

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." – 2 Corinthians 5:20

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WE MADE IT!

When we left just over two years ago, we were telling you about the Sunday Social meetings our team had started with the young couples of the church. We explained how the word "community" often holds a "communist" connotation, and people are often mistrusting of one another here. Our teammates faithfully continued these meetings, and the group grew in relationship with one another.

Then COVID hit, and two of the three missionary units serving Romania were in the States, and this Romanian church group banded together to work through conflict and grew in leadership of the church. The women continued meeting online for Bible Study and went on a retreat together that bonded them significantly. The men met for Bible Study and leadership training when the Ebbers returned to the field, and two of the young men have taken on more leadership roles in the church.

It has been such a joy for us to return to this community of believers, and we have truly experienced that deep community in just a short time. We were welcomed into tight, long hugs. Two families - one of which we had never met because they began attending the church while we were gone - worked together to move our things into our new apartment. Several families brought us meals as we were settling in. We were invited to dinners and coffee and play dates right away. One young lady specifically told us how much she and her husband want to walk alongside of us and help us; she has come over several times to help watch the children so that I could unpack, organize, and clean. We have already discussed going on double dates and trading off babysitting times so we can each invest in our marriages. The women are continuing Bible Study, and three of us are getting together on Wednesday mornings to do activities with our kids, and the men are playing soccer together on Wednesday nights.

And we have seen how this community mentality has spread to those outside of the church as well. There has been a surge within our church members to help with young girls who are aging out of the orphanages. One young lady, who I will call "Mama," aged out a year ago and quickly discovered she was pregnant. With no family to help, the church has surrounded her with love and care. She now attends our church and is trying to finish her high school degree so she can provide for her and her Baby. As part of this team coming alongside her, we have volunteered to watch Baby two mornings each week so that Mama can finish her degree. (And just when we thought we were done having more children close together, God has provided another precious baby for us to love on in our home!)

We left at the beginning of a new season for our church, and we have come back to see the Lord's faithfulness in helping the community to blossom and flourish. We clearly had nothing to do with it because we were gone, yet the Lord's plan continues with or without us! And since God is a God who shares his blessings, we are overjoyed to be back in Romania again, where God is

letting us be a part of what He himself is doing. Praise be to our kind Father!

Please join us in praying for an explosion of harvest in these coming months. We are praying for Spirit-led boldness to spread the Gospel, evangelize, and bring people into this community, where people are being the hands and feet of Jesus! We are grateful to have left a wonderful Stateside community and stepped into another fantastic Romanian one; it is truly God's mercy to have surrounded us with fellow workers for the Gospel. It is a privilege for us to be here!





Prayer Requests:

- We are still working through the visa process. We were approved for two years by the Ministry of Cults, and we are so excited for this! But unfortunately they entered some of our passport numbers incorrectly, which is causing a setback on going to Immigration. We need the corrected paperwork to be sent in the next two weeks for us to be on track to get our visas in time.

- Pray for the church here! Praise the Lord that several men have stepped into leadership roles, and one young man is preaching occasionally! We still need continued prayers for a full-time Romanian pastor and Romanian worship leaders.

- Pray for Mama M and Baby M (mentioned above) to finish her high school degree and to come to know Jesus as her Savior! Pray for us to have boldness in guiding her to His feet as best we can.

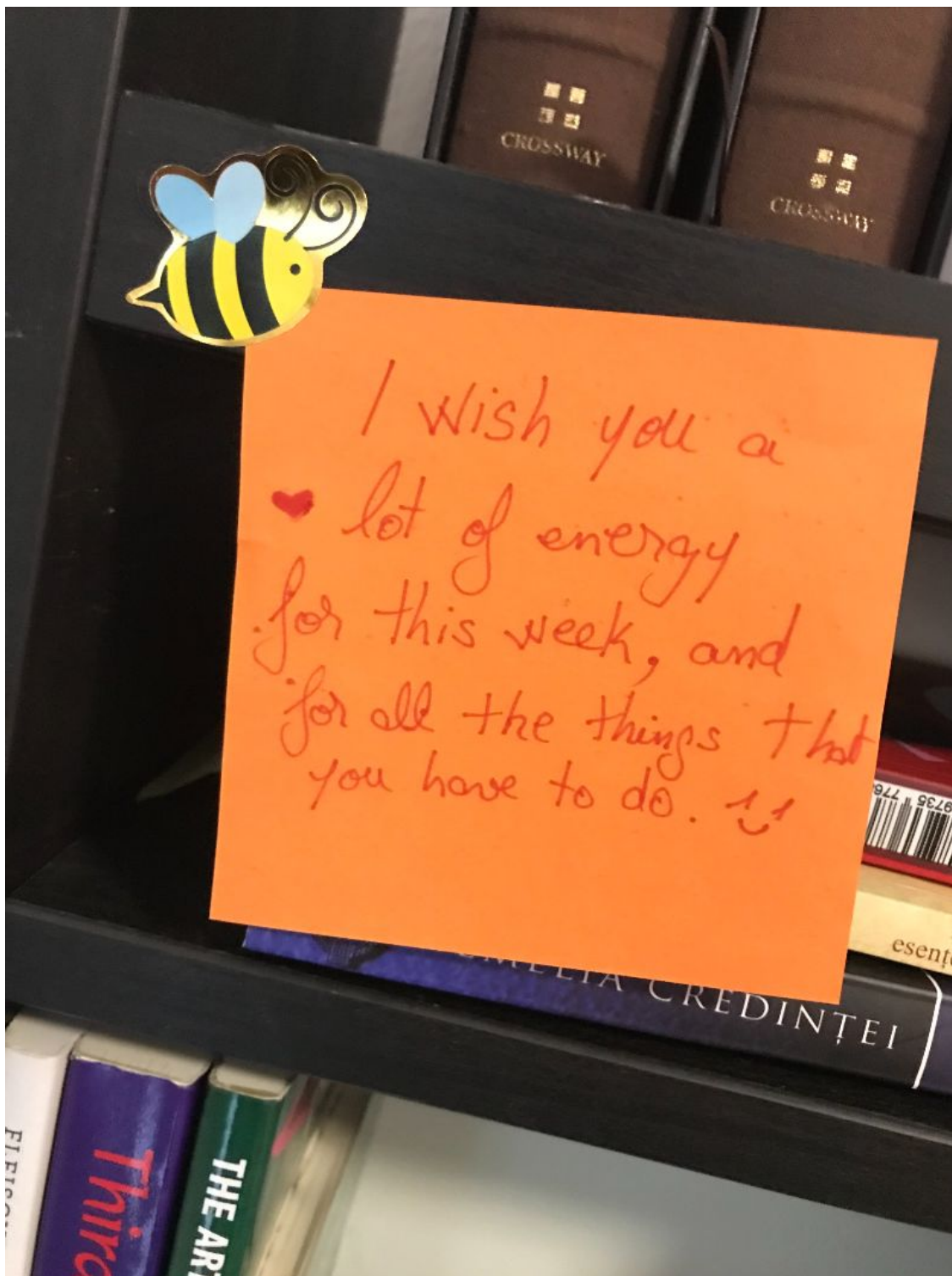
- Please pray for us to be led by the Spirit as He guides us in ministry. We have spent this first month back settling in, making sure our family is whole, reestablishing relationships and routines, and resuming some of our former activities. Derek is back with his Ultimate Frisbee team, participating in the church's Kids Club, helping to clean the church and maintain the church Facebook page, and working on the visa requirements. He'll be leading homeschool on Thursdays so that Catalina can participate in the Women's Bible Study, and he helps care for Baby M. Catalina's main focus is providing stability to the home, leading homeschool, and building relationships with others as a natural overflow of the home. We are praying about what other specific ministry opportunities the Lord wants to bring us to, but we

definitely feel a leading and desire to focus on outreach and bold evangelism to grow the church body.



Our kids are doing really well so far!! It just brings me to tears to even try to tell you how grateful I am! We've had lots of good family time as we've transitioned back here. We've gone on hikes together. They've been loved on by our teammates and church members. We have begun homeschooling, which is a new challenge with Denton and Jemma in the mix. But we're finding our rhythm, and Elin and Atticus are just doing so well! The two oldest have also resumed going to the daycare's after-school program; the same daycare they used to go to as toddlers. They are picking up Romanian, their friends remember them and have welcomed them warmly, and they're enjoying the swim lessons that come with this program! And now these two are finally old

enough to join Derek on Friday nights at our church's Kids Club! One of the biggest blessings I have seen from this is that suddenly I'm getting a glimpse into Team Elin & Atticus that I haven't seen in a long time. Typically the boys now team off and play together, and often Elin is left wanting playmates. But since they've gone to this school together, Elin and Atti's bond has reignited-like old times. And it just gives our hearts such joy! Denton and Jemma are more homebodies and have no interest in going to this daycare or participating in any of the activities, so they get to be at home in the afternoons with lots of puzzles and playdoh time with me! We have been able to pick back up with family routines we haven't had in a long time, and even despite some initial sickness when we first got back, we have been healthy. It feels as though our souls are getting to slowly and cautiously exhale for the first time in several years! Praise be to God for this rest and joy! May we learn to live with these fruits regardless of our outward circumstances!



We're living in a new area and a new apartment now. We are more in the city than before and further from the church, but we're actually a lot closer to most of the church members with young families. We LOVE this apartment!!! We've met a few of our neighbors and brought some fresh-baked blueberry banana bread to them last week with a note and Catalina's phone number. There are two girls who live above us: one is a first year English teacher at an elementary school, and the other is beginning her first year at University to become an English teacher! So we received a great note taped to our door in response, and Catalina has been able to text back and forth a bit with them. We are planning to have them over for dinner soon. Please pray for this to become a Gospel-centered relationship!



The Lord is spoiling us like a doting Father! Our new apartment is on the third floor (with no elevator, so we are meeting our step-count goals every day!). And we have a balcony in every room so that we have a 360 degree view of His creation. From our back porch (outside of the master bedroom), we get to see the sunset over the mountain where we used to live. The church sits in a town (Codlea) at the base of that mountain, and we get to see this beautiful view every night! I have meditated on Psalm 121 many times in the last few years, and this view is a beautiful reminder of His faithfulness to us.

Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;

⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;

⁸ the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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!

Support Account Reminders:

- If you're interested in one-time giving and would rather support projects, we have a project account for the Romanian church which goes towards things like the youth program, elder trainings, etc. The account is **#94978** for the Romania church plant.



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