



# ISTL

International School of Theology and Leadership

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## Educating Albanian Leaders

### From Two Students

Two of the current ISTL students (a married couple) share their testimonies. They talk about their lives and their desire to study at ISTL:

My name is Ymer Duka. I am married to Esterina and we have 4 children: Micah, Joel, Priscilla and Daniel. When I accepted Jesus in 1995, my life took a completely different direction. I started serving as a volunteer in the church. In the year 2000, when I was a soldier, I had to decide whether to serve Jesus or to emigrate to Greece, because the economic conditions in our family were inadequate.

My name is Esterina. I accepted Jesus when I was 13 years and I met my Saviour by reading the Bible. My life was completely transformed. I started serving the Lord at a young age, initially as a volunteer and later

full time. Together with my husband, I currently serve in the children's ministry, teenagers and women's ministries.

We heard about ISTL for the first time in 2016 when we attended a conference in Pogradec. Hervin and Sedika Fushekati explained how the school works and it seemed appropriate for us to attend this school. We had a strong desire to receive a solid Christian education. We took the brochure and spoke to our leaders about this school. Later we met with Pastor Hervin and we were so happy that we had been accepted and became part of ISTL.

This school has opened our eyes. Our hearts were filled with new knowledge. We have learned how to read the Bible in context and how to preach. We are so happy to see how the Word of God changes the lives of others. We always en-

joy going to ISTL, eventhough it is a challenge because we have to come in the afternoon (after a busy working day) all the way from Durres to Tirana. We have to leave our children alone at home. When we return home, they are already asleep, but it is a sacrifice worth making. And surprisingly, the lessons never exhaust us, because the ISTL workers always make us feel like being part of one family. They show us a lot of care. We have great gratitude to all the staff, but especially to God who has given us the opportunity to go to this school. He did not give up on us because God wants his servants to be perfect, fully equipped with all the good work, and able to teach others His Word in humility.

We are convinced that God wants to educate young leaders to lead the churches in the Balkan.

**Ymer & Esterina Duka**  
*(Nehemiah Church Durres).*



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# Working together



## Number of Students

This year 35 new students have joined ISTL. Together with second and third year students, about 70 active students attended ISTL classes during the year. We are very grateful to all teachers and partners who have made it possible to serve the churches from Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo by training their leaders. All glory to God

**Eri Ndreca, ISTL Office Adm.**

## Partner Experience

On June 5th 2019, Wes Bold, author of "Authentic Leadership—Living in Newness of Life", was leading a session of the Authentic Leadership curriculum at ISTL when, suddenly, those who were in that class experienced a John the Baptist moment.

As John the Baptist did, Wes Boldt spent the whole evening pointing to Jesus, lifting up the name and the gospel of Jesus, and God's presence became more than obvious. Wes Boldt prophetically challenged the class about the importance of being self-aware of spiritual strongholds and agreements, lies that we tend to believe, which distort our view of who God is and who we are in Him. The ISTL class was told about the importance of rejecting these lies and allowing Jesus to speak truth into their lives. Then, I felt prompted to

suggest that we should extend that reflection and awareness to our church culture, but also collectively as a nation. What are the lies that we have embraced in our church culture? What are the lies that in our culture, collectively as a nation, we have embraced as truthful statements? In response, one quiet woman stood up to say that Albanians, including those who profess Jesus as Saviour, have come to believe that Albania is a lost cause. They lost hope and many are leaving the country. That bold statement led the whole class into a moment of honest prayer, brokenness and confession. It was beautiful to witness a John the Baptist moment. Wes Boldt invited the class to allow Jesus to speak and confront them in this terrible lie and He, indeed, spoke truth to the whole class.

He is not done with the Albanian people and this country, according to Wes Boldt's words, is a gateway for many great things that He wants to do in the Balkan region.

God is doing something special among this group of students.

**Paul Pascoal, DMin,**  
**Int. Program Director, Equip Leadership Canada (ELC)**

## Seminar

In May 2019, the ISTL organized a 3-day seminar in Pogradec for church leaders and their spouses. Most of the 25 participants were (former) students. This event took place in collaboration with the Dutch mission organization GZB and the ETS Bible School of Croatia. The theme of the seminar was "Six functions of the church and ministry". Pastor Steve Paulus of ETS taught the principles of leadership and church governance. Because it was a small group, there was a lot of room to share different experiences, to sing together and to pray for each other. It was an encouragement for everyone.



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