



MY CHURCH

EDITOR'S PREFACE: *The one country that is especially dear to my heart is Romania. I first traveled there in the spring of 1991 and have returned at least twenty-five times over the years. We had so many amazing and miraculous things happen on those trips — I could write a book! Some of these events were in connection with a lay-evangelist by the name of Nicu Butoi, who was sponsored by Laymen Ministries in the 1990s. The following is just one short experience...*

BY JEFF REICH

In the southwestern part of Romania lies the city of Alexandria. One winter, an evangelistic series was being held at the Civic Center in downtown. Nicu Butoi, a lay-evangelist who was sponsored by Laymen Ministries, was the main speaker. Each night the Civic Center was packed, with standing room only. Little did anyone know the series of events that were soon to transpire and who the key players would be in those events.

Not far from the Civic Center a young girl had been walking home from school on a certain afternoon when a car pulled up next to her. Two men in the back seat opened the door and pretended to ask her for directions. When she approached the car, they grabbed her and dragged her into the car.

Kidnappings for the purpose

of human trafficking have been a long-standing problem in Romania. Young girls are kidnapped, drugged, and then taken to Turkey or Bulgaria to work as prostitutes. This problem has been addressed by several international organizations such as the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA).





Laymen Ministries sponsored Nicu Butoi as a lay evangelist in his home country of Romania during the 1990s.

Recently they have called on Romania to step up its efforts to improve the identification of and assistance to victims.

The sad thing about this abduction, besides the basic fact that it happened, was that the girl was an only child of elderly parents. The mother was already a weak, sickly woman, and now with this terrible news, she became even more frail and depressed.

Nevertheless, the parents did what they could. They reported their daughter as a missing person to the police, and that is when they found out what most likely happened to her. It was a terrible blow to them. They made photocopies of her picture and put up posters in the train and bus stations as well as other public areas. The local TV station and newspapers started a campaign to find this girl as well.

Three weeks passed and still the girl had not been found. The police said the chances of finding her were now very unlikely. The situation seemed hopeless.

THE DREAM

It was during the night that the mother woke from a dream — a very unusual dream. In it she heard a voice, clear and distinct, say, “GO TO MY CHURCH!” As she lay there in bed, she thought about how strange the dream was! She had heard of St. Peter’s Church, St. Michael’s Church and St. Mary’s Church. She had even heard of the Baptists and Pentecostals — but she had never heard of “My Church”! It was all so confusing.

She could not sleep, so at the break of dawn, she put on her long wool coat and started walking the cold, snowy streets close to where

she lived. In her mind, she kept thinking about the dream and wondering where, possibly, “My Church” could be?

About that time, a teenage Adventist boy was passing by on the other side of the street. He saw the dear old woman with dark circles under her eyes and deep sadness in her face. Without thinking, he crossed the street and approached the woman. “Mother, why are you so sad?”

“My daughter was kidnapped a few weeks ago,” she whispered in a faint voice.

“Oh! I am so sorry! I have heard about the story on TV and saw the posters,” he sympathized, trying to comfort her. “Why are you out walking around this cold morning?”

She told him about the strange dream she had had that previous night and how she was looking for “My Church.”

“My Church! I know where My Church is!” exclaimed the young boy. “It is at the City Civic Center.”

“My Church would not be at the Civic Center,” assured the elderly lady.

“Yes. That is where my church is. We are having meetings there almost every evening,” he explained. “Why don’t you come tonight?”

She explained that she could not come that night, as her health was not very good.

“Every night we take prayer requests. Would you like us to pray for your daughter?” asked the boy. “If so, write your request down on a piece of paper, and I will give it to the evangelist.”

A PIECE OF PAPER

The mother wrote her request, along with her address, on a small piece of paper and handed it to the young man. That evening, the boy

gave the note to Nicu Butoi just as the evening prayer request time had begun. When Nicu read the note, he was amazed. He went to the microphone and told the audience that there was a special prayer request from the mother of the young girl who had been kidnapped.

Everyone knew who he was talking about. A hush came over the audience. After he read the request, he asked everyone to stand, and then he had a special prayer for the kidnapped girl. In his prayer, he pleaded that somehow the power of the men holding this girl in bondage would be broken.

Immediately following the prayer, the boy who delivered the note became excited and ran out of the building to find the first bus headed toward the elderly mother's home. Upon arriving, he knocked on the door. The father answered, and the young man told him that they had just prayed for the missing girl at the meetings. At that very moment, the elderly couple's phone rang. The father politely excused himself to answer it.

"Daddy! Daddy! Please come and get me. Hurry! I am at the North Train Station in Bucharest hiding in the information booth. Please come and get me as soon as you can. The men are looking for me. Hurry! Please hurry!" urged the voice of their daughter on the other end of the line.

The father, incredulous and excited at the same time, stammered that he had to leave right away to get their daughter, who had escaped from her abductors. It was realized later that she escaped just about the time that prayer was being offered in her behalf at the evangelistic meetings!

THE MEETING

The next night, at the meetings at the Civic Center, the mother of the kidnapped girl came to the edge of the platform right before the evening prayer requests. "May I share something?" she asked two of the elders attending. The men helped her get up on the platform, and with microphone in hand, one of them explained that this was the mother of the girl who had been kidnapped and for whom they had prayed the previous night. Again, the whole place, though packed full of people, became dead silent.

She explained how her daughter was found as a result of the prayers that came from those meetings. Then she explained all about her dream and about meeting the young man in the street that morning. "I want to let everyone here know that God has saved my daughter and that I have found MY CHURCH! This is MY CHURCH!" she exclaimed with firmness in her voice.

It is amazing and true — yes, God does work miracles! But what has always struck me about this experience is the fact that God used a teenage boy who saw an elderly lady who was hurting and took a personal interest in her. His caring, loving spirit set in motion a series of events, which in the end, turned out to be priceless.

If God could use a young man like that, He certainly could use you. All of us have been called to help those in need. Opportunities are all around us, if we only open our eyes to see.



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