

# Clipă de Lumină

SHARON BEMIS—ROMANIA PROGRAM HOPE! INTERN—CRWRC



My co-worker, Lucian, and his wife, Ana-Maria. Keep his family and other former co-workers in your prayers as they seek God's wisdom in searching for new jobs



## Here's to Christmas!

I'm about to celebrate my second Christmas in Romania! People have asked if I'm going home for the holidays, and I am home in Bucharest! I never understood what people were talking about when they were overwhelmed by the Christmas season but now I'm beginning to understand; things are crazy around here! In addition to preparing for Christmas itself, work has included another CBCD meeting with church leaders (at which I prepared and shared a short presentation on community mapping...in Romanian!), two wonderful visitors from the States (a board member and his wife), Kits 4 Kids Christmas boxes (with paperwork that isn't going through as quickly as it might, and ever fewer days to distribute the boxes), group meetings with

Clinica Pro-Vita, Christmas cards, newsletters (...slightly late), plans for next year, all while closing the Bucharest office for good before Christmas. Then there's church, which involves choir, youth group (which I led a week and a half ago), Christmas caroling, playing my oboe, and being [willingly] drafted for the youth Christmas skit. At the same time, my best friend here is moving back to the States right before Christmas, and there are Christmas parties, Bible Study, and random times hanging out with a multitude of friends....You probably quit reading halfway through that list!

This is part of the reason I'm looking forward to Christmas—it's the light at the end of the tunnel! I love the op-



portunities that I've been a part of recently, but it hasn't been very conducive to relaxing evenings at home or a good amount of sleep! What better way to look at Christmas, then as a light shining for us to move toward? It's not about gifts or just a baby being born; it's about the birth of hope and peace into the world!

## Fundatia Neemia (The Nehemiah Foundation)

We are closing the Bucharest CRWRC office this month. It's sad emptying the office, but it's also an exciting time for a few of us as we transition from CRWRC to a new foundation: Fundatia Neemia. We are seeking your prayers as we continue the ministry that God has put on our hearts for holistic community development in southeastern Romania! We are walking alongside church leaders as they prepare and teach their churches in what it means to be salt and light in their communities! The ministry we are doing in

Romania is described well by John Perkin in the introduction to his book, *With Justice For All*:

"The gospel has this power [of justice for all]. I know, for I have seen it bring hope to the hopeless; I have seen it empower the powerless to break the chains of oppression.

"I am persuaded that the church, as the steward of this gospel, holds the key to justice in our society. Either justice will come through us or it will not come at all."

Like Perkins saw both the ability and the necessity for the church to be the leaders in

showing the transforming power of Christ both in rural and urban areas in the United States, we are learning how to work together as churches in living out the gospel of Christ in Romania. It's not an immediate process to change from broken-down lives to transformed participants of a community changed by His power! But we don't do this ourselves; we do it only through God's power.

Please continue to pray with us as we seek His wisdom and will!

## Prayer Requests

- FOR OUR TRANSITION TO FUNDATIA NEEMIA AND THE FUTURE OF OUR WORK —THAT WE WILL KNOW GOD'S WILL
- FOR FORMER CO-WORKERS WHO ARE NOW LOOKING FOR WORK
- MY WORK WITH CLINICA PRO VITA
- WISDOM IN SPEAKING AND WRITING—THAT I WILL GLORIFY GOD
- PRAISE AND THANKS FOR ANOTHER CHRISTMAS AND YEAR FILLED WITH BLESSINGS!



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### Christmas in Romania

On Saint Nicholas Day (December 6), children traditionally receive candy. Mos Craciun ("Old Man Christmas"/Santa Claus) is popular, but not as much as in the States. He's also skinnier here.

Christmas decorations are similar to those in the States, but Christmas trees are often decorated on Christmas Eve with fruits and nuts and handmade decorations. Caroling is very popular in Romania, with groups of carolers often dressed up, telling stories and singing songs, walking through cities and villages. Carolers are generally given money or sweets.

"Cutting of the pig," five days before Christmas, involves family and friends butchering the Christmas pig. Sarmale (cabbage rolls), roast pork, and cozonac (Romanian sponge cake...infinitely better than fruit-cake) are especially delicious Christmas traditions!

2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

Sharon Bemis  
Bd. Ion Mihalache  
Nr.321 Bl.11 Ap.73  
Sector 1, Bucuresti  
ROMANIA

sharonb@crwrc.ro  
Blog:  
bemis.wordpress.com



<http://images.google.ro/images?q=romania+map>

## Bring on the foreign languages!

I haven't talked about language learning in awhile. It's just one of those things that's become so natural that I don't think of it as being terribly interesting to friends who aren't here! ... Then I remember that it *isn't* very normal to speak Romanian in the rest of the world! My first six months here were spent almost exclusively in language learning (along with a good dose of cultural acclimation). I thought I had fried my brain about two months in. Not only that, but I realized that I don't like doing things unless I do them

well, and I still felt foolish every time I opened my mouth...I had the vocabulary of a two-year-old with a bad accent! Then one day it occurred to me that it's impossible to learn to speak if you don't open your mouth. All the clear thoughts and perfect Romanian sentences in my head meant nothing if I never said them. Of course, they weren't clear or perfect coming out of an American mouth that wasn't used to rolling r's and saying â's. But even while attempts stirred pity in some: "Just say it in

English!" others patiently listened and encouraged and even responded to my bumbling efforts.

It's been nine months since I finished Romanian lessons. People still occasionally respond in English to unsuccessful sentences...but they're few and far between! I translate for foreigners who come; I speak Romanian relatively well. All it took was learning to open my mouth and a lot of laughing. Now I have another problem...me saying, "I can't remember how to say it in English!"

### FUNDATIA NEEMIA

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

In addition to prayer, you can also support us financially through the CRWRC Home Office, with donations marked specifically for ministry in Romania.

#### PERSONAL MAILING

##### ADDRESS (NEW!!):

Bld. Ion Mihalache  
Nr. 321 Bl. 11 Ap. 73  
Bucuresti, Sector 1  
ROMANIA

... **DO NOT SEND MAIL TO MY OLD ADDRESS!**



"...AND SO, AS TINY TIM OBSERVED, GOD BLESS US, EVERY ONE!"

~CHARLES DICKENS

## Broken Heart (written on 4 December)

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken.... The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell" (CS Lewis, *The Four Loves*).

I cried today. We went to speak with some church leaders in a Roma community. After our meeting they invited us to come and pray with a 7-year-old boy, Ruben, who is dying of leukemia. He has been in the hospital almost three years and

was recently sent home because his body is no longer responding to any treatment. We visited his family, who live in a one-room house. It's a cold, rainy, muddy day, but the warmth in the house couldn't be hidden...and I'm not just talking about physical warmth. Ruben laid on the bed, his little brother smiling shyly next to him and his mother by his side, while we (with about five church leaders) filled the rest of the room. His mother told about yesterday being a really rough day in which Ruben asked, "Why can't I die

now?" and, "Why doesn't God have mercy on me and heal me?!" This little boy and his family have faith. When asked if he believed Jesus would come, Ruben answered, "Yes! But why can't he come right now and heal me?!"

We prayed, some of us cried, and then it was time to leave. Ruben waved shyly and his little brother played peek-a-boo as we wished each other peace and blessings and went back out into the rain.

Why can't He come right now and heal us?