



Praise & Prayer

Summer 2010

People often ask me on my return from a long trip, "Did you have a good holiday?" I smile and reply "yes thank you, although it wasn't really a holiday!" Driving almost 5000 miles this time, about half on unmade, potholed and damaged roads was anything but... especially as I assembled kitchen units, painted walls and a staircase, taught English for a morning in a high school, acted as chauffeur - several times etc. I can hear you say what has this to do with EPIC? My answer is that I meet people where they are. Getting involved in their lives, I can be an extra pair of hands and it helps me to understand how people are living and adapting to the new serious economic conditions they find themselves in.

So many of our 'friends' have no jobs, no state help and in Romania the government has reduced wages and pensions by 25% overnight. That means for Julia a teacher with 17 years experience, instead of £180 a month she will get £45 less and for Petru his pension becomes £120 a month. How can people survive on this? Many are saying they were better off under communism and I believe them. When I visited believers in the 70's and 80's they had jobs, a home, and money in their pockets - because the shops were empty there was nothing to buy. Now the shopping centres equal any Mall in England for size but they are empty of customers. People look but cannot afford the prices. They struggle to buy food and pay the bills.

John, of whom I have written many times over the years and who is a good sounding post said that his newly opened church in Cluj was closing because the congregation cannot afford the rent on the building and people are embarrassed because they don't have money for the collection and stay away.

So after half a page of gloom some inspiring news to encourage you to be grateful!

On most trips there is usually some memorable event - either meeting a person or an experience which I say I will never forget! On this occasion I think it could be both at the same time. I renewed contact with Mihai



whom I last saw 9 years ago and he was eager to tell me about his work in what I think is the most beautiful region of Romania. He insisted on taking me to see a field his church has purchased for a camp-site. The ensuing 7km drive up a potholed, boulder strewn muddy track in the rain will not easily be forgotten. Neither will Mihai. He calls himself a 'missioner' and has a vision for reaching teenagers and children with the Gospel as well as planting churches. He is invited to speak about 'protecting the family' in all the local schools, but he doesn't have a car and many villages are

inaccessible without transport. He is praying for a wife, but she would have to live in his two-roomed wooden house with no kitchen, bathroom or running water!! He has no regular income, and few material possessions, but he is totally convinced that God wants him to remain faithful and will provide for him - and for the 2 month long camp he plans for July and August with 60 children and then teenagers alternate weeks. **He is my Hero of The Year!**



Petru with Raoul June 2000

Two years after telling me about his 'dream', Petru in Romania has finally been given all the permissions necessary and has dug the foundations for his village Church and Bible School. I was reminded of an occasion almost exactly 10 years ago to the week when I took the photo below (on the left). He was with his younger grandson and he



Petru with Cris June 2010

had run out of money to finish another village church. I gave him £500 out of EPIC funds (which was all I had left at the time!) and 37 days later the church was dedicated and opened. The other photo was taken with his 3rd grandson a few weeks ago and shows how far he has got with the building. Sadly because of all the extra 'fees' he had to pay he has used up all the money we gave him and he needs a lot more than £500 this time!! However he has proved that he doesn't give up when faced with setbacks whether from authorities or lack of money.

Whilst away I visited churches in Bosnia which is not a country we hear very much about and I wonder how many could find it on a map! Despite it being the least evangelised country in Europe people are coming to faith in Christ and one way is through an English Language project that



The church meets on the top floor

takes place in the church in Tuzla. Anyone can join and the course is so successful that the model is going to be used in Serbia this autumn and then Romania and Bulgaria next year. Many who attend are from Muslim backgrounds and they face opposition if they convert to Christianity. Several have ended up in hospital with knife or head wounds as a result



The pastor and family in England

Exciting things are happening for Friendship Church in Russe, Bulgaria, the extension work to raise the roof and make another floor has started thanks to the generosity of their English partner church, and they have been given the free use of a large house in the centre for their day care work amongst young people with learning difficulties. These 'orphans' have no jobs, no families, no money of their own, and are very vulnerable so having a safe, attractive place to meet has been an answer to prayer.



'Baba Tonka' house



the young people



the helpers

Finally, a true story to show that much as I respect Christians in Eastern Europe they aren't all saints! I will not identify the place but the country is Bulgaria. A lady in her 80's who had been very influential during the communist period in discipling and caring for new Christians is now a widow, living alone in great poverty and in May fell and broke her hip. She was alone for 18 hours before a neighbour raised the alarm and she was admitted to hospital. The surgeon would not operate without being paid 700 Euros. Her relative (a daughter-in-law) could only raise half the money and went to the lady's church to ask the minister for help. He said to her, "Do you think we are a Charity?" In despair she contacted my friend who immediately informed his congregation and poor as they are, they found the rest of the money needed. The daughter in law (who is not a Christian - yet,) and her daughters were in church on the Sunday I visited and stood up and thanked the members for their help. It's easy to give money to high profile people but the verses in Matthew 25 challenge us to give money, time and compassion to anyone in need.

In July we reach another milestone - EPIC is 14. Many many thanks to you all for your loyal support and encouragement over the years.

PRAISE GOD FOR

All the donors to EPIC and our faithful trustees

PRAY FOR

All the children's camps, especially that they will have enough money for food and transport so they can remain running all summer

For Petru, that he too will have the money to continue the building of the new church

All the exchange visits taking place this summer

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