

COMMUNICATION WITH FELLOW WORKERS

May, June 2006

FOR EDIFICATION

Praise and thanks to God for His strength! I feel strengthened both physically and spiritually by the Lord's power. I can walk normally again and therefore be more active in the Lord's work, and I have been edified by various brethren that have come to Romania in the last couple of months. The Lord is the source of our strength.

In view of our moving back to the states early next year, I am concentrating on building up the church here. This includes teaching the brethren with a sense of urgency and teaching others while there is still time and opportunity. Hopefully, the brethren will also be better able to carry on the work of teaching others.

CONSTANTA

After the conference in Bucharest (see below), George and I have been meeting almost every evening for studies. He is seriously trying to learn as much as he can before I leave. He had already grown tremendously in the last couple of years, and he wants to be able to be more of a leader for the church.

Vali has been struggling quite a bit. I had been meeting with him individually about once a week, but then he sprained his ankle and has been staying with his parents. This has pretty well cut out our contact with him. It has been a few weeks since he has taught the Thursday evening Bible class.

Iulian does seem to be doing better. He has a dependable job as a security guard at a hotel and helps to run errands for another business in exchange for food and clothing. Two different brethren visiting Iulian have helped him to get a room to rent furniture with the understanding that Iulian is responsible for remaining there.

Doru has informed us that he will return to Constanta at the end of July. His personality and presence will be a much-needed boost for the church. We have not heard any news from Marcela. My studies with Maricica are going well. She mentioned the need to make some changes in her life, and she also said that she is thinking about being baptized soon.

We were encouraged and edified by visits from several brethren in May. Greg Gravitt came with three other members of the Southwest church meeting in Lakeland, FL. Judy Anderson and Linda Rumrell had been to Constanta before; it was Darren Black's first time. His wife Carrie came last year. Everyone enjoyed seeing each other again and singing together in the brief time they were at Constanta. They concentrated most of their time and effort in Bucharest. They passed out thousands of pamphlets and started some studies and found several who started visiting the church in Bucharest.

We also enjoyed a return visit by Sewell Hall, who brought his son Gardner for the first time. Gardner knows Spanish very well after many years of working with Spanish brethren, and he made an effort to learn some Romanian and understand what he could (since Romanian is also a Latin-based language). We were edified by the lessons they gave at church and the time we spent together. Along with Greg Gravitt and Buddy Payne, they participated in the lectureship in Bucharest.

Jeff Carr returned to Romania in June, and he brought Ross Harkrider with him. Jeff taught in Bucharest, and then they spent a week in Constanta. They spent a lot of time with the young people and had studies with them every day. Jeff is a good, dedicated worker and preacher. I was also impressed with Ross, who has a high level of spiritual maturity and wisdom for his age. We are glad for the teaching and good examples they provided.

BUCHAREST

Marian Otvos and Buddy Payne planned a Bible lectureship for May in Bucharest. This was for the purpose of instructing the men who are teachers of the gospel in Romania. There were two full-time preachers who could not come because of serious health problems and other men who could not come because of work, but it was encouraging to see thirteen men there for all the lessons.

Greg Gravitt gave some very good, spiritually rich lessons based on studies from the gospel of Mark. He uses Mark as an evangelistic tool in his individual Bible studies with people. Greg also communicates his sincere love for the Lord, and the Romanian brethren would do well to use his example of applying the word correctly to effectively teach others.

Gardner Hall gave some instructions on how to prepare and give public talks, and then he gave all the men a chance to give a short one so he could give analysis and constructive criticism. He has experience helping Spanish brethren this way, and his love for the brethren also made him the ideal man for this task of helping the Romanians.

Sewell Hall gave a series of lessons about the kingdom of God. In addition to the prepared notes containing Sewell's vast experience and knowledge, we were busy taking notes with all the extra gems he was throwing in during the lectures. One of the fundamental problems in the religious world is a failure to understand the nature of the kingdom of God and the nature of the church. Sewell's lessons equipped us all with spiritually-challenging lessons for ourselves and useful teaching to help others come to knowledge of the truth.

Buddy Payne gave some lessons concerning divorce and remarriage. Wisely starting from the beginning, he established principles which we find in the Old Testament, then in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. Because it is an emotional subject, people have tried to make it more complicated than it is. He also dealt with other questions raised by people from 1 Corinthians 7. This teaching is very much needed in Romania as well as the U.S. Buddy also gave a lesson to encourage every man to be closer to God through a personal devotion to God each day. This lesson stirred Vali when he was checking my translation of it for the notebook.

Vali helped me with my translation of Buddy's notes, and other former members of Constanta (Cosmin and Nicoleta) helped to translate other printed materials for the lectureship. At the lectureship itself, Liviu, Marian, and Florin Carnaru all translated very well for the speakers. Marian did a lot of the logistical work necessary to make things run smoothly during our week of edification.

It was edifying to get to know other brethren better by the time we spent together. It was good to hear lessons from every man who attended, and we were strengthened by our singing, praying, and studying together every evening in addition to the excellent lectures.

PERSONAL NEWS

I am happy to report that my ankle is doing much better. Because it was such a serious injury, it took a long time before I could walk normally again. I am thankful to Iota's friend Dr. Tanase for his help and most of all to the Lord for his healing power. My wife Ellen and my son Ronnie were a big help to me during this time. The members of the church were also very good to offer their help in several ways.

All the events involving my parents' health make our lives an emotional roller coaster. Dad has been transferred from the hospital to a nursing home because his recovery progress is very slow. We arranged for Ellen to go to the States for three months to help Mom. Right before Ellen left, Mom had a problem and had to be hospitalized. After she was stabilized, she was transferred to the nursing home but immediately had another problem and had to be sent to the hospital again. Ellen has been visiting Mom and Dad every day plus taking care of things at the house. We are hoping that Mom and Dad both will get well enough to back home. (Note: At this time (July 16) both of James' parents are in the same room in a nursing home in Benton, AR. His mom is doing much better than his father - T.T.).

Ellen's absence is a challenge for Ronnie and me. It has been good for Ronnie to learn to take some more of the responsibilities around the house. As the saying goes, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," so we are appreciating Ellen all the more. This is especially true because of the help she is providing now. As I said in my last report, this is the main reason we will be moving back to the States early next year.

FELLOW WORKERS

We are thankful to those who sacrificed to come to Romania, and we look forward to others who will be coming later this year.

Doug Seaton asked me to help him and a group he is bringing to the western part of Romania in July. I look forward to seeing the fine men who were in Bucharest in May as well as those who could not attend.

We look forward to seeing Frank Jamerson in August, Annette and Dave Girardot in September, and Alan Williamson in October. Dave and Alan will be spending most of their time in Constanta.

We also appreciate all those who are fellow workers through your support that makes it possible to live here and work with the brethren and teach others. Please pray for us and the brethren in southeastern Europe.

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