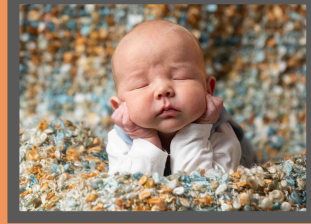
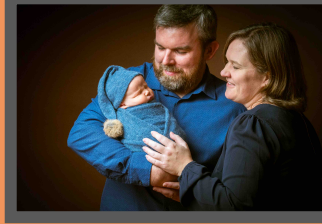




# God Will Strengthen!



joshmandapidgeon.com

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## Please Pray...

» **Praise** God for His many provisions and strength to get through the past few months. **Pray** for wisdom for us and the doctors as we work out the best plan for Zeke's health.

» **Pray** that we will receive all Zeke's ID papers in time for us to travel to Australia.

» **Pray** for Josh as he travels to Albania this week, for wisdom in networking with other Roma workers. **Pray** for Manda as she remains home with the kids.

» **Pray** for preparations for our fourth RWN conference, (20-24 May). **Pray** that God will provide the right helpers for the week and that he'll provide enough sponsorships for workers to attend. **Pray** for the speakers to prepare their workshops well.

» **Pray** for our preparations for our Home Assignment, that we will be able to prioritise well and fit in the various medical checks needed.

## Undeniable peace!...

There is no doubt that since 15th December our family has "been through the wringer." However, as hard as it's been some days, we are amazed at just how much God has provided for our every need, even in ways we never expected. I (Manda) have often found words of comfort in the book of Ephesians, and these past months have again revealed God's truth and steadfastness. Just two verses which have reassured me that I want to share are Eph 3:16-17 (NLT). "I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong." Thank you for upholding our family in prayer and for the many messages of comfort and support we've received- sorry if we haven't replied to every one of them.

## The journey...

I am so thankful that Josh and I were able to attend Isla's end of year gradi performance on 15th December, yet without knowing the changes before us. In fact, just after midnight that night

saw me head by ambulance to the local maternity hospital with the fear that our 'Squeaker' might be coming at only 31 weeks. Following a second scare the doctors said they were not equipped for my situation and that they wanted to transfer me. I cannot express how grateful I am for my doctor, who took it into her own hands to organise for an equipped ambulance (a helicopter wasn't available), with a doctor onboard, for me to make the risky two-and-a-half hour bumpy ride to the hospital in Bucharest, where I stayed for the following week.

Praise God for the provision of an affordable apartment less than a 10 minute drive from the hospital! After I sped past Josh and the girls (and our friend Anca who dropped everything to help) in the ambulance, they arrived sometime later with somewhere to stay, though a day earlier than we had planned to initially arrive. However, on learning that I was safely staying put in the hospital, they returned to Valcea that week, to continue working on submitting our residency permit renewals, for which we had still been waiting on a paper.

Once the applications were in, Josh and the girls returned to Bucharest in time for me to be released from hospital the Friday



before Christmas. Whilst I remained on strict bedrest and Josh took up the load on himself, we are thankful that we were together at the apartment for Christmas and New year. We were also thankful that Anca was able to come just after Christmas and be on standby, before passing the baton to Josh's sister and then another sister, leaving us with only the few days over Christmas without someone with us, another amazing provision and relief, knowing that the girls would be looked after when the need arose. Just after the new year, I had some more scans and my doctor said that she was grateful that I'd made it past the 32 week mark as a safety point. The appointments continued regularly from then before she didn't want to take the risk any further and scheduled me in for a c-section. In her words "In my 30 years of being a doctor, I can tell you it's a miracle you've made it this far."

So, after much angst and waiting, at 35 and a half weeks gestation, Ezekiel Thomas William joined us on the outside. The birth itself was not without complication, and Zeke was whisked away to NICU where he

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." Psalm 139:13-16

remained for the first six days of his life. We are thankful that Josh was able to be with me for the first three days before relieving his sister who had been caring for Isla and Tilly. And, it was a blessing in disguise that Zeke being in NICU allowed me to also focus on my own recovery. We were grateful that

we were able to visit him in his humidicrib, though unfortunately the cuddles had to wait until he was brought to the ward on day 6. After some bonding time and ensuring he was feeding properly etc, we were able to take him 'home' on day eight and for all of us to enjoy being together and having cuddles all round.

After a week of rest at the apartment in Bucharest, obtaining Zeke's birth certificate, and submitting his Australian citizenship application, we made the call to head home to Valcea. This then enabled me to finally submit my residency renewal, though Josh and the girls had already received theirs. Just this morning, we received an email to say Zeke's Australian citizenship has been processed, allowing us to now apply for his passport and then Romanian residency. We particularly ask you to join in praying that these will be received in time for us to come to Australia on Home Assignment from the end of June.

Less than three weeks after arriving home in Valcea, after both Isla and Tilly had caught colds, Zeke started developing a cough. So when we returned to Bucharest to meet with his neonatal doctor for the final time, she told us to take him to the children's hospital to get checked. A few hours later he was admitted with pneumonia, meaning another week-long stay. With another return trip to Valcea to fetch some clothes and supplies for me, Josh returned to Valcea to stay with the girls before another of our dear friends picked Zeke and I up on the day of Isla's 6th birthday party. We made it home an hour before the party was due to start and, again, I'm very thankful I was there to celebrate with Isla on her special day. It really takes a community to raise a family, and we have been assured over and over again in the recent months of just how much we value our local friends here.

# Upcoming Events

Josh attending  
Roma Networks conference  
9-12 April 2024, in Albania.

Rroma-Workers Network,  
Romania Conference,  
20-24 May, 2024.



82% Current Support

We are forever grateful to all who partner with us through your prayers, financial support and encouragement. Please continue to pray that God will provide for our spiritual, mental, physical and ministry needs, and let us know if you'd like to join our partnership team.

[www.pioneers.org.au/give](http://www.pioneers.org.au/give)

## Our Contacts

Our Work Email:  
[jnm.pidgeon@gmail.com](mailto:jnm.pidgeon@gmail.com)

Pioneers:  
PO Box 151  
Forest Hill, VIC 3131  
[www.pioneers.org.au](http://www.pioneers.org.au)  
[info@pioneers.org.au](mailto:info@pioneers.org.au)  
(03) 8814 4444  
1800 78 78 89 (free call)



Photos: Professional Newborn Photos; Ezekiel's birth; A little bit of snow and ice-skating; Isla's piano recital; Isla's 6th Birthday; Josh's sister's visit; Josh's & Manda's birthday bbq



Since coming home we have tried hard to develop a new 'normal', and especially for the girls to return to some routine. They certainly had their own struggles with their limited understanding of what was happening, but we are thankful for our legion of prayers that saw us through.

On 24/25th March, I spent a day and a half in what was Zeke's third hospital, as he underwent numerous tests to investigate a condition on his right lung. We are still waiting on the results from these tests, with a potential operation to remove an extra part. Please pray with us as we step forward in faith, and that God will give us a peace about the best course of action. We know Zeke's life is ultimately in God's hands, and He has certainly shown us that all along the journey so far. We pray that 'God will strengthen' Ezekiel with each step, as his name means.

### Rroma-Workers Network fourth conference...

Despite being on bed rest, dealing with paperwork, hospital trips, and adjusting to being a family of five, we have continued to work on the new version of the RWN website. We are excited that this week we have finally been able to launch the site, and with this also open registrations for workers to attend the conference from 20-24 May. The theme this time is "Building Resilience Together". Please pray with us, with the five speakers, and with the other helpers, that all will come together well and on time. There is still a lot to prepare but we trust that none of this is a surprise to God and that He steps forward with us. We continue to seek two or three people to help look after the children during the week, including someone dedicated to look after Zeke. We also pray that the word will spread about the conference and that God will bring the people He wants to be there.

Unfortunately, our efforts to make the RWN an official Romanian organisation before the conference have taken another step backward, with the local lawyer now saying he can no longer help us. Please pray that we can find the right advocate for what we need, and for all the other factors involved throughout this challenging process.

Will you sponsor a worker to attend this conference? As with our previous conferences, we have quite a few workers who would love to attend but hesitate knowing they can't afford it. Particularly with the rise in the cost of living, and the need for the conference centre to also raise their prices, workers are in need of sponsorships all the more. Please pray about and consider providing for one worker to attend, or perhaps for your Bible Study group to put together to provide a sponsorship. We would love to be able to say yes to these workers but this is something we are trusting God to provide.

### Home Assignment...

As I mentioned, we are planning to come to Australia from the end of June through till the end of August, returning in time for Isla to start big school and Tilly to start gradi. With a tighter schedule this time, we will mostly be in Sydney, with just short of two weeks spent in Melbourne and Phillip Island. Hopefully we'll get to see many of you, even if only at some bigger joint events.

In His Hands,  
Josh, Manda, Isla, Tilly and Zeke

