

COR Newsletter – 20 February 2008

Dear all,

The Britannia Ball

What a night & what a success. I think the organising committee were nervous right up to the night - and then *it began to snow hard* as if we hadn't enough to worry about.....but in the event this only delayed the start and people trickled in, on dog sleds, skis and snowmobiles to almost a full complement of about 140 people.

Ela Stan was a revelation as a singer with the band "Take Five" and they kept people dancing all evening. The emphasis was on fun, and boy did people have fun. Charlie Crocker and John Barker provided an excellent double act for the auction and special thanks to Charlie, exuding charm and bonhomie for providing us with an excellent M.C. - not an easy task.

Some photos of the event are already available on John's resurrected Blog site that can be reached via our website www.churchoftheresurrection.eu or there are even more posted on the church search site www.achurchnearyou.com . Punch in Bucharest and then trawl through the "Picture gallery". Many more pictures will be available very soon.

The prizes on offer were magnificent and one of them - a week in a four bed four bath villa in Paphos - (sold!) - is being extended to include a discount on bookings made by members of our church. Full details on this offer is on an attachment with this email.

Overall we made a large sum of money for the church - *exactly* how much we will be able to tell you after all monies have flowed in and bills paid after a couple of weeks. All we can definitely confirm at the moment is that it exceeded all expectations!

Last Sunday in Sofia

After the ball was over - I got in about 4am - later that day I flew to Sofia. This time I stayed overnight with a member of the congregation - (thanks Gino) - and was up bright and early for the 9am Eucharist. A good crowd of us this morning (including the British ambassador and his wife) which is very encouraging - we arranged after the service to organise an expedition to the ancient church at Boyana (at the foot of Vitosha mountain) a UNESCO heritage site which was excellent (and VERY cold) and then we all had lunch at the Diplomat restaurant looking out upon the Alexander Nevsky church to wait for the journalist from the "Sofia Echo" to turn up. Kevin (the journalist) grilled me for about two hours so I can't wait to find out how he is going to portray me. If it's flattering I might post it as a profile on our website www.churchoftheresurrection.eu and if it isn't - I'll try and make sure you never get to read it!!

Last Sunday in Bucharest

Thank you to Reverend Steve Hughes for presiding at the Eucharist. And a warm welcome to two representatives from CMS (Ireland), Robbie Syme and James Price - an organisation which is generously donating 2,500 Euros a year for three years to finance our Bulgarian mission.

A bumper congregation by all accounts - I look forward to seeing everyone again next Sunday.

Monday night Lent course

We are up to Wednesday in the last week in Jesus' life now and we contemplated the contrast between failed and model discipleship. A surprise is that in Mark's gospel there is no focus on the *motive* of Judas in betraying Jesus - the focus is on the fact that Judas is simply "one of the twelve" - that there is nothing particularly evil about him (that came in later accounts) but he is representative of the worst traits evident in all the disciples - he is just an obvious example. Mark's view is that *all* the disciples were pretty useless, it is just that Judas was even more useless than all the others.

Monday night at 7pm in church. Open to all.

Tonight

There is a council meeting at 7pm in church.

Thought for the day

The Albanians in Kosovo have declared independence from Serbia - which has opened a can of worms, and it should come as no surprise that it is particularly opposed by all countries with large ethnic minorities or regional independence movements. Romania and Bulgaria, along with Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia and Spain are all countries within the European Union that are all bitterly opposed to what has just happened in Pristina. Because if the situation in Kosovo is accepted they reason, how long can we stand out against an independent Basque country for example, or Hungarian independence within Romania, and why are we not recognising the Turkish republic of North Cyprus?

This led me to recall a conversation I had with the former British ambassador to Bulgaria, Jeremy Hill when talking about Kosovo many months ago and he mused - "at some level we can say this is just a piece of dirt and that land is land is land, and it really shouldn't matter, and yet *and yet*....."

.....and yet it does matter - it matters a great deal to a great many people. (This *might* be wrong, but still it *does* matter)

Kosovo is the cradle of Serbian Christian civilization and their main religious and cultural sites are all situated there. But a large part of the West thinks that this doesn't matter and that Albanian Muslims should now have this land come what may, and are willing to use force if necessary to wrench Kosovo apart from Serbia.

Our emotional relationship to land can be one of the most powerful forces in the world. I just need to mention Israel and Palestine, and you will get the point. I am not a psychologist so I am at a loss to explain it (that we use terms like Mother country or Fatherland will I'm sure be something to do with it), but I know it to be true, because I feel the same emotional pull of land myself even though I no longer live in Britain (and have no real desire to) -but for some reason I just need to know that it is still there, as an entity, as the place where I am from. I am sure that the west thinks it is doing what it thinks is right (I'm in a charitable mood) in a seemingly intractable situation, and maybe they think that time will bring forgetfulness if not healing. But sometimes time does *not* diminish the pull of a piece of land, when that land holds a deep symbolic significance for a people. The last Jewish state came to an end in 70 AD. One thousand eight hundred and seventy eight years later, in 1948, they returned to claim what they saw as rightfully theirs.

Kosovo is not an issue that is going to go away. Russia, Serbia's main ally, will see to that. Fr. Robin Fox, chaplain to the Anglican congregation in Belgrade has asked, in a general email, for prayers for the Serbian nation and people - they will certainly need them because the military might and the will of some major western powers are very much against them.

Prayer for today by Frank Colquhoun (adapted)

*God of all wisdom and might,
we pray for those involved in the present crisis in Kosovo
especially those who bear the responsibility and exercise the authority of leadership
May the Holy Spirit so direct their councils and actions
that justice and mercy may prevail,
evil be averted and harmony restored,
to the honour of your great name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Love and peace

Martin