

COR Newsletter – 26 November 2008

Dear all,

Last Sunday in Bucharest

Wow.....So many children! I think there were about 16 to 18 children this morning. Frans and Dagmar put them to work and distributed most of the parts for the December Nativity play. The children are very excited by it. (Special thanks to Tracey, the youth worker at my former church for emailing me a variety of scripts). Parents please note: If your child is in the nativity play please try and make sure that they are in church over the next two weeks so they can practice! There were about 60 of us this morning and a good spirit. Thank you also to the Reverend Steve Hughes for helping me in the service (and for changing the hymns!).

Next Sunday in Bucharest

is **Advent Sunday**. The start of year B. For the uninitiated this means that for the whole of next year the primary gospel passages for each Sunday will mostly be culled from Mark's gospel. A = Matthew, B = Mark and C = Luke, and John gets intermingled throughout the lot when it fits nicely!! We welcome back to Bucharest Dr. John Barker and Ela, and let me thank John in advance for leading the service. I will be in the UK so unfortunately there will be no weekly email next week either - my apologies.

Last Sunday in Skopje

Speaking of John - the young Anglican community in Skopje drew 7 people this morning and with music provided for the first time on Claire's electric piano.

Christmas services

14th December. 10am Morning Prayer with a nativity play presented by the children from our Sunday school

17th December. 7pm. English carol service—nine lessons and carols by candlelight—followed by minced pies and mulled wine at "Chez Marie"

21st December at 6pm. Romanian carols from the choir of the Domnita Balasa Orthodox church

24th December at 11.30—Christmas Eve—Midnight Mass

25th December at 10am—Christmas day. Holy Communion

Also.....There will be a **church Christmas party on Saturday 20th December**. Further details to follow soon!

Thought for the day

It is very rarely that I venture to recommend a book to anyone. Whether anything is any good or not is very subjective. I will recommend the following book however - *the shack* - by William P. Young for two reasons. First of all it is the latest Christian publishing sensation - The New York Times Number 1 bestseller - and it got a front page spread in last week's church times and a review by the editor. Having seen that, I

happened to say to Alex that perhaps I should read it and much to my surprise, Alex had actually bought the book on our last trip to England and it was laying unread upstairs!!! This seemed very fortuitous so I read it last week. It is only about 250 pages and an easy read. Secondly, I will recommend it because although books are very much about personal taste William Young manages to deal with some very deep theological issues in such an entertaining and engaging way that it is worth reading for the theology alone, made accessible by weaving that theology into a gruesome story of the murder of a child and how it affects the family (especially the father, Mack), which I found actually made the theology *much* easier to relate to. The story is actually very harrowing as you might expect. Within this narrative Young deals so imaginatively with pain, forgiveness, judgement, the nature of evil, bad things happening to good people, grace, the true nature of Christianity, the concept of the church and especially (and quite provocatively) with the Holy Trinity that it deserves to be read for that alone. This is one of those books that is meant to affect you, so did it? Well yes, it did. I admit that the abduction and subsequent murder actually did bring a few tears to my eyes - and the theology that attempts to come to terms with such evil is quite profound. Last week I spoke about a phenomenon called the "emerging church" and this book with some of its' ideas fits quite well within that niche. It is definitely generous, and it has upset quite a few conservative Christians for some of what it says and for what it implies about God, scripture and the world. I'm not a great reader, and therefore I'm not much of a critic, but I think the book is worth reading because I think most people could get quite a lot from it. (It has received rave reviews and is talked about in reverential terms as being life changing). From my own stance and training, it was actually a reinforcement and a reminder of what I already believed though put in a novel, understandable and memorable way, but for people unused to these ideas or coming to theology for the first time - I would strongly recommend it.

The **prayer for today** is very simple one line prayer but bears a lot of meditation. At its heart is an understanding that the primary object of prayer is not to beg God to intervene to change other people or events but to *change the person doing the praying*. The prayer was written by St. Thomas More and has at its heart the concept of mankind as a necessary *collaborator* in bringing about God's purposes. Co-creators in God's universe.

Lord, give me the grace to work to bring about the things that I pray for. Amen.

Love and peace

Martin