



Field of Dreams!

Manda Lewis

"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin..." - Zechariah 4:10. It is tempting in life and ministry to think that it is only about the big things we do or achieve that really count. Yet this verse reminds me not to despise the small things that make up a lot of what we do."

These words, written by a friend on Facebook, were exactly what I needed to hear that day.

These past six or so weeks, I have travelled a lot around this beautiful country, driving on newly laid roads as well as some of the most pothole-laden roads I've ever experienced. I can only but apply the Romanian locations to the song:

'I've been everywhere man... Timișoara, Szeged, Arad, Ianova, Jdioara, Corabia, Augustin, Crihalma, Rupea, Crăciunești, Sovata, Aiud, Alba Iulia... and back to Râmnicu Vâlcea!'

Whilst it has been somewhat tiring, I have been encouraged by each meeting with those who work with Roma communities around this amazing country. With each meeting building upon the bigger picture, the need for networking between Roma workers became more apparent. Hearing their personal stories and dreams and struggles, it became more and more obvious that, the somewhere upward of 2 million Roma in Romania, have differing needs in each area, though with many factors still overlapping.

The ministry focuses ranged from

children's and women's ministries, church planting, Bible school training, Bible translation work and whole community transformation and development. The nationalities of the workers also varied, requiring language clarification at times, but I was amazed once more just how much being part of Christ's family overrides such differences.

Thankful for the opportunity to get to Timișoara and catch up with several friends, alongside the networking, I was also blessed to be able to join the celebrations out at Ianova, for the official opening of 'Caleb' - the Boys Home - 13 years in the making! With one of their farm-grown pigs being the *pièce de résistance*, the festivities shouted praise to God for all that had been accomplished through much perseverance! Cerbu and Nadine now continue the search for a couple/family who will take on the role of running the farm and parenting the boys who will live there.

Thank you for your prayers during this busy time, and in particular for safe travel. Driving through villages, especially early mornings and in the evenings, it is common to be halted by herds of cattle, sheep or goats, as they are walked up the streets to and from grazing land. Overtaking horses and their carts, tractors or semi-trailers are also a frequent occurrence and the unknown requires a constant state of being on high alert with quick reflexes. The Dacia has proved a faithful

Please Pray...

» **Praise** God for his guidance with each meeting and **Pray** that He would continue to show us the best way to develop and grow the Roma-Workers Network.

» **Praise** God for smooth travels and that I was able to balance my time of work and of rest. **Pray** for my last few weeks in Vâlcea, that I finish and say goodbye well (at least for now).

» **Praise** God for His faithfulness and provision in so many ways, both with my time in Vâlcea and for my return to Australia.

» **Pray** for Josh and I as we continue to make plans for our wedding and our future together; and for these last few weeks of separation.



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companion thus far and is certainly very economical. The beginning of November saw the enforcement of winter tyres for all vehicles and the necessity of carrying chains for any snow travel. However, I am thankful that I had no need for these, as the week I travelled from Augustin to Aiud, was one of the warmest weeks on record for that time of year. Another blessing indeed!

Alongside each meeting, of course, has meant writing up notes for each Roma-Worker Network- such as a ministry outline, their current limits and their dreams for the ministry. Part of my dream and what I am doing, therefore, is to help link these workers together so that Roma-workers around the country can become more effective in their ministry domains, through whatever means necessary. Many of the workers I have met with to date, have welcomed the network, to assist the development of their respective 'field of dreams', as well as in mutual edification. And, through my own local work in Vâlcea, I am seeing more and more, the great value of working together to see Roma communities transformed by the power of God.

In between all the gaps of meetings and processing etc., I am thankful to have found time to do bits of wedding planning, including the joy of finding a dress, which I was excited to take possession of yesterday. It certainly hasn't been easy to make plans from this side of the world, nor has it been easy to endure the long distance in our relationship for months, but I am ever thankful for Skype and the many people who have supported both Josh and I along the way.

As well as picking up my dress yesterday (20/11), I was very excited to be able to wake up and Skype my family to hear the most precious news that my new niece, Emily Jade Lewis, had arrived safely in the world and that all had gone smoothly for Fiona and my brother Adam. And more so, I am rather glad I will be able to enjoy many cuddles in just a few weeks time, when I get back to Australia.

With my heart and passions feeling the tug-o-war of wanting to be in both Sydney and Romania, I continue to pray that God will show me how these things best work together. I look forward to continuing to see the Roma-Workers Network grow and develop, though remotely through Skype, email and potentially a few shorter trips over the next couple of years, but I also have learnt to expect the unexpected and wait for God's leading for the rest.

When I was on my way to Crăciunești, I found myself having enough time to stop in Sighișoara for a few hours, a town built in the 1200s. As I was walking down the hill through the cemetery, I felt God prompting me to just sit down for a while and watch the show. Whilst I didn't know what I was watching for, a few minutes later a black squirrel appeared in a tree just near me. It proceeded to dash between two trees for at least the half an hour that I watched. During this time I felt God saying to me: 'this squirrel doesn't know exactly what lies ahead but he is ensuring he is prepared for whatever I have planned for him, by carefully selecting individual twigs to take back to the other tree where he is building his nest.' It was then that I breathed a sigh of relief acknowledging again that, as yet, I can only prepare for the future one twig at a time, until God shows me what next. Thank you for continuing to pray with me about my next steps.

In His hands, Manda.

Photos: (front page): driving between Sovata and Aiud; At Alba Iulia; (Above): With Petrica, Laura and Tudor in Timișoara; At the opening of the Boys Home; The stream next to my 'pensiune' in Sovata; walking around Alba Iulia.



UPCOMING EVENTS

**Engagement Party
Sunday 8th February**

~ SAVE THE DATE ~

4th April, 2015

(Easter Saturday)