

White Cross Mission Newsletter – December 2001

Message From Pat

Dear Supporters,

Whatever Happened to Christmas?

For Christmas 1993 I sent you a letter about a little boy called Craçiu. He was abandoned by his parents on Christmas Eve when he was only 4 years old. He could neither walk nor talk. When he was taken into the orphanage the nurses named him Craçiu. It means Christmas. Do you remember him?

Craçiu's time in the orphanage was not a happy time. He eventually learnt to both walk and talk but he suffered from chronic earache and, as a result, he was restless and unable to concentrate at school. Because he was a bit deaf he didn't talk - he shouted! His loudness and his constant fidgeting exasperated the staff who were often severe with him.

Craçiu is now 12 and the White Cross has taken him out of the orphanage and given him a home with 5 other boys and 4 loving Romanian housemothers. Now he lives in Casa David. It has taken Craçiu a while to settle but his ear seems to be much better and he is now calmer and a lot easier to live with. He is, at last, learning to read. Here is Craçiu (front right) with some of his new family.

All the boys work the land. This year they have at least a ¼ of an acre of potatoes and I was shown a very healthy crop by a very proud Craçiu who told me that his job was to pick off the Colorado beetles each day. Now that's what I call organic farming! The children also have pigs and chickens and we've just bought them another hectare of land so that they can have a cow.

Farming is hard work in Romania. As yet our farms don't have tractors so everything has to be done manually. We are hoping that each family of children will eventually become self-sufficient, but until that time comes each of our houses is costing almost £1000 a month to run. As well as financing the general running of the farm this covers the salaries of 4 mothers and half a housefather (one man between 2 houses!).

All of our houseparents have families, children & older parents of their own to care for so that, in fact £1000 a month supports 28 people.

Finding this money each month is quite a problem. We have to keep thinking of new ways of fundraising.

I wondered if some of you might consider holding a Christmas party on our behalf this year. Just have a really good time but make sure that there's a large pot for contributions in the middle of the room!

I don't know what the future will hold for Craiun. I am anxious to make sure that he always has a comfortable and happy home in which to live. His dream is to drive a tractor.

You could make both our dreams come true. Please remember the White Cross Mission this Christmas.

Thank you for reading this letter. I hope you all have a lovely Christmas. May God bless you all.

Pat

Jenny's Bit

Jeff and I have just returned from a visit to the United States. When we booked the flights last summer it was at the invitation of Rabbi Aryeah in Portland, Oregon. I had met him earlier this year while visiting my son and his family and had been invited to a Sabbath service by Howard's mother-in-law. It was my first experience of such a service and I was delighted to have been able to share in the joy and the love in that room. When the Rabbi heard of our work with the children in Romania he invited me to return in the 'fall' and share the story with his congregation.

However, we were overtaken by the events of September 11th and when we arrived Rabbi Aryeah was involved in grief counseling with those affected by the tragedy of that day. We also learnt that his wife was about to give birth to twins, With all that we didn't have the opportunity to tell our story. We send our best wishes to the Rabbi, his family and congregation and hope that we will be able to fulfill our promise to tell them our story one day.

We were invited to give 5 presentations at one of the large schools in the city and it looks as though, as a result, they will be doing some fundraising on our behalf over the coming year.

Before we flew on to Portland we were able to spend two nights in Kansas City, where we met the board of Directors of White Cross USA and some of their regular supporters. We'd both like to say thank you to Verna for accommodating us and to all those who listened to Jeff's update of our work and the plans for the future. Thank you to you all for your continued support, we value it greatly.

A few days after the tragic events of 11th September I received an email from a friend in the USA. I'd like to share it with you.

'Is This Normal?'

'Four thousand gathered for mid-day prayer in a downtown Cathedral. A New York City church filled and emptied six times last Tuesday. The owner of a Manhattan tennis shoe store threw open his doors and gave running shoes to those fleeing the towers. People stood in lines to give blood, in hospitals to treat the sick, in sanctuaries to pray for the wounded. America was different this week.

We wept for people we did not know. We sent money to families we've never seen. Talk-show hosts read Scriptures, journalists printed prayers.

Our focus shifted from fashion hemlines and box scores, to orphans and widows and the future of the world. We were different this week. Republicans stood next to Democrats, Catholics prayed with Jews. Mexicans and Norte Americanos were brother Americans. Skin colour was covered by the ash of burning towers. This is a different country than it was a week ago.

We're not as self-reliant as we were. Hands are out. Knees are bent. This is not normal.

And I have to ask the question, "Do we want to go back to normal?" Are we being given a glimpse of a new way of life? Are we, as a nation, being reminded that the enemy is not each other & the power is not in ourselves & the future is not in our bank accounts? Unselfish prayerfulness is the way GOD intended for us to live all along.

Maybe this, in his eyes, is the way we are called to live our entire lives. And perhaps the best response to this tragedy is to refuse to go back to normal. Perhaps the best response is to follow the example of Tom Burnet. He was a passenger of flight 93. Minutes before the plane crashed in the fields of Pennsylvania he reached his wife by cell phone. "We're all going to die," he told her, "but there are three of us who are going to do something about it."

We can do something about it as well.

We can resolve to care more.

We can resolve to pray more.

And we can resolve that, with GOD being our helper, we'll never go back to normal again.'

Perhaps we all need to care more and to pray more and I pray that at this holy season we ask the Lord to enter our lives anew and help us in these resolves.

Wishing you all a very happy and blessed Christmas.

Jenny

P.S. Have you logged on to our new website yet? We'd all like to say a huge thank you to [Adrian Allen](mailto:Adrian.Allen@whitecross.org.uk) for his time and hard work in creating this - www.whitecross.org.uk