



Cleaford News

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May 2007

Romania in the Spring

Angus and Abigail Cleaver led a splendid party to visit our projects in Romania during March this year. One of our long standing Trustees, Andrew Henderson was with us, together with Rev Danny Pritchard, who has just become a Trustee. Danny is the minister of Downs Baptist Church in Woodingdean, near Brighton, a church that has supported our work for many years.



Danny (left, with a retired army officer on zero pension) has previously worked with other churches in Romania, so has background knowledge of the country.

Some of you will know of the greengrocer's shop that the church runs, and from which a proportion of the profits come to us. (If all goes well, you may soon see the BBC reporting the grand opening of the shop following a major refurbishment.)

Lucy Barnardo from Farnham Baptist Church was returning to the country for the first time for many years, having previously worked in an orphanage in Sibiu. Kevin Kirwan, an excellent photographer who attends Weybourne Baptist church, was making his first visit.

On the flight home Kevin gave us his reactions to his introduction to what can be a confusing mixture of third world living conditions in an EU country.

With this edition

Better Home Project Special Supplement

We are no longer sending food, knitted blankets, second-hand clothes, computers, monitors and printers.

Kevin's Impressions

10 months ago I expressed an interest in travelling to Romania yet as the day grew closer I wondered what I was going for and if I could make a difference. As a photographer I tend to look at things differently to others, looking for contrasts in buildings and in life itself. Nothing could have prepared me for the contrasts I was about to not only experience but also to be part of.

In Romania, I have met a country made up of different tribes, some with western wealth, some with what can only be described as disaster poverty. These people, some with absolutely nothing were so open and loving, welcoming us into their homes. I felt that it was an intrusion, but they wanted us to be there. I could hide my feelings behind the camera I was holding, portraits of faces depicting severe hardships whilst still retaining a togetherness of the family unit.

Faces tell stories and without my possessing a Romanian vocabulary, words were not needed. There is a saying “a picture is worth a 1000 words” and here in Romania some of the photographs I have taken speak volumes in the faces of these Roma and Gabor people. It has only been one week in Romania, in their homes, but I have found friends that I will never forget.



On entering the [Roma] camps of Zizin and Tarlungeni I didn't really want to take photos and I felt uneasy about doing so but I knew I had to show people in the UK the “real conditions” some are having to exist in, in modern day Europe. The stark contrast of a beautiful country with a hidden centre of two peoples struggling to exist in a world that treats them as outcasts.

Most were welcoming in the camps, although there was a small minority that were angry at being “inspected” by the West. Our aim was not to go where we were not wanted or to embarrass.

We were not ready for the love that the people showed us at the Zizin Roma church and their love of God as they prayed and worshipped in an already overflowing church. Voices led by a very apt piano accordionist and a young boy learning piano. Refined the service was not, but that didn't matter, the hearts of God's people were on fire in that place. I'm not sure how long we were in church but only the realisation that it wasn't enough!



The Team seemed to work well together in the different areas we visited. The devotion of the staff at the Brasov Children's hospital could not be surpassed but they are desperate for extra essential medical equipment that can save these children's lives.

Very young mothers with small very ill children, with for example liver or respiratory problems, some of these young girls in an understandable state of despair were being comforted by such caring nurses and counsellors. Babies are not my most favourite photographic topic but with their big beautiful eyes one could not help but record them on photographs. Some of the babies and children had their mothers with them; others were on their own, it being too difficult with jobs

or other children to look after. or so expensive for the mothers to come and stay with their children. The children we saw were both well cared for and very responsive, it not taking long for the team to engage their attention and play.



I have seen first hand The Cleaford Christian Trust meeting this need through the generosity of people in the UK under the direction of Angus Cleaver whose whole approach and remit can only help in these circumstances. Here is an organisation that is making a difference in such a positive way, on the front line so to speak, to a people that have been rejected by their fellow countrymen.

- ◆ If you can imagine what its like to live in the early 1800's, but in little more than a shed, that in most cases is not even watertight, the floor being the dirt that you put it on.
- ◆ If you can imagine a family of 6 or more living in a single room no bigger than 6'x9' (2m x 3m) with no water.
- ◆ If you can imagine no transport (except a horse and cart if you were wealthy enough) and little or no work or having to travel to Hungary or Bucharest to find such work.

◆ If you can imagine what it would be like for any of these things you would only be a fraction of the truth of what these people have to deal with every day.

The Christian church is growing in 'downtown' Romania, with the help of organisations such as The Cleaford Christian Trust, bringing these people together, disoriented families and individuals and uniting them as part of God's family.

Practical help is being coordinated by several good men and women, giving their time, skills and even financial support they can not really afford themselves, to a people that want to progress from where they are but are finding it increasingly



more difficult.

Through my photographs I intend to promote this hardship that both the Roma and Gabor people are experiencing on a daily basis, but also that these two peoples are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. The Christian church is growing in Romania through the planting of churches in these communities by people both in Romania and the UK who have a vision. A vision that Jesus can make a difference to these people's lives and throughout their communities.

It has been a privilege to travel with a team to a foreign land to meet brothers and sisters that, before, I did not even know existed. These people, although they have nothing materially, they have a faith in the Lord Jesus that truly brings richness into their lives.

Kevin Kirwan



Pastor Janos Totos with the church plant in Balauseri

Projects Roundup

We think it would be helpful to give you a summary of the projects we have running -

- ◆ Brasov Children's Hospital. We send a basic batch of medicines each quarter (Approx £800/quarter from General Funds. We supply consumables (swabs, etc.) for the Path Lab, and the occasional small machine. We keep Dana and the Therapy Team supplied with craft materials. Occasionally we give a grant for the local purchase of special baby milk and gluten free flour (£1,000 from General Funds). Where we can arrange a designated gift we are able to buy small items. E.g. pulse oximeter.
- ◆ Widows. UK supporters each sponsor a widow for £12.50 supplementary pension per month, via our Widows' Fund
- ◆ Families. A few specially needy families have been recommended by church pastors for sponsored support through our Families Fund.
- ◆ Pastors' Salaries. We pay monthly salaries for two pastors (Janos Totos, left, in a Roma house church) and a reduced amount for one pastor's wife. Our Salaries Fund does not have sufficient income, so is supplemented from General Funds.



- ◆ We need to provide for freight costs of each shipment of hospital items plus other goods.
- ◆ Children's Work. We help with materials for use with about 350 children in various village groups in Mures county, and provide £160 a quarter for the church produced Children's Newspaper.
- ◆ We pay £2,000 per annum towards the gas bill at Harghita Christian Camp.
- ◆ Most months we buy useful items at much reduced prices from InKindDirect, which are sent

to the camp and to work FAST are doing with poor families in the Brasov area.

- ◆ Church building. The new church building in Sangeorgiu de Padure is nearing completion. So far we have sent £6,000, most of which has been provided by ladies in Essex.
- ◆ We have part funded the building of a new 'Standard chapel' building in Gornesti village.
- ◆ We are providing 6 months' feeding for school children (£2,400) through FAST, and a year's salary for an administrator in the new community office FAST have set up in Tarlungeni Town Hall
- ◆ The transformation of the Gabor house in Viforasa, including creation of a room for church meetings, which we have funded, is nearing completion.



During our visit we were invited to visit Gabor Roma churches meeting in private homes in Viforasa, Balauseri and Fantanele. The last two (each with 30+ attending) are currently meeting in families' living rooms, which are also bedrooms. They need help with the purchase of small houses that could be converted to small churches. There is room for more people to meet if they are sitting on chairs or benches rather than beds!

Administration

With Romania's entry into the EU we are now unable to recover **VAT** on purchases of items we send. The only exception is medical items for the Hospital which can be zero rated, so most things will cost us 17.5% more.

Next April our **Gift Aid** benefit of 28p in the pound will reduce to 25p with the change in Income Tax rates.

We can earn a little extra if our supporters will use **everyclick.com** as their primary search engine. Please log on to the site, register as a supporter of the Trust, and set their page as your home page in Internet Explorer. It is possible to set two home pages, so we have everyclick.com as the first and Google as the second. If we don't find what we want on the first it is then easy to look in Google, and the Trust benefits from every search our supporters do via everyclick.com

We are now using **Google Groups** for our Trust circulations. Please go to the Trust website and add yourself to the list if you are not already on. Drop us an email if you can now receive the News (and other occasional items) by email, which saves us printing and postage.

It is very pleasing to find on each month's bank statement proceeds donated by those selling via **eBay for Charity**. Thanks to those who are helping in this way. If others wish to give a proportion of their eBay sales proceeds please set up their sale item via the link at www.cleafordchristiantrust.org.uk.

There is a **petition** on the Prime Minister's website for the abolition of VAT on purchases by charities. If you have not already done so, please add your signature at www.petitions.pm.gov.uk/Charities/

You can now find our main website via the rather shorter address of **www.tcct.info**. This provides a branch to either our main site or to the new site for the Better Home Project—see the special Supplement for more details.

We have two people in need of incontinence pads, which families cannot afford to buy in Romania. Please let us know if you come across any that are surplus.

We have had many **knitters** supporting us over the years. We no longer need to send knitted blankets which, thanks to your generosity, have been most useful. There is now a great demand for warm socks for children to wear in wellingtons in the winter. We welcome as much help as possible in this way.

CAF give us a donation for every CAF Charity Account opened by our supporters. This is an easy way for tax efficient giving—let us know if you would like details.

The Cleaford Christian Trust

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Prayer Points

Thank God for the growing groups of believers in the villages.

Pray for their witness to those around them, which can be strong in such close-knit communities

Pray for wisdom and energy for the church leaders, wives, Sunday school teachers and evangelists.

Thank God for the financial and prayer support received by the Trust, and pray for its continuance.

Pray that the Trustees may be guided by God as they allocate resources to the many worthwhile projects presented to them for support.

Pray for the organisers, helpers and children at evangelistic camps during the summer.

Pray that we may all see the way God wants us to go in both the short term and long term life of the Trust, and that we may follow his will.

Pray for God's oversight in the financing and practical details of the Better Home project, including decisions about the allocation of new homes.