

Christmas in Oradea!



Alan Heavey



Fane Conant



Daniel Rus

On the **9th December, 2009**, 'Luis Palau Associate Evangelists', Alan Heavey and Fane Conant travelled to Romania with LPA Director John Grant for several evangelistic events in the city of Oradea. With them was **Daniel Rus**, who is the LPA Missions Facilitator for North-Western Romania, whose help made this intricate mission with difficult logistical problems, a great success.



The team flew to Timisoara airport from Luton airport in Bedfordshire and was met by Ioan Bogdan, who pastors one of the five churches involved in the Affinity Event evangelistic outreach in Oradea, (he is engaged in many other activities for the Lord). This lovely brother with whom Fane had done a 'church' mission in March, drove a long distance to pick the team up and take them to Oradea, and he is to be thanked for this and for arranging Action Group meetings in his church as well as for arranging many of the wonderful events that the team was privileged to take part in. On the journey Ioan shared with Fane how **many of those who has responded to Fane's gospel invitations in March, had a few months later passed through the waters of baptism**; this was thrilling news, just the kind of thing an evangelist wants to hear at the outset of a mission.



After a productive final Action Group meeting, the team just had time to check into the Pensiuena Laura (owned by Christian businessman Bobi Horj) in the next door town of Baile Felix and then rush to the first event which was a dinner for Gypsy people from the village of Haieu. The adults were gathered in a pleasant restaurant owned by the Mayor of Baile Felix and named after his wife whom the team met upon arrival. The children had a separate function in the local church a few kilometres away, and Daniel Rus drove Alan there to share the gospel with the children.....said Alan "Mums and Dads and Grandmothers were also there and it was so emotional listening to all their loud voices praying the sinner's prayer and inviting Christ into their lives!"

Commented Ioan Bogdan at the **Gypsy dinner**, "This is an historical occasion - never before have these people sat still for so long in one place!" - one imagines that this had something to do with the presence of the Holy Spirit who stirred the hearts of thirty eight people to pray a sinner's prayer of repentance with Fane Conant - seventy two responded positively to Alan's message down the road, and generally this was a joyful and fantastic start to the Mission.

Commented Ioan Bogdan at the **Gypsy dinner**, "This is an historical occasion - never before have these people sat still for so long in one place!" - one imagines that this had something to do with the presence of the Holy Spirit who stirred the hearts of thirty eight people to pray a sinner's prayer of repentance with Fane Conant - seventy two responded positively to Alan's message down the road, and generally this was a joyful and fantastic start to the Mission.



Thursday 10 December

A few weeks before this, the LPA team had met Daniel Bagosi who had done some interpreting for Alan in Satu Mare, and because he had expressed appreciation of the mission model, John Grant had invited him to involve his small church in the Oradea programme because it is not too far from Oradea. Daniel was set a target of about 45 people, but just a few days before it appeared as if he would not reach this attendance level and he wanted to cancel the event. John shared with him how in another Romanian small town a few years ago, only thirteen people arrived for a dinner planned for many more, but one of them was the Vice Mayor of the town who that night, sitting around the single table that the event had been reduced to, gave his life to Christ and today some years later is a member of the local evangelical church that hosted the event.



This testimony inspired Daniel who invited his local Mayor as well, and an amazing number of eighty eight people came to a midday event at the **Axon Restaurant, Auseu**, seventy percent of the unbelievers present indicating on the response card that they had ticked the box to say they had prayed a prayer and asked Christ to be their Saviour. Daniel is organising a 'Next Step' event for Thursday 17 December and prayer is needed that the Lord will be present and bless this meeting, so that the local church in Auseu would flourish. The MC was Mihai Micula, a delightful pastor from our last mission in Satu Mare.

Later on in the day John and Fane attended the somewhat novel named **Friends' Coffee Event**, organised by the Harul Baptist Church at the Restaurant 'Colors'. A few minutes before the event was scheduled to begin, almost none of the expected one hundred guests had arrived, but suddenly as if someone had opened the door to an invisible room, over one hundred people crammed into the room, peering round the columns as they listened to Fane sharing the

good news. One of the team was Kamal Mounir, an Egyptian serving the Lord in Oradea and it was sadly fascinating to hear of the persecution of Christians in that country and a clarion call reminder for us to maximise our 'golden' opportunities in this land of Romania that is wide open and receptive to the Gospel. Kamal's wife was refused re-entry to Egypt because of the family's involvement in the Lord's work there. 19 guests at the "Friends" Coffee became "friends of God" as Fane made full use of his opportunity.



The Youth Pizza for the Vestea Buna (Good News!) Church had all the makings of a disaster; the reason mainly being that this church was a very late inclusion into the programme and its representatives had not had the advantage of the Action Group programme of pre-mission planning meetings. However, Daniel Rus saved the day by negotiating a price for a meal with the restaurant and by finding Daniel Bagosi to be the interpreter and generally instructing the willing, yet rather hapless co-ordinator so that the fifty six young people who attended had opportunity to hear and respond to the "Good News" and hopefully some of them be added to the 'Good News' Church.



This event reinforced the NGA policy of having co-ordinators present in the Action Group meetings programme that leads up to the Mission Event - there were six decisions for Christ from 56 people which in itself is a matter of great rejoicing, but with proper preparation this number could have been trebled, and we could have been satisfied that the best stewardship for this 'Affinity Event Evangelism', had been accomplished.

Perhaps **the gem of the Mission** followed the Youth Pizza, which was the highly organised **Police Dinner**. It had been obvious from day one of the Action Group meetings which the Christian Police Association representatives had been present at, that they were 100% committed to planning, to prayer and to the follow-up of



their event. As John Grant and Fane walked in the door of the Antirium Restaurant, the whole event team were already there and John and Fane were handed typed out programmes for the evening.

In speaking to Petru Bohus the event co-ordinator, it was immediately evident that the Lord was going to bless this event - he shared a vision to see the present number of 500 members of the Christian Police Association nationally increase to 5000 during the course of his life time, and he told how organised prayer and fasting had been taking place leading up to the event. To give credence to the dinner, he had invited Radu Tarle, Regional Councillor to give a short address prior to the message from Fane - Radu holds a very high office in the city and is a Christian and this was an excellent idea.



Perhaps the highest response percentage ever at a Police Dinner that the Luis Palau Association has done was the truly miraculous 51% of the guests present. Fane, in being asked later about anything remarkable and memorable about this evening said, *"The most amazing thing was the policeman who said his boss was 'persecuting him'. He was really surprised to see him at the event. Afterwards he told Peter who organised the meeting and who suffered his abuse, that not only had he prayed to receive Christ but he wanted to come to Peter's prayer meeting. He said the message made 'such good sense!'"*

We stand 100% behind Petru's vision statement and will do our best to help propagate the fulfilment of it - Petru is going to provide contacts for the CPA in Timisoara and Deva, two cities where God willing, we will be involved in missions in 2010.

Friday 11 December



Off on another "out-of-town" adventure were Alan and Daniel, travelling to the small town of Cefa, some 30 kilometres outside of Oradea, to meet with Gheorghe Padure and team at the Cultural Hall of the town. The photograph illustrates the flexibility of the NGA Evangelistic Affinity Event model, with the hall transformed to a huge restaurant that had nearly 200 people in it; the town itself having no restaurant at all; the total town population being one thousand people

.....so **20% of the town heard the gospel on this day !!!!!**



The Mayor was present as well as many children, so it was not an easy task for the preacher, especially with an interpreter who would not emulate the preacher's 'sheep sounds' to get the children interactively involved (the message was the Lost Sheep) - but said Alan, *"The guys in the band 'Emanuel' did it and the children then listened and responded to the message!"*

This was a **'watershed day for this village'** as 50 people responded to ask Christ into their lives, representing **5% of the whole town's population!**

Fane was the evangelist for the **Youth Supper** organised by the Tabor

Pentecostal church in a very good venue owned by a believer, called the 'Antirium' - where Fane did events in March earlier this year.

Not as many guests arrived as we had been expecting, due to the Bible College students having another function elsewhere, but one hundred and forty people were present to enjoy a good event.

Ioan Bogdan 'warmed' the audience up by getting them to all introduce each other and sing a Christmas carol, as happened in many events in this 'Christmas Mission', and Laurentiu, the event co-ordinator and friend from March as well, did a splendid job of interpretation for Fane, paving the way for a good number of these young people to accept the Lord as their personal Saviour.

It was interesting to note that only about twenty people there were at the similar March event, dispelling the theory that this type of model could have a "sell by" aspect to it.

Friday ended with a very good event, truly in the Christmas spirit, the **Medical Dinner** at the delightful 'Transilvania Restaurant', positioned in the city centre where every building around it is bathed in beautiful seasonal lighting.





Alan's message was really well suited to this group of 'medics' and some of his analogies were excellent - feedback conveyed a great appreciation for the event hosted by Doctor Moise Mateias from the Emanuel Baptist Church, one of the great Romanian evangelical churches that was about to celebrate its 100th anniversary the next day. Good tasteful music (live and background) was organised by Pavel Badea, the event co-ordinator and great pillar of developing the whole Oradea Christmas Mission.

The reward was the response and part of that response was an oversubscribed attendance of 105, with an estimated unbeliever guest number of fifty seven from which 34 people ticked the "I have today prayed to ask Jesus Christ into my life" tick box on the guest's information card.

One very well spoken lady said in English that how much she had enjoyed this evening. She remarked how she had been thinking earlier in the day about buying herself a gift for Christmas. She **said that Alan's message was the best Christmas gift she could ever have!**

There were two people who were nothing to do with the event that wandered in looking for a quiet nice place to eat. This couple wanted to leave, but they were invited to stay and enjoy the evening which they did; they apparently came from Germany! Wouldn't it be fantastic if they had made a decision for Jesus?

Saturday 12 December

This was a busy day for the team with five events taking place - how good it is to have Daniel Rus co-directing and to have both Fane and Alan on the same team, when things get this busy with meeting times right on top of each other and the venues in different parts of town!



Fane experienced a quiet **Seniors Event**, where there were very few unbelievers, the event being held in a church. The numbers also were less than half of what were expected and the weather could not be blamed for it because although cold to start with, it was pretty mild for a mid winter's day, thanks to the good Lord's kind providence. Notwithstanding these negatives, Fane preached an excellent message and it was thought that virtually every unbeliever present was touched by it as the Holy Spirit took charge. Gabi and Daniel supplied nice Christmas music on accordion and saxophone; they apparently accompany the church evangelists in its many outreaches to the villages around about Oradea.

Fane made mention quite extensively of Richard Wurmbrand, voted the fifth most popular person in Romania - Fane had met him shortly after his release from prison incarceration and torture during the communist era, and shared how Richard had been able to cope with such enormous difficulty because of his living relationship with the Lord Jesus. Fane did not mention that he (Fane) had last year preached in the prison where Wurmbrand had been interned, at times thirty feet below ground in solitary confinement; in total darkness.



Later in the day the **Ladies Event** was held in the Antirium Restaurant on the upstairs level which was rather nice because it is a smaller and more intimate area of this large restaurant. Here again the lack of having been present at Action Group meetings, made the organisation very last minute, and it is feared that the whole concept of planned 'Next Step' meetings outside of church buildings has not been grasped fully, and that as a result the fruit from these very good events will not be maximised. There were an equal number of 'Next Steps' boxes ticked and 'Decision' boxes which means the ladies who made decisions were serious about going further in their newly acquired Christian faith.

It is amazing in this type of ministry, how that so often when there has been insufficient preparation and forethought, that the Lord steps in and does a miracle despite everything and when Alan invited the ladies to pray with him, almost all of those unsaved prayed the sinner's prayer, making it all worth while, and giving us more material to pray for that they may not fall away as a result of lack of further foresight and planning.

The team had to hastily conclude this event in order to get across the city to the next venue which was perhaps the most intriguing of all the venues, for one of the two Couples Dinners of the evening.the name of the venue was the,



The atmosphere in this "bomb shelter" basement restaurant was tremendous, not just because of its setting which is rather unique, but because there was an air of excitement and expectancy amongst the co-ordination team and musicians, lead by Gheorghe Padure, and it was therefore no surprise that the Spirit of God influenced people in an amazing way, bringing salvation, joy and happiness. *"We have not done it this great way before!"* was on the tongues and in the hearts of Gheorghe and his team. Daniel Rus was his usual invaluable help, but he had to leave early to collect Fane for the other 'couples event' that was running almost simultaneously to this one.

The **Couples Event** at the Antirium was somewhat different to the 'Hannah' because the venue is a typical wedding-type venue that seats 210 people very comfortably around 21 round tables, but the same excitement was prevailing as the event expected attendance surpassed the targeted amount, 140 people arriving for this event, hosted and organised by Ioan Bogdan, with Laurentiu Pascuti again doing a fantastic job of interpreting for Fane Conant.



From all accounts this was a good Event and Fane's message from the Lord again accomplished God's purposes. Fane felt the need to raise the issue of not having the recommended "Next Steps" events in a 'neutral' venue (outside of a church), and Ioan Bogdan gave assurance to Fane that he would do this for his church events.





The last event on Saturday was a **Youth Event** organised by the Sperante Baptist church in their church premises which is a hall belonging to the three star Hotel Silver, Oradea.

This was a delightfully light hearted event, organised by Cristi Sonca, who speaks perfect English having studied in the USA. The church musicians were good and Alan's message held the attention of the young audience of approximately sixty. Pizzas were very nice and interpretation very good (Daniel Bagosi), but the end result was that only one person made a commitment to

surrender his / her life to Jesus Christ. It was surmised that there could have been as little as 10 unbelievers, and as the prayer and preparation for this meeting was no less than that for other meetings, this can be the only conclusion to come to, as disappointing as it was from the organisational perspective where churches are challenged to a 3 - 1 unbeliever to believer ratio, and from the preacher's point of view - we must take consolation in that this being the case, this progressive church's young people will have been encouraged to evangelise more to their friends.



Sunday morning saw the team ministering in three churches, Fane at the Harul Baptist Church of Pavel Badea, Alan at Gheorghe Padures' Sion Baptist and John at the Vestea Buna Pentecostal church with Daniel. Alan's service was disappointing because the Pastor and a lot of his members were not there and it appears as if no one had seriously brought unsaved guests for the pre-arranged evangelistic service. John's visit was probably more fruitful in the sense of promoting the Luis Palau Affinity Event model and challenging people to discipleship, evangelism and full time work for God. Fane had a very good service in Pavel's church and saw a number of people come to the front as a result of Fane's gospel invitation.

The Business Event was the last event before the team members returned to Baia Mare and Timisoara, and was held, as last year at Pensiune Silver, 25 kilometres out of Oradea on the road that leads to Deva.



Being a Sunday afternoon, this event had a rather leisurely and relaxed atmosphere and particularly nice was the 'Christmas' snow that was falling turning the countryside into a beautiful picture reminiscent of the wonderful promise that began at Christmas, "*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as wool (snow)*".

It was lovely for Fane and John to renew acquaintance with the Christian owner, Silviu Ciuc, and really nice to enjoy the delightful atmosphere and food, 'letting the hair' down a bit as the end of the mission drew nigh. Fane's message however, was as usual, tactfully hard hitting and was driven home by the Spirit who "convicts and converts" and resulted in twelve business peoples lives being changed somewhat - praise God.

After a brief financial meeting with Ioan Bogdan, farewells were said, Daniel returned home to Baia Mare and the UK contingent were very kindly driven to Timisoara by Reuben Popa, where after spending the night at the delightful (and cheap) Oxford Hotel, travelled on the early WizzAir flight to Luton to arrive 07:00 on Monday morning.

Financial

Without going into boring details, this delightful outreach was well within budget, the churches contributing magnificently and sacrificially thirty percent of the costs of the events plus paying for the printing and other costs - this type of support is certainly helping greatly to maintain our presence in Romania, and is very, very helpful particularly for Alan who was without his usual income for the whole of the year 2009.

Conclusion

And so we **give thanks, praise and glory to our great God for what he did** and will continue to do after this remarkable Mission (in faith because 'Follow-Up' processes are not as we would like to have seen them). We give thanks too for every member of the Action group, the interpreters, those who organised the sound and music, the various general co-ordinators and our National Co-ordinator, Daniel Rus who was a great help with both the preliminary work and the Mission as well.

Both of **our evangelists** did a magnificent job, and have brought many souls into the Kingdom of God through their words and the power of the Holy Spirit, and they are to be highly honoured for the exercise of their gospel communicating talents, for their godliness, hard work, sacrifice, and faith, and for their love for the lost and the Lord that compels them to fulfil his calling upon their lives.

Not only that, but **they have gained favour and respect** amongst men of God of high repute in the city of Oradea, pastors, denominational leaders, Bible College fraternity and others that do not readily come to mind, and have cultivated a friendship and brotherly love that is wonderful to have seen.

Alan and Fane have helped keep alive the incredibly high standard of Evangelism that the country has come to expect from the **Luis Palau Organisation** - everywhere I go I hear of people proud and glad to have heard Luis speaking in the country, and this time it was, "I heard him here **in Oradea**" Said **Ioan Bordog**, the pastor of the church where I was speaking on Sunday morning, at the end of the service (the Good News Pentecostal Church), *"I was at the Oradea meetings with Luis Palau in 19.... and it is so wonderful that the blessing that this man was then, is being kept alive by the 'Next Generation Alliance evangelists' from England that serve under his name some twenty years later and an even greater blessing that still so many souls are being saved!"*

Future expansion is something that could be an offshoot from this outreach to Oradea - Ioan Bogdan who superintends hundreds of Pentecostal churches in the Bihor area, who is responsible for church planting (more than for pastoring, although he is senior pastor of a 600 member church) , who is responsible for evangelism in the area and has as well a desire to get the gospel more and more to the Gypsy people, has said he would be more than happy to provide contacts and suggestions for future outreaches for us, including in Arad. He has said he has someone who would be available to do administration - alongside of this is Daniel Bagosi, with his Baptist connectionshe would be available to assist in the same sort of capacity, i.e. contact and administration. Then several people approached Alan for NGA Missions to their towns and areas.

The slogan (It Keeps Getting Better!) is not just a one-off for a city in Romania, but for the country of Romania - statistics show that starting from response rates of a little more than 25% a few years ago, things have developed so that the average response rate of this outreach was 55%. This is surely the endorsement and blessing of God upon this model of evangelism, and the **need to continue and develop it across the country.**

What however needs to improve is the concept of follow-up to these blessed events and the correction of the mistaken idea of church leaders that people who have responded so freely in a friendly restaurant environment will naturally come to what is too many of these people, an unfriendly, unfamiliar environment of an evangelical church**discipleship needs to be done in a neutral venue**, until the new converts are ready to be incorporated into a church.

To statistically recap:

- ✚ 1344 people attended the events - 1560 were optimistically projected
- ✚ 743 non believers were guests at the events
- ✚ **406** of these indicated on the response forms that they had prayed the prayer to invite Christ into their lives
- ✚ 289 wanted more information
- ✚ **408** said they would like to attend a Next Step event following the first step of accepting Christ
- ✚ 306 left their contact details

