



*Chestnut tree in bloom in my neighborhood*



***"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." ~ Romans 1:11-12***

**Spring is my favorite season in North Macedonia.** Fall is really nice too, but the gentle rains; the abundance of strawberries in the markets; the chirping of baby birds; and the beauty and fragrance of the flowering trees all make spring here intoxicating! *Except for this year.* This year was a bit melancholy as I mostly experienced spring from my balcony, and I reminisced on the plans I had to revisit the Sunday school teachers in Albania.

Last fall, I visited Pogradec, a quaint town in the southern part of Albania, to lead an all-day workshop for Sunday school teachers serving in our four Methodist churches in Albania. They were a vibrant group, mostly in their 20s, and very eager to learn how they could become better teachers for the children entrusted in their care. Quite early in our time together, I realized that none of them had ever experienced Sunday school as a child because they all came to know Christ as young adults. There

were no Methodist churches in their towns when they were young children. I was suddenly struck with gratitude for the Sunday school experiences I received as a child and humbled by the importance of the task God had given me to assist in the development of Christian education in Albania.



*Group photo of the workshop participants*

We had three sessions of ninety minutes each. In the first session, I asked the teachers what they wanted their children to gain out of twelve years of Sunday school classes. We brainstormed for a bit and then listed our ideas under the categories of what we wanted the children to **know** (knowledge), **be** (character), and **be able to do** (skills). Next, we looked up some verses to see what the Bible instructs us to teach and then added to our lists. I closed by thanking all of them for being willing to take on this huge responsibility of being Sunday school teachers.

In the second session, we talked about *how* to teach the things on our lists. We discussed using Bible stories, games, interviews of church workers, role plays, and various other activities in our classrooms. We also talked about the importance of modeling Christlike behavior and creating a predictable classroom culture for the children. I shared how being consistent with a schedule and

rules helps children feel safe and open to learning even if they have a different teacher each week.

In the final session, we moved to the ever-present concern of classroom management. We talked about the things we can do to prepare well and then I gave them some concrete strategies for dealing with problem behaviors. I put them in small groups to practice teaching a lesson while the other members pretended to be “problem children.” The teachers practiced employing the techniques I gave them and then switched roles. It was definitely the most active and engaging portion of all the sessions!



*Giving participants a chance to practice dealing with problem behaviors*

### ***When life isn't cherry pleasant...***

While life during a pandemic may not be “a bowl of cherries,” I am very thankful for the real cherries I can get in this season and for many other blessings. I am thankful for those who joined me for 40 days of prayer for our world, for Zoom church services, for generous supporters, for my mom having only two more chemotherapy sessions left, for friends, for Lizzy, for the chance to reflect on life, and for a God who is bigger than all my plans.



I think the teachers were not sure what to expect when they were asked to come to this training, but by the end they were already asking me to come back and do another one. “Sure,” I responded, “Why not? I’ll come back in the spring.”

Sigh. *I miss them.* Perhaps this is similar to the way Paul felt when he longed to revisit the churches in Asia minor. I am hopeful the borders will reopen soon, and I can return. But for now, I wait.

I do not know what plans the coronavirus has delayed or thwarted for you, but I grieve with you. The fact that you had it planned means it must have been important to you. I pray you are comforted and are still able to find joy in this season.

In Him,

*Jennifer Moore*

