



Next Sunday (9th October) we will celebrate our Harvest Festival in the Church of the Resurrection here in Bucharest. You are cordially invited to attend. You may wish to bring non-perishable food (such as tins and pasta) which will be delivered later to the local Casa Ioana charity for the homeless. You are also invited to bring sandwiches, which we will share at lunch after the service.

The past month has been a busy one in the Church of the Resurrection. We marked the tenth anniversary of 9/11 with a service attended by the United States, British, Canadian and Irish Ambassadors. That evening I took a similar service in the Lutheran Stadtkirche in Sibiu. It is sobering to reflect on how much has happened in the world since that day of horror.

From 22nd to 25th September the Eastern Archdeaconry Synod of the Diocese in Europe met for the first time in Romania. This annual gathering of chaplains and lay representatives from Anglican Chaplaincies in central and eastern Europe was held in the beautiful lakeside monastery of Cernica just outside Bucharest. For most of the participants it was their first visit to Romania and they were pleased to have the chance to learn something of the country, the Romanian Orthodox Church, and our own Chaplaincy life. One of the delights of the monastery's Conference Centre was the dining hall's verandah where we ate our meals overlooking the lake. Perfection is not to be expected this side of the Pearly Gates and we shared our meals with a synod of inquisitive wasps, who shared our taste in jam.

On Saturday 24th September we held our annual Summer Garden Party in the Residence of the British Ambassador. Synod members joined members of the local community for a most enjoyable occasion. We were fortunate to have good weather. About one hundred people attended. We are most grateful to our host and to those who worked hard to make the occasion a success. It was a relaxed and friendly occasion, and members of Synod were delighted to meet friends old and new within the Bucharest community.

On Sunday morning the members of Synod joined our congregation for a splendid Eucharist celebrated by Bishop Geoffrey Rowell. This included the confirmation of a member of the Anglican congregation in Skopje. We remembered the Bishop's visit at Easter, which also included confirmation, and those confirmed then were in church on this occasion to see the Bishop again. After lunch together many members of Synod went on the new Bucharest City Tour, a bus tour which enables passengers to get on and off at various points of interest around the city. Some participants visited the Village Museum and the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Others preferred simply to enjoy the sun and sights from the upper deck of the bus. In the evening we attended Vespers sung beautifully by the nuns in Stavropoleos Church. Members of Synod left Romania with many happy memories.

Last Saturday we held a marriage blessing in church. The British guests included Scots and English, but all remained peaceful despite an exciting rugby match between the two nations earlier in the day. On this occasion we were blessed with fine

weather, although the couple's desire to leave church to the strains of an Icelandic song about leaping into puddles might have been seen as tempting fate. On a previous occasion in Bucharest I had had to shout my way through the marriage blessing because of the violence of the storm outside. At the end I gave the blessing and paused to take breath after the mention of the Holy Trinity only to have the silence filled with a tremendous clap of thunder. The bride had been disappointed by the weather but came to appreciate the rare drama of the occasion.

On Sunday we held a baptism at lunchtime. This was a very happy occasion, with the little boy who was baptised clearly fascinated by the lighted candle. Before the service he had been very keen to flip his way through his father's Bible. He was too young to appreciate the content, but clearly had the sense that the Bible was a good and interesting thing. That is more than can be said for some adults! After the service the predominantly Romanian congregation remained happily sitting in their seats as if hoping for a second sermon. I duly obliged with an account of a Greek Orthodox baptism that I had attended on Mount Tabor in the Holy Land. This was enlivened by a vigorous dispute between priest and parents over the temperature of the water in which the baby was to be baptised. I was able to reassure my congregation that I have had no such arguments!

I continue to pay monthly visits to Sofia where I celebrate the Eucharist for our Anglican community in a Roman Catholic chapel. In addition to these services I have also in recent months conducted a marriage blessing and dedicated a war memorial. The wedding reception included my accompanying the American bridegroom in his favourite song, a contemporary French Canadian ditty, and improvising on request a song in German to the tune of Highland Cathedral. The war memorial was erected in the South African Embassy in honour of seven South African airmen killed in World War Two and buried in Sofia.

Services in Bucharest are held on Sundays at 10 a.m. and you are always welcome to attend. The service is a celebration of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) except on the third Sunday in the month when I am in Sofia and Morning Prayer is said instead. (In Sofia the Eucharist is held at 9.30 a.m.) This monthly pattern changes in November, when I will be in Sofia for Remembrance Sunday on 13th November. Both church services, in Bucharest and Sofia, will be held at 9 a.m. on that day, to be followed by ceremonies in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries.

Next year the Britannia Ball will be held on Saturday 3rd March in the Intercontinental Hotel Bucharest. You may well wish to note this date in your diary now. If you have attended these Balls in the past you will already know that they are most enjoyable occasions. If not, here is a chance for you to have a jovial evening and help the Church of the Resurrection at the same time!

Best wishes,

Patrick Irwin
Anglican Chaplain in Bucharest and Sofia