

COR Newsletter – 11 February 2009

Dear all,

Last Sunday morning in Bucharest.

It was lovely to see some familiar friends this morning - the Shakespears who I thought had left for good last year now have a year's contract in Romania, so we will be sharing them with Vienna, as before, which is excellent news - and Reverend Steve Hughes, the former chaplain to the COR, making one of what will now be very much rarer visits to Romania now that he is the inter-faith development officer for churches together in Lancashire.

and in the afternoon....

It was a pleasure to host the first **confirmation class** for some years at this church, when four of our older children arrived for instruction. After a shy start, the ice eventually thawed and we shared an interesting time learning What we believe (the creeds), how we pray (the Lord's prayer) and how we live (the beatitudes). We also toured the church and learned what things were called and what they were used for, and learned what was distinctive about Christianity over all the other religions - **that God is as Jesus is!!** Each child left with a bible, knowing how to find books chapters and verses in it. *Note: Since then, three adults have asked me about the possibly being confirmed. If you think you would want this, just ask me privately and we will talk - you won't be the only one!!*

Next Sunday in Bucharest

I will be celebrating the eucharist with our sister congregation in **Sofia, Bulgaria** next Sunday so in Bucharest we will have **Morning Prayer** at 10am with **Sunday school**.

Great news for Adrian

You will have heard in intercessions over the past year the names of **Adrian Wilson** and **KC** being consistently prayed for. Both are in Rahova prison. KC was a dearly loved Nigerian member of our congregation but I started to visit Adrian as the only British subject in a Romanian jail at the request of his family and friends and the British embassy over a year ago. I was notified on Sunday by Jenny, one of his friends in the UK that Adrian has at last been transferred to Wandsworth prison in the UK which is excellent news. Adrian is reportedly suffering from culture shock at the vastly improved conditions and level of care and being able to actually understand what people around him are saying. He was overcome when the prison doctor actually *smiled* at him - obviously smiling is not a regular occurrence in Rahova prison! But seriously, you all know that there is a vast difference in living conditions between Britain and Romania, so I'll just leave it to your imaginations as to what the conditions are like in a Romanian prison. I am extremely happy for Adrian.

Tonight (Wednesday)

There is a church council meeting at 7pm in church.

Looking forward.....

Lent and Easter will soon be upon us. This will be my last Easter at the Church of the Resurrection. I intend to hold a **Lent course** this year and the subject will be the Beatitudes and how they provide a way of living well as a Christian. The book I am basing it on (besides the Bible that is) is called "Living well" and is by Robert

Warren. Palm Sunday will also have a more familiar feel to it this year. You might remember that we have used willow twigs in the past in the Eastern tradition, but last week when I was visiting Durham Diocese, Gainford parish church gave me **50 palm crosses** to bring back.

and in Skopje.....

I get regular updates from John and the congregation in Macedonia is definitely on the move. Quite a dedicated core of people are now becoming a community. Let us keep them in our prayers.

The BRITANNIA BALL

is now almost upon us. If you have anything that you wish to donate to the **raffle** or the **auction** please let me know this week. **Money** needs to start flowing as well. You can pay for tickets either in cash or electronically into our local account. Please see either me, our churchwarden Lillah Houghton or our treasurer Christian Dickson.

Thought for the day

As I write this the Swiss people have recently voted to allow Romanian and Bulgarian workers the same right of access to the Swiss job market as workers from other EU member states. There was already agreed access for all other EU members but the far right forced a vote not to allow this to be extended to Romanians and Bulgarians. There may very well have been good economic reasons for not doing so but the tone of the adverts that I saw on the news - a map of Switzerland being pecked at by sinister looking Black crows - left one feeling that economics was not the only reason that a vote was being called for. Deeper anxieties were at play. My own country, Great Britain, also discriminates against Romania and Bulgaria, not affording them the same full right of access as enjoyed by other member states. Again, I hope and trust that only economic reasons, and possibly very good ones, are the reasons, but even so, it *still* means that two countries are being singled out to be treated differently from all the others.

Were either Romania or Bulgaria really ready to join the EU? Many would say not, but Europe to its credit understood that whatever problems both countries might have, the best way to tackle them was by drawing them in close and *not* keeping them at arms length. By giving acceptance, money, support and expertise, and access to our job markets, and Europe access to their markets, this was reckoned a better route to stable economies and stable democracies in South East Europe in the long term than in freezing them out and expecting them to make all the changes on their own first without material support.

As with nations, so also with people. Fully formed Christians do not appear freshly wrapped believing all the "right" things, doing all the "right" things, and acting in a fashion that we all find totally acceptable. But for all those people who are on the fringes of the church, the best policy is full acceptance and incorporation first, giving us, the community the time and space to teach and assimilate rather than keeping them at arms length hoping they will learn or grow on their own without support, before we let them in as full partners. This policy is based on Grace. Full acceptance first, with transformation happening as a result. I'm not saying this is easy - there is bound to be pain on both sides but because this is not a one way street (the whole body is changed and affected by the introduction of new members), we grow together by supporting each other and learning from each other. The church is not a club but an organic, living, growing, supportive community with a divine mandate.

Going back to the EU, in concentrating solely on the "problems" of Romania and Bulgaria, this almost always overshadows appreciating the richness and gifts that these two countries can and do contribute to the whole. As with countries, so also with people.

Being singled out as different, not quite a full and equal member and treated differently, is demeaning for both countries and individuals, and the ever present danger is that once you have labelled someone (or a country) as just a problem, there is the distinct possibility that this becomes a self fulfilling prophesy and they will start to live up to that label.

The **prayer for today** is written by George Appleton and speaks of respect and concern and understanding for others, wanting for them "life in all its fullness".

*Grant me O lord, an understanding heart,
that I may see into the hearts of other people,
and know their strengths and weaknesses,
their hopes and their despairs,
their efforts and failures,
their need of love and their need to love.
Through my touch with them grant comfort and hope,
and the assurance that new life begins at any age and any day,
redeeming the past,
sanctifying the present,
and brightening the future, with the assurance of your unfailing love,
brought to me in Jesus Christ,
your Son, my Lord.
Amen.*

Love and Peace

Martin