



"GRACE" CHURCH, SLATINA

GREETINGS IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Through God's grace we want to let you know about what God has been doing in the south-east region of the Olt district. The church in Slatina, through God's grace, is involved in planting churches in the south-east area of Romania. This summer God has led us to share the Gospel in two gypsy villages, one in the Olt district and another in the district of Gorj. Potcoava is the village with the largest gypsy population in Olt.



In the Christian Baptist community of Oltenia there is a brother who is involved in translating the Bible with the Wycliffe organization (



first from right in the photo). Along with him there is another gypsy brother who sang for a long time in the Literary Circle "the flame" during the communist period (very famous in that time). We went to Potcoava many times, as well as to Bolbos, a village in the district of Gorj (upper left in the picture). God has also placed on the heart of some brothers at "Grace" church to go to Potcoava to this gypsy community. God opened up the door for us so we could sing, share the Gospel and talk to people from these two gypsy communities. We went to the gypsies' houses and talked to them, witnessed Christ to them. In Romania gypsies are marginalized and there is a lot of prejudice against them. Pray that God would move the hearts of these people to receive Salvation.

In the village of Potcoava, since 2009 we've been prohibited by the Orthodox church to bury our dead people from church in the public cemetery. After very many discussions with the mayor and the local council of the city we were forced to defend our rights before the judge in Slatina and the Olt court. In spite of the fact that cemeteries are public places, the court in Slatina passed a sentence in which our right to bury our dead people from church in the cemetery of the village of Valea Merilor was taken from us. After the recourse that Grace church did in front of the court of the Olt district, they went back to the decision to let us use the cemetery. After this, the orthodox church, through its six priests present there and through the members of the parochial councils, made pressures before and during the public session of the local council of Potcoava, wanting the cemeteries to be taken from public usage and under the administration of the seven orthodox churches. After this happened we contested it to the prefect of the Olt district through which we brought to his knowledge the abuses that had taken place. The Olt prefect's office sent back to the Potcoava council a letter declaring that their decision to pass the cemeteries from public administration to the administration of the orthodox churches as being abusive and illegal. Because they chose to disregard the prefect's recommendations, the local council of the city of Potcoava was called to judgment by the prefect of the Olt district.

I spoke to one of the councilors (former vice mayor) and he told me that before the meetings three of the orthodox priests went to him and told him that there are too few of us, baptist believers, to take us and our rights into consideration, and that they don't have the courage to oppose the orthodox church, considering that elections are coming up. They told him that the orthodox church rules all of Romania. The orthodox church is the one that now persecutes other religions, especially in the south-east area of Romania where believers are very few in number. We know that the One who is in us is greater than the one who is against us.

Through God's grace we continue to add new members to the church in Slatina. Among the newcomers there is a family who had 5 stores, of which one was a bar and two others sold alcohol and cigarettes. After they came to Christ they stopped selling alcohol and cigarettes and closed the bar and made it into a building where the church can meet. Because they are not selling cigarettes and alcohol anymore, he was forced to close two of his stores last month. Together with another church from the Olt district we are trying to help plant a church in the village of Radomiresti where the church is now meeting in the former bar. We've had a good response from the children with whom we have been doing activities every friday. Last time we had approximately 50 children present. This past month we had the first funeral in that village. Brothers from the baptist and pentecostal churches in Slatina, Caracal and Draganesti were present at the funeral in great numbers. I had the blessing, together with other pastors, to preach the word to a group of people who have never head the word of God preached before. After the funeral, the orthodox priest announced that he will take the appropriate measures to exhume the believer's body, saying that we do not have the right to bury her in the cemetery. God gave us the grace to send a lot of kids to camp this summer, between the ages of 7 and 12. It was a great joy for these kids who come in large part from families who cannot afford to send them on vacation. A great part of the money was donated by the church in Slatina and the parents supplied the rest.

We have ended the second series of the Biblical College of Oltenia, which I coordinated and at which i have been teaching for the past 8 years (graduation in the pictures). 21 students graduated after 4 years of study. They are people without theological education, pastors, deacons, evangelists, missionaries, layman's, who come from small churches in the villages and serve in local churches.

Mariana is a young married mother of two girls ages 10 and 8. She started to frequent



"Grace" church. Her and her husband lived in the same house with her in-laws (this is done a lot in Romania because it is very hard to buy your own place). Her in-laws are orthodox and they made her choose: if she continued to go to "Grace" church then she would have to leave with her



girls. Mariana chose to leave the house and her husband, who has not been attending church, left with them as well. They are now staying with Mariana's family, her mom and sister being christians. Her dad is not and he is furious that his daughter is going to church. He said she got kicked out because she is going to church and she needs to renounce her faith and go back to the house from which she got kicked out. Last week i went to visit this family and had a great time with Mariana and Laurentiu, her husband but also very bless time with Mariana father. Her husband is very open to the Gospel and promised he would come to church for Christmas day.

Every monday evening, through God's grace, we meet with 7-13 men for bible study, prayer, planning, hermeneutics and homiletics. From this group of men, 2 or 3, sometimes more, go to the other 4 mission churches we have planted and visit them every sunday.

At the church orphanage, "Grace House", we have 10 kids between the ages of 8 and 18. It is a very difficult time for us financially. Because of the expenses that grow during the winter we

don't know if we are going to have enough money to pay for electricity, heat and food. This month we made an announcement in church and received a lot of donations of money and food from our members. Also, a family from the mountains helped us with wood for the fire for the boys' room and now we don't have to use gas to heat it up.

We have seen new people coming to Christ and join the church, new young couples are asking for membership at Grace Baptist. Even last sunday two new families asked for membership . Sharon is a lady from the USA , Illinois, and she is married to a Romanian young man from Slatina. they have been attending "Grace" church in Slatina since May . First Alex , her husband , started to come to our group, the men's group that i lead every friday or monday . We are praying about starting another mission church nearby Slatina . Also we have started a new ministry in a new village , working with children and adults since summer. We've had times in our church service , more often than not , where we have needed to bring in more chairs to sit all the people. We are praying for a new building and we have 32.600 \$ in the church's bank account for the new building. The cost for a metal building (including blue print and shipping from USA) is 70.000\$. I have been talking with Pat, the brother from USA who is helping us with the building logistics. We are in God's hands .But also our people will work and give for the building. We thank God for wonderful peple like you , with a big heart for Romania and much love for the south part of Romania. We hope to build the building next year with God's help. It will be a metal building and we would love to work with teams fromyour church on that building for the glory of our God and for His kingdom.

We love you all very much and we are missing you a lot

With love in Christ

viorel

My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.