

Church Triumphant

PO Box 2806, Antioch, CA 94531-2806
PH/FAX (925) 778-7094 CELL (925) 360-9012
<http://www.churchtriumphant.com>

May/June 2006

“HOPE DEFFERED MAKES THE HEART SICK”

Pro. 13:12

This Scripture gripped our hearts as we stepped off the plane in Timisoara, Romania on April 20. We had returned to Timisoara to help celebrate the 10th anniversary of Logos Church that we helped to establish during the six years we lived in that city. The church was an outgrowth of Logos Christian High School, the first Christian school in Romania, which opened in September, 1990. From there it has grown into a pre-school through college level educational system with 600 students.

Yet as we arrived in Timisoara and headed for the church, the overwhelming feeling all around us was not one of accomplishment and victory but of hopelessness and despair. Because the Orthodox Church calendar is different from that followed by Western Europe and America, we were able to celebrate Christ's resurrection twice – first in England, then in Romania the following week. This should have been the most glorious time of celebration as we remember the great price paid by Jesus Christ to redeem us from the power of sin and to restore us to a right relationship with God the Father.

Everywhere we looked there were signs of prosperity – new apartment buildings, modern high rise office buildings, and even a new western style shopping mall. The beggars on the street corners had disappeared and everything looked upbeat and bustling. Yet there was this sense of hopelessness. What had happened to our beloved city that had paid such a high price to see freedom come to Romania?

When we first visited Timisoara right after the fall of communism in December, 1989, there were burned out stores and bullet holes in the central square but there was also great hope for the future and great joy at their newly won freedom from communist oppression. Now 16 years later, there are outward signs of prosperity but the fire of hope was but a dying ember. The people of Timisoara may have more things than they had dreamed of in 1990 but they had lost their hope.

Romania is in the process of applying for membership in the European Union. Three years ago there was great expectation that membership in the EU would end all their problems and enable them to become “just like America”. Instead they are caught in a struggle just to survive as they face Western European prices while still receiving communist era salaries.

In the last 16 years, gasoline prices have gone from 17 cents a gallon to \$5 a gallon! The exchange rate for the Romanian lei against the US dollar has jumped from 70 ROL - \$1 to 30,000 ROL - \$1. When we left Romania five years ago, the rent for our apartment was \$50 a month. Now just the utilities (gas, heat, water, trash) for a similar apartment are about \$80 a month per person. That does not include electricity or telephone. The average salary in Romania today is \$200 a month yet most goods cost more there than in America! Credit is freely available so people are still able to buy things such as computers and televisions but the interest rates are very high.

For the average person, life has become a struggle just to survive. Add to this the devastating floods along the Danube River and massive corruption within the government and it is easy to see why the people of Romania have lost all hope.

BUT GOD...

As we reached Logos Church and slipped into the regular Thursday night service already in progress, we were overwhelmed by the loving welcome we received. What a joy to see people we had disciplined growing in their faith. New Believers we had led to Christ during our last visit three years ago were eager to share their testimony of God's amazing grace at work in their lives. As Howard ministered from the Word of God, heartsick souls were healed and hope began to revive.

Because of "Holy Week" activities, Howard preached Thursday, Friday, and Resurrection Sunday morning, reminding the people that only Jesus Christ was their living Savior and their source of hope regardless of outward circumstances. We discovered that Logos Church has been praying for us at every service since we left Romania to go to the Philippines five years ago. The Holy Spirit showed us how their prayers (together with yours) had been a major reason for the victories we had experienced on Mindanao. The pastor of Logos Church introduced us as Romanian missionaries to the Philippines who just happened to be Americans. On Sunday evening, he asked us to share our slide presentation about what God has been doing on Mindanao. The people at Logos were deeply touched to see what God has done in response to their prayers.

Then the most incredible thing happened. Some dear friends of ours came up to us after the service. They said, "We want to help your work in the Philippines", and handed us 4,000,000 lei (about \$120)! We were overwhelmed and humbled by their sacrifice. The following Thursday, Howard thanked the congregation as a whole for their generosity in the midst of their financial struggles. When he did that, something broke in the heavenlies. Another person came forward after church and gave us 100 Euros. Then another 100 Euros! Every time Howard preached, he would thank the people for their overwhelming generosity. It only caused them to give even more. Then the anointing and presence of God would increase until there was an open heaven over the city.

Members of the church began to share how neighbors and friends began asking them the reason for their sense of hope and joy and how easily they were able to lead these people to receive Christ as Savior. The Holy Spirit used the needs of new Believers halfway around the world to remind the Romanian Believers that hope and blessings have very little to do with material possessions and very much to do with having a heart filled with love for God and compassion for a hurting world. Through their sacrificial giving, God restored hope to the hearts of the Romanian Believers and that hope became a magnet drawing the lost to Christ as Savior and Lord.

By the time we left Romania to return to America a month later, the Romanian Believers had given more than \$1,000 for the work in the Philippines. Based on their average salaries, it would be like a church in America giving \$10,000! Their giving created such an open heaven that the presence of God filled the sanctuary and hope was radiating from the lives of Believers as they went about their daily lives. That hope in the midst of hopelessness was like a bright light shining in the darkness and hurting hearts were finding salvation in Christ.

Revival is coming to Romania. Nothing can stop it as long as the Believers draw closer to Jesus Christ and find in Him that hope that is an anchor regardless of the storm. Yes, there are difficult days ahead, but the same God who protected them in the past will continue to make them more than conquerors through Him.

CONTINUED BREAKTHROUGH ON MINDANAO

God is continuing to move on Mindanao in response to your prayers since our visit in March and early April. We have completed the paperwork to purchase the headquarters building in Tagum City. The final purchase price was only \$15,000. The down payment has already been made and monthly payments are just \$300 a month for 36 months. God is so good!

The new church in Kapalong is finished and work has already begun on the new church in Calabab. The foundation is currently being laid for the expansion of the church in Uraya as well. More than 50 students have enrolled in our Bible school to be trained as pastors and church planters.

God even sent us an unexpected blessing. Datu Oscar, the head chieftain of the Talaingod tribe, contacted Pastor Allan Asang, our Filipino Director. He told Pastor Allan that he had been given an opportunity to buy a low mileage 2000 Mitsubishi 4X4 diesel van for just \$3,000 but he didn't need it because he already had a car. So he asked the company involved to sell it to Church Triumphant instead. So we were able to buy a \$15,000 van for just \$3,000! This means we will no longer have to rent a van for transportation to and from the airport or, more importantly, to take ministry teams to our churches in remote villages at the end of the roads. What a wonderful tool for evangelism.

God is on the move in response to the prayers of His people. We can look at our circumstances and become frustrated because things are not going the way we think they should. Or we can look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who is at work in our circumstances to draw us closer to Him so that in Him, we also can experience breakthrough and become more than conquerors for His glory. Thank you for your love and support through your prayers and faithful giving. God bless you abundantly.