

Atsuko's report about her trip to Rumania in 2004

September 7th in Cluj-Napoca (Klausenberg)

I arrived in Cluj-Napoca on September 7th.

Many Germans came to this city in the 11th century in order to build „Guildo“. For this reason you can find many beautiful German buildings in Cluj, which is called “Klausenberg“ in German. Cluj has 350,000 inhabitants, 20 % of whom are Hungarian. It is the third largest city in Rumania and is also an important university city.

Albesti, August 8th to September 10th

Albesti is a small picturesque village in the mountains between Bucharest and Brasov. The Christian conference center of the Rumanian Evangelical Church is located there.

I met with two missionary couples (Katsu and his wife Kayoko, Yuzuru and his wife Ida) there during a retreat for 45 youths. Many of them come from families who belong to the Rumanian Evangelical Church. Some of them are believers but others are not. At such retreats as this one, some of the nonbelievers have come to faith in Jesus Christ. I sang while I was there and had a wonderful time with everyone.

The Rumanian Evangelical Church

The Rumanian Evangelical Church was founded at the beginning of the 20th century by converted Christians from the Rumanian Orthodox Church. It is now made up of 250 churches throughout the country.

Its history

A Rumanian Orthodox priest, Dumitru Cornilescu, wanted to make a new translation of the Bible which would be easier to read and understand. He began in 1916. While translating, God showed him that he was a sinner in need of repentance. Under conviction he repented and turned to God. As a result, his sermons were transformed and through them, many came to repentance. At the same time there was another Orthodox priest, Teodor Popescu, who, at the death of his wife, was plagued by the question of whether his wife had gone to heaven or not. Popescu went to talk with Cornilescu about it. When he heard Cornilescu preach, he was deeply moved, and he also began to preach like Cornilescu. However, no-one wept or repented at his preaching. Popescu then asked Cornilescu, “I preach like you. But why doesn't anyone weep or repent like they do at your preaching?” Cornilescu replied, “Dear Popescu, first you have to repent of your sins before God.”

Popescu did, and after that, many people came to true repentance through his preaching. It was through such converted ex-Orthodox Christians that the Rumanian Evangelical Church was founded. In 1926 Cornilescu was sent into exile and went to Switzerland. He was never able to return to Rumania until his death. However, all of the churches in Rumania began to use his Bible translation, which is very simple yet poetic. No better translation in Romanian exists today.

At the retreat, there was a girl named Dorina. She is an orphan. When she finished secondary school she wanted to study, but she had no money to do so, so she went to talk to the director of the university about it. He told her, “You do not have to pay anything; you can study here.” And now she is a student. Last year was her first time at the retreat and at that time she accepted Jesus as her Savior. Now she would like to work for God when her studies are completed.

Hunedoara, September 10th to 11th

After a tearful good-bye at the retreat in Albesti, we drove to Hunedoara, where we were to visit a home for children. Driving into the city, we saw many old, dirty apartment buildings. And when we looked through some of the windows, we could see smoke and thought, there's a fire! But we found out that people use wood or coal to heat and cook inside.

The childrens' home “Maranatha”

Maranatha was built by Pastor Hada in 1992. In 1990, when communism collapsed, Pastor Hada had the vision to build an orphanage or home for children. He went to the USA in order to earn money and found work there in farming. At that time, it was possible for foreigners to earn \$3.00 an hour. He earned \$30–40 dollars a day and returned to Rumania after one year with \$6,000. Then he asked the city government if he could buy a large school building which had belonged to the communists. The city sold him the building along with the land around it for \$6,500. Pastor Hada said, “It was a miracle!” Then, little by little he began to renovate the building and turned it into an orphanage where orphans as well as non-orphans live.

At present, 28 children and two caregivers live there.

In 2000, Pastor Hada's wife set up kitchen and dining area in the home so that another 50 children from poor families in the surrounding area could eat there. Some of these children have to walk up to 1 hour to reach it. I asked Pastor Hada what the most difficult thing about his work was and he answered “Having enough food for these children. It costs one Euro a day to feed a child. We have 28 children living here and another 50 come just to eat. Every day we need 78 Euros. It isn't easy. We have often had nothing, but then every time God somehow

took care of the children.” When I heard that I had to think of Georg Müller in England. Pastor Hada lives just like him.

The goal of “Marantha” is to reunite the children (who have parents) with their families some day. Pastor Hada visits the families every day, in order to keep in contact with them and help them. The parents and children attend church every Sunday and hear God’s Word. Many of them have become believers.

When I gave Pastor Hada your donation, he thanked me with tears in his eyes and quoted Matthew 25:40 “ I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” He and his children pray for us every morning.

The slums in Hunedoara

The next day Pastor Hada took us to the slums of Hunedoara. There we visited a few families and distributed cookies. Most of the families in Rumania have many children – often from seven to ten children. If there isn’t enough room for the children in the house, some have to sleep on hay in barns. Others have to sleep in stuffy little rooms, for example, with nine children on two beds.

When Pastor Hada arrived, children of all ages came out to see him. “What do you need?” he asked them. They told him, “It’s getting colder now and we need shoes, socks and gloves.” And when I looked at their feet, I saw that there were children without shoes, and some were wearing shoes which were much too big for them. There were also children carrying buckets, They collect scraps of iron. When they have collected 20 kilograms, they can sell that amount for one Euro.

Sunday, September 12th in Gerla

We had planned to visit a Baptist church in a village near Cluj where I was supposed to sing and give my testimony. However, the man who was going to drive us there arrived 45 minutes late because he had overslept. On the way, we realised that we wouldn’t arrive in time, so we decided to go to the “Open Bible Church” in Gerla. When we turned up there, Pastor Pop gave us a warm welcome. He can speak German so he asked me to sing and give my testimony. After each song, Pastor Pop kept saying “Sing another one!” In the end, I had sung and given my testimony for 50 minutes. After the service the pastor told me that he had planned to evangelise at the service on that day and for that reason he had invited many people. He was so happy that God answered his prayer so wonderfully.

The childrens’ home “Sunshine”

By chance Pastor Pop also had a home for children. In 1990, just like Pastor Hada, he also had a vision to build a home for children. He wanted to build a home for girls, because he had seen so many girls who worked on the streets as prostitutes because their families were poor. So, from 1991 to 1993 he was able to work in Hannover, and earn the money he needed to build the home. It was finished in 1996. At present there are 8 girls living there between the ages of 15 and 20, as well as three missionaries from Switzerland. Six of the girls have become believers and are now leaders in the youth work in various churches. Pastor Pop said, “The main reason I built this home was to help girls to live for God.”

He is now adding on to this home so that they can take in more girls. However, he doesn’t have enough money to continue building this year. He said, “It took 5 years to build our first house. The present project will be completed with God’s help in his timing. I will continue to trust.”

Many thanks for reading my report. Please continue to pray for Rumania. If anyone would like to visit these homes, please let me know. You are warmly welcome to visit them whether you come with me or on your own.

God bless!

Atsuko