

LIFELINE ROMANIA with CHESTERFORDS AID

Autumn 2019

Registered Charity Number 1061999



Open at last !

After seventeen years of meeting in Cris and Lidia's house, Panciu Baptist Church now has a new purpose-built home of it's own.

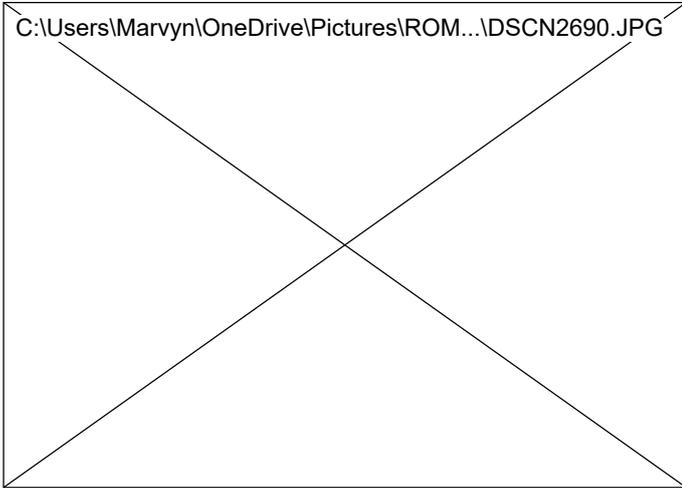
The inauguration service was on Sunday 24th November, 2019, and there were more people than chairs.

The full story of the church construction is on pages 4 and 5.



Who's who?

During the summer we were asked to put a photo of Cris and Lidia in the newsletter, so that everyone can put a face to the name. They have been married nearly 25 years, and running the church since 2002. Cris has



spent the last 4 years studying theology, working from home on a Baptist College course. His son Emanuel did the same course, at the same time, but he lived at the college while he studied. They also have a daughter, Cristina.

In addition to running (and building) the church, they are also involved with the smaller church in Haret, about 5 miles away from Panciu.

Lidia is the manager of our charity shop, a job that she has done for the last 12 years. Cris also helps at the shop sometimes, particularly when furniture needs to be unpacked and assembled. He spends an enormous amount of time doing the paperwork for the shop; every item that we send has to be meticulously recorded before the item can be sold.

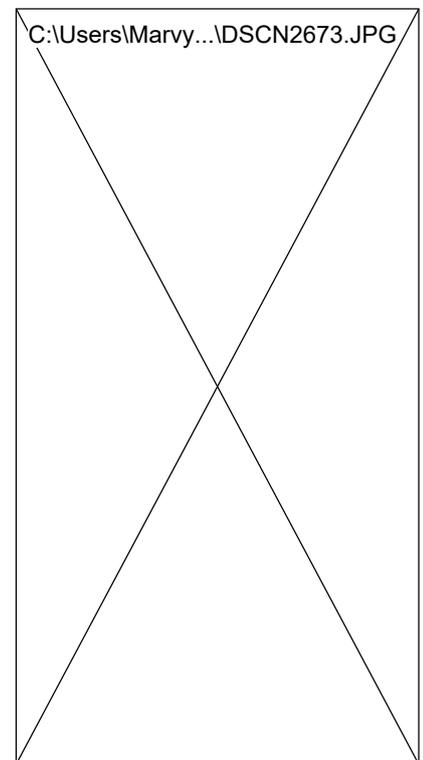
The Romanian charity is called "Calea Viepii România", and has a distribution centre (giving goods to those who can't afford to buy) and a shop in the town of Mărăeoti. Profits from the shop help the poorest people in the town in other ways, e.g. paying medical bills that they can't afford.

The English charity LRCA supplies all the goods to the Romanian charity. It is run by Roger and Marvyn Amos, David Maskell, and Anne Kirkwood, with some help from many other people. We especially appreciate help on the

Disability

Disability is generally seen as a barrier to employment in Romania. Whether partly paralysed, deaf, blind, or anything else, a disabled person rarely has employment. It is often thought that they are incapable of work.

They are not incapable, they just need to find the right job that fits within their capabilities. One man, Cătălin, has turned his disability to an advantage. He was born completely normal, but a vaccination at an early age paralysed his legs. He is not the first Romanian person that we have met with this problem. Strangely enough, the other person disabled due to a vaccination was also called Cătălin. That Cătălin died when he



was 10.

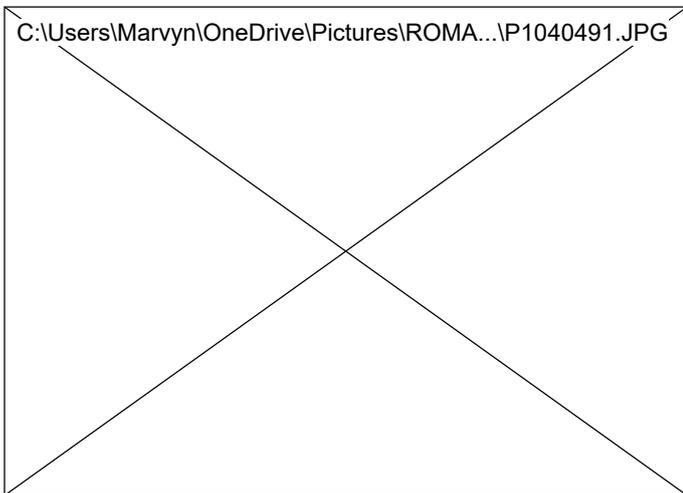
This Cătălin found the perfect job for himself. He works in the building trade, doing all sorts of flooring. He laid thousands of bricks all around the outside of the church, front, back, and sides, up to five metres wide. They were laid perfectly. Anyone else would get a backache in that job, but Cătălin just folds his legs up and gets on with it. He works with his brother, and one day we saw them painting a room. Cătălin sat on the floor and painted as high as he could reach; his brother painted higher up.

We were impressed that he had the will to work,

Poor families from Mărăești

On our first day of giving goods to some of the poorest families in the town, we had 100% attendance; all 18 of the invited families came to our distribution. It is rare to get such good attendance, and there was a bonus – we finished 10 minutes early! Sometimes we finish an hour late.

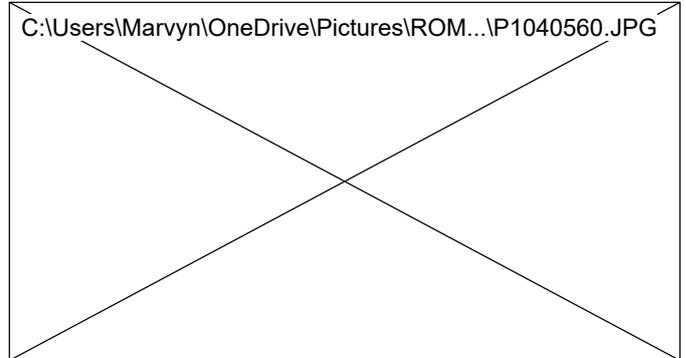
Florinel and his wife **Georgeta** don't even have a proper address. Post is sent to the cemetery where Florinel works, because his house is one of three houses built in a field. There isn't a street, so there isn't an address. Cris drove down there the previous evening, and found the place just before it went dark. There aren't any "street-lights" in a field!



The main reason for inviting this family was their youngest son, Andrei. He had crossed eyes and they were getting worse. An optician had told them Andrei would lose his sight without treatment. A year ago we told the parents that CVR (our Romanian charity) would pay for the eye test, lenses, frames, and anything else that may crop up in connection with his eyes. They didn't take up our offer. In the spring we sent a message to them, still no response. We tried again this time, and visited them again at home (in daylight) and they said they had been "too busy" last year. We repeated the offer. We can't do any more, we are still waiting to see if they will accept our all-expenses-paid offer. We just don't understand people who are too busy to look after their child's eyes.

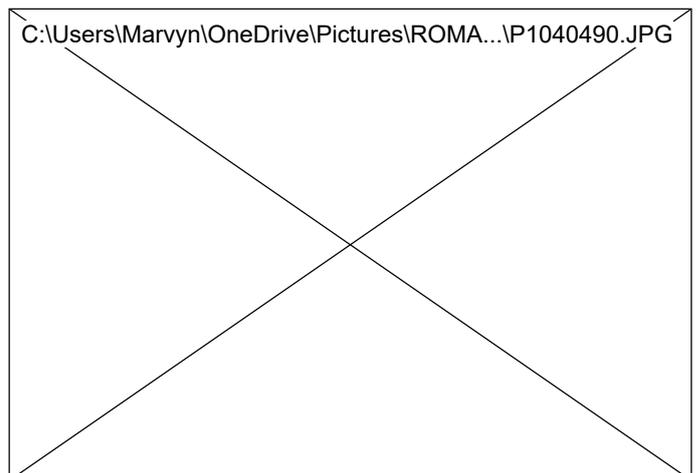
Next, we saw Florinel's brother **Nicu^oor** and his wife, **Marinela** and their 6 children. They are building the third house in the field, but it does

not yet have doors and windows. We were able to give them an exterior door, but we could not get a close look at the house because of a very large (bear-sized) dog that had been left on guard.



We don't normally give goods to grandchildren although occasionally grandparents ask for clothes for grandchildren, nephews, nieces, and numerous other relatives! We made an exception for **Vasilica** and **Titel**. Vasilica brought their 4-year-old grand-daughter, and said that there were another four grandchildren at school. All five grandchildren lived permanently with the grandparents. The parents of the five children had divorced, and neither parent was willing to take responsibility for the children. Vasilica took clothes for all the grandchildren, shoes for the one who came, and she chose to take a small bedside cabinet and 2 chairs. Many families don't possess any chairs.

Vasile and **Lenupa** had 5 children, and the entire family lived in a 20-foot by 8-foot metal container without any plumbing or electricity. The only time they have water indoors is when the roof leaks. We gave Vasile a stepladder so that he can get up to the roof and repair it. They also



From a field to a church

Cris Popa is the minister of Panciu Baptist Church. For over seventeen years, the church has met in his house. They outgrew the first little house, which started to be used in 2002, in a room which was previously Cris and Lidia's bedroom. Cris and Lidia had to sleep on the sofa-bed in the living room for over ten years. The room was far too small, and children often had to



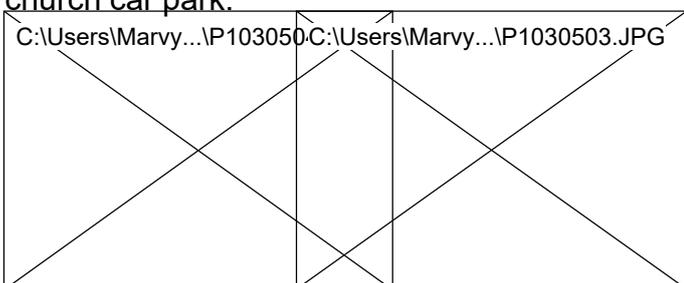
stand up. Anyone who left their seat for a moment, lost it!



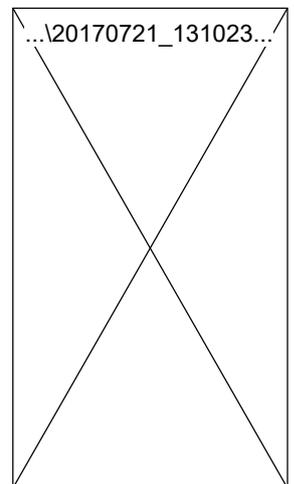
Then Cris built a bigger house, designed to accommodate the church in the largest room. At times, this room has been too small, and people have sat on the stairs. The church also had the disadvantage of being on the edge of the town; many people don't know it is there. Three years ago, Cris had the opportunity to build something better. There was a plot of land near the town centre; it was

The owner of the land went to school with Cris and both of them had remained in that town after leaving school. He was very willing to let Cris buy it, even though he knew he would have to wait for his money. He is still waiting for half of it.

It was just a piece of wasteland that had once had a small mud-brick house on it. The owners had died, and the house fell down. The land was covered with weeds. Some American Christians gave Cris enough money to buy about half the land. He bought the piece at the left-hand side, and started to build a church. His friend is still waiting for the money for the other half, but he trusts Cris and knows that the money will come. The other half of the land will one day be the church car park.

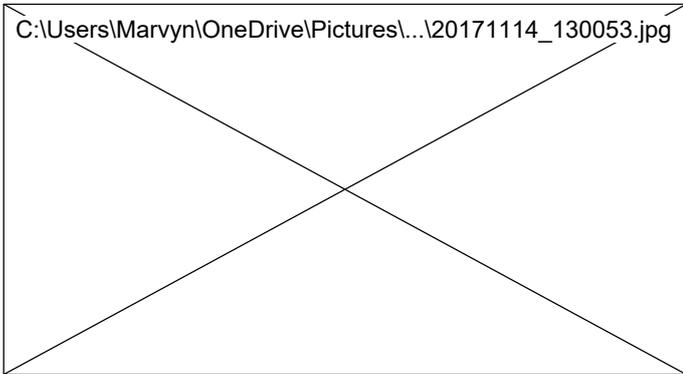


Architects drew up plans, which were initially far too ambitious and expensive to build. After eliminating the proposed basement, and therefore reducing the cost by about half, Cris and some professional builders started work on the place. Foundations were dug and steel reinforcing bars were put in, then the concrete.

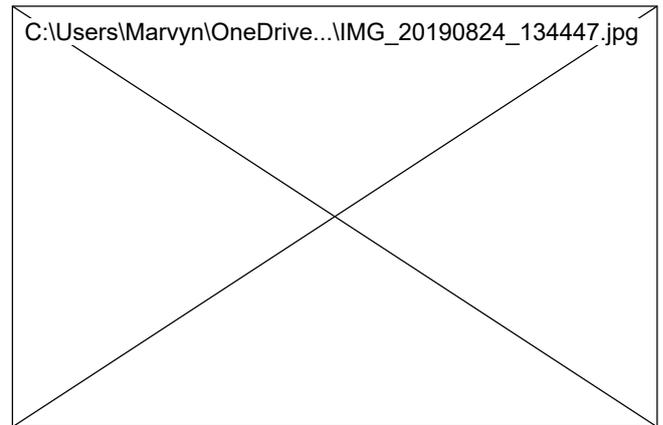


Professional builders were needed for legal reasons. Public buildings can't be built by amateurs, even those who have built their own house. Steel and concrete are necessary – in vast quantities – because Panciu is in an earthquake zone. Since 1940 all large buildings have had to be made with reinforced concrete.

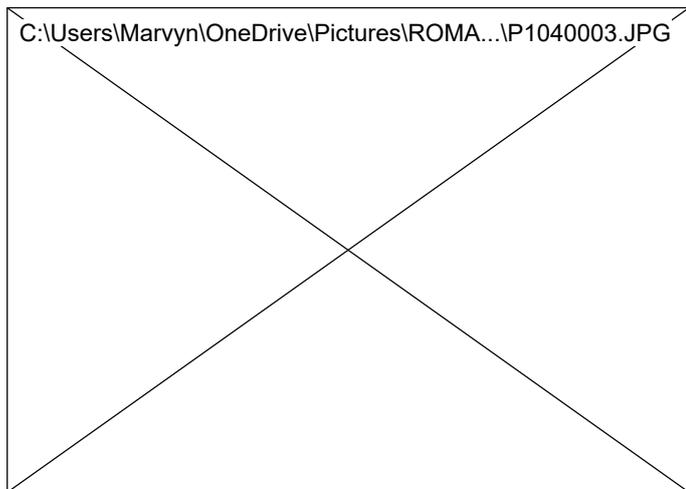
Professional builders are expensive, and so some parts of the work were done by church members to cut costs.



Then the doors and windows and at last the workmen could have some comfort and respite from the cold and sometimes snowy weather. The outside was rendered and painted.



By the autumn of 2016 the walls had started to go up. These were made of bricks, between the reinforced concrete columns.

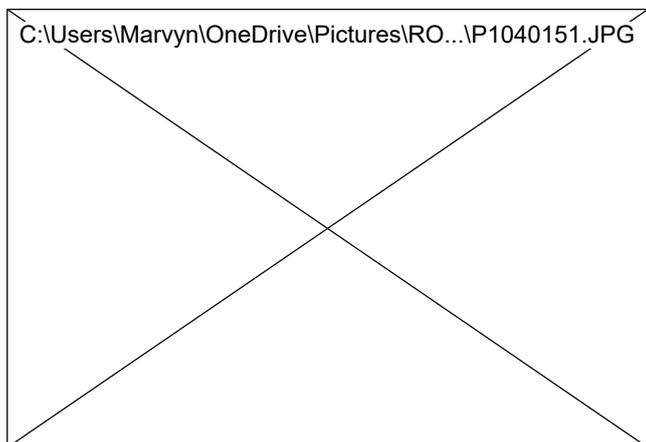


Work continued inside the building, with much plastering, painting, and plumbing. Then carpets.



Slowly the walls went up. Sometimes there was a break in the work due to unavailability of builders or funds. Cris never knew where the next donation would come from. Certainly the people in the church could not afford to contribute much. Quite a lot of it came from LRCA, some from the Romanian American Mission, some from other American and British friends, even the occasional donation from individuals in other countries. God always provided what was needed, a bit at a time.

Finally Cris was able to complete the electrical work, and light up the cross at the front. We had hoped to be at the inauguration service, but in the end it was not possible. The place was packed, and many were not Christians.



Cris was able to tell these people about another cross, long ago, where Jesus had died to save them from their sins. We hope they listened!



The next milestone – the roof went on.

Can you help?

We are planning our next visit to Romania in **April 2020**, but we need the goods as soon as possible, and ideally by the **END OF FEBRUARY**. This allows us time to pack them and complete the paperwork which has to be done before every trip. Please don't leave goods until the last minute. We have more than enough to do in the last few weeks and it really doesn't help if we go there already exhausted!

THESE THINGS CAN BE NEW OR SECONDHAND.....

Bags – shopping bags, rucksacks, holdalls, transparent plastic bags.

Beds – single, bunk, cot, sofa-bed, Z-bed – *must be clean and in good condition*. No double or king-size beds please.

Bedding – single and double, but double size is especially welcome because we never get enough of it. Sheets, especially flat sheets, pillows and pillow-cases, blankets, duvets, and duvet covers. Must be clean. No cot bedding; they don't have cots.

Boots, shoes, slippers, sandals – if used, must be sturdy, very clean and in good condition.

Building materials – doors, small windows, roofing, wood, and other simple materials for building houses. Also basic tools.

Paint.

Clothes for adults – all sorts! Costume jewellery.

Must be clean and in good condition.

Clothes for children over 3 years old – WE NEVER GET ENOUGH CLOTHES FOR CHILDREN!

Educational goods – exercise books, pencils, pens, crayons.

Furniture – small furniture is sometimes useful; please phone and ask us because some furniture is not useful in

Romania, and some does not travel well. Cupboards, chests of drawers, dining chairs and tables are needed.

Household goods – crockery, cutlery, saucepans (especially BIG pans), towels, rugs, irons, mirrors, clocks, spindriers, etc.

Anything electrical must be in perfect working order.

Christmas trees & decorations.

Mattresses – Standard sizes. Must be clean and in good condition.

Medical – wheelchairs, crutches, zimmer frames, walking sticks, plasters, bandages. *We can't take any kind of*

tablets, medicines, creams, etc. Ear

defenders.

Money – without this, we cannot pay for the lorry to take all the other goods. Cash, cheques, (payable to LRCA), trust-fund vouchers etc.. If you are a tax-payer we can

reclaim a further 25% of your donation from the Inland Revenue at no extra cost to you.

Socks and tights – we never get enough to meet the needs.

Toys for children over 3 years old –

Nothing that requires a knowledge of the English language.

Educational toys are particularly useful.

Must be clean, complete and in working order.

THESE THINGS MUST BE NEW.....

Clothes for children under 3 years old

Toiletries – basic toiletries only. Soap, shampoo, conditioner, toilet rolls, sanitary towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes. **NO**

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LRCA Committee

Chairman	Roger Amos
Vice-chairman	Dave Maskell
Secretary	Marvyn Amos
Minutes Secretary	Anne Kirkwood

Clean, please!

All bedding is packed at our home; we have no other place large enough or clean enough to pack it. Please do not give us bedding that your dog, cat, or any other animal has been in contact with. Some of the donated bedding smells dreadful, and we really don't appreciate that in our living-room. We always give the people in Romania **CLEAN** bedding and clothes, ready for use. Most people don't have a washing machine.

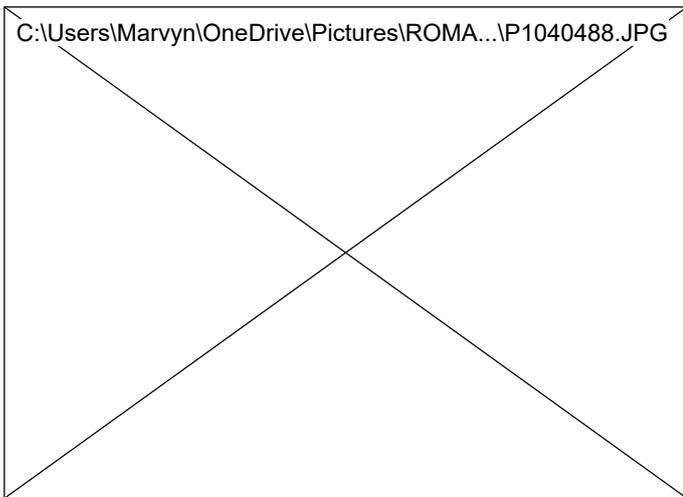
Babies are rarely met in Romania. Fewer are being born than there were many years ago. For this reason we can't use large quantities of baby knitwear. If you want to knit, please knit for school-age children... they really need it!



Fire!

All eight children came with **Daniela**, but Dad (**Ionipă**) stayed at home to work on their new house. The family had a rude awakening in the middle of a summer night, when a neighbour arrived at their door, shouting and banging. He had noticed flames coming from their roof. They were all left on the street in their night attire as the flames consumed the house and contents. The walls were still standing, but the roof had gone. An investigation by the fire authorities concluded that someone had dropped a cigarette onto a pile of straw. Why they had a pile of straw in the house is a mystery.

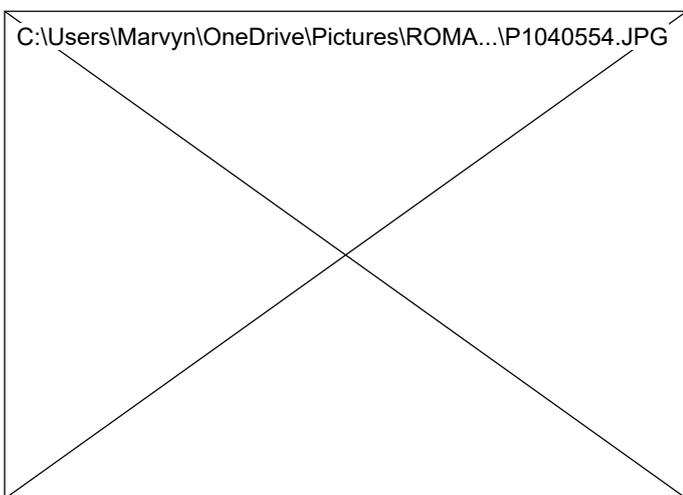
be put up by friends or relatives. Their solution was to find some scrap metal and build a shack next to the house. I think the shack was windowless, and may not have even had a door. It was just a roof over their head. A generous neighbour donated a double bed and all ten people slept in it, sideways on, like sardines in a tin. It was summer, so they could be outdoors all day, but they worried about what to do when the winter came, if the new house was not finished. There was an unusual solution to this problem; Daniela's uncle died so they moved out of the shack and into his house, until theirs is completed.



They needed beds, but we were a bit short of beds and they were rationed; no more than one per family. We gave one, and told them to come back on Saturday, when we had finished. Then they could "hoover up" any furniture left over. It disposed of our excess, and helped them, they were glad of anything.

Fires are common in Romania, especially among the poorer families. Often they are due to carelessness or electrical faults. People won't call an electrician, they will do the job themselves, do it wrongly, and a fire is the result.

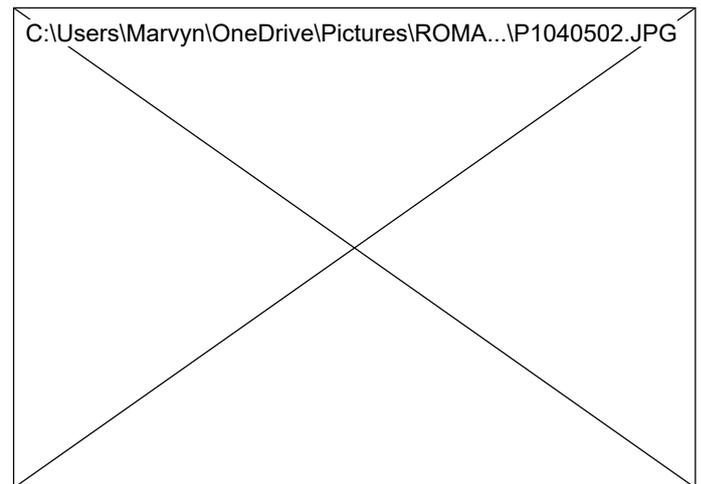
The parents are not married, and not Christians, but some Christian friends are helping them to rebuild. They are helping with the work, and the finance, so they will eventually have a much better house than they had before, but still too small for ten people.



The neighbour who saved them in the night is on the left in this picture.

They had a dilemma. A family of 10 cannot easily

Changed by God



Vizuca suffers from ankylosing spondylitis and is bent double and unable to work. We met the family 10 years ago, but found them to be dishonest. This time they were nominated by the minister of their church. They had recently become Christians, got married, and were about to be baptised. Vizuca apologised for his behaviour all those years ago.

Helping the local pensioners at Christmas

Every Christmas, we help some of the local pensioners. Every other charity seems to concentrate on children at Christmas, but we do something different! Pensioners are often forgotten, and on their small pensions, it is hard to make ends meet. Pensions are dependent on their work record. In Communist times – up to 30 years ago – everyone was compelled to work, the only exception being ladies with a child under 2 years old.

Some ladies had a lot of children, at two-year intervals, so they did not work. They are now paying the price for that, and receiving a very low pension. Some will get help from their children, but not all.

Most of the pensioners in this area had horrible jobs. There wasn't any attempt to match the job to a person's interests. Local people mainly worked in the chemical factory, or the glass bottle factory. Both of these places have now been demolished.

Some pensioners had an interesting story. Mrs Grecu (Grecu means "The Greek") lived in the next county. Before meeting her future husband, she had to meet his father. She and the prospective father-in-law had a long talk, and the next day she moved to Mărăești and married! A whirlwind courtship, but she is now a widow.

Mrs Linguraru was widowed at the age of 39. She has many health problems, being diabetic, having hepatitis C, and she was born with only one kidney.

Mrs Linguraru never married again, and supplemented her meagre income by making wooden spoons at home, and selling them. This was a very common thing among the gipsy people. It was an apt occupation for this lady, because one of the meanings of her surname is "the maker of spoons". The alternative meaning is the less elegant term, "the shoveller".



Many of the pensioners had health problems, and a lot of them rely on their children to pay their medical bills. Some of the illnesses were hepatitis, high blood pressure, diabetes, and at least one had a pacemaker.

They were all offered clothes, walking aids if needed, bedding, and toiletries. A few received shoes, but the thing that appealed to them most was a new bucket filled with an assortment of food. We give mainly basic essentials, but we always put luxuries on top – bananas and oranges. They can't afford to buy these things.

