

OPERATION CHRISTMAS LOVE 2011

mission without borders. Australia



Dear Supporters of Mission Without Borders,



Vasile's health affects his ability to provide for his family

This month I would like to invite you on a journey. It will be an emotional one. You will need to dress warmly, you won't have access to a clean, flushing toilet, poverty will be everywhere you look, but you will see into a family's life, albeit briefly, and I have no doubt you will be changed.

This journey is special. You won't need a passport or Moldovan visa; just take the time to stop, find a quiet place, close your eyes and imagine joining me on this special visit.

As we travel down the bumpy Moldovan road, our van skates over the ice. Most of us, more accustomed to hot and dusty Australian roads, wonder how the locals negotiate these roads when told snow and ice blanket the ground for more than half the year. Some of us close our eyes as we dodge animals wandering across the road. We remark to one another that the donkey and cart have long disappeared from the Australian landscape but are obviously an essential part of life for many rural, Moldovan families.

We finally arrive at a small home at the end of the bumpy road. Most of us would more aptly describe this home as a hut or hovel. We are told a family of 7 lives there and they are expecting us. As we approach the front door, we cannot but help take note of the large cracks in this clay home, the cracked windows that would let the cold in... and the front door that does not shut properly. With a makeshift roof we can only begin to imagine the amount of snow and rain that must leak in. Rather than prepare to take our warm coats, scarves, hats and boots off as we enter the home,

we remove our boots to be polite, but decide to stay rugged up as we enter their chilly home. The dampness and musty smell is overpowering. However, despite their obvious poverty, their simple home is tidy.

As Vasile and Valentina begin to share their story, the weariness and heavy burdens are etched on their faces. Day in, day out, their struggles threaten to overwhelm them. Birthdays and Christmas are never celebrated as providing basic food is often out of reach. Their 3-room house does not have running water, there is only a make-shift kitchen in the hallway, they have no bathroom, a pit toilet is located across the snow covered yard and the family looks like they are both sleeping and living in just one room of their home as that is all they can afford to heat. There are two beds, one for the parents, one for three of the children, with the youngest two sleeping in a cot and pram.



We delivered Christmas today

We notice Vasile is not well. It is explained that as a young child he suffered a severe case of pneumonia. It remained untreated because of their poverty. The residual effects of the illness significantly and permanently damaged his nervous system. Finding casual work during the long harsh winters is hard enough, but Vasile's fragile health means he cannot leave their home when the temperature is at or below zero, leaving the family with next to no income. The family has no choice but try to survive on \$25/month, which is the government social security benefit for their youngest child.

Vasile is keen to share about growing up in a hardworking family of 8. Vasile's family was well-respected and always hardworking.



Their home lets the cold, harsh weather in

His father was a pig feeder and his mother worked on the Kolkhoz (the collective farms during communist times). However, 20 years ago, when democracy arrived in Moldova, the collective farms closed, plunging this already humble family into long term unemployment and crippling poverty. Vasile dreamt of following in his father's footsteps as a tractor driver, but the damage to his nervous system means he can never safely manage heavy machinery. Over the years, periodic hospitalisation and treatment have been recommended to maintain a reasonable level of health and function, but with next to no income, he simply cannot afford to go to hospital to access treatment.

Valentina then shares about growing up in a loving, simple family. Both parents worked in a Kolkhoz and after the Soviet Union collapsed, her parents became unemployed. When she contemplates her upbringing, she is saddened her childhood dream has remained unfulfilled. "Growing up, my dream was to study and qualify as a chef, but my parents could not afford to pay for my studies. But I knew we were poor so I didn't want to bother my parents and make them feel bad they were unable to support my studies," said Valentina.

Despite their simple upbringings, it is Vasile's and Valentina's dream to have a happy, loving home. They know they will never be wealthy, but are determined to raise a stable, loving family. As the youngest brother of 6 children, Vasile's parents gifted the family home to Vasile and his young family. However, in 2006, their lives were threatened, they nearly lost everything and their hopes and dreams were dealt serious blows. One night, for reasons unknown, Vasile's drunken brothers set fire to their home while everyone was asleep. Thankfully, Vasile smelt the smoke and was able to wake up and evacuate his family. The fire destroyed most of the home and all of their possessions. With next to no income, they have not had the resources to repair a lot of the damage done on that night.

Their inability to recover from this tragedy and provide for the basic needs of their young family, means the family not only misses out on food, clothing and heating, but their children are at a distinct educational disadvantage. Their eldest child, seven year old Silvia, is due to start school this year. Official primary school does not start until age seven in Eastern Europe. Because of this late start, preschool is absolutely vital. Without it, students start behind their peers and many never catch up. Unfortunately, Vasile and Valentina cannot afford preschool for Silvia and it looks like

the same scenario is going to affect her younger siblings. "I would so much like to go to preschool, but my mum says we don't have the money. I would love to meet other children. A neighbour told me what they do and that there are lots of nice toys, such as dolls and cars. We don't have toys because we don't have enough money. I have always wanted a doll, but would never dare tell my parents as I know they are trying their best to provide food for us..."

As we visit the Dimitrov family today we are all in agreement that it is going to be very difficult to affect long-term lasting change without good education for their children.

Our visit today was to bring Christmas cheer into their simple home. As we present the 'Operation Christmas Love' (OCL) boxes, they are ripped open with much excitement! It is the first time they have received this 'love in a box'. Valentina grasps the oil

"We cannot find the right words to express how blessed we feel."

and flour and talks of baking cookies and a cake. She is relieved to discover the canned meat and vegetables and the children are wide-eyed as they are handed sweets, unheard of luxuries in their home. Thanks to the OCL boxes, the Dimitrov family has been encouraged that they are not forgotten, even during the most difficult times. They see that God is with them and watching over them. What's more, the Dimitrov's are encouraged that generous people, who we represent today, have thought of them and want to convey their love and care through these gifts. "We cannot find the right words to express how blessed we feel. It is such an encouragement for us to be helped by Mission Without Borders. All the food products you have given us are very useful for our family and such a surprise!" shared Vasile.

As we leave the simple home of the Dimitrov family, we could leave feeling downcast and overwhelmed by the hard road ahead of them, but we are buoyed to discover they were recently enrolled in our Family-to-Family program. They will now receive regular food and hygiene parcels, emotional and spiritual support. Our field staff will do their best to ensure schooling remains a priority and the very fact that we dared enter their simple home has helped healed some emotional wounds. It is so often the testimony of poverty stricken families that people never visit the very poor and would rather pretend they don't exist...



Thanks for taking the time to imagine coming on a journey with me to visit this poor Moldovan family. I hope it serves as a reminder of what the poor endure, but most importantly the impact we can have if we all work together.



On the eve of Christmas, we want to once again deliver 30,000 Operation Christmas Love boxes to needy people in our six field countries of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. Families, the elderly, disabled and staff of Children's Homes who are so poorly paid will benefit. Each OCL box weighs approximately twelve kilos and contains a mixture of items, such as oil, tea/coffee, tinned vegetables, tinned meat, sugar, flour, pasta, rice, national celebration delicacies and Christmas literature that show the families we serve that the real hope for Christmas is not for a feast or a tree laden with gifts, but hope through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Items that we might consider mere incidentals and not worth pondering, are often dreamt of, prayed for, luxury items they simply do without for much of the year. Your gift today will ensure these items grace

their tables this Christmas. They will be purchased and packed in our field countries by our staff and large numbers of volunteers from the local churches and delivering them is a highlight for everyone.

Can you help us spread the Christmas cheer again? \$40 is the cost of one Operation Christmas Love box. We will source many of the items locally in our field countries and also hope to compliment the OCL boxes with items donated from companies through 'Gift in Kind'.



The Christian literature is savoured

If you are able, please visit our website – www.mwb.org.au to see the movies about Operation Christmas Love and the Dimitrov family – you will be challenged, encouraged and inspired. Further movies will be loaded in the coming

weeks and months that will show the packing of the OCL boxes and deliveries in our field countries. It is quite a large undertaking and such a highlight for our beneficiaries!

Upcoming Event

MWB Australia Sydney Open Days

Friday 18th and Saturday 19th November - 10am-4pm - 10 Stubbs Street Auburn NSW 2144

We look forward to meeting you and giving you a tour. We will also be giving presentations throughout both days which will encourage and inspire you!

RSVP. There is no need to RSVP unless you are bringing a group.

Sydney Dinner Feedback

Our Sydney dinner on August 13 was a great night of fellowship! We loved catching up with long term donors, meeting new supporters and were really encouraged by people's interest and excitement at what God is doing through our ministry.

Just a few comments from the dinner will hopefully inspire those able to come to our Open Days in Sydney in November.

"Your presentations were great! We loved the videos shown throughout the evening - it was so encouraging to see the need and the happy children. Having the child and family sponsor packs on the table inspired people to think about sponsoring now!" **(Maureen, Hamlyn Terrace)**

"Great food, great company, I loved hearing the stories and the game was fun! The sponsorship information packs on each table were great conversation pieces. We will definitely come to your next event!" **(Toni, Gwandalan)**

"It was a very good overall presentation of the ministries of MWB. It was enlightening for new supporters and finishing off by singing together was great!" **Margery, Enfield.**

For those further afield, a Mission Without Border's dinner is a great way to be inspired about what God is doing as well as the perfect opportunity to introduce friends, family, your church or group to our ministry. We are always on the lookout for supporters willing and able to help us put on events around Australia. Contact us if you would like to help!



'Gift in Kind – Operation Cover Up' Update

Thank you so much for keeping busy to ensure the poor can be warm! We will be sending at least one more container from both Sydney and Melbourne before year's end – you never know we may even manage more than one from each location before the year's out! Many ask when the next containers are leaving. This is hard to gauge as we never know when knitted items are going to arrive or companies are going to bless us with large quantities of their excess stock. Just keep them coming. It is our hope to send as much as we can before the year is over so it will reach our field countries when the weather is at its coldest.



We would like to outline some changes we need to make after discussions with our field countries:

Knitted, Crocheted and handmade items:

- **Blankets – the minimum size of blankets requested is 1.6m x 1.4m**

- These can be knitted by: Size 8 needles, 8-ply yarn, 40 stitch x 80 rows to make 56 squares.
- If you can only contribute a few squares, please send in the squares or talk with a friend about sewing together enough squares for a large blanket.
- If your blankets are smaller than this new size, do not finish them off with an edging, they may be able to be joined with other small blankets or knitted squares.
- When I visited Eastern Europe earlier this year, the size of blanket is actually the minimum of what they would like to receive, so the bigger the better.
- If a backing can be sewn onto the backs of blankets that will provide extra warmth. Do not attempt this unless you are confident to do so. It is not obligatory, but is helpful for those able.

- **Jumpers** – the older children, teenagers and adults are in greatest need and crew neck patterns are most suitable. Make sure the neck size is big enough to fit over someone's head!
- **We do not send the 'AIDS jumpers'.** These are not suitable for Eastern Europe.
- **Scarves, beanies, and bed socks**
- **Knitted Teddy Bears**
- **Patchwork quilts**
- **All items for sewing, embroidery, knitting and craft activities** - material, wool, needles etc.

ALL ITEMS MUST BE NEW (CUSTOMS REGULATIONS WE MUST ADHERE TO)!

COORDINATORS AND COLLECTION POINTS

Please contact our office, or your nearest collection point listed below, to organise getting your donated goods to us in Sydney or Melbourne.

God bless,

Michelle Dorey

Michelle Dorey



David Turner is the Australia-wide Coordinator

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Leila Lydeamore:
33 Ina Close CRAIGMORE SA 5114
Phone: (08) 8255 0092
Email: leila@chariot.net.au

Brisbane, QUEENSLAND

Yasmin Scott:
*** Please note Yasmin's new address for drop-offs.
45 Randall Rd, WYNNUM WEST QLD 4178
Ph: 0402 232 259
(Yasmin requests that items be delivered in boxes wherever possible)

Please Note: You are no longer able to just drop off your donations to Debbi's home!! Please contact her to arrange a time for drop off (now only possible weekends or weekday evenings).

Street Address: 10 Stubbs Street AUBURN NSW 2144
Opening Hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday
Postal Address: PO BOX 7533 SILVERWATER NSW 1811
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