



WorldVision

WINTER 2008

Lighting the Way

CHILDREN REKINDLE THE FLAME
OF FAITH IN ALBANIA

RICH STEARNS'
NEW BOOK *page 10*

PRAYERS FOR ENDING
POVERTY *page 30*



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—Gwen Bradley, who established her first World Vision Gift Annuity in 1986

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WorldVision

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» ON THE COVER

In Albania, the Youth Bible Curriculum program is bringing Christian children like Andrea Laska, 8, back to church. Photograph by Jon Warren.

World Vision, a free quarterly publication, affords people responding to God's call to care for the poor by providing information, inspiration, and opportunities for action, linking them with children and families in nearly 100 countries where World Vision ministers. In an effort to be careful stewards of our resources, this publication costs less than 46 cents a copy to produce.

We welcome your comments and/or address changes. Send them to: The Editor, *World Vision* magazine, P.O. Box 9716, Federal Way, WA 98009-9716 or e-mail us: wvmagazine@worldvision.org

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ABOVE: In Albania, elder generations are glad to see churches rebuilt—and youth learning about God. **INSET:** The Millennium Development Goals seek to end poverty for children like this toddler in Peru.



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JON WARREN/WORLD VISION (2)

Inconvenient Truths »

"Facts are stubborn things." —John Adams

Sometimes the truth is inconvenient. That's why Al Gore coined the phrase to title his book and movie about the possible perils of climate change. Truth is inconvenient when it challenges our deeply held beliefs and our ingrained behaviors. Truth is inconvenient when it forces us out of our comfort zones. Sometimes it's much easier not to know the truth.

It is convenient to believe that most children are happy, well-fed and loved in our world. It is inconvenient to learn that nearly 27,000 children under age 5 die tragically every day of easily preventable causes.

It is convenient to believe that AIDS is a disease that only affects the promiscuous. It is inconvenient to learn that 15 million children have been orphaned by AIDS and that 2.7 million children are HIV-positive because their mothers passed it to them through childbirth or breastfeeding.

It is convenient to believe that America is the most generous nation in fighting global poverty. It is inconvenient to learn that we rank almost last among the wealthiest nations in providing foreign assistance to the poor* and that less than 2 percent of our church budgets goes toward foreign missions.

Since coming to World Vision 10 years ago, these inconvenient truths have challenged me personally on almost a daily basis. I now think twice about ordering a Coke with dinner when I remember that just one dollar can bring clean water to a child for one year. When my daughter wants a new dress for the school dance, I think of 7-year-old Maggie in Zambia, who had only one dress and no shoes at all. When my cable bill comes, I realize that I could sponsor two more children with the money my family spends on TV.

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." —James 1:22

In Scripture I find some inconvenient verses:

- » *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46)*
- » *"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" (1 John 3:17)*
- » *"I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." (Matthew 25:45)*
- » *"Religion that God our father considers to be pure and faultless is this: to look after widows and orphans in their distress..." (James 1:27)*



Maggie, now 12, whom Rich met in Zambia.

I don't believe that we should live with constant guilt. Jesus himself attended weddings, enjoyed feasts, and even dined with the wealthy—he celebrated the good things God provided. Yet we never doubt his compassion for "the least of these." Jesus never turned away from inconvenient truths—he did something to change them. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and comforted the afflicted. Jesus cared. He only asks that we do the same.

In this issue, you will read about children living in difficult circumstances; children who have never sipped a Coke, watched TV, or bought a new dress. You'll read about their hopes and dreams, their hurts and disappointments. You'll learn what they pray for when they talk to God. When you're done, you'll realize that when you made your decision to sponsor a child you changed the world in a small but significant way. And that's the truth. ■



**The U.S. ranks 21st out of the 22 wealthiest nations in foreign aid as a percent of our GDP.*

FRONT LINES

Compiled by James Addis

World Vision



WENDY CHIN/WORLD VISION

“I have a
bigger **desire**
to learn more
about our **God.**”

— Jezuela Gega, 9

Youth Bible Curriculum participant

Help spread the gospel in Eastern Europe and Lebanon. Complete the form on the reverse side and return it in the envelope between pages 28 and 29.

Food Aid

A child Karen Caabas, from the Philippines, shows off the bitter melon her family has grown since getting training from World Vision. Such programs are becoming ever more critical as the world faces a global food crisis prompted by rising oil prices, poor harvests and surging demand. Soaring food prices have caused riots in more than a dozen countries, including Indonesia, Peru, Senegal, and the United States.

World Vision is lobbying the U.S. government to substantially increase funding for global food aid programs. ■

FOR MORE about World Vision's response to the global food crisis, visit www.worldvision.org.



Inconvenient Truths

"Facts are stubborn things."

Sometimes the truth is inconvenient. I coined the phrase to title his book "possible perils of climate change," when it challenges our deeply held beliefs and behaviors. Truth is inconvenient when it forces us to change our comfort zones. Sometimes it's much easier to believe what we want to believe.

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- » "Religion that God our Father considers pure and undefiled is this: to look after widows and orphans in their distress."

Visit us at www.worldvision.org

PLEASE REMOVE BEFORE MAILING

- My gift to support Youth Bible Curriculum in Eastern Europe and Lebanon:**
 - \$25 FOR 5 TEACHER MANUALS
 - \$60 FOR 10 STUDENT BOOKS
 - \$78 FOR A CLASSROOM CURRICULUM SET
 - OTHER: \$ _____
- I want to sponsor a child for \$30/month.**

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LIVING IN: ASIA AFRICA LATIN AMERICA

MIDDLE EAST/EASTERN EUROPE

WHERE MOST NEEDED
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FRONT LINES

Compiled by James Addis



Food Aid

Sponsored child Karen Caabas, from the Philippines, shows off the squash and bitter melon her family has grown since getting training from World Vision. Such programs are becoming ever more critical as the world faces a global food crisis prompted by rising oil prices, poor harvests, and surging demand. Soaring food prices have caused riots in more than a dozen countries, including Indonesia, Peru, Senegal, and Haiti.

In addition to running extensive agricultural programs across the globe, World Vision is lobbying the U.S. government to substantially bolster funding for global food aid programs. ■

» **TO LEARN MORE** about World Vision's response to the global food crisis, visit www.worldvision.org.





GEORGIA



WORLD VISION STAFF
ASHLEY JONATHAN CLEMENTS/WORLD VISION (3)

PHILIPPINES

WORLD WATCH

GEORGIA | WAR RELIEF »

More than 160,000 people fled fighting between Russian and Georgian forces in South Ossetia in August. World Vision, working in Georgia since 1994, immediately rushed food, hygiene items, and bedding for 45,000 of the displaced. Later the organization provided Child-Friendly Spaces to help children regain a sense of normalcy after the conflict.



GEORGIA



BANGLADESH

AZERBAIJAN | TOPS FOR CHILD RIGHTS » World Vision was declared "Best Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) of the Year" for promoting child rights by an alliance of NGOs working in Azerbaijan. The award recognizes World Vision's success in transitioning children out of grim institutions and ensuring that those with disabilities get an education.



AZERBAIJAN

PHILIPPINES | TYPHOON TROUBLES » Typhoon Fengshen swept across 20 provinces in June, causing landslides and large scale flooding. World Vision delivered emergency supplies to 8,000 families in Iloilo Province, including food, mosquito nets, raincoats, cooking utensils, and water containers.

VIETNAM | MONSOON PLANNING » Villagers in Quang Tri Province participated in a flood simulation exercise to prepare for the monsoon season. Communities learned to reinforce their homes, drew up evacuation plans, and practiced responding to early warnings. World Vision and the European Commission's Disaster Preparedness Program funded the project.

NORTH KOREA | FOOD AID » Aid organizations, including World Vision, signed an agreement to distribute food donated by the U.S. government to North Korea. The partnership will distribute 100,000 metric tons of food to more than 500,000 hungry people over a 12-month period. The agreement follows a United Nations report that says 77 percent of young children are chronically malnourished in the country.



AMHO ASCENSION/WORLD VISION

BANGLADESH | UNFINISHED BUSINESS » One year after Cyclone Sidr, World Vision continues relief efforts to assist communities still struggling in the wake of the disaster. Relief includes cash-for-work projects that allow those who have lost their livelihood to earn income by repairing infrastructure such as roads and drains. The cyclone, the world's deadliest natural disaster in 2007, killed more than 4,000 people and adversely impacted 2 million families.

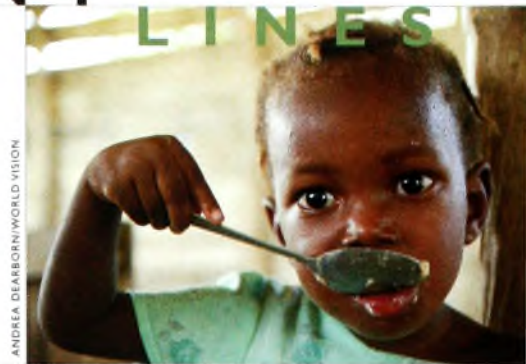
SUDAN | DEATHS IN DARFUR » Truck drivers delivering emergency food into war-torn Darfur increasingly risk their lives. In April, the World Food Program announced that five contracted workers were killed in truck hijackings within a three-week period. Despite the dangers, World Vision continues to distribute food aid to 300,000 people living in 13 camps in the region. An ongoing militia terror campaign has displaced 2.4 million people in Darfur.

BOLIVIA | MEDS FOR CAMPS » High humidity and polluted water caused an outbreak of respiratory infections, fever, and diarrhea among children living in temporary camps in Trinidad and Beni. World Vision distributed donated medicines worth \$1 million to makeshift clinics serving the camps, which were established after families were forced to flee flooding early this year.

RWANDA | ORPHANS ENCOURAGED » The success of an experimental mentoring program to assist child-headed households in southwestern Rwanda has encouraged World Vision to expand the initiative into other parts of the country. Researchers from Tulane University found the overall well-being of households vastly improved after regular visits by mentors. The lingering effects of the 1994 genocide and the prevalence of AIDS has left Rwanda with one of the highest percentages of orphans in the world. ■

BOLIVIA

WORLD VISION STAFF



ANDREA DEARBORN/WORLD VISION

HUNGERHELPS

6 ways to fix the global food crisis.

What you can do...



Sponsor a Child » Child sponsorship programs provide food and nutrition support for families and often include an agriculture component to help farmers boost yields.



Eat Less Meat » Meat consumption is soaring globally, increasing demand for corn to feed livestock, thereby forcing up the price of corn. It takes 7 pounds of corn to produce 1 pound of beef.



Advocate » Ask your member of Congress to increase food aid funding. Visit www.worldvision.org/advocateforfood.



What your elected official can do...

Remove Trade Barriers » Developing-world farmers cannot compete with the artificially low prices of subsidized crops from wealthy countries, crippling the development of indigenous agriculture.



Rethink Biofuels » Producing fuel from crops—such as using corn to produce ethanol for cars—has caused food commodity prices to soar.



Improve Food Aid » Governments tend to concentrate funding on quick-fix emergency food programs. More funding needs to be applied to longer-term programs that deal with the fundamental reasons for food scarcity. ■

SOURCES: World Vision and U.S. News and World Report



Treasure from Trash

A California girl finds an ingenious way to sponsor.

Until recently, 11-year-old Joanna Vasquez had an income of \$5 per week, which she earned by cleaning up after the dog in her family's backyard.



QUOTABLE » "If men do not keep on speaking terms with children, they cease to be men and become merely machines for eating and for earning money." —JOHN UPDIKE

But the youngster from Lancaster, Ca was determined that such modest means would not prevent her from fulfilling her dream of sponsoring a child. She hit on the idea of making extra money by recycling her family's six-month accumulation of empty bottles and cans.

Her mom, Cynthia, feared the stash would only cover sponsorship donations for a month or two, but she decided to allow her to sponsor Janaina Maria, who lives in the state of Alagoas, one of Brazil's poorest regions.

Joanna was so enthused about helping a child in need that she took Janaina's picture around as she asked neighbors to donate their discarded bottles and cans to support her sponsorship effort.

Almost everyone said "yes," and Joanna established a weekly pick-up routine. Every month the bottles and cans are loaded into a horse trailer and taken to a recycling station. So far, Joanna has managed to recycle more than 17,000 bottles and cans, earning more than \$771—enough to meet her sponsorship commitments, plus buy a goat and some chickens through World Vision's Gift Catalog.

Joanna, who ultimately would like to pursue a career helping impoverished children, says the bottle collection is a lot of fun. "I like helping other people and like to give what I can," she says. ■

GREG SCHNEIDER/GENESIS PHOTOS

PIXIE DUST for a Broken World

actress Kerry Butler embraces impoverished children.

Tony Award nominee Kerry Butler is currently dazzling critics with her performance as Clio in the Broadway production of "Xanadu."

But not long ago, the bright lights of the theater seemed a million miles away. Kerry and her husband, Joe Mazzarino, sought to adopt a child from an Ethiopian orphanage.

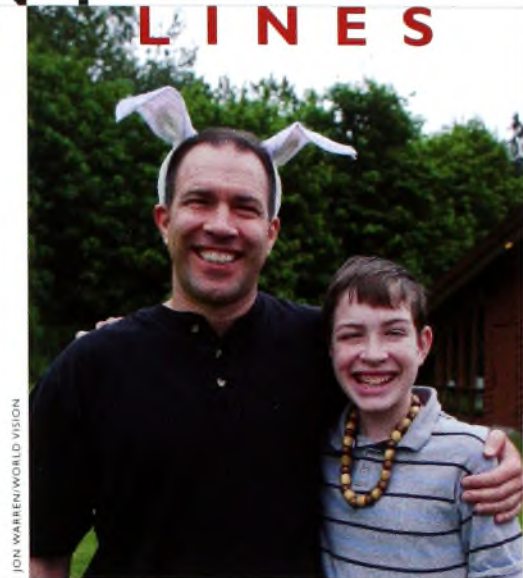
At the orphanage, she learned that a dozen sickly orphans had died in single month. Caregivers told Kerry that 13-month-old Segi, who had been abandoned, was lucky to be alive. The little girl stole the couple's hearts, and they brought her back to live with them in New York.

Kerry, pictured below with Segi, says the girl's progress has been amazing. "She is so smart and healthy. We feel so lucky to have her."

The brush with extreme poverty only deepened Kerry's concern for suffering children. In her recently released solo album, "Faith, Trust & Pixie Dust," her favorite track is "God Help the Outcasts."

After hearing social-justice advocate Jim Wallis speak at her church, Kerry decided that the album, then in the last stages of production, needed to do more for the cause of the poor. She left the church and hastily phoned her producer, insisting that a portion of the proceeds go to support World Vision's work in Ethiopia.

Kerry says she supports World Vision because of its extensive operations in Ethiopia, and also because of its willingness to deliver aid in hard places like Darfur, Sudan. ■



changeAGENT

Name: Shannon Curry

Home: Maple Valley, Wash.

Occupation: Service director, health care company

Program: Gift Catalog

Buzz: When Sunday school classes at Shannon's church raised money for goats through World Vision's Gift Catalog, Shannon bolstered church fundraising by daring people to pay him \$100 to wear goat ears at services—much to the amusement of his 10-year-old son, Joshua. He then said he would wear the ears to a critical business meeting if anybody would chip in \$250. He was convinced nobody would pay. He was wrong. Shannon was obliged to don the ears for the meeting. Altogether the stunt raised more than \$3,000. ■

God thought it would be a really good idea for me to run around in front of our congregation wearing goat ears. It garnered quite a reaction.

—SHANNON CURRY

» To give through the Gift Catalog, see the insert between pages 16 and 17.



From the President's Pen

Rich Stearns' first book, "The Hole in Our Gospel," will be released in March 2009 by Thomas Nelson. The author's royalties will go to World Vision.

Explain why you titled this book "The Hole in Our Gospel."

In Luke chapter 4 [verses 16-21], Jesus is asked to read Scripture in the synagogue, and he reads from Isaiah. It was essentially Jesus' own mission statement. I believe that passage tells us what the gospel was all about. It was about Jesus coming to preach the good news to the poor, but also that we, his followers, would then be good news to the poor. We would minister in his name.

I think many of us in America have understood the gospel to be only about preaching. This limited view gives us only half a gospel—a gospel with a hole in it—that lacks the power to transform the world, as God called us to do. The "whole gospel" proclaims not just forgiveness found in Christ, but also the command to care for the poor and stand up for justice. Yes, churches and Christians are doing a lot of good things around the world, but as the wealthiest and best-resourced community of Christians in history, we are not doing nearly enough. We need to rise to the challenge to truly be good news to the world.

"We need to rise to the challenge to truly be the good news to the world."

How did this book evolve?

Ten years ago, when I had the opportunity to join World Vision, I was a very reluctant recruit. Like some of the people we read about in the Bible, I really wanted God to send someone else to do it. I didn't want to go to the poorest of the poor. I didn't want to see children suffering and dying, children living in garbage dumps. I didn't want my heart to be broken like that. And yet, I really felt that this was God's call, and I'm convinced that God wants me to talk to others about what I've learned.



ION WARREN/WORLD VISION

Rich shares his compelling personal story in the book.

Why is this the right time for your message?

I have a sense that we are in a very special time in history. 9/11 was the wake-up call that the world is connected, and we can't turn our backs on the things that are happening in Africa or the Middle East or Asia. Advances in technology mean that everything that happens anywhere in the world becomes news everywhere instantaneously. We can no longer say we're not aware of AIDS or disasters or ethnic and religious tensions. And for the first time in history, we have the tools to do something about these problems. I believe that this could be the Church's finest hour. This could be the moment we say, "This is what the Christ we worship is all about. He's about caring for the poor, lifting up the down-trodden. This is what he stood for, and this is what we stand for."

What do you hope readers will take away?

We tend to think that other people will make a difference—Bono will take care of the poor; the president will appropriate money to deal with the AIDS pandemic; my congressman or my senator or my pastor will do something. But if I can get one message across to you, the reader, it is that this is *your* job—it's your job and my job. You and I, both of us, can make a difference. Two thousand years ago, 12 men changed the world. I believe it can happen again. ■

» FOR MORE INFORMATION,
visit www.theholeinourgospel.com.

Why I love

BEING A CHILD SPONSOR »

Years ago, I was not the person I am today. I suffered from drug and alcohol addiction and a troubled marriage. As God walked me through changes in my life, I began to have a heart for children. I decided to take money I wasted on drugs and alcohol and

do something good with it. I went to World Vision's Web site and started to look for children to sponsor. I chose a beautiful girl, Bavithra, from India. I enjoyed her letters so much I decided to sponsor another child, Jaquelin, from Guatemala. As my pay increased, I chose yet another child, Sonia, from Bangladesh. After Cyclone Sidr I cried for Sonia as I feared I might never hear from her again. But I did! As God leads me, I sponsor more children. I believe this is my calling, and I thank World Vision for their undying faith in reaching children across the world. Words cannot express the joy in my heart to be a part of that. ■



JEFF RAYMOND/GENESIS PHOTOS

Bev with her grandson, Quentin Eppig.

TELL US YOUR STORY

Why do you love being a child sponsor?
Write the editors at wvmagazine@worldvision.org.

PERFECT VALENTINE

A successful salon owner finds a way to give back.

When high-school dropout Thaddeus Valentine wanted to create a new kind of men's hair salon in Seattle, no bank was interested in loaning him the money.

Fortunately, a friend of a friend was convinced Thaddeus was onto something and helped him secure a loan to start up Valentine's Men's Grooming Salon—a place that has acquired the atmosphere of a grand European hotel.

At Valentine's, a harried man can settle into a leather armchair, prop his feet on an ottoman, and sip a cappuccino while Thaddeus and his team administer a hair cut, shave, manicure, and facial massage.

"Today's man is so bombarded. I wanted to give him a place of escape," he says.

For years, Thaddeus gave free hair cuts on Valentine's Day as a way of thanking loyal clientele. But this year he was persuaded by a member of his staff to donate the day's profits to World Vision instead.

Thaddeus was especially drawn to World Vision's microenterprise development (MED) programs, which grant small loans for businesses to impoverished families. Thaddeus could easily identify with such families. "Absolutely everybody needs help, I don't care who you are," he says. "Somebody helped me to get where I am today, so it's my obligation to help someone else." ■



COURTESY CASTING CROWNS

CHRISTMAS WITH CASTING CROWNS

Christian band Casting Crowns has encouraged more than 20,000 people to sign up to sponsor a child through World Vision at their concerts in 2008. This Christmas, they will continue to spread the message of hope for children as they tour the country, performing songs from their recently released CD, "Peace on Earth." To purchase the album or to find tour information, visit www.castingcrowns.com. ■

KIT COUNT

151,242

Number of Caregiver Kits assembled by U.S. churches, businesses, and community groups to equip World Vision volunteers caring for those living with AIDS. Help grow this number by getting your group to assemble kits. Visit www.worldvision.org/carekits. ■

FAST FACT »

World Vision microloans
serve 578,000 borrowers in
47 countries and create or
sustain nearly 750,000 jobs.



a li



child shall lead them

Communists sought to destroy religion in Albania, declared the world's first atheist state in 1967. Four decades later, World Vision helps foster Christianity among Albania's children through Youth Bible Curriculum.

BY KARI COSTANZA | PHOTOS BY JON WARREN

It is a bright and sunny day in Tirana, the capital of Alban

The weather is warm; the sky, a brilliant blue. Sidewalk cafes are crowded with stylishly dressed men and women enjoying an afternoon coffee. Tirana's mayor has brought color back to the gray landscape, painting the old Soviet-style apartments a patchwork of rainbow hues—each red, blue, and yellow stroke designed to infuse vitality into what was once an isolated nation.





FACING PAGE: From communist gray to a kaleidoscope of color, Albania's formerly drab capital, Tirana, has undergone a facelift. But inside, poverty cannot be masked. **ABOVE LEFT:** Elizabeta's kitchen doubles as a bathroom. **ABOVE RIGHT:** National hero Skanderbeg. **LEFT:** Andrea Laska with his cut lip and his patron saint.

Inside one apartment, Andrea Laska and his brother, Joan (pronounced Yohann), are devising a way to wrangle a ball from a high closet for a game of catch. Andrea, 8, and Joan, 6, perch on a coffee table, reaching for the shelf. In an instant, the table topples. The boys crash land on the floor. Andrea sustains a nasty cut, a tooth puncturing his lip.

The incident comes on the heels of another. The boys' mother, Elizabeta, is cooking dinner in the family kitchen, which doubles as a bathroom—the oven sits next to the toilet. Her brother-in-law asks her to leave. Elizabeta waits nervously outside while her brother-in-law takes his time. The night's dinner—stuffed peppers—burns. Elizabeta cries.

The Laskas share the apartment with Elizabeta's mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and his wife—seven people crammed into a tiny flat with three small rooms and the combination kitchen/bathroom. "You cannot even imagine how hard it is. There is so much conflict," says Elizabeta. But a vivid imagination is unnecessary. The tension in the apartment hangs like a dark cloud.

In Tirana, a city so colorful and seemingly full of life, there is a dreary undercoat of sorrow. Families like the Laskas

Youth Bible Curriculum, tailored to Albania's culture and traditions, is used throughout the country to teach children about Christianity and how to worship. Armenia, Bosnia, Lebanon, Georgia, and Romania use specially crafted curriculum as well.



struggle to overcome the remnants of a harsh communist regime, the destruction of the country's beloved Orthodox churches, and the challenges of living in one of the poorest nations in Europe. In hoping for something better, they look to their children—and their faith.

Remembering the Past

Leonard and Elizabeta Laska live paycheck to paycheck. Leonard makes 20,000 Lek (\$250) per month building automobile radiators. There is no money to spare or to save.

But for the Laskas, the period between 1980 and 1991 was worse. Elizabeta used to have to hide her feelings. "If you weren't happy, you would get put in prison," she says. "Your outside had to show happy. You couldn't even speak [negatively of the government], because they would take you to prison immediately. You could go for 20 years. Your family would be taken to concentration camps."

Life under communism had a sort of numbness to it. "We simply didn't know what to feel," says Leonard. "We didn't have any information about the world.

"I was forced to be an atheist," he says. "There was no church. I had no choice."

Adds Elizabeta: "My mother would try to get religious education for me, but I was afraid. I don't remember praying." She points to the icons of the saints on the wall for whom Andrea and Joan are named. "You could be executed for having those."

After the communist party, led by Enver Hoxha, took

power in 1945, many churches were destroyed—some turned into gymnasiums, others used to store weapons of war. Most of the priests were executed or died of old age.

When churches reopened, Elizabeta started going with her mother. "I had to learn how to pray and when to light the candles," she says. "I felt really happy and joyful that could go. I was freer."

In Tirana, only two Orthodox churches have been resurrected since communism ended in 1991. It is to one of them, the beautifully restored Annunciation Cathedral, that Andrea, Joan, and 50 other students come every Saturday morning to play, sing, and learn about God.

Bringing God into the Present

In the cathedral courtyard, a fierce soccer game is underway. Children whoosh down slides. Albanian children's songs blast from a boom box. Inside the classroom, artwork decorates every wall. Garlands of plastic flowers hang from the ceilings. Even the windowpanes are painted with flowers, balloons, and a sun rising from behind the mountains. It is light, airy, and happy.

Elizabeta has been bringing Andrea and Joan to these classes for two years now. "We came to check it out, and the children loved it," she says. "Every Saturday is the same. We have to be the last ones to leave. If we are not, they cry."

Soon the children get down to business, taking out their workbooks to learn about Jesus. These workbooks, part of the Youth Bible Curriculum, were specially designed for them

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