

COR Newsletter – 24 November 2010



Dear All,

Greetings from the Church of the Resurrection!

This is the first newsletter that I am sending out, and I am aware that the list that I am using is somewhat outdated. If you know of anyone who would expect to receive such newsletters and has not done so, please let me know and I will add the person's current e-mail address to the list. Equally, if you wish to be deleted from the list, for whatever reason, please let me know and I will remove your details.

First of all, I would ask you to pray for my predecessor Martin Jacques as he mourns the sudden death of his wife Alex and also for their daughter Claire. Martin has asked me to say how much he and Claire appreciate the love and sympathy with which they have been surrounded in these tragic circumstances. The Funeral will be held at 1.30 p.m. (GMT) on Friday 26 November 2010 in Gainford Parish Church. It would be good if we all could join together in prayer at that time for Alex, Martin and Claire, wherever we happen to be.

The season of Advent is approaching and there are as usual delights in store for those who visit the Church of the Resurrection. All are welcome to attend these events.

+++ **At 6 p.m. on Wednesday 8th December** the Bucharest Diplomatic Choir will give a **Christmas Concert** in church.+++

+++ **At 10 a.m. on Sunday 12th December** our Sunday School will present a **Nativity Play** during our morning service. The children are now busy rehearsing for this and I am sure that it will be a most enjoyable occasion. All are welcome to attend, particularly children, as we remind ourselves of the true meaning of Christmas. Afterwards there will be a Parish Lunch in *Chez Marie*, the restaurant opposite the church. The cost of the lunch will be 50 RON per adult. There will be no charge for children. If you wish to attend, please either sign the list available in church or inform me by e-mail, in either case by 5th December at the latest, so that we can make appropriate arrangements for the catering. +++

+++ **At 7 p.m. on Wednesday 15th December** we will hold our traditional **Service of Nine Lessons and Carols**. Attending a Carol Service is a wonderful way to prepare ourselves for Christmas and I hope that there will be a good attendance, especially from those who will be away from Bucharest for Christmas itself. The Carol Service will see **the launch of our very own Choir!** (If you would like to have more information about the Choir, please speak to Vicky Tompsett at church or send me an e-mail.) After the service there will be seasonal refreshments. +++

+++ On **Christmas Eve** there will be a celebration of **Midnight Mass at 11.30 p.m.** and on **Christmas Day** there will be a service of **Holy Communion at 10 a.m.** On the following day, Boxing Day or St Stephen's Day, it being a Sunday, there will be the usual service of Holy Communion at 10 a.m. +++

I hope that you will be able to attend some or all of these events, and if you cannot do so, I hope that you will remember us in your prayers. I wait with interest to see what the weather will be like in Bucharest this Christmas. One year in Belgium at the SHAPE NATO Headquarters where I was Anglican Chaplain we had a good attendance at our Christmas services. Those attending the service on the Sunday after Christmas, however, consisted of me, my teenage organist and his younger brother. Snow had fallen and we had walked to church. I offered slightly to shorten the service, but the boys wanted and received the full service with all four hymns and a full sermon. The younger boy requested the full sermon, remarking rather sweetly that "it might be interesting". The American Protestants cancelled their service because of the snow though many of their community and their cars were used to far more snow than Belgium had provided.

In some ways my favourite Christmas service remains one I conducted for a single individual. I was on duty with the United Nations in Bosnia and after celebrating a well-attended Midnight Mass I walked round the camp visiting the sentries. I met one mournful lad from Somerset who had not asked permission to attend the service (which he would certainly have been given) and so found himself on guard-duty. He told me that his parents did not go to church but that he himself always went to Midnight Mass at home and was very sorry to have missed the service. I told him that he was telling this to the right man, as I was a Chaplain with all my church kit on my back. I promptly unpacked and proceeded to celebrate a full Midnight Mass for one soldier in the ruins of a Bosnian bus station. I was very conscious of the presence of the angels and the saints. Later that day I conducted Christmas worship for the local Roman Catholic community in the town (their priest having fled), taking with me an excellent choir recruited from our Norwegian medical unit. Then I boarded a land rover and was driven through the snow round the British outposts to conduct a series of Carol Services for the occupants.

Reminiscing about Christmas has taken me far from Bucharest, but I have been having a busy and interesting time here in my new job. The Church is looking very splendid after its recent redecoration and it now stands proudly in a pedestrianised square. Attendance at church is going up and I enjoy the worship. I am most privileged to have this opportunity to live and work in Bucharest and Sofia. In the Orthodox world I have enjoyed the annual celebrations for St Demetrius the New, patron saint of Bucharest, which this year were graced by visits from The True Cross, preserved in northern Greece, and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Both Cross and Patriarch were formally welcomed to Romania in remarkably similar fashion in the V.I.P. Lounge at the Airport, an elegant touch that might not have happened at Heathrow. I attended a wonderful Liturgy concelebrated by both Patriarchs in Greek and Romanian outside the Patriarchal Cathedral.

I pay monthly visits to Sofia. My last trip coincided by visits from the recently-excavated relics of St John the Baptist and also Mr Putin. I took the opportunity to venerate the bones of the Baptist in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky. So did Mr Putin, but I had the better visit as my arrival coincided with a very splendid Liturgy. I conducted Remembrance Services in British War Cemeteries in Sofia on Sunday and Plovdiv on Monday. In Sofia the British, German, Italian and French War Cemeteries lie beside one another in Sofia City Cemetery, and on Remembrance

Sunday there are four consecutive ceremonies in them. I conducted the British service and then went on to the German ceremony. Next came the Italian ceremony, which the Italian Ambassador began by welcoming us all in English and apologising that he had not provided a priest. Without any warning he turned to me and asked me to provide worship. So I went forward and said appropriate prayers. I was happy to do so.

I hope that you and yours will have a holy and blessed Advent as you prepare for the Great Feast of Christmas.

Best wishes,

Patrick Irwin
Anglican Chaplain in Bucharest and Sofia