

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf:

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Be reconciled to God." – 2 Corinthians 5:20



Our whole family will be together in the States for the month of August. While we won't be able to see everyone individually, we would love to see you and share some stories, information, and lessons over the past year in Romania. Please join us on Saturday, August 25, from 11:00-1:00 pm for a light lunch, a presentation on Romania, and prayer time. If you are able to make it we would love to see you! [Please RSVP using our evite link](#) so we can plan accordingly for food.

## Community

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." - [Hebrews 10:24-25](#).*

The Bible is all about community. From the very beginning, there was community, as our triune God said, "let **us** create man in **our** image." In the Old Testament, we see God speak a wonderful promise to Abraham. The promise was not that Abraham alone would become great, but that Abraham would be

made into a great people. God would raise up a community to worship him and proclaim his greatness to the world. The New Testament continues the idea by emphasizing the importance of community, calling the church the "body of Christ," the hands and feet of God himself in this world. While many modern Christians find the church outdated, it is difficult to explain how a Christian can be a real Christian apart from community. Independents and isolationists would do well to listen to Cyprian of Carthage who said, "He can no longer have God for his father, who has not the church for his mother." The church community is no mere suggestion. It is an integral part of what makes us God's people. For who can express that which infuses all things with meaning - Love - without being in community with another?

From the moment our family left the States, we were hit hard with illnesses. Our kids had all sorts of fevers and rashes during our month long training in Belgium. The day we were leaving from Belgium for Romania, I threw out my back and we barely made our flight. Not long after we landed in Romania, our kids began getting sick. A fever here. A rash there. Anxiety. Excessive tantrums. A hospital visit. We were bombarded with all sorts of physical attacks, but we managed. God provided and we got through those inconveniences, frustrations, and exhaustions.

But after months and months of illness, a pattern began to emerge. Each time our kids stabilized, Catalina and I would plan a much needed date, or we'd plan a team meeting with our mentors. Wouldn't you know it, each time we were about to engage in some sort of community, our kids got sick that very day. When we invited someone from school over for dinner, or if we invited another family from the church to our home, our kids would inevitably get sick. While we didn't know to keep a log of the pattern then, it became much clearer with the severity of our son, Denton's, illnesses. Denton was hospitalized or taken to the ER six times within the first six months of his life. The first time was the night before my parents left Romania. It was already a rough time for our daughter who had emotional issues relating to separation, and then we added Catalina being apart from us for ten days in the hospital with Denton as my parents left.

Another one of Denton's hospitalizations just so happened to land a day before Catalina's parents left Romania, with the same concerns for our daughter applying here. Catalina didn't get to see her parents for the last two days of their trip, and didn't get to say goodbye. A few weeks later, Denton was also

rushed to the ER in the early morning hours of the very day I was supposed to fly to Greece for a conference on Orthodoxy with our pastor and team leader. I didn't make it to that conference. A few weeks later, Denton had to be taken to the ER again - two days before Elin's big birthday party (which she was very much looking forward to). While we were able to keep Denton from being admitted to the hospital by making twice a day trips there for medication, and we were able to host Elin's birthday party, we weren't able to prepare as well and were holding our breath that he wouldn't have to be admitted until after Elin's party was over.

Denton's most recent ER visit fell on the day before we were scheduled to take our first vacation. Doctors had been prescribing a beach for the salty air and we were exhausted from all of the sickness, so we decided to visit a Romanian beach. We needed this vacation for some sanity and rest, but Denton got sick the day before we were to leave. The other ER visits he had fell on what was supposed to be a date night for us.

A string of coincidences no longer seems to be coincidence. As we look back over our time here in Romania, it is very clear to us that our illnesses have been strategic spiritual attacks.

Through this whole process, it is Denton's safety that ultimately brought us back to the States to seek a resolution. God has helped us to deal with pregnancy, birth, and sicknesses here in Romania, but Denton's persistent and worsening condition gave us a growing and continued concern for his life. While there are a number of reasons we eventually decided on this course of action, there's only one reason we didn't return to the States sooner, and there's only one reason why we don't believe this medical pursuit will keep us from returning to Romania. **Community.** We have been poked and prodded for almost a year now. What began as physical trials very soon became trials that sought to isolate us from our team, from our church, from our friends here in Romania, and from each other (Catalina and I). But we have been blessed with a community that is far more resilient than what the enemy has thrown our way.

As spouses, we continued to communicate with each other and with a counselor we began seeing before moving to Romania. Our team leader and his family blessed us with spur of the moment babysitters and they always

sought our best interest. In fact, our team leader came over during Denton's last breathing ordeal and very lovingly, but firmly said that we should return to the States to stabilize. As he has told us many times, this is not a sprint, it's a marathon. If we don't get stabilized, we're going to sprint ourselves to death. We have always felt like he has our best interest in mind as he follows God. Our church here in Romania has also been a blessing to us, as we have received meals, prayers, and communion in our home when we were too sick to come to church. God has blessed us with a wonderful school, a wonderful kindergarten, and a number of relationships through those communities which have blessed us extraordinarily. And we have been blessed to be supported by the church universal. For such a time as this, MTW has put us through the support raising process. We have numerous churches, families, and individuals who have contacted us, sent us cards, sent us care packages, prayed for us, and loved us from afar all throughout the year. It is only this network of community that has kept us in Romania, and it is only the community of God that will raise us up to return.

In my mind, it's no coincidence that spiritual warfare has surfaced in our lives with our children. Attacks on children tear parents apart. We were told in our initial training that child issues are the number one reason missionaries leave the field. But while child issues may tear missionaries down, I believe it is often the destruction of community which prevents healing and restoration through God's means, his body. Missionaries already experience isolation as they move away from their familiar communities, face difficulties in building new community due to language barriers, new customs, etc. To add on top of this the isolating effects of sickness and worry is just overwhelming.

God is trinity and understands the beauty and blessing of community. It's why he creates it and prescribes it for us. To this we can attest. God has sustained us through his hands and feet - all of you - and will continue to do so. We can't thank you enough for your love, encouragement, support, and prayers, all of which have spurred our healing through the difficulties we have faced. We pray that God would continue to love us and raise us up through you, and we pray that God would provide you with the community you need to heal whatever the enemy throws at you. We pray that your community, of which we are a part, would spur you on towards love and good deeds.

**\*\*For an extended update you can follow the links below:**

## [Medical Update and Return Plan for September 4 July Romanian Course](#)

PLEASE PRAY...

- An elder, his wife, and another missionary in the church run a summer camp for the youth each year. They do a fantastic job and have a great relationship with the kids. Derek had just started helping with the youth back in June and was able to join them for the last day of camp. Please pray that the kids will internalize the biblical lessons and modeling they received at camp last week. Please pray that they will take this teaching home to their parents. As most of these kids and their families do not attend the church, pray that God would use our church leaders and their service to the kids to create community and draw families into the church.
- Continue to pray that our church would find a Romanian pastor. Also pray for our church leadership and congregants who are facing hardship.
- Atticus's operation went well and he's sleeping better. Please pray that his issues continue to clear up post-surgery.
- Elin is still have a hard time with anxiety. Coming Stateside hasn't helped, so please keep her in your prayers.
- Denton's breathing has been consistently better, but there are still a few considerations for planning our return to Romania. Currently we're hoping to fly back as a family on September 4, but we're praying for God to give us and Denton's doctor clear direction as to whether that's what we should do, or if we need to stay here longer. For more information on the reason for this decision, read the medical update blogpost.



Check out this video we watched in my language course about the revolution of Romania in Brasov.



Click on the picture of my Romanian class above for a ten minute lesson on some Romanian grammar.



Top Left: A picture of the church summer camp

Top Right: A beautiful Orthodox Church located in a small, historic village

Bottom Left: Another beautiful Orthodox Church just outside of the [Fagaras](#) fortress

Bottom Right: Catalina and the grandparents getting ready to take the kids to Chick-Fil-A



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

07/18/18 - [The Church, the Church, and the Church](#) by Derek

07/08/18 - [Abortion and Human Rights](#) by Derek

6/17/18 - [Cheap Grace](#) by Derek

Check us out on Facebook! We post on Catalina's ["From Dacula to Transylvania"](#) album so that you can stay up to date with us. You can also follow [our photos on instagram](#) or check out our [video archive](#). But best, of all, you should let us know if you want to join our secret Facebook Group to get more updates!



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