

Chapter 32

Romania



Paul and Judy Wakefield (UK) have been visiting Romania since 1992. They were initially part of a team invited by Romanian Baptist Pastor Marcel Cordos to conduct ministry in his city of Cluj. After that experience, they used their holiday leave and also took time off work to travel there several times every year with their children, Andrew and Rebecca. Their passion for Romania and its people steadily grew. They also realized that Romanians were searching for something to fill a void that was left following the demise of Nicolae Ceaușescu and communism. They knew that there was only one way to fill that void: with the love of Jesus. They could see that the people were struggling to survive physically, so they decided to do something about that as well. They started by telling friends about Romania and organized them into groups, collecting items for delivery to these very needy people. In addition to all this was an ever-growing sense that the Lord was calling them into this work full-time.



PAUL & JULIE WAKEFIELD

Their passion for the country and its people steadily grew. On one of their trips, they met Constantin Rodila, president of the Association of Baptist Sunday School Teachers in Cluj. This man became the doorway by which a more permanent ministry could be established. Soon, training Sunday school teachers across Romania and working with folks such as Delia Mihaltan and others were underway. People were being taught to use the sketchboard, puppet ministry, and other methods for children's work. In 2004, our OAC International leadership officially voted to recognize this field of ministry as OAC Romania! In God's timing, an opportunity came to purchase some property in Somesu Rece and turn it into a Christian camp (Bethany Camp). This became a center for holding evangelism training seminars. In September 2012, construction began on a new building on the property to house a dining/kitchen area on the ground floor and bedrooms and bathrooms on the first floor.

One of those attending the early training seminars was Traian Opruta. He and his wife, Lidia, eventually joined the OAC staff. Traian's dad is a retired injection pump engineer, and his mom works for a clothing manufacturer. He has a married brother, Horea, five years his senior. Traian says, "I have been going to church since I was four years old. My mum told me that she was going to take me somewhere special; that place was the church. At 12, I started going to Sunday school regularly; church was part of my life; it



TRAIAN & LIDIA OPRUTA

was routine. I started mandolin lessons and got involved with the orchestra. I didn't really like it, but I can see now that it was the way the Lord kept me attending regularly. Right up to the age of 17, the orchestra was a big part of my life. I used to pray before school every morning and read my Bible from time to time because that was the thing to do. Things went on like that until July 19, 1998. It was then, at a baptism service, that I realized the importance of having a relationship with Jesus. Before that Bible study and praying was something to brag about and be proud of, even if it was a bit of a struggle. Everything changed that

night. When I returned home, I told my mum, but she said that she already knew because she had been praying for me and was expecting the Lord to meet with me! It was then that I started my personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and on January 3, 1999, I was baptized. Unfortunately, I wasn't encouraged to join a Bible-study group until six months later, so I didn't realize the importance of reading the Bible until then. But as time went on, my relationship with God began to grow. The following July, I was able to go to Bethany Camp with the puppet team, and I met Paul and Julie Wakefield. They invited me to England to take part in their Christmas puppet tour, so I went and stayed for two months. I arrived in England without really knowing what God was doing. I remember thinking, 'What's the purpose of all this?'



TRAIAN AT AN OPEN-AIR IN CLUJ NAPOCA

"However, over a period of time through Bible study and listening to sermons, God began to speak to me about actually getting involved in ministry, and I can remember saying to Him at the time, 'I can't do it; I don't know what to do.' But the Lord said, 'Trust Me – do what you did before.' He meant the puppets were the key, and I became the church puppet team leader, as well as a full-time staff evangelist with OAC.



DRAMA TEAM AT AN OPEN-AIR MEETING FOR CHILDREN IN TIMISOARA

"Taking Him at His word, I tried to get appointments to go into the kindergartens in Alba Iulia; people said I had no chance. God knows of no such barriers, and He opened the doors that people said couldn't be opened. Since then, God has been working miraculously in my life and ministry. Door after door has been opened, and now we are regular visitors in all the kindergartens in Alba Iulia. We even go into

schools on a regular basis. But we are praying for more. I have learned how to use the sketchboard, and I use it with the puppets.

“When Paul asked me to arrange the first open-air, I again thought, ‘I can’t do that; I have to see the mayor and get permission.’ But I did and it happened! Permission was granted, and the mayor even sent some bodyguards to protect us. It was amazing! We now have regular open-airs in the middle of Alba Iulia. So now, with God’s help, I am really looking forward to serving the Lord full-time with OAC and helping to develop the organization here in Romania.”

Lidia writes, “I grew up in a Christian family, and ever since I can remember, my life had more or less to do with church; that is, church, not God. My brother, sister, and I were regular attendees. In Sunday school, I always tried to impress my teachers and friends with my extensive Bible knowledge, but I never allowed it to change my life; I did not give God any chances. My heart was totally closed for Him. But still, He did not give up on me.

“When I was 16, I went to an evangelistic meeting in the cultural house in Alba Iulia, and that was when the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to the terrible sin in my life. That’s when I knew that no amount of Bible knowledge was going to get me into heaven. I had to give my life to Jesus, and that’s what I did that evening at home.

“Both my parents have jobs that require stressful physical work (my father, Ioan, is a printer and my mother, Ana, works in a china factory), and that’s why they encouraged me to study as hard as possible to make something of my life. During my three years in high school, I studied mathematics and physics, changing to social sciences in my final year. I graduated second in my class.

“In university, I studied Romanian and English; I planned to become a teacher. All through university, I served God with OAC, being part of the puppet team and a children’s club leader. I would always check my day’s timetable and decide what lectures I could miss so I could go with Traian and the rest of the team. It was all great, but I viewed it as my way of serving the Lord for that time.



“I was also studying hard to make teaching a possibility. Strange enough, though, God had other plans, and in my third year of university, He unveiled them to me. I was paying really good attention to the lecturer, and God was the last thing on my mind when all of a sudden, I heard a voice saying, ‘You will never do that.’ It was Him. I went back home and decided to dedicate myself to three days of fasting and listening to God in order to know what to do with my life.

He told me to bring knowledge of Him to my country and to do so by continuing the ministry that I was already involved with. I graduated in June 2005, and instead of starting a teaching career, I joined OAC Romania as a full-time staff evangelist.”

Another young Romanian who joined our staff was Cristian (Cristi) Petrisor. This young man exhibits a genuine desire for evangelism and has been used in partnering with many local churches in outreach activities. Cristi was born into a Christian family. His parents, his brother, and his sisters all attended the local Baptist church. In 1995, his father was killed in an accident while building a new church in his village. His death affected not only the family but the whole village. Everyone came to the funeral.



CRISTIAN (CRISTI) PETRISOR WITH HIS MOM AND SISTERS

Cristi became a Christian in 1996 and was the first person to be baptized in the new building that God provided for the work. He plays keyboard, guitar, accordion, and harmonica, and sings and preaches. He also has an excellent command of the English language and is frequently asked to interpret. During the week, he leads several study groups in and around the University of Cluj, where people can learn what Christians believe. These groups have grown in number, and Cristi has trained many leaders. Several people have given their lives to Jesus.



NEWLY TRAINED STUDENTS PRESENTING A MEMORY VERSE ON THE SKETCHBOARD

Cristi says, “I am excited about the future. One of my options was to go to Bucharest Bible College to study for five years and then start with the evangelism, but people need Jesus Christ now! I am looking forward to working with OAC in Romania and using my gifts to serve the Lord. I have listened to Paul, and he has told me how OAC works. I was with him while the registration process took place, and I am now a full-time staff evangelist. Being able to study the Bible and to evangelize is something that I thought could not happen at the same time.

“As part of OAC Romania, I am involved in open-air, puppet tours in schools, kindergartens, churches, children’s clubs, etc. I also organize our kids’ clubs, kids’ camps, and Sunday school. I have the chance to use my studies by translating ministry resources to be used in Romania.”

The main office of OAC Romania is located in Alba Iulia, and the work is now officially registered in this country as “Organisatia Crestina in Actiune,” which in English means “Christian Organization in Action.” There is also work going on in Vatra Dornei, a potential site that, Lord willing, could operate as a



ONE OF THE FIRST CHILDREN'S OPEN AIRS IN ALBA IULIA, THIS LED TO A WEEKLY KIDS' CLUB WHICH HAS BEEN RUNNING FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS

Christian center with the grounds being used for a variety of evangelistic open-air and related activities. Good relationships have been developed with the local mayors, and our staff has also developed positive relationships with a good number of churches in the area.

The vision of our work in Romania is to train Romanians to reach their homeland for Christ so that they can “Present Christ By All Means Everywhere.”



OUR OAC ROMANIA OFFICE IN ALBA IULIA, ROMANIA



GOD ENABLES US TO DO LOTS OF GREAT TRAINING



ROB AND GAYLE GEORGE IN AN ORPHANAGE NEAR TIMISOARA

