

1/13/2025

New Year's Greetings to all of You!

I overheard more than one of our European Teen Challenge directors say something to the effect of: "It sure made me grateful for our conditions when I see how they are living here at this TC center."

Where were we that would evoke such responses? We were at the young TC program in Albania. In late November, we held our annual ETC Fall Leaders Meeting, there, on the Adriatic Sea.

Every time I am in Albania, my mind wanders back to my first few visits there in 1991 and 1992. The first visit was weeks after the communist regime collapsed and it was an experience I can never forget. I could tell stories about it for an hour. I have often told people: "I have traveled in many places around the world and in numerous extremely poor countries, but I have never seen anything so run down, gloomy, and depressing as that." The just-collapsed regime used to boast: "We have eradicated all religion in Albania!" That wasn't all they eradicated. They eradicated joy, hope and zest for life itself.

Now, over 30 years later, some scars of that dark and gloomy time can still be seen—mostly in the country's infrastructure and buildings. It was just such a building where we were all gathered to be with the TC Albania program and spend an hour with the staff and students. I have to say, even though the facility has its challenges, so to speak, there is a wonderful sense of joy and hope among all those who live there. They are discovering new life in Jesus Christ. So, it would be a mistake to 'judge the book by its cover.' It's what's inside that counts and TC Albania has vibrant, God-breathed life inside!

Thankfully, this was not lost to our leaders from around Europe. Another leader quipped: "I wish all of our residents could see this and sense what God is doing here. They would be so grateful for what they have."

TC Albania has recently purchased a new piece of land and will build a new facility for their residents, beginning this new year. It will house up to 30 men who are learning a new life in Jesus. It won't be a reminder of gloomier days, but rather a place where hope flourishes and new life emerges. If you would like to be involved with this project, we will gladly handle gifts for it!

We are thankful to all of you who have a part in stories like this. Some of you have supported our work for over 40 years. We pray God's abundant blessing on you, your family and all of your loved ones in 2025!

Gratefully,

Tom Bremer