

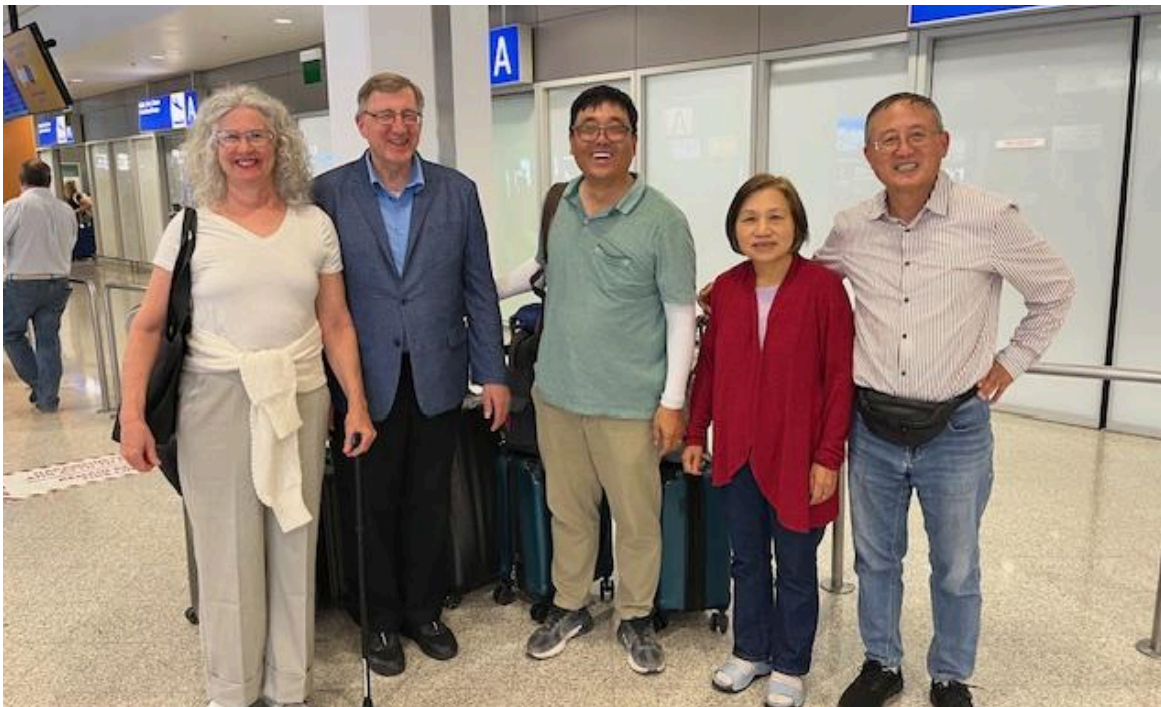
REJOICE WITH CHRIST AND SHARE IN HIS GLORY (1Pe 4:13)

A delegation from UBF Headquarters (Ron & Dervilla Ward, David & Joy Kim) visited southeastern Europe from June 10-26, stopping by house churches in Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Poland.



Historically and culturally, these are Christian countries. Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia are Orthodox; Poland is Catholic. Poland is most populous, with 38 million people. Romania has 19 million, Greece 10 million, Bulgaria 7 million, and North Macedonia 2 million. Scattered throughout these nations are UBF house churches, established more than 30 years ago. The purpose of our visit was to encourage them by getting to know their struggles and how God is working among them, and by sharing the word of God and praying with them.

Our first stop was Athens, Greece (June 11-15). We were welcomed warmly at the airport by Barnabas Wu, Mark Lee, and others, who took us to a delicious lunch prepared by Pauline Lee. During our time in Greece, Dervilla and I stayed with Barnabas and Joanna Wu, and David and Joy stayed with Mark and Pauline Lee. These servants of God welcomed us into their homes from their hearts, like their own families.



A happy greeting at the Athens airport with Barnabas Wu



Joyful eating fellowship in the home of Mark and Pauline Lee

After settling in, we met the Greece UBF Director, Paul Lee, at the Athens University campus and prayed together with him. He prays to raise men and women of God among students, who will follow Jesus in this

generation. We gave thanks to God for upholding him and Lydia as pioneering missionaries for the last 34 years. Through their sacrifice and service, God has raised Timothy (Stamatis) and Isadora as Bible teachers.



With Isadora and Timothy in the Greece UBF center

Timothy established a house church with Rebekah (from Astana, Kazakhstan), and they now have four children. Upon hearing that we would visit Greece, Timothy prepared a list of questions for me to answer and sent them in advance. This gave rise to a heart-to-heart discussion when we met. I learned that he has grown spiritually and has a deep desire to study the Word of God. With the consent of the leaders in Greece, I invited him to Bible study online, and he accepted. I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead our Bible study and help us to grow together in Christ in faith, hope, and love.



With Timothy, Rebekah and family in their home

Second-generation missionaries participated actively during our visit, including Joanna, Samuel, David, and Zoe Wu; Esther and Susanna Lee; and Pauline Lee. Throughout our visit, they often translated for us and helped us solve technology problems. They were real stewards of the ministry. Together with the missionaries, they guided us to visit historic sites: the Parthenon, the Areopagus, the city of Corinth, the Corinth Canal, and Cenchrea. In Ancient Corinth, we visited the site where Apostle Paul was brought to trial before Gallio. We put our hands on the stone he might have taken an oath on, and David prayed for us to be bold and courageous witnesses of Christ.



On three consecutive nights, together with Dervilla, I led Bible study in English on 1 Peter chapters 2, 4, and 5. The Holy Spirit really inspired us through these studies, and I experienced once again that Peter's letter still speaks to house churches today. When we accept the living hope in the kingdom of God and practice the teachings Peter gives us, the Lord will change the world through us. M. David and Joy Kim guided a graceful study of Isaiah 40 in Korean, which comforted the missionaries deeply.



English Group Bible Study in Athens with Greek coworkers



At the Areopagus, where Paul preached in Acts 17; Parthenon in the background

On Sunday, June 15, I delivered a message based on 1 Peter 4, titled "Rejoice to Participate in the Sufferings of Christ." *(This message is available through the associated link at the top of the report.)* Timothy translated into Greek. Several gifted second-gens, especially Esther Lee and David Wu,

guided praise and worship with spirit and joy. The word of God worked among us in power to bring about repentance and new faith in our hearts. We also marked the birthdays of Paul and Timothy, which are on the same day. After finishing, we said a tearful goodbye and headed for the airport, accompanied by Lydia Lee, Barnabas Wu, Mark Lee, and Timothy.



Happy Birthday to Paul and Timothy, with Pauline and Mark Lee looking on



Lydia and Joy share fellowship after the Sunday worship service

Paul and Lydia Lee have struggled to overcome many problems in their mission field by holding onto God's word and with prayer. God has given them wonderful coworkers, and raised spiritual leaders, as well as young generation leaders, who serve the Lord willingly. Through our visit, it became clear that God's power is at work in Greece UBF. Let's pray that Jesus may continue to bring healing, unity, and fruitfulness to our dear missionaries and leaders in this vitally important mission field.

Our next stop was Bucharest, Romania (June 15-18), to visit house churches there. John and Monica Jung welcomed Dervilla and me into their home. Isaac and Catalina Jo welcomed David and Joy. Monica and Catalina are both native leaders who married Korean missionaries. They have both learned to prepare delicious Korean food, as well as Romanian food.

The first morning we were there, they took us to a nearby park and introduced us to an important figure in Romania's Christian history:

Constantin Brancoveanu (1654-1714). He was the Christian King of Wallachia when Ottoman Turks took over. He was offered a choice of converting to Islam and being treated as a prince, or being killed. He would not betray Jesus or his people. So he was killed. But first, he had to watch his four sons die. Nevertheless, his faith was unwavering. His endurance to the end in the face of such persecution inspired Romanian Christians to stand firm in their faith. Through him, we could see God's hope for raising young Romanian disciples of Jesus into great men and women of faith.



Monica Jung (far left), Isaac and Catalina Jo, and their children (center)

We had a group Bible study on 1 Peter 4 in the backyard of the Jung's house with John and Monica, Isaac and Catalina, and Anastasia and Eliana. The word of God was so sweet to our souls that we spent four hours studying. We are grateful to David and Joy, who humbly babysat children during the Bible study, treating them like their own precious grandchildren.



Bible study in Jung's backyard

The following day, we held a special baptism ceremony for two precious young people: Anastasia Somina and Eliana Jung. It is the fruit of Monica Jung's faith and the prayers of coworkers. Anastasia is Monica's Bible student, and Eliana is her daughter. It was a spiritual family celebration. Anastasia and Eliana shared heartfelt testimonies of their faith in Jesus. After baptism, we all became very joyful and celebrated with many of their friends.



John Jung is a very able and talented man. He graduated from Korea University. He now works full-time for Oracle, and he and Monica also run a Korean Language Academy with 200 students. He knows politics and history very well, especially as they relate to Romania. He could answer all of our questions. He helped us understand how anxious Romanians feel when they think about the possibility of a Russian invasion. As he spoke, I felt his deep shepherd's heart for Romania. He is also an excellent tennis player who has many trophies in his home. He plays tennis regularly with Romanians, while other Asian men usually play only with Asians. I was deeply moved to realize that he is a true missionary to Romania, and I respect him from my heart.

We then went to Bulgaria (June 18-21), where we visited two different chapters: Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo. The Sofia chapter was pioneered by JK and CK. Recently, they turned the leadership over to their spirited daughter, YK. They are now praying for Veliko Tarnovo. Sofia chapter is led by John and Maria Jung. Their lovely daughter Jin, who has nearly finished medical studies, presented a clear and meaningful overview of the ministry.



Our mission field
University of National and World Economy (UNWE)



- **Year of foundation: 1920**
- **Subjects : Political Economy, Business Economics**
- **Number of students : more than 20,000**

UNWE UNIVERSITY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP **SOFIA CHAPTER**

Their mission field is the University of National and World Economy. Families serving there include: John and Maria, Georgi and Heather, Dimitar and Tsvetomira, Stanislav and Katya, Stephen and Vesela. Sisters Maria and Boriyana are also there. According to their 2025 key verse (2 Ti 2:15), they pray to present themselves to God as approved workers, to grow as Bible teachers and shepherds with at least one Bible student, and for a CBF orchestra to be built for the glory of God. After the introduction, we broke into two groups for Bible study. Dervilla assisted me in leading 1 Peter 4 in English, and David and Joy studied Isaiah 40 in Korean with missionaries. Once again, the word of God worked with power, giving life to our souls.

In the evening of the first day, we held a special baptism. The two oldest of Georgi and Heather Kumanichliev's seven children, Ilya (12) and Daniela (11), were examined and baptized. Afterward, we took Holy Communion together. The Lord poured out a special blessing on this event, and we experienced His power. Afterward, John Jung declared his commitment to continue preaching the gospel without compromise and to raise disciples of Jesus with all his heart. I was moved by his testimony. He loves Jesus and has God's heart for the people of Bulgaria and for Europe.



Daniela and Ilya after baptism

The spiritual atmosphere of the Sofia chapter is very healthy. The members study the word of God together sincerely. They are all joyful, loving and working together well. The power of God's kingdom is spreading across generations and cultures. Georgi and Heather are raising their children with love and gentle discipline. Their family moves together as one, with each one looking out for the others. Stanislav and Katya's family has been a blessing through their faith and prayer, as well as their spirited leading of praise and worship. Their children are also growing well. I was inspired that God will bless the Sofia chapter abundantly in the years to come. After a final Bible study on 1 Peter 5, our team departed to visit the Veliko Tarnovo ministry.



The beautiful people of God in Sofia, Bulgaria!

Veliko Tarnovo is a 3-4 hour drive from Sofia, depending on traffic. Sh. Georgi graciously lent us his big van for a day, and JK, CK, and YK, drove us to the city. While Sofia is a lively and bustling capital city, Veliko Tarnovo is more peaceful and known for its historical and spiritual significance. The major university is the University of Veliko Tarnovo. It is also known as St. Cyril and

St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo. There, JK, a university professor, teaches Korean to Bulgarian students. As he brought us to his classroom, a beautiful girl student, Elizabeth, whom he knows and teaches, unexpectedly appeared. She greeted him in perfect Korean and bowed respectfully.



A time of fellowship in the classroom, “Jesus’ church”

JK, CK, and YK are all accredited instructors of Korean and teach at universities. They are ideally placed to reach college students with the gospel and to raise them as Jesus’ disciples. JK refers to his classroom as “Jesus’ church.” He prays for his students and all Bulgarians to come to know Jesus and live as his disciples. One of his students, M, liked JK’s teaching so much that he began Bible study with him after graduation. He has shared Daily Bread with JK every day for the last five years. He and his wife are expecting their first child. He prays to have one Bible student soon. He is growing spiritually and is a noble man; he greeted Dervilla and Joy for dinner by presenting each of them with a beautiful flower. He responded very well in our 1 Peter 4 Bible study, as did YK. At the same time, JK and CK studied Isaiah 40 with David and Joy. Afterward, they were so joyful.



Victorious servants of Christ, like eagles soaring on their wings



Precious missionaries from Ukraine to Bulgaria, Katya and Stanislav

Next, we visited North Macedonia (June 21-24) and the house church of Barnabas and Petra Kang. Seeing Barnabas at the airport was awesome. He had suffered a great deal last year from a mysterious liver illness. He was very sick, and many wondered if he would recover. Most troubling, the doctors could not find the root cause of his illness. But God's people all over the world prayed for him. With God's help, he began to improve slowly. I visited him in the Asan Hospital in Korea in September 2024. After prayer, we agreed to "meet in North Macedonia next spring, 2025." It seemed impossible, but we wanted to please God by faith. Our hope was fulfilled when Barnabas greeted us at the airport. He looked like a different person. He had gained weight, had a bright face, and moved and spoke freely. He surprised his doctor in Macedonia, who did not think he would return from Korea. The doctor said, "It is a miracle!" It was God's answer to the prayers of his people all over the world. Praise God for his great mercy! Surely God has a great purpose for Barnabas and his family and coworkers.



At the Skopje airport: Petra, Sanya, Shua, and Barnabas—a healthy servant of Christ!

On the drive from the airport, Dervilla asked why the nation was called "North Macedonia," since there is no South Macedonia. Sanya, a native

Macedonian, answered, “No. Taking the name ‘North Macedonia’ was necessary to avoid conflict with Greece.” Through this, we began to realize how small and vulnerable North Macedonia is. Since it is the birthplace of Alexander the Great, I thought it would be strong and powerful. But it is not. I once again realized that the kingdoms of the world rise and fall, and this is under God’s sovereign hand; it happened as was prophesied. Yet God is mindful of those who are weak and oppressed. God calls and uses people and nations who are weak. Through them, he shames the strong and reveals his power. It is time that Macedonia can be used greatly by God.

After getting settled, the first thing we did was study the Bible in two groups. Dervilla and I studied Isaiah 6 with Sanya, and David and Joy studied Isaiah 40 with Barnabas and Petra. Sanya is a delightful young lady. She grew up in a good family and has a twin sister, whom she prays for. She is well-educated and holds a good job in a government office. She had prepared answers to the study questions very well. So our Bible study was blessed.



Sanya, in front of a church dedicated to Mother Theresa, in Skopje

On Saturday evening, we had dinner at a traditional Macedonian restaurant. We prayed before the meal, and this caught the attention of the server assigned to us. So he asked Sanya, in Macedonian, if we were missionaries. When she said yes, he was very interested. They talked for several minutes, and he became enthusiastic. She introduced him to me and we began to speak in English. He said that he has recently become a Christian, and he wants to grow spiritually and shared some personal prayer topics with me. So I prayed for him on the spot, and everyone silently joined in prayer. Afterward, he agreed to have Bible study with Barnabas.



God sent a Macedonian man who wants to study the Bible

On Sunday, praise and worship was led by Petra, who was full of the Spirit and joy. Her youngest daughter, Shua, praised Jesus beside her with all her heart. Anna Kang played a beautiful violin solo. I delivered the message on Isaiah 6, "Who Will Go For Us?" and Sanya translated it into Macedonian. Right after worship service, Anna and Sanya shared very graceful testimonies that revealed Jesus' personal love for them, and were baptized.



Two beautiful daughters of God: Anna and Sanya

The following day, we visited the K-shop, which is run by Barnabas and Petra. Their business began 20 years ago when they introduced Ramen to the people of Macedonia. At the time, Macedonians did not know what Ramen was. So the Kangs gave free Ramen to people to try. The taste for Ramen began to grow, and their business was born. Today, it is a successful business that deals with a variety of different products, both wholesale and retail.



Inside the K-shop with Barnabas, Petra, and Sanya

Before leaving, we visited the gorgeous Matka Canyon, taking a boat up the river, where we entered natural caves filled with stalactites. Though the scenery was breathtaking, the most heart-moving thing was hearing Petra and Sanya sing the Macedonian national anthem together on the boat ride back. Their passion for the people of Macedonia was amazing. Surely God will bless Macedonia through their prayer and faith.



A godly couple, Barnabas and Petra



Two beautiful daughters, Anna and Shua

During the visit to North Macedonia, I realized that Petra is a woman of great faith in Jesus. She persevered through the time of her husband's illness with faith. She dealt with all of the practical problems in the family and ministry with courage and wisdom. She shared with us a secret that she held onto God as her "hiding place." When she went to God in prayer and asked for His help, He gave her everything she needed. She loves to sing the praise song, "You are my hiding place." It is the theme song of North Macedonia UBF. I praise and thank Jesus for giving her faith to persevere.

The last place we visited was Poland (June 24-26), and the house church of Elijah and Deborah Park. Elijah guided us in Warsaw through sites commemorating great people in Polish history: Copernicus, Chopin, Pope John Paul II, and Madame Curie. As we thought about their lives, Elijah shared his prayer topic that, through one-to-one Bible study, influential leaders like them may be raised in Poland. With this faith, Elijah has engaged in heroic one-to-one Bible study with several influential people, such as Alexei, who works in the National Academy Institute in physics, and Zbyszek, and Tomasz. They have all been studying the Bible with Elijah for over 20 years. They are from an atheist background. Sometimes, their Bible studies can be heated, and their relationship is strained. They have not changed fundamentally in over 20 years of Bible study. In fact, one person slept through Sunday messages very regularly, but anyway, he attended the service faithfully. I was amazed at the persevering faith of Elijah Park.

In the midst of this perpetual struggle, Elijah and Deborah studied Isaiah 40 with David and Joy. Elijah confessed that the Holy Spirit touched their hearts, renewed their strength, and gave them hope to pray for the Polish people. He shared that he has begun to see signs of change by the work of the Holy Spirit in his Bible students. When his three Bible students are changed in Jesus, Poland will change. Please pray for God's victory in the great one-to-one Bible study battle of Elijah Park.

Dervilla and I studied 1 Peter 4 with Elijah and Deborah's three adult children: Polan (26), Youngin (25), and Youngje (21). Through the Bible study, Polan understood that her suffering in testifying to her friends and classmates is part of the sufferings of Christ in our time, and she found joy in this. Her brothers Youngin and Youngje were encouraged that faith in Christ sets us free from sinful desires and empowers us to live a new life by the Holy Spirit.



With a spiritual general, Elijah Park, and his son Youngje



With Youngjin, Deborah, and Elijah

Finally, on June 26, we flew back to Chicago, and our journey came to an end. As soon as we landed, Dervilla, David, and Joy went to attend the Midwest Region Summer Bible Conference in Chicago. Early the next morning, I left with my son Joshua to attend the Vision Camp in Korea. We were a little tired, yet our hearts were light and full of joy. As we participated in Christ's sufferings, we were filled with the joy of his glory. We are indebted to all of the great men and women of God in Eastern Europe who loved us and served us during the journey. We are deeply grateful for the prayer support of God's servants worldwide. Let's keep the precious house churches in Eastern Europe in our prayers. May our great God empower them with the Holy Spirit to proclaim Christ and transform Europe by his grace.