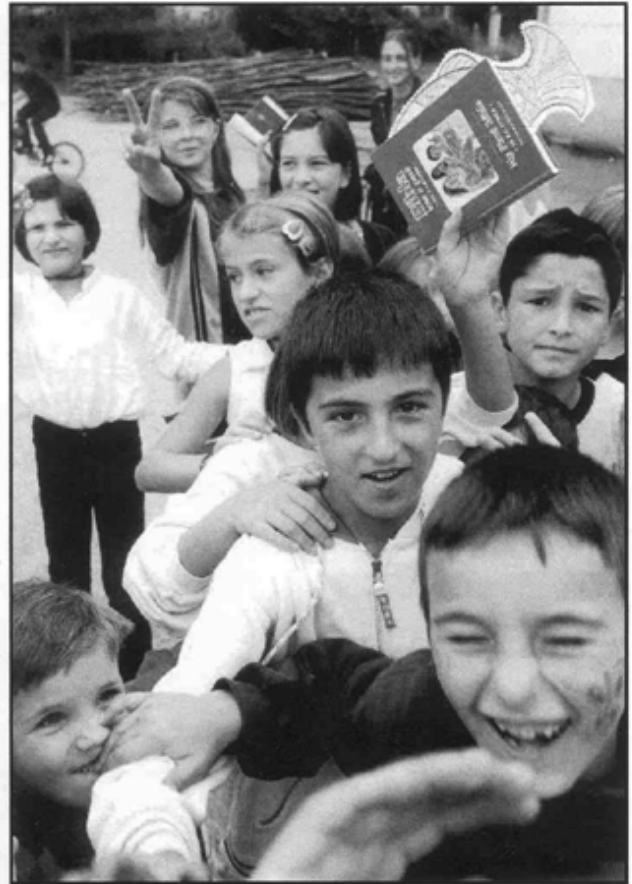
After the brief war ended in June 1999, the IMB wrapped up its operation in Tirana and quickly followed some of these refugees back to their burned out cities and homes in Kosovo, so that missionaries might help them pick up the pieces of their shattered lives, share in their overwhelming grief and begin to minister to their needs, while at

the same time showing them the Love of God and sharing with them the hope, that can be found only in Jesus Christ. The IMB mobilized human, material and financial resources



in the face of such devastating needs of the Kosovar People, and as a result, established two massive humanitarian relief operations in Peje and Prishtina, so that missionaries, Southern Baptist volunteers, and other Christian volunteers from the United States could assist them in meeting the needs of returning refugees.

Through donations from Baptists and other Christians in America, such as warm blankets, food boxes, and dry roofs, Kosovars have been shown love. Through the loving smile of a volunteer, they have seen God in action. Through contact with genuine, committed Christians, their hearts have been won. All of us know that only God can win their souls, but by putting Kosovars in contact



"We have won the hearts of the people, but only God can win their souls."

Connie Davis

with the Gospel through actions, as well as words, IMB missionaries are fulfilling their role in carrying out the Great Commission.

The evangelistic efforts of missionaries consisted of the distribution of the Jesus Film, tracts, Scripture portions, New Testaments, Children's Bibles and Bibles. The work functioned essentially without the supervision of a career missionary; nevertheless, in roads were made into the lives of the people through home visits by Journeyman, ISC missionaries and volunteers. In September, church planting possibilities were assessed and career church planters were requested to serve in Kosovo, in order to facilitate a church planting movement among an open Muslim people group.

For the most part, Connie Davis has worked alone in Prishtina for more than ten months and has relied upon volunteers from the United States, mainly North Carolina, to pack and distribute food boxes and clothing bags in the villages to needy families, living

(Continued on page 2)



"After the war, my old life was destroyed. Nothing was left. I had a new life and everything was new. It was like being born again."

**Kosovar
Albanian**

(Continued from page 1)

near Prishtina. During this time Connie and volunteers were able to meet people, living in these villages and share Christ with them. Many times the Hope of Jesus Christ was shared in villages, where there has never been an evangelical witness before.

Connie was joined in May by Wilburn and Nancy Overstreet, who are serving a two year ISC term in Kosovo. Donna Robinson also arrived in May with the Overstreets and will also serve a two year ISC term. The Overstreets are new to the mission field but have served on short term mission trips before. Donna, on the other hand, is an experienced missionary and has served in Bosnia for two years, where she worked with Kosovar refugees during the war in Tirana and after the war, in Sarajevo.

Since the IMB entered Kosovo, the work in Peje has flowed among short term volunteers, ISC Missionaries, Journeyman, and a few Career Missionaries along the way. The mixture of personnel has established a good, consistent work, which has had strong elements of evangelism tied to church planting. The work in Peje began with volunteer coordinator Debbie Rouse, who was soon joined by Journeyman Shawn Mooneyham and Carol Maecumber. In January, the Team changed when Shawn and Carol finished their term and returned home to the United States. Debbie was joined by Jarred McAfee, an ISCer, who works with stu-

dents, and Rob Cattalani, a volunteer church planter. The Team was soon joined in March by Larry and Sonia Petersek, an ISC couple, who are developing human need projects. And finally, the Team expanded yet again in April, when career missionaries, Steven and Deborah Reece and their family, joined the work.

Today, the crisis in Kosovo is nearly over and life is slowly returning to normal. With the coming of Steven Reece, who serves as Strategy Coordinator, and other personnel, the IMB's work is transitioning. Missionaries are developing strategies to facilitate a Church Planting Movement (CPM) among the Kosovo Albanian People Group. The vision of the Kosovo People Group Church Planting Team is to offer **"hope for every heart and a church planting movement for every people of Kosovo."**

Student work and the use of short-term student missionaries are critical components of the missionaries' strategy to facilitate a CPM in Kosovo. The missionaries in Kosovo are sharing Jesus and meeting needs everyday. There are multiple Bible studies going on in Kosovo. There is an open door for the Gospel today, but for how long, no one knows. The missionaries are working hard and are asking God to "send out laborers" into His Harvest Field. They need people to join them on the field in Kosovo. They need you to come and join them in telling the People of Kosovo about the Hope that can only be found in Jesus! Maybe God is calling you to join the missionaries in Kosovo.

Peje, Kosova (Pec, Kosovo)

Student Work in Peje

Peje is a young peoples' haven. The streets are nightly filled with thousands of youth and young adults, walking along the city's sidewalks and sitting, drinking coffee or tea in Peje's cafes.

Future possible ministry events for students:

- ☐ Students could work in the local high school to teach English and establish friendships with high school students for the purpose of sharing Christ.
- ☐ Students could network with, engage other students attending the small local economic university, and develop relationships for sharing Christ.
- ☐ Students could be the starting point and become the nucleus of a Christian coffee house in Peje to engage young people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ☐ The formation of a periodic event aimed at targeting young people with a non-offensive scriptural message. This will be similar to a "Young Life" group in the States, but will culturally be aimed at the local Kosovar Albanian population.

Each of these ideas will have an intentional purpose of finding young people that are interested in spiritual matters, and the forming of Bible studies among those that express an interest.

There are a large number of university aged students in Peje, who are waiting to enter the University of Prishtina, which is the only university in Kosovo.

As a result, many of these students have a great deal of free time. They throng around American students their own age, wanting to "talk with an American." They are bright and open to new ideas.

There are many different opportunities for Southern Baptist students and student leaders to join the IMB's work in Peje:

1. **Shot-term mission trips** during the school year, especially Spring Break, for Conversational English classes, share testimonies, coffee houses and stir interest for long-term student work.
2. **Semester Missionaries** can come to Peje and work with other IMB personnel to start Bible studies and also work in a student center/coffee house environment.
3. **Student Summer Missionaries** can come to Peje for the summer and work with children and teens, conducting sports clinics, summer camps, Backyard Bible Clubs or VBS.
4. **ISC/Journeymen** positions are open for two-year terms to do student work and to work in evangelistic Bible studies and student center/coffeehouse ministry.
5. **Career Missionaries** are needed to reach the students of Peje (and Prishtina) for Christ.

Missionaries in Peje

Steven D. Reece is the Strategy Coordinator for Kosovo. He and his wife, **Deborah**, and their four children have been in Kosovo since April 2000; however, Steven has had an association with Kosovars since May 1999, when he worked with refugees in Tirana. He and his wife are first term missionaries appointed in December 1996. They have three sons and a daughter: Zach, 15, Aaron, 12, John, 2, and Rebekah, 8. The Reeces initially began their first term, serving in Poland for three years, where Steven was a church planter.

Jarred McAfee is a 24 year old missionary who is serving an approximate a one year term in Peje, Kosova. He has planned to do overseas ministry since his final year in college. During the war in Kosova, he felt God's leading to Kosova. This was partly due to his teaching English part-time to Kosovar refugees in his native city of Dallas, Texas. He came to Kosova to do refugee relief work; however, during his time in Peje, he has sensed the need for a ministry to students.

Larry and Sonia Petersek are grandparents, serving in the Master's Category of ISC Missionaries. They are experienced "volunteer missionaries," having served on numerous mission trips around the world. They are Volunteer Coordinators, serving a two-year term in Kosovo and arrived on the field in early March. They are working to coordinate volunteer projects, develop human needs projects, and coordinate the Kosovo Team's prayer ministry and prayer support.

Debbie Rouse serves as Volunteer Coordinator for Texas Baptist Men and has been "on loan" to the IMB Team in Kosovo, since last June. She worked with Kosovar Refugees last May in Tirana and moved into Kosovo in the early days to coordinate volunteer projects. She has been working in Kosovo almost a year and has seen many changes. Currently she is leading Ministry to Children and teaming with a local NGO, "Women 2000," working with widows in the Peje area.

Rob Cattalani is a "Great Commission Partner" with the IMB Team in Kosovo, who heads the Food Distribution Program and serves as a Church Planter. He is from Dallas, Texas, joined the IMB Team last January, and will probably remain in Kosovo until the middle or end of December. Rob has been instrumental in establishing work in the neighboring villages around Peje, as well as, developing a Muslim-Kosovar worldview. He is also developing a Bible study method, using the Psalms, to minister to grieving Kosovars, help them work through their grief and focus them on Jesus.

Student Work in Prishtina

There are approximately 20,000 university students, attending the only university in the country in Prishtina. Many of these students speak English and are interested in all things American. Many will throng around American students their own age, wanting to "talk with an American." They are bright and open to new ideas.

Future possible ministry events for students:

- ☐ Students could work in the local high school to teach English and establish friendships with high school students for the purpose of sharing Christ.
- ☐ Students could network with, engage other students attending university, and develop relationships for sharing Christ.
- ☐ Students could be the starting point and become the nucleus of a Christian coffee house in Prishtina to engage young people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ☐ The formation of a periodic event aimed at targeting young people with a non-offensive scriptural message. This will be similar to a "Young Life" group in the States, but will culturally be aimed at the local Kosovar Albanian population.

Each of these ideas will have an intentional purpose of finding young people that are interested in spiritual matters, and the forming of Bible studies among those that express an interest.

There are many different opportunities for Southern Baptist students and student leaders to join the IMB's work in Prishtina:

1. **Shot-term mission trips** during the school year, especially Spring Break, for Conversational English classes, share testimonies, coffee houses and stir interest for long-term student work.
2. **Semester Missionaries** can come to Prishtina and work with other IMB personnel to start Bible studies and work in a student center/coffee house environment.
3. **Student Summer Missionaries** can come to Prishtina for the summer and work with children and teens, conducting sports clinics, summer camps, Backyard Bible Clubs or VBS.
4. **ISC/Journeymen** positions are open for two-year terms to do student work and to work in evangelistic Bible studies and student center/coffeehouse ministry.
5. **Career Missionaries** are needed to reach the students of Prishtina (and Peje) for Christ.

Missionaries in Prishtina

There are no career missionaries serving in Prishtina at this time.

Connie Davis is an ISC missionary, who will be ending her term of service at the end of June 2000. She has worked with Kosovar refugees in Tirana last May and June, and in Kosovo, since July. For the most part she has worked alone in Prishtina and managed a massive food distribution program. She has developed a series of contacts among a cluster of villages near Prishtina, where the IMB is planning to establish some of its first church planting work. There are three new ISC missionaries, who arrived in May, serving with Connie in Prishtina.

Wilburn and Nancy Overstreet are serving a two year term as Masters in the ISC Missionary Program. They joined the Prishtina Team in May and will work with the Team, serving as the IMB's liaison with the United Nations and KFOR, as well as, network with other Great Commission Christians working in Kosovo. They have lived in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, working in gasoline production and have served on short term mission trips in Africa.

Donna Robinson is an experienced missionary, having served a two-year ISC term in Bosnia, where she worked with Serbs and later with Kosovar Refugees. She first worked with Kosovars in Tiarana, Albania and then later in Bosnia. Donna arrived in early May with the Overstreets and will work with the Prishtina Team in developing Bible Studies and structuring follow-up with refugees on distribution lists.

Current Personnel Requests for Kosovo

There are several active personnel requests on the books of the Personnel Selection Department of the IMB. They include:

- ☐ Career Church Planter

- ☐ Career Volunteer Coordinator

Current Journeyman Requests for Kosovo

- ☐ Journeyman - Community Outreach
- ☐ Journeyman - Administrative

Future Personnel Requests for Kosovo

Student Volunteers, Student Workers and Student Semester or Summer Missionaries will be requested in the near future.

- ☐ Student Semester Missionaries
- ☐ Student Summer Missionaries
- ☐ Journeyman - Student Work
- ☐ Career Missionary - Student Work

Why Students Are Important for the IMB's Work in Kosovo

The Kosovo People Group Team recognizes that Students are crucial component of the IMB's long-term work in Kosovo. Students are adventuresome and are willing to live life on the edge "for the sake of the call."

Life is on the edge in Kosovo. The Kosovo People Group Team wants to invite Students to come and serve in Kosovo on Volunteer Mission Trips during Spring Break, or for a Summer or a Semester, so that these Students might get a "taste" of Kosovo and see what God is doing among the People of Kosovo for His Glory.

God could call some of these young people back to Kosovo to serve as Journeymen or even Career Missionaries.

K O S O V O
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A Dossier For
Steven D. Reece
sdreece@webmedia.pl
(871)-76213-4425
Satellite Phone

"Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you."

II Thessalonians 3:1

Deborah and I are first term career missionaries, and until April 2000, we had served as church planters in Poland. It is never easy to determine God's will. God is faithful and always gives us His wisdom, so that we may be able to discern and understand what His will is for our lives. Since September 1999, God has been dealing with us in a very clear and specific way. This was a difficult decision, but over several months, we came to realize that God was calling us to His work in Kosovo. We knew that God had called us to be missionaries, but over time, we learned that He has not called us to a specific place like Poland or Kosovo, but He has called us to obedience. We must be obedient to Him, no matter what the circumstances seem to say.

From a human perspective, the circumstances in our situation seemed to say, "stay" where we were. Logically, we spent three years in Poland learning the language, culture, and investing our lives in the Polish People and building relationships, so it would have made good, perfect sense for us to stay in Poland. We loved the people of Poland. We had to tell our friends, our co-laborers, and fellow church members that God had called us, from them, to Kosovo. When we told them, they were all saddened, just like we were. Some of them told us that they had known for some time that God was calling us away from them. This made it all the more difficult for us.

However, Deborah and I heard God clearly speak to us. He said, "Obey Me, in spite of what the circumstances seem to say." We knew that God speaks to us through circumstances and through the godly counsel of other people, but we must weigh everything together. For this, we needed His wisdom. We asked God to give us His wisdom, so that we could discern His will. We wanted to hear His voice in the midst of what our circumstances and others were telling us to do. Throughout our lives, we have learned that we can only obey God's voice, God's calling, through our daily walk with Him. We have learned to walk with Him by faith and not by sight.

We realized that walking by faith, involves risk. We did not have any guarantees about the outcome that our decision would bring. We did not know what would happen in Kosovo. All we knew was that we had to trust and obey Jesus. In a dangerous situation like being in a boat on the stormy sea, it does not make sense to get out of the boat, does it? Peter faced this decision, when he saw Jesus walking on the water. It did not make sense then to get out of the boat; nevertheless, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water with Jesus.

Why? Jesus said, "Come." This was an invitation for Peter to join Him in His work, in His mission. Yes, it was risky and dangerous, but Peter did it. Does Jesus still walk on water, today? Is He still at work? Does He still invite us to join Him in His work? If we played it safe, we would miss something special. Eleven men stayed in the boat, but only Peter walked on the water with Jesus. We decided to step off the boat like Peter, and walk by faith. It certainly appeared to some that we were taking a foolish and an unnecessary risk, but we had to trust and obey Jesus, even if no one else understood. Much happened

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Satellite Phone

in the midst of this decision, but more than anything, we know that, God answered our prayer. He spoke to us and we clearly heard His voice. He gave us complete peace about moving our family to Kosovo and this is what we did.

We now have been in Kosovo for two months, where I serve as Strategy Coordinator for the country. This means that my job is not just going to be leading people to faith in Christ and starting churches, but I will be seeking ways, and developing strategies, that will facilitate a Church Planting Movement (CPM) and bring the Kosovo-Albanian People Group to the knowledge of Him as their Lord and Savior and begin hundreds of new churches.

As the Apostle Paul asked the Church at Thessalonica to pray for him, we asking you to pray for us and for the people of Kosovo, so that "the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored" among them, "just as it was with you." We are asking God to move and work in a mighty way among these war-weary people, so that He will be glorified and hundreds of new churches will rapidly spring up across the countryside.

Contact Information:

Steven D. Reece Strategy Coordinator Kosovo People Group Team International Board, Southern Baptist Convention Office Phone: (871)-76213-4425 Satellite Phone Office Fax: NONE	Address: Steven D. Reece c/o Kyle Kirkpatrick Milan Markovic 59 1000 Skopje Republic of Macedonia E-Mail: sdreece@webmedia.pl
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