

## Update from Romania

April 1, 2022



Things have been busy here with over 100 people coming to the church each day to use our food pantry. We've had to install some shelving to make the operation more efficient.

The family we brought from Chernivtsi last week are now settled in Pitesti a city approximately 350 km south of here. I have attached a picture of 5-year-old Varvara resting in her new (and hopefully temporary) home.

Centerville church of Christ has gotten quite a bit of advertising from the **"Great is Thy Faithfulness"** bracelets they donated. They are quickly becoming the children's fashion statement here in Cluj.



The outpouring of love and generosity from the Romanian citizens continues to amaze me. Monday evening a Romanian man came by to drop-off some supplies for our pantry and filled our two refrigerators with milk, cheese and other dairy products!

While it is rewarding to see the despondent looks on the faces of the new arrivals replaced with smiles and laughter, the war is never far away!

Tatyana arrived on Monday to tell us that her home along with all of those on her street had been destroyed by fire started by the fighting around Kyiv. The picture shows Anna trying to console her friend.



We are having English classes using the Bible every day. It is very enjoyable as we study John 3:16 and other passages related to God's love for us. I am always pleased to see the response when the *"light-bulb comes on"* and they begin not only to comprehend the English but also the beautiful message of the Gospel.

Again though, the realities of life in war torn Ukraine are never far away. In the picture is Ola (9), who sang a song for me, her older sister Ilona (14) who is a very good violin player (I saw a video of her recital) with their grandfather, Georgy. My emotions took another nose-dive when I asked Ilona if she was practicing her violin. Her answer, *"No, I had to leave it behind!"*

It is a fact that going through hard times is one of the things that can create bonds between people. In fact, the more difficult the experience, the more bonding that may occur.



Another family - now dear friends - will leave for Germany tomorrow. They have pitched in and helped in every way they could. They have prepared traditional Ukrainian meals, helped with the food pantry and even trimmed the grapevines the church has. I am going to miss them especially since I'm not sure if I'll ever get to see them again!



Larissa wrote about her experiences here in Cluj and the close attachment that we feel and the bond that develops almost immediately towards the people that arrive here. I wanted to share this with you!

*So many lifetime memories with lifelong friends were made on this trip. So many deep conversations were had. No small talk.*

*As hard as it was to say good bye to new friends that headed forth on their journey to their final destination through Cluj, I have been filled with excitement to see where God takes them and uses them to his glory.*

*One sweet Ukrainian lady said that not long ago she felt the Lord tell her that her family business would expand out of Ukraine and affect people all around the world. She wondered how that would be possible given she had never left the country, but now she says that it's all making sense to her.*

*The one and probably only good thing about the war, she said, is that people across the world will be blessed by and introduced to the Ukrainian people as they are displaced from their homes and dispersed literally throughout the world 🇺🇦🌍*

*Today, I'm looking forward to seeing Ukraine and the people rise from the ashes. Everyone I have encountered were confident that good will prevail and the war will be won. "Слава Україні" ("Glory to Ukraine") as they say, and "Glory to God!"*

Please keep not only the people fleeing their homes in Ukraine but the wonderful people of Romania who are opening their home to the refugees in your prayers!

God bless!

John Durham