



10 Days in Romania

by Sarah Parsons-Winter

Introduction

The plan is that this will be an online ebook with all that I learned from my 10 days in Romania. The Lord laid it on my heart to encourage others to step out and experience short term mission. It is for everyone who wants to see the sort of events that happened in the book of Acts, happening today. It is to get you involved, and seeing Jesus working in other cultures and communities.

I have only been on this one mission, so I am not an expert, but I will try to pass across all that I saw and experienced, the good bits and the not so good bits. If you come away from reading this with a desire in your heart to experience something like this for yourselves, then it will have fulfilled its purpose.



Day One - how it all began

I remember very well the conversation I had with my husband, we were both sitting on our bed at the time, and I was sharing with him about an e-mail I had received, telling of a team going to Romania. The e-mail had been in my inbox for several weeks and the thought of going on mission wouldn't go away, so here I was sharing it with my husband. I was making excuses for not going, e.g. needing to be here to look after our 11 year old son. He washed away the excuses with a confirmation that he would have time off work and stay home to look after him. So with that cleared away I rang the organiser, Jeff, and asked if he had a team yet, and was told 'No'. There was no reason now why I shouldn't go - but why would I be going, that was my question. What could I do in Romania? Or more importantly, what would God do with me?

Not long after my conversation with Jeff I was invited to Sunday lunch to meet others who had also been 'called up' to go. Eventually the Lord

put together a team of seven, made up of five women and two men. We agreed to meet every month for quite a few months before we went. There was one theme that ran through every one of our meetings that was the prayer. It was an essential part of our meeting and critical if we were to do what God wanted whilst we were away. The Lord was so gracious with us and gave pictures and visions, words of encouragement, and a love for each other. I believe this prayer was a powerful part of our planning. Nearly everything went to plan for the time we were away, but I wonder what it would have been like without the prayer beforehand? I know that all prayer is powerful if we have faith to believe that what we ask can be accomplished.

Another facet of the planning came to light, as the Lord started to speak to me about what He wanted me to take. We would be working on a children's three day outreach mission and it was all things that we could use for that. I packed into my suitcase some modelling balloons and pumps, to make hats, swords and dogs with the children. I packed a Polaroid instant camera so that we could give pictures to all the children who came. We were informed that many would not have any photographs of themselves. I stowed away in my luggage a puppet. There seemed hardly any room left for my things, but I knew it would be different returning home as everything I was taking would be staying behind. I also had some flags made by a couple of the ladies in the church. I have no professional training in any of the things I was taking. I have only ever been to one flags and banners workshop! I taught myself to do balloon modelling from a video I ordered off the internet. And the skills with the puppet were all learned from playing with my son. In many ways this looks like I have a gifting for children's work, but that couldn't be further from the truth! I have just picked up these skills along the way, and if God could use them to brighten up the lives of the children we would meet, then I would be pleased.

So we could bless the people of the villages we were visiting as much as possible, it was decided to arrange a few fundraising events. The first of

these was a cream tea event in the leaders back garden. Friends, neighbours and churchgoers were invited to have tea and scones on a beautiful Saturday afternoon in May. For the first hour we spent kicking our heels as only a couple of people showed up. We were beginning to think we would all be taking strawberries home when suddenly loads of people arrived. The garden was full and we ran out of chairs and teacups! It was wonderful how God blessed the event. We didn't ask for a fixed sum for the teas, just a donation. It exceeded all our faith goals. It was such an encouragement that God's hand was on the event. Towards the end of the day I was asked if I was helping to organise the children's work or the ladies day whilst in Romania. I couldn't put my hand up to either of these things. So the lady bluntly asked me what my role on the trip would be. I couldn't answer as I didn't really know there would be anything specific. How the devil would try to use those words to make me feel useless and stop me from going!

In July came the Auction event. I have to admit I have never been to anything so wonderful. There were about 50 people and they came with soft hearts and full pockets! I had baked a fruit cake to auction, and would have been pleased had it raised £5.00; it finally went for £36.00! That was the style of the evening. Everything went for more than expected and the team were blown away with it all. If there had been any doubt about this trip, then the confirmation of God's provision for it was there in front of us in hard cash. I didn't bid very much, but sat watching others, and as the light faded out in the garden, we continued until all 40 items were sold. Some of the bids were via the phone, but even waiting for them to be called in didn't for a moment take anything from the atmosphere. The evening was full of joy, sharing, and fun, and brought tears to several people's eyes when the total was announced at the end. We had prayed for £1,000, and God had done more than we could ask or imagine. As I am sat here writing this it makes me reflect back to before I knew Jesus. There is no comparison then to the adventure and thrill of a life following Jesus. Doing well in line with His will is so exciting. We were all stepping

out as we had been called and He was blessing us every step of the way!

Before we knew it we were getting up at 3.30 am to catch the early flight to Bucharest, we knew that it would be hot when we arrived so the team dressed accordingly. Everything went to plan until I was at the gate and had to say goodbye to my family. The reality hit me then as I saw the look on my son's face whilst I walked away! I knew that I needed to do what I was doing but at that moment the reality was hard. I was upset for a while but the girls in the team comforted me, and before I knew it I was sat on the plane looking down at the clouds from my window seat. I was feeling a little apprehensive, not really knowing what to expect. I had been told many things but the reality could be so different. Simple things like going without a shower every morning or having to use a drop toilet! And also in my mind how alien the culture will be to me, and the desire in my heart not to offend anyone just by my actions. As we flew on it was a good opportunity to catch up on sleep, so I spent much of the four hour flight sleeping.

With a good wind to blow us on our way we arrived at Bucharest early. We left the plane to change up money and Jeff, the leader of our group, advised that we would need no more than £30.00 changed to Romanian Lei. At the time we were there £1 was equal to 50,000 Lei. We passed through passport control and I put on my best smile, with a prayer that none of us would be held back. I thanked God when we all came through without a hiccup. As we had arrived a little early we had to wait for Sandu, the Pastor from Slatina, and Marius, a gifted worship leader, to collect us. I sat and waited in the terminal as it looked so hot outside. It was nothing like Heathrow, just a few chairs and a place to get a drink and a paper and that was all. After a little while they arrived and the excitement amongst the group grew as we knew we were on the last leg of our journey. I asked to sit in the front knowing that I can sometimes get travel sick, as we all piled into the minibus.

We were then out driving through the streets of Bucharest looking at the sights and sounds of this large city. The whole area looked so flat with row upon row of blocks of flats. Most of them looked run down from the outside. Some of the shops had metal grills covering all the glass and only a small hole where goods and money could change hands. Everyone I saw looked slim and healthy. But only God really knows what is going on behind their eyes and the front doors of this city. We had not come for them, but others in a village tucked away in the southernmost part of this country. I was ready now, I had a peace inside of me that I would just do whatever God wanted and I knew that it would be OK.



As we travelled on, the flats and shops disappeared and the only way to describe the change is to say it seemed like we were being slowly sucked back in time. As the cars went so we would see donkey and cart. We would see geese and chickens wandering around. The houses were all different. There were

fields of crops everywhere and as we drove through small villages there would be people washing at roadside wells. It was incredibly hot and there was lots of dust. Usually I sleep on car journeys but I couldn't as there was so much to drink in. I knew that a lot of what I saw I would never remember and if I took a picture it would just look like dry fields, but I so wanted to remember. This was like another world to me. I love watching historical dramas on the TV and it was just like going back into one of those. A place where wells are commonplace and electricity is a luxury. I offered up silent prayers as we sped past and asked God to come to these villages in a big way.

My mind had been trying to take so much in, so when we finally arrived at Brincoveanca it came as a bit of a surprise! We pulled up at the church, with my hair plastered in dust! We were met by about 40 people from the

church. There was nowhere to freshen up as the church has no running water! I smiled at these people who had come especially to meet us. I must admit I felt a little hesitant, and I think they did to, but that soon passed as we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. They knew Jeff and Frances well from all there previous visits, and we were soon taking our seats for this special service.



I chose to sit at the back; I wanted to be able to see everything that was happening in the room. We were all welcomed by the Pastor, and then the worship started. The song was lively and suddenly something clicked into place. For years I have been singing in tongues in my home church, I would be able to sing along to the tune using my heavenly language, whilst still singing the words of the song in my head, and now, where I didn't know the words I could just sing along in tongues and I knew that I would be worshipping God. I felt completely at ease and able to enter in to worship. I had often wondered why I used to do this and now I knew that it was so I could worship the Lord anywhere, with anyone, all I needed was a tune to sing along to!

After the first song the Lord started to speak to me. He wanted to give a message to this church, so I fished out my pad and pen and started to write. This is what I believe the Lord gave me.

Greetings from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessings from the Holy One, the Lamb of God,
The precious King of the Most High.
You are blessed my children of the King,
My beautiful ones, my delights.
You are so important to me, so precious, so beloved.
Do you know how much I care about you?

Do you understand how important to me you are?

I am excited that you are all at last together, holding hands and sharing a Holy kiss.

Be delighted to know that I am going to do amazing things amongst you!

I showed the above to Jeff, the leader of our group, who asked me to share it with the church. I knew it was what the Lord wanted, but what if they rejected the word and the one who sent it. If they did, it was going to be a long ten days! I shouldn't have been concerned as it was received. Jeff had us all come up the front and then the whole church came forward and prayed for us. Such fervent looks on their faces as they cried out to God. Then they asked us after the sermon to pray for them. We all had interpreters and the Lord showed me a few women He wanted me to pray for. Then He drew my attention to a little girl, seven years old with a lovely white cotton dress on with little blue flowers. Her long hair was in a plait down her back. But the thing that drew my attention more than anything else was her huge brown eyes, just like two chocolate buttons. They were fantastic. I asked her if she knew Jesus as her special friend and she said 'no'. Then I asked if she wanted to know Jesus as her special friend and she said 'yes'. So I prayed with her to become a child of the King. After the service I found out that she was a niece of one of the church leaders. I knew that I had reaped where I had not sown. On the way to our accommodation the Lord spoke to me 'You have seen the first fruits of the harvest'. There was such joy in my heart, and I knew that we would see a lot more, but if this was all, who can ask for more than praying one child into the Kingdom. All praise be to God.

We were all hot, tired and hungry when we finally arrived at our accommodation. All the girls were in one room and the boys in another. Jeff and Frances had a room downstairs. We were informed that the house had originally been on one level and then they had dug down and put in a kitchen, bathroom and third bedroom. To reach the lower level you had to climb down a ladder. I am telling you this because I never go into our loft

as I don't much like ladders! I took one look at the ladder and my heart sank. How was I going to cope for 10 days! Well, if I wanted the toilet I was going to have to overcome my fears and climb down the ladder! When I finally made my way down I found a fully functioning bathroom! Praise God! It was wonderful. Our hosts supplied us with a wonderful meal of hot soup and bread, then a meat stew with rice, potatoes, or pasta. This was to be the pattern for the evening, and I must say the food was wonderful. It was such a treat not to have to cook. We talked while we ate, some on the floor, some on chairs. One of the topics of conversation was the loss of one of the teams' purse. They had it when they arrived in the village but by the time we arrived at our accommodation and they had unpacked it was missing. It put a bit of a dampener on the beginning of our visit and made us aware that we needed to look after our belongings. Obviously the temptation was too much for someone. We prayed and then bed. As I lay for a few minutes thinking about my day, I smiled in the darkness, and told myself that I was here at last and already had seen God working. I was looking forward to another day to see what the King would bring.



Day two – Tuesday

I woke up to the sound of cockerels crowing! Also faintly in the background were dogs, cows and donkeys. It certainly made a difference to the radio on my alarm clock back at home. I got straight out of bed as I wanted to be the first in the bathroom. I was aware that there would be eleven of us sharing the one bathroom and I like to have a shower every morning at home. It was six thirty when I left the girls bedroom and what I saw gave me quite a surprise. The front door was open! It must have been like that all night! It struck me then how much these people had that

we do not. They have the knowledge that they can trust their neighbours, and they probably know everyone in their street!

After I was dressed I went outside to sit on the steps of the house and look out over the street, and those going past. There was such peace just sitting there. I found it easy to pray, to thank God, that everything I looked out on seemed precious and wonderful. I know that it was a special time as we were all being covered in prayer from home, and God was blessing our stepping out into the unknown. As I was sat there I became aware that the Spirit was drawing my attention to some straw stacks over the road. As I was looking at them it was impressed upon me that God uses everything around us. Then Exodus 15:7 came to mind, which says “In the greatness of your majesty, you overthrew those who rose against you. Your anger flashed forth; it consumed them as fire burns straw.” This was such a wonderful confirmation to me of protection for our trip. To be reminded whatever the devil may throw at us, God is bigger. And what a wonderful reminder for me every time I would look out on the straw stacks.

The breakfast was incredible, though probably not usual for those in the village. We had fresh tomatoes and peppers from the gardens. Fresh boiled eggs and cheese, bread, yogurts. Homemade honey and jam which all went to make a wonderful organic meal and just perfect for the temperature.

In the afternoon we went to visit the pastor at his home. We were all shown into the bedroom as they have no living rooms. Some of the team ended up lying on the bed! It certainly made for a relaxed meeting. We met with the team who run the Timothy project. Let me explain, the children in Romania only attend school for half of the day and then get homework. What the Timothy project does is take in 15



children in the morning and 15 in the afternoon and help them with their homework and also bible teaching. Another important part of the work is to feed the children. They are usually given soup and bread. All materials are provided for them. The feedback from the local school has been incredible. They were suspicious at first of what the Christians were doing, but now they have seen the fruit of the work and want the project to expand. The children have improved in their learning and concentration, and cause less trouble at school. The church where they hold the project has no cooking facilities or running water, so one of the workers gets up at 6 am each morning to cook the soup for the children, and then carries it in a bucket about a mile! What incredible dedication!!

This was some of the information that came out of the meeting. The money for the wages, food and wood for the fire in winter comes from Transrom. Folks in Bristol, England are funding the work. People agree to pay a set amount each month and that allows children in Romania to eat and learn. Certainly with God's family anything can happen. He can send people from the other side of the world just to support a project, or an individual. All it takes is obedience and prayer.

Out of the meeting, the thing that will stay with me longest is that fact that some of the children come to the project in the winter dressed in garbage sacks! That is all they have to keep them warm and dry!

After the meeting we returned to the house where we were staying and rested in the afternoon. Towards the evening, when the weather was a little cooler, and the workers had returned home, we went visiting. I was escorted, with an interpreter to meet a lady called Angela. To say she was beautiful would be an understatement. She has two small children, one still really a baby and the other about two. I wanted so much to share with her and encourage her in her faith but her oldest child just kept crying. She explained that a lump had come up under his ear and he was in much pain. So I offered to pray, and as I touched the lump, the child screamed!

It was the quickest prayer I have ever said, and I must admit I had little expectation that God would act. It didn't feel finished at all. So I left her shortly after feeling completely inadequate wishing I had brought some children's painkillers with me as this would help the child. Where was my faith! I had a cry in my heart for this family and that small child. I couldn't do anything, but pray and leave it to God.

After we returned, one of the other teams shared what had happened on their visit. They went to see a woman in her 70's; she has been a Christian for 18 years. They spoke to her husband and asked him if it wasn't about time he gave his life to Jesus. They asked when was he going to make a commitment and he said 'now'. So the team had the honour of praying with him to give his life to Jesus. As a gift the woman gave a live chicken which she tied up and put in a bag! It brought a whole new meaning to 'chicken takeaway'! We had much to thank God for as we ate our evening meal.



Day Three – Wednesday

As I was lying in bed after waking I started to think about the infrastructure of the village. There are no street names - do they have a postman? Is there a doctor or dentist? Do they have a rubbish collection day? All these very ordinary things that we take for granted do they happen here? Later in the day I asked the questions and they do have a postman and he knows everyone's family name so can deliver the post. They have a doctor who likes a drink and a dentist if you can afford it. The rubbish isn't collected as most things are reused and don't need to be thrown away. If you have things you can no longer use they are dumped outside the village on waste ground.

Again I went to sit outside and wait on the Lord and this is what I believe He said to me.

“For 2000 years I have walked and talked with my people, I love them dearly, they are precious, and whatever the hardships, I am here. Do not be deceived into thinking that this small village isn't paramount to my plans. It is significant and worthy of the best of efforts.”

And the scripture the Lord gave me to confirm His word was Psalm 16:3 'The Godly people in the Land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!'

After getting ready for the day and spending a short time in prayer we headed out to start the three day children's work. The weather was still over 100 degrees centigrade, but most of the time we were indoors. We arrive at the site for 10:30 am to be ready for the start at 11:00 am, but when we arrive the place is already filled with children - we are informed that some have been at the site since 8:00 am! There are about 80 children and it takes us a little while to get ourselves organised. We register each child and take their address, give each child a badge and get them to sit groups. They range in age from 2 to 16. The programme has to cater for all of them! So we played with them, sang songs, told stories with and without the puppet and held games that usually ended up with one or more of the leaders getting wet, painted, or covered in egg! But the children left after a few hours and they seemed to have enjoyed themselves. Not everything went to plan, or was as good as it could have been. We didn't realise that we really needed to have something to feed the children with, especially since they had been there since 8:00 am. They must have been starving when they left! One of the team got her trousers covered in concrete dust playing wheelbarrows, which thankfully came out in the wash! All of us went back hot and tired knowing that it would all start again the next day. We returned to our accommodation soaked in sweat, happy that the kids seemed to have had a good day, and prayerful that the Lord would bring them back the next day.

As we were leaving and all trying to pile into the car, Sheldon, one of our



team, climbed into the boot. One of the villagers came along and shut him in. He was only in the boot for a moment, as we did let him out, but little did I know how I would be able to use this story to show the love of Jesus.

In the afternoon we debriefed and planned for Thursday, most then had a sleep. We prayed, had lunch and went for a walk. We went outside the



village, and saw the geese and ducks out on the ponds. We also came across an area of straw bricks drying in the sun. It was wonderful to see them all lined up in rows. It was like being back at the time of Moses where the Israelites had to make bricks for the Egyptians! What a treat.

In the evening we went to the church at the other end of the village, where there was to be an outreach service. When we arrived the speakers were playing music and the benches had been put under the trees. We got out the flags for the children to practice with. With the music and flags it attracted passing attention. Angela came with her children and praise God they were both well, smiling and running around. She had brought each of the team a red rose and it was such a wonderful gift. Some sat on the other side of the road to watch from a distance. The evening service started and a few of the team shared testimonies, some prayed, I was asked to tell a story with the puppet. Jeff the leader told a wonderful story about a goose and had all the children up and involved, they loved it. Then Sheldon preached and as he preached the sun started to go down, someone put on an outside light, and it became dark. At the end of the evening Sheldon invited people to give their life to Jesus and at first no one came. So I said to God, "I'm going home if I don't see fruit. I didn't come all this way not to see fruit". Then about 50 adults and children came forward. I shouldn't

have doubted that God was in control! We were asked to pray with people and it was wonderful. How faithful Jesus is.

After the service I had a deep desire to be alone with Jesus, I wanted to praise and thank Him for all that He was doing, and had done so far. I decided that I would walk back to our accommodation. It would give me a chance to reflect and wonder at what I had just seen. He had been so very faithful and I knew that it would be busy when I returned, and the moment would pass. We were about one or two miles away and I told the team that I would be walking and started with others from the village. We couldn't communicate but walked along holding hands. I started to sing in tongues as my heart sang to the Lord. The car with the others passed me several times and I waved at them. They stopped to take me back and I refused. I wasn't intending to be difficult I just needed some time. As we walked on, those I was with left to go to their homes and I was beginning to think I would finally have some time to myself when Marious arrived with the car. He had seen some men coming my way, they were a little worse for wear and he didn't want anything to happen to me. I could do nothing but climb aboard. I know that God knew what I was trying to do, but I also know that He would be interested in my safety so I arrived back in time for the evening meal.

Amazingly God has given me the grace to love these people. I cannot speak their language but they have shown me their love. They are not high status, they cannot improve my career or promote me, but I can receive from them far more than a career. I see past the poverty to the faces and I am prepared to give of myself, the most precious gift I have, except for the Holy Spirit within me.



Day Four – Thursday

I woke up thinking about my family, and what they might be up to. It

didn't make me sad as I knew that I was in the right place as far as God was concerned. I also started to think about what it would be like in winter. People huddled around fires trying to keep warm. It would be nearly impossible to dry cloths And try cooking outside at -15 degrees C! Like my mother says "you don't know your born!" The extent of the luxury that we have in the UK is so taken for granted. I found out that during Christmas they eat pork for Christmas dinner. The remains of the pig are buried in the snow to keep it frozen to last through the winter!

In spending time with the Lord I received the following scripture 'He gives food to those who trust Him; He always remembers his covenant.' Psalm 111:5 For these people who rely so heavily on the crops how important to trust God to provide for the daily food. How many of us don't even think twice about what we have and consider it a chore to shop at the supermarket, when really it is such a privilege to have that much food at hand! The more I think on this the more humbled I am and realise the excess in which I live. How much choice I have access to and the complete range of this worlds foods I have tried. I am spoilt for choice, and yet God has chosen to place me here, so I will enjoy what He has given me, but it makes me more mindful of those who do not have what I have.



Not much time to ponder and reflect as it was back to the Kid's club. Messy games are the order of the day! Water, paint, eggs - you name it, one of the team got covered in it! We sang songs, told stories, ran around in the 40 degree heat - but every moment was worth it for the smiles on the faces of the children.

Towards the end of the time we went outside and each team leader was given a sheet, paint and a word to write. All the children had a chance to paint on a big scale, and the results were stunning. The photographs were bright and colourful, with happy smiling children. It was so worth

the team effort.

God has done something wonderful with the hearts of the team. He has taken people who are totally different and made us into a single unit, focused on one aim. The amount of grace is high. We help, encourage, support each other and it is wonderful to behold. I shall never forget this time, it will shape who I am from this point. My heart goes out to Jesus to thank Him for letting me come away.

In the afternoon we all visited a member of the church as it was his birthday. He had made a cake for us. He told us the problems he had experienced with the lack of rain. We saw the crops shrivelled in the ground. He also explained that he had to sell his largest pig as there was nothing to feed it. My heart went out to him and his family. These were God's people and they were finding it difficult. All we could do was pray. Yes, we could have reached into our pockets and given him money, but that wouldn't change the situation for long, and we had been told before we came not to do that, unless we were prompted by the Spirit and in agreement with the leadership. I thought that was sound advice, but difficult to follow when your heart sees need.

In the evening we returned to the church for a meeting. There were some new people there who had given their hearts the night before. The praise and worship were wonderful. The flags were used again. I had been asked to bring the puppet with me and to spend some time with it at the front. Quickly I asked God what to talk about and I thought I should talk about when Sheldon was shut in the boot of the car, that the puppet had been shut in the boot and had felt lonely and scared in the dark until it remembered that Jesus was with him and then he knew he wasn't alone. It made everyone laugh, it was light hearted but with a real message of how we are never alone when we receive Jesus into our life. The sermon was about giving Jesus our hearts, our time and our obedience. At the end of the meeting everyone was invited forward to dedicate their all to Jesus. I was

thinking of going forward and the Holy Spirit stopped me. I was to pray from the back and cover the others with prayers of protection and intercede for the Holy Spirit to come more powerfully. I was told that I was standing on the watch tower to protect those who were vulnerable. It was an honour to stand in the gap, but I really would have liked to soak in the presence of Jesus. I did feel a bit like I had lost out. I know that's silly as I have been so blessed during the week, and we hadn't finished yet.

Day five – Friday



Today is the last day of the holiday club for the children and there are 71 children present. It's great to see so many happy smiling children. I have started to remember the songs we sing in the morning. I think one of them will be forever stuck in my mind! Tug of war today and a forfeit for leaders of the

loosing team! Then more games and suddenly things start to get serious. Towards the end of the last day one of the team starts giving the gospel message and telling them how much they are loved by Jesus. The whole atmosphere in the room changed. Some of the children don't look like they are listening, but some are all eyes, as they watch and listen. Finally they are called out if they want to change their lives and give themselves to following Jesus. At first there is silence in the room and then one of the



older children comes forward from the back and then it seems like the whole room is moving. And it has, except for one small boy who is about 8 years. I start crying out to God 'How could you let one get left behind, how could you leave just one?' Then I continue 'I

asked for them all, why would you leave the one?' As I am crying, Anka has seen my distress and I try to explain why I am so sad, and she goes and talks to the boy, who wasn't quite sure what to do, and he goes forward. I can rejoice, now that they are all saved. Now I am feeling humble before God and have to apologise for my ranting. He had it all in hand, and just because of my impatience I ranted and raved at Him. And now they are all gathered in. Praise God! Praise Him for His kindness and faithfulness. I am blessed, and honoured to be part of His plan.

After this I get the opportunity to bless the children by doing some balloon modelling with them. All of them enjoy making hats, swords, and I did a few animals as well. Whilst they are playing we take them off one at a time and take a photograph of them with an instant camera. They turn out really well, and it is so great to think they have a photo of their new life in Christ. Many of the children will have no photographs at all, so this will be the first.



We go back tired but very happy. Everything had been worthwhile - all the planning, prayer and effort. God had shown up, what could be more wonderful.

As we were packing up some of us were taken in the car to visit a family nearby. Half the house had collapsed and the family were living in one room. We were invited in and the mother wanted to give us something! It was explained that we didn't need anything but had come to visit. I don't think I have ever see such poverty with my own eyes. She had one of her children with her and he was eating a dried crust. We were told her husband spent his money on drink and that even though she was a Christian she didn't come to church because she didn't have clothes for her children. We gave her some money before we left, enough for a few days food, but

with a plan to buy clothes for the children.

The weather continued to be very hot, so it was a good time after lunch to rest. Often in the afternoon we would be blessed by being offered water-melon. All the skin cut off and cut into chunks, so refreshing in the hot weather - perfect.

In the evening we get ready for another Evangelistic meeting at the other end of the village. Again we are at the same place we held the holiday club. One of our group doesn't come in the evening as she is feeling sick. We have singing, a children's talk and a sermon as before, as soon as we have finished one of the guys is desperate to get back to the house as he is feeling sick. As soon as we get back, he is totally unwell. Then two of the other girls start feeling sick. I can tell you it was a long night. I knew it was an enemy attack, we had just seen all those children saved and the devil was having a go. During the night I woke up many times, and every time I would sit up and pray in tongues until the feeling of sickness had gone - then I would lay down again and rest - and so it went on through the night. No one had much sleep. Out of our group there were three that hadn't been sick. I don't know why it worked that way, but I'm glad I wasn't ill. My heart went out to our hosts as they must have been thinking they gave us something that made us ill.



Day Six – Saturday



We were all late getting up today. We had all been up through much of the night. Everything was relaxed today. There were no visits planned, no teaching or preaching. There is only a church barbecue in the woods. We left late morning and we were given the op-

portunity to ride in the cart led by a donkey. A treat for us, but normal transport for people of the village. We were a small party as many of the group had stayed behind - too frail to venture out. We were honoured by the church folk. We were given better meat than everyone else, we were served first. In every way they put us first and it was a humbling experience. Personally I would have been happier to be treated the same as everyone else. I was not allowed to join in the football with the young people. They consider women to be 'fragile'. The duties for men and women are more defined, as they were here years ago. Men play chess and football, women cook and look after the children. Though I must admit I did have a game of chess, but was hopeless at it! I asked the people if there was anything they wanted to ask about my life back home, and they had no questions. I was surprised by their lack of interest, but on reflection if I had no television, radio, or news would I believe anywhere else was different than where I was. I tried to explain that we don't usually grow our own food, or keep cattle, chickens, donkeys, etc., at home. Everything we eat comes from the shops. It doesn't sound much like progress when you think we have given up our right to be self sufficient, and that everything is transported in. Not to mention the fact that everything is intensively treated before it reaches the shops. How many of us would survive in a crisis without the supermarket? All the food here is organic and eaten straight from the garden. In the summer when fruit and vegetables are abundant it looks an idyllic lifestyle, but I know that winter is different, people go cold and hungry.



The conversations continue and I am told that I am fat! Most of the people are very thin. I must admit I was insulted. I have no excuse for being a size 16 other than an indulgent lifestyle. I have access to every type of food available. I have opportunities to eat out where the portion sizes are larger

than they need to be and I am constantly surrounded by food that is heavily processed. But it is something I can think about, and something I have the power to change, but these people, do they have the power to change?

After resting in the afternoon those who were well enough gathered for a leaders meeting in the evening. We talked about what had happened so far and then split up and prayed for each other. There were gifts given out, gifts of the Spirit as He directed. I wouldn't say the evening was the most captivating, but there was gentleness, a growing in community between us. Once you pray with someone else you understand them a little more, there is a connection of spirits. By the time we had finished it was quite late, and by the time all 11 of us had used the bathroom, it was very late, and we have an early start tomorrow.



Day Seven – Sunday

Up at 6am, showered, dressed, breakfast and out by 8am. We had to be in at the other church for the 10am service as Sandu is the Pastor there. We had to collect the PA equipment and set up in a public building. We took three of the flags with us to leave here for this church. During the worship the 40 of us entered the presence of the Lord, and it was sweet. There were no problems with the tunes for the words. Some were sung in Romanian, some in English, everyone was catered for. I was asked to share the testimony of how I became a Christian. I spoke about a visitation of the Holy Spirit. How He came when I asked Jesus to show He was real by coming to heal me. I explained how for years I had such pain in my wrists and on a bad day couldn't hold the kettle, cut my food or pick up my two year old son. As soon as I asked for healing, bright lights appeared in the black room, I started to feel weightless, and my palms started to burn. After 2 hours of this experience I told God that I knew He was real and I would follow Him, and could I please go to sleep now as it was past midnight! Looking around the room I wondered who had taken in what

I'd said. I knew I had shared it to impact at least one life, maybe more. I don't remember any particular feedback, but that was fine. We talked with others at the end of the meeting and left to go to a restaurant for lunch. The meal was different from anything we had had so far, but I can't remember what it was.

The conversation over lunch was about the food shortages in Romania. How they ate their first banana when aid came, and leaving the skin on as they hadn't seen one before! Jars of marmite were given out, and how they thought someone was trying to poison them! After lunch we went back to Alex and Sandu's flat. It was inside one of the tall blocks of flats. They are from the communist days and all look the same. The stairway inside was dark and depressing with peeling paint and nothing on the stairs. I was pleasantly surprised when we entered the flat, it was light, and airy and could have been a flat in any European town. It was also very large with four bedrooms. We stayed for a while and then they took us to the center. The center is where Alex works. They work with disabled children. They are given the education and skills they are capable of learning. When we returned to the village tonight two of our team will stay behind with Alex to work in the center with the children. It is a beautiful place with everything to the highest standard and a model facility. The second floor was still under construction. The place is being made ready for 10-12 children to come and live. I'm sure it will look incredible when it's finished and offer a much needed home for some needy children. I take my hat off to Sandu and Alex. They have been given a vision and are working to see it come true. I pray that God will bless them in their faithfulness.

While we are at the center there is the opportunity to contact home for the first time since we have come away. I haven't spoken to my husband or my son, they don't even know if we have arrived safely. So we makes some calls, all I get is the answering machine but I am able to let them know that everything is OK. It's the longest I've ever been away from them and it makes me a little sad, but I know that we will be going home in a few days

and I want to make the most of the time remaining.

It's time now to get in the minibus and head back to the village. We will be meeting at the church for another service. We were all seated on long wooden benches. Nothing on the concrete floor, no pictures on the walls. But then the music started and we all got to our feet and started to praise God. There was a children's talk and then the message. At the end there was a call for people to come forward and receive prayer. We were all asked to come and pray. I shall never forget the lady who came forward and asked me to pray for her. She reminded me of a frightened rabbit. She wouldn't look me in the eye as her shame was so deep because her husband hit her and she wanted it to stop. I asked God what He wanted me to pray and I ended up praying exactly what she asked for. The lady seemed to have given up. Her whole aura was of one who had given up. She was completely trapped in her circumstances and could see no way out. I often wonder as I reflect back on my time there if our prayers were answered for that dear lady. Was my faith strong enough to make a difference? My prayer is that as I knew I was completely out of my depth that God would turn up and grant her prayer.

The biggest surprise we had was seeing the lady we had visited with the small children and only half a house. She was there with her children. They were dressed in thick jumpers in the boiling heat. It had been discussed by the group to buy clothes for the family and that was being actioned. It was wonderful to see her. I had a bag of sweets in my backpack and these were given out to the children. I know it wasn't much but even small acts of kindness can speak volumes of God's love

Day Eight – Monday

In my quiet time found myself crying for the people of this village, I had a strong impression that this winter is going to be hard. It will be a time

for the people of the village to cry out to God in their desperation. Had a picture of social action, a picture of doing things for people in the village showing the love of God through simple acts of kindness. The Lord gave me a word about there not being enough. Not enough workers, not enough people caring for the Romanians. I saw the love of God for His people, the pain He feels for those who are suffering. He showed me that the winter would be harsh but the harvest of souls will increase and there will be ample opportunity to bless people.

Today is the Ladies day where we take a group of women from the church and encourage them. There were about 20 of us and the team shared about themselves. We talked about women of the Bible and the impact they make. We talked about claiming the promises of God and how it is good to claim them for ourselves and repeat them to God. We also talked about the power of praise.



When it came to my time to speak, I talked about a puppet ministry, about using cuddly toys to share with children, to inspire them and to reach out and tell stories, to pass on difficult messages. How we all need to be prepared to be silly and use the imagination to tell stories.

We also talked about praying, about not having lists and limiting our time, but praying from the heart.

We were served by the men at lunch time, they gave us a roast chicken BBQ. It was wonderful to see the women laugh and smile as they were served. Over lunch I shared about the hard winter with Sineta the Pastor's wife and she agreed with me. God had shown her the same thing. It gave me the confidence to know I should share this with the church before I

leave.

We rested in the afternoon and then in the evening we were all invited out to dinner by a family who have 6 children. They had cooked us a goose and served us. It was fun that we had to share knives between us as there weren't enough to go around. We sat around the table and talked late into the evening so it was dark when we went home. The family are a gypsy family and I found them warm and kind, and yet they are considered less than equal in many societies. What right have we to judge another culture less than our own? What right have we to judge anyone?

Day Nine – Tuesday

In my quiet time this is what I believe the Lord gave me this day.

Behold, this is the day the Lord has made, a day of great rejoicing and merriment. A day to be settled into the knowledge that I am in control of the destinies of my people, if they will be obedient. Nothing can stop the plans that I have, nothing can make me turn back from the hope I have for my people. Oh daughters and sons of Zion, I am about to do a new thing in this place as you have never seen before. The hearts are hard but I will tenderise them with the love I will show through my people. You have seen how I have shown my love to you, so now I will pass that love on through you. There is a time coming of great hardship and then I will use you to show your love and kindness to those who are in need. You will not go without if you show faith in me and not fear.

And the scripture that came with it was from Ecclesiastes 5:7 “Dreaming all the time instead of working is foolishness. And there is ruin in a flood of empty words. Fear God instead.”

We went visiting in the morning to see a woman called Anka and her fam-

ily. We spent time talking about the week we've just had and how wonderful the children's club was. Anka was a great help and God had made a bond between us, I shall miss her when I return home. We also visited another family who have lost part of their home. It collapsed in a bad storm and they were grateful that they all got out alive. We returned back to base for lunch and then in the afternoon the others went out visiting again. I decided to stay behind which surprised me, until they returned and said that the two people they wanted to call on were not home. I had been able to rest and relax and talk to the Lord.

Jeff the leader of our group spent the afternoon with the leaders of the church. This was a men only meeting. It strikes me that they are operating on only 50% of the wisdom they need as they have excluded the women. It's very common I know for the leadership of a church to be only male. It saddens me that the men think they have everything they need to lead a church. If God is male and female joined into one surely the church should reflect that and bring the gentleness and nurturing that women have in abundance. How many wars and divisions are started by women, and how many by men? It just seems like such a wasted opportunity.

I've shown Jeff the word I had about the hard winter and he wants me to share it tomorrow at the last service before we return home.

I have been given a word from the Lord for Marios the worship leader about God giving him a gift to write Romanian worship songs. He tells me that a preacher from America said the same thing! It's very encouraging for me to know that I'm saying the right things and confirming God's word.

We go back out again visiting which I find really tiring, trying to think of things to talk about with people whose worlds are so removed from mine. But the Grace of God is present and we make conversation and laugh. We visit a woman high up on the hill and talk about how isolated she feels. A

lone Christian woman whose husband doesn't yet know the Lord. I could so easily relate to that as my husband wasn't a Christian either. Perhaps there really isn't that much difference between us after all. We prayed that God would give her a community on the hill. That He would bring others around her to support and encourage each other in their faith. Don't we all need that.

Our next visit will always remain with me. It was as incredible as it was horrific. We visited a house that was no bigger than a large garden shed. A couple lived there and the man was blind because his ex mother-in-law had thrown acid into his face. Then the father-in-law had attacked him with an axe! He showed us the scars! Incredible to come across such hurt. The man was very bitter and we found that we could not pray for his healing until he could find it in his heart to forgive. So difficult when your world has been shattered. I tried to put myself into his shoes and couldn't. It was difficult to go and leave him and his wife. We know the church will look after them but we were all touched.

After this visit it made me think about the level of poverty in Romania. In the UK it might be 10/20%, but here it is 80%. It is very evident and yet in the sunshine it seems like everything is not too bad. To really understand one would have to come back in the winter.



Day 10 - Wednesday, the last day.

After our usual breakfast and quiet time we went on another visit. I must say that I am ready to go home now. The days have started to drag and I wonder if this trip could have been done in a week. Perhaps I am just home sick and want to get back. I am feeling impatient and yet know I haven't finished what I have been given to do. I have a chance to share with Sandu, one of the church leaders. The Lord has given me a word for him and it is now time to share it. When I sit down and consider the

responsibility that church leaders have and how much they have to give out I do feel for them. It's such a position of servanthood when you offer yourself out to your community and say 'I am here for you' and they can come any time of day or night. Would I have all that it would take? I don't think so.

Our first visit of the day is to a coach driver who sits outside with us and tells us that he is a Christian but we find out later that the local church don't yet consider him a Christian as he hasn't been baptised! It is quite difficult for me to understand that the act of baptism has to be undertaken before someone is considered truly Christian. For me as long as someone believes in Jesus, that He came to earth as man, is the Son of God, that He died for our sins and came back to life, then to me they are a Christian. The Baptism is a good thing but for me it can come later. It is interesting to see how different churches interpret the Bible.

The afternoon is spent preparing for the evening meeting and resting. The heat has been a major factor during our trip. It has been over 100 degrees centigrade every day. We have seen no rain whilst we've been here and a few times they have had to use a hose to pump water down the toilet as the well has been low. All the crops will be withering unless they are watered.

Before the evening service several of us go up to the escarpment which is a large cliff overlooking the village. On the top are just rows and rows of sweet corn growing, but as we get to the edge we can see for miles. The view is breathtaking. It reminds me so much of how we have stepped back in time. Seeing the small horse and carts, the haystacks and the animals. Hardly any roads and no pavements. But it's beautiful and interesting and in the distance is a



river and woods. It is hard to drink it all in as I want to take this view with me in my head. I know I will have photographs but they won't include the sun on my face and the smell of the air, or the stalks of cut sweet corn digging into my sandals! It makes me reflect back on our visit and want to bless every one I can see for this vantage point. These people are special to God and that makes them special to me.

We are off to celebrate our last night with a church meeting. We have all made new friends and it is good to have closure on our visit. One of the stories told is about the auction we had before we left the UK. How some Indian pastors were visiting the UK and heard about the auction so gave away their jewellery to make a contribution to the visit. They couldn't give money as they didn't have any! Jeff gave another amazing story of the sleeping prophet and talked about going in the wrong direction. As usual the kids joined in and there were screams and shouts from every row of benches. What a wonderful gift he has to involve the children and they love him for it, that is so evident as they are so keen to join in. I then got to stand up and share about the hard winter. The room went very quiet as I thought it might. I sat down as quickly as I could.

After the service a group went off and delivered the clothes to the family who came to church in winter jumpers. I didn't get to go but if I was the woman I would have had a good cry at receiving such a gift for my children. One of the nicest things is when God uses you to fill a need for another. The feeling of peace and wholeness when giving freely can't be beaten any other way. It will only work if you have willingness and don't feel like it is because of some obligation. Then it becomes a chore and it loses the power it brings to make you whole.

When back at our accommodation we start packing as we have to leave early the next morning. We are hoping to visit the government palace on our way home. It is one of the largest buildings in the world and should be worth a visit.

Going Home

After goodbyes, hugs and breakfast we are actually on our way home. We have a long drive back to the airport, but we are stopping at the palace on our way. I spend my time sat in the front, looking at the view, saying goodbye to this country and reflecting back on all that has happened. I have learned much about how God works when groups go away on mission. His Glory is upon us and we all got on really well. We looked out and prayed for each other. It was so good to see God in action, bringing people through to a place of belief. We were able to bring joy to the children and hope for the future. I have learnt that the Romanian people are giving and humble. They share what they have and treat guests with such honour.

When we arrived at the palace it was about £2.00 to get in and another £2.00 to take photographs. It was such a contrast to the village. All the materials and labour came from Romania. There are 11 floors, 8 above ground and 3 below and it is square. It has really high ceilings and loads of marble. The curtains were hand stitched with gold by nuns and weigh tons. Impressive but was it really necessary when there is so much poverty?



So we come to the end of my story. I deliberately didn't say much about the others in the group to protect their privacy as they have their own stories to tell. I would recommend that everyone experience a few weeks helping others as it truly makes you re-evaluate your priorities and values. I would have to say that since I've returned I am happier to live a simpler life. (Material possessions become less important and shopping for or growing fresh vegetables becomes more important.) I would encourage



you to think about your next holiday and ask you to seriously think about what you could do for someone else. There are books in the shops that talk about going and helping or someone at your local church could probably point you in the right direction.

If you really would just like to financially support this small village and the work the church are doing there then please e-mail and I will pass you on to Jeff who leads the work there.

Thank you.