

# From Pocket Money to Project Income

*A challenge to a group of new believers to use their gifts and talents for God yielded results far beyond their expectations.*

**K**osovo, a province within the federation of Serbia and Montenegro, is home to 1.8 million Albanians. Most do not know Christ.

Femi Cakolli, founding pastor of Messiah Evangelical Fellowship in Pristina, Kosovo, wants to change this.

His church, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in October, is having an impact on thousands of Kosovars. How is this possible?

"The power of the written word," says Georges Houssney, of Horizons International in Boulder, Colorado, United States. "Cakolli is a gifted writer, and print has given credibility and exposure to the church."

Houssney adds, "When you go and give a great speech, perhaps 300 people hear it. But once it is finished, it is soon forgotten. In print, in a magazine format or in a booklet, you can pass it around. You can reprint it. That's what's happened; the



*Pastor and publisher Femi Cakolli, left, smiles as he baptizes a new believer.*

effectiveness of the church grew through evangelistic publications. From 20 believers a decade ago, there are now 54 churches with over 1500 members throughout Kosovo."

"In 1993," recalls Houssney, "I had an opportunity to meet with Cakolli and other Kosovar believers. I asked them how they could put their gifts and talents to use for the Lord's work, to bring the gospel to some two million Albanian Muslims."

They decided to start a monthly evangelistic newsletter. Cakolli, a student of Albanian literature, was eager to reach students and teachers with the message

that transformed his life. Another church member, an experienced journalist, interviewed new believers and wrote their stories. Later, a young man joined the church, learned graphic design, and began to help.

*Letra e gjallë (Living Letter)* began as a one-page handout, photocopied and distributed by church members to passers-by on Pristina's streets. But, "once they got started," says Houssney, "one page was not enough." Now *Living Letter* is a 48-page, full-color quarterly magazine that reaches adults, youth, and children with the Gospel.

At first, the money for the publishing efforts "was just pocket money." As the magazine grew, support from Messiah Evangelical Fellowship grew as well. "Now," Houssney says, "*Living Letter* is generating income and becoming self-supported from sales." The publication is sold on newsstands, next to Time and other local and international magazines.

From a newsletter 10 years ago, a publishing house developed. It is called Tenda, meaning "tent."

The publishing team consists of Femi Cakolli, working part-time, the graphic designer, and others who volunteer. Aside from *Living Letter*, Tenda has published over 60 titles, from apologetics to spiritual growth to theology. The average print run is 1,000 copies, but some titles have gone to 5,000.

To sell their titles, Tenda started a bookstore in 1999. "It is a bookstore and a coffee house," says Houssney. "There's a segment of the bookstore that is a lending library, and the other part is for sale. Many people are coming to the Lord through the bookstore, through the publications. They are invited to read and discuss our books, they chat, and then come back for more."

Most of Tenda's materials are translated, but about 30 percent are written by Kosovar Christians, members of Pristina's Messiah Evangelical Fellowship. "The writers are very highly motivated," says Houssney. "They want to share their faith. They are reaching thousands in Kosovo, and even spilling over into Macedonia and Albania. They are doing great things for the Kingdom of God!" ♦