

BLYTHSWOOD NEWS



P3

Transforming lives in Western Romania



P7

Food and smiles help migrants who seek a normal life



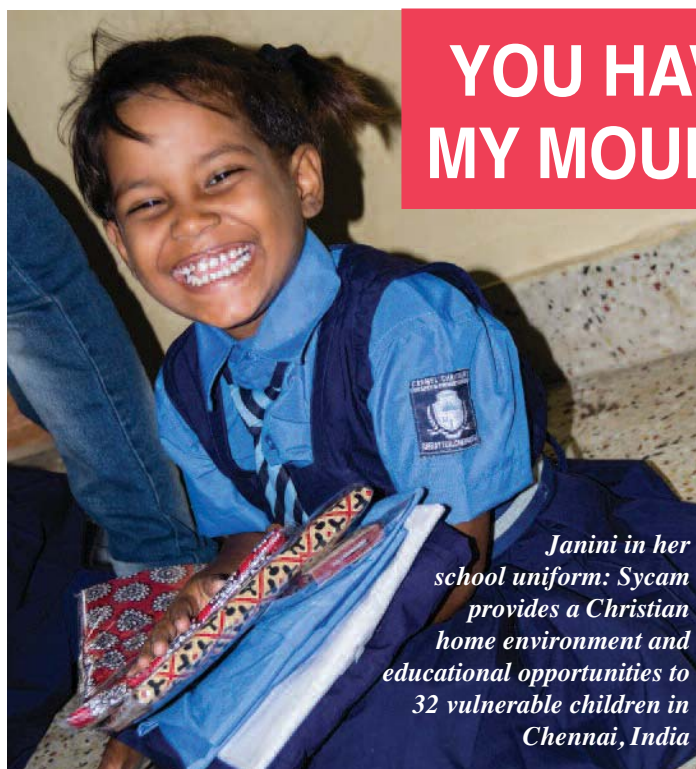
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Foster Mum in Hungary helped by Christian books

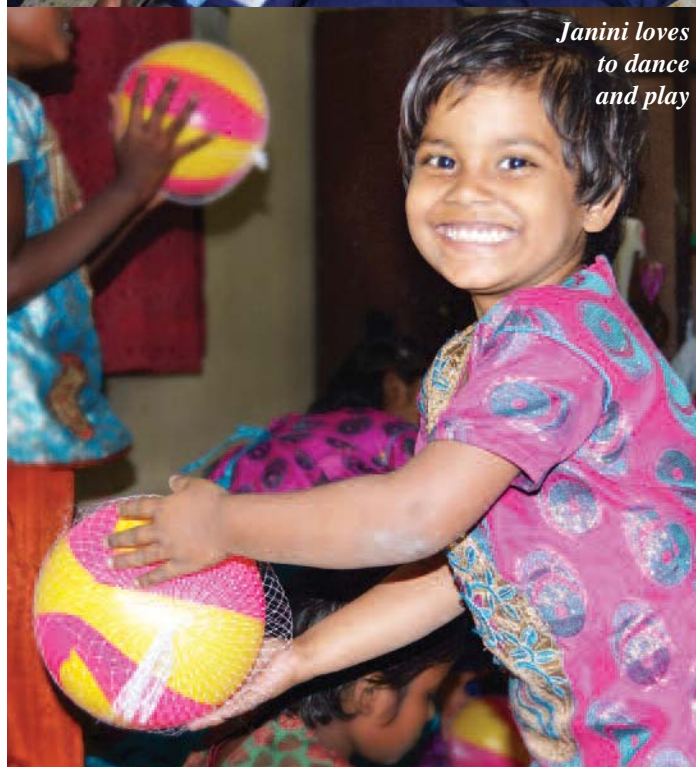


P16

So much potential in India



Janini in her school uniform: Sycam provides a Christian home environment and educational opportunities to 32 vulnerable children in Chennai, India



Janini loves to dance and play

YOU HAVE TURNED MY MOURNING INTO DANCING

What a difference two years has made!

When Janini was brought to the Sycam Home at the age of three, she was tearful, moody and unhappy. And no wonder: her birth family was blighted by strife and alcohol abuse and both parents wanted to be rid of the little girl.

"At first she was always crying," says Pastor Emmanuel Milton who has witnessed the transformation in the previously unwanted child.

"Now she has become so happy and friendly and loves to sing and dance and play. She just loves the company in the home and in the kindergarten."

"Blythswood Ireland has supported this project throughout 2016," says James Campbell, chief executive of Blythswood Care. "Sycam is transforming the lives of children who were very much at risk, and giving them a start in life that they could never have imagined."



What will you give this Christmas? Blythswood's gift catalogue is full of ideas that let you share the joy of helping someone in need.

Go to blythswood.org or call 01349 830777

Lydia is one of 42 women due to graduate in November from Harare Shelter's sewing skills programme, run with support from Blythswood Care.

Having successfully completed the eight month course in dressmaking and tailoring she hopes to start her own business and to be able to support her three school-aged children.

While all of the students on the course are economically disadvantaged, Lydia faces particular challenges as she suffers from albinism, with the eyesight problems and experiences of social prejudice that often accompany the condition.

She was still a child when her mother died and with no one to pay her fees could not progress beyond form four at school. More recently she has been deserted by the father of her own three children, and receives no financial support from him for their care.

Harare Shelter director Stephen Damuputirai says: "Lydia is very appreciative of the help she has received from Harare Shelter and from Blythswood Care. The programme we run with your support really does change lives."



Lydia (centre) hopes that newly-acquired sewing skills will enable her to earn a living and support her children

ZIMBABWE SEWING SKILLS PROGRAMME EQUIPS LYDIA TO PROVIDE FOR HER CHILDREN



Dayspring House ensures that children like Mahender receive the care and education they need to keep them off the streets

Providing home and school for children who lack both

Ten-year-old Mahender had the sort of early life experiences that can sometimes lead to a childhood spent on the streets

of Hyderabad, India.

His father had a drink problem and died as the result of an accident. His mother has

poor health and abandoned the boy.

But three years at Dayspring House, supported by Blythswood Care, have enabled Mahender to thrive by ensuring a safe place to sleep, clean clothes to wear, regular meals and daily attendance at school.

Dayspring House is home to 56 children aged from 4 to 17. Dayspring School, using the same building, provides classes for 25 children up to the age of eight, while the 35 older children attend the nearby government school.

One of Blythswood's four anniversary projects is to add a first floor to the Dayspring building in order to separate sleeping and classroom accommodation and to upgrade kitchen and bathroom facilities.

The children sleep on mats with up to 10 in one room. "The extra accommodation will certainly help all the children," says Dayspring director Samuel Babu. "The older girls and boys sometimes find it difficult sharing accommodation with the little kids. The first floor will also help to provide separate space for school and hostel."

TRANSFORMING LIVES IN WESTERN ROMANIA

Breaking a cycle of illiteracy and poverty can transform the futures of children like Pari



Eight-year-old Pari is the fourth child in her family to attend Talita Kum, Blythswood Care's after school programme in western Romania. She had heard the older children talking about the 'cantina' but still it was all new and strange and wonderful to her.

A well-cooked meal at lunchtime and a further snack in the late afternoon constitute a major incentive for children from low-income households to attend the programme. And learning to eat them with a knife and fork can be quite a challenge as Pari discovered in her first week there.

Being able to take a shower with water "sprinkling from above" was another wonder to the little girl who lives in a two-roomed flat with her parents, brother and sister and also with an older brother and his wife and child. "At home we heat water on the stove," she said, explaining her surprise.

But Pari's biggest disadvantage at home is that neither parent can read or write and so are unable to give her any assistance with her homework. For her the tuition on offer at Talita Kum is potentially life-changing, breaking the cycle of illiteracy and poverty that continues to blight Roma communities across Eastern Europe.

"Girls in this situation are at risk of dropping out of school," says Adrian Popa who founded Talita Kum 15 years ago and continues to direct the programme. "By the age of fourteen they can be under pressure to enter premature arranged marriage.

"To raise the aspirations of these children we need to help them imagine themselves inhabiting a different story, a story that will prove more compelling than the others that compete for their future."



The rural campsite provides an amazing environment for city children

Christian camps help teens with troubled lives

Alina* is one of a thousand children who enjoyed a week of camp this summer at a woodland campsite tucked away in the hills of southern Moldova.

For a city girl, it's such a treat. At home the 13-year-old lives with her grandmother in a block of flats with no play area for

children, giving her little opportunity to mix with other youngsters outside school.

At camp she was outside all day long, exploring the forest and enjoying games and craft activities.

"Alina was very quiet the first few days," says Rona Matheson who led a team of

volunteers from the Scottish Highlands to help run the camp. "It was amazing to see how much more outgoing she became as the week went on."

A healthier environment is just one benefit of summer camp for children like Alina. Christian counselling is another. As the Moldovan leaders gained her trust she was able to open up about her difficult situation at home. Like so many others of her generation in Eastern Europe, she has experienced broken family relationships caused by economic pressures. With no opportunity to earn a wage in Moldova, her mother had gone to work in Spain. Her father took another woman to live with him and Alina was sent to her granny.

Separated from her sister and both parents, the teenager had started harming herself as she felt so alone and unloved.

"It was great that she was able to pray with the leader and speak out about her fears," Rona says. "The camp leaders are able to follow up children in such situations and make sure they get continued support after they return home."

"Blythswood's support for these camps ensures not only three meals a day but the opportunity for young people like Alina to re-evaluate their lives in the light of God's word."

*not her real name

LOW-RENT ACCOMMODATION HELPS DANIEL CENTRE BOYS ESTABLISH INDEPENDENT LIVES



Sebi is one of the first to benefit from low-rent accommodation that helps former Daniel Centre boys to find their feet

Being able to afford a place of your own is increasingly difficult for young adults not only in the UK but in Romania, too. And it's especially difficult for young people who lack the support of a family. That's why Blythswood Care has opened

two new flats in Cluj, Romania, giving low-cost accommodation to young men who have completed a life-skills programme provided at the Daniel Centre.

Sebi, now 26, spent the first 18 years of his life in orphanages in Romania. "When I first joined the Daniel Centre I was a little bit scared because I didn't know what to expect," he says. "I was not a child anymore and I was anxious to become responsible and integrate myself into society."

Holidays with the group from the Centre were crucial in giving Sebi a sense of belonging. "I had the joy of discovering new places in a family-like atmosphere," he says. The support of the social worker, Maria, was vital, too, helping Sebi to obtain his first job.

After two years, Sebi moved to the Daniel Centre's transition stage, living semi-independently for more than a year. Since

then he has shared a flat with three other lads at the same stage, with minimal supervision from Daniel Centre staff.

"The new flats will give five young men the opportunity to save up for deposits for homes of their own while living completely independent lives," says Blythswood's head of projects, Finlay Mackenzie. "They will also benefit from the companionship of people they know, who have been through the same programme and have had similar life experiences."

On Wednesdays former Daniel Centre residents enjoy an open invitation to dinner and to talk about their lives. "It's quite something to see them so keen to return and to hear about what triumphs and troubles they face," says John McKellar, head of donor development. "It was this group that showed us the need to provide low-cost accommodation for a further period."



Restoring sight in Southeast Asia

Thirteen-year-old Ayn Nyein was praised by the surgeon for his bravery

When Aye Nyein bent down to retrieve his pen, he failed to notice an upright bamboo stake. Before he knew what had happened, it had impaled his left eye. The injury, which happened just this summer, led to the rapid development of a dense cataract. Although vision in his right eye is good, the impairment of vision in the other left the teenager very disturbed.

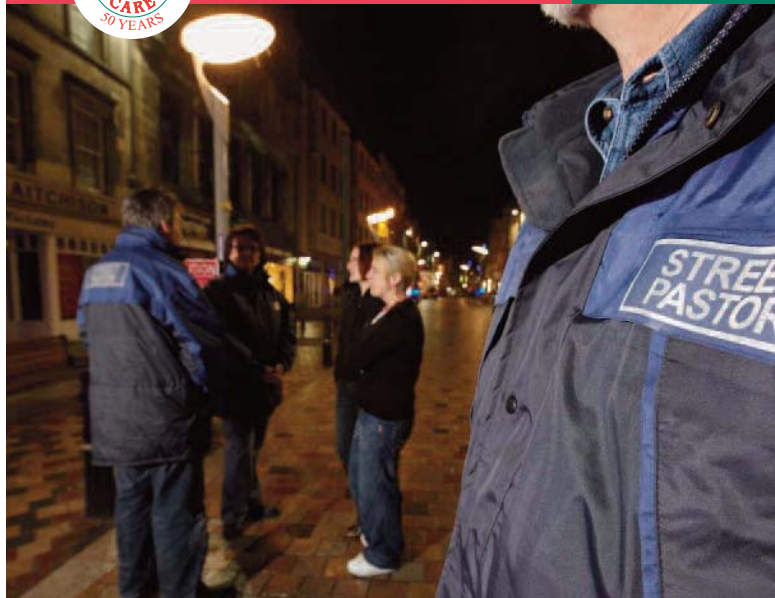
At the Mae Tao Clinic in Thailand doctors

from the UK volunteer their skills to restore the sight of people who otherwise could not afford treatment. Blythswood Care contributes towards some of the costs involved. When friends told Aye Nyein's parents about the clinic, they hired a truck to make the six hour journey from their village home across the border in southern Burma.

As all operations at Mae Tao have to be performed using just local anaesthetics,

normally they cannot be carried out on young children. "This 13-year-old boy was brave," says the surgeon who operated on Aye Nyein. "We had to give him two injections, the main one going behind his eye."

"He didn't bat an eyelid and now that his vision is coming back nicely he and his parents are very pleased. With his life ahead of him, the benefits of this surgery will be long-lasting."



facebook.com/nesspastors, Twitter @nesspastors

STREET PASTORS – THE CHURCH IN ACTION ON THE STREETS

Dressed in just jeans and T-shirts, Paul and James* considered themselves ready for a night on the town. But by the time their friend's birthday party was over, they had run out of money and lost their

bearings. Inverness Street Pastors found them staggering on a busy road, dodging oncoming traffic.

“Alcohol reduces your core temperature and impairs your judgment,” says Morven Ball, administrator with Street Pastors

in Inverness. “Our concern was to help these teenagers get home safely, avoiding either a road traffic accident or the onset of hypothermia.

“Most people welcome our concern and our offer of help. But this isn't always the case, especially where the bravado of young men is concerned. It was only after one of them slumped into semi-consciousness that his friend accepted our assistance.

“We stood by and offered them sips of water and a shoulder to lean on as one was physically sick. A foil blanket helped to keep them warm while we tried to contact their friends and family. Our last resort is to refer to a police cell for the night. It's somewhere warm and safe, but it's not ideal for anybody involved.

“An hour later, when the boys were over the vomiting stage, we walked with them to the taxi rank, hoping that a kind-hearted operator would recognise that the risk of a mess in their vehicle was now low. A driver did agree to take them home and to accept payment at the destination.

“There were embarrassed hugs all round as we sent them on their way. Most people, especially the young, don't intend to become vulnerable and are very grateful and apologetic as they start to sober up.

“For our part, we are privileged to help another made in the image of God and to leave people with a good taste of ‘the church in action on the streets’. Not only did we preserve the safety and dignity of the guys involved and their families, but we also took pressure off emergency services.”

Blythwood Care gives monthly support to Street Pastors in Inverness. “We have about 50 volunteers and just two part-time staff,” Morven explains. “We have to provide training, uniforms and equipment. We also supply people we meet with flip-flops, water and blankets as the situation requires. For any who are rough -sleeping we hand out sleeping bags, warm clothes, and are sometimes able to buy a hot meal or a hot drink. Thank you for being part of this with us.”

*not their real names

Basis project restores dignity to couple without work



Maria and Arpad pictured in January 2016, just after improvements had been made to their simple home

Since Arpad and Maria are still a few years away from qualifying for a state pension, life is tough for them. Arpad is partially sighted while Maria suffers from heart disease, health problems that make them unattractive to employers where they live, on the outskirts of Cluj, Romania.

The couple's only income is social welfare equivalent to £26 per month. For them, a monthly supply of basic foodstuffs (worth about £14) from Blythwood Care's Basis Project is a lifesaver.

And last winter the single-roomed shack which they call home was transformed with sponsorship from a Blythwood supporter, providing insulation and a solid fuel stove.

“Older workers were trained under communism for industries that are now long gone,” observes Bogdan Arsene, project officer with Blythwood Care in Cluj. “It is exceptionally hard for people of their age group to find work today.

“Blythwood is really a beacon of hope to this couple as they do not yet qualify for a pension and they have no family to help them. The improvements to their home have helped restore to them some dignity.”



Dragisa with Abdul and one of the children: by September 2016 Blythwood had helped as many as 56,000 migrants passing through Serbia

FOOD AND SMILES HELP MIGRANTS WHO SEEK A NORMAL LIFE

Abdul has been in Serbia for three months. He did not plan to stay so long. He is there with his wife and two little girls, having left his native Afghanistan a year previously.

“We are very tired,” he admitted to Dragisa Armus, who heads the work of Blythwood Serbia. “But it is better to be alive even in this situation, travelling

from place to place, than to be dead in Afghanistan.”

Abdul's English is very good: for 12 years he worked as a driver for an American organisation. That may well have added to his conviction that he and his family had to leave for their own safety.

Now, with the freedom of migrants to move across Europe severely curtailed, they are among 200 Afghans moved from the reception centre at Presevo to one of the new facilities half an hour's drive away.

Blythwood workers who have been providing migrants at Presevo with food and other essential aid since August 2015 have watched the situation change from rapid movement to stasis and frustration.

“It is obvious that these families with children risked everything in their long journey to escape a war situation,” says Dragisa. “They had hoped to find a normal life.

“Now they are conscious that they will be here for a long time. Friendly contact is important to them. They watch our reactions and return our smiles. The children want to play games.

“We have promised to organise a concert for them and hope to give them Blythwood shoeboxes, too.”



Blythwood Care runs nine foodbanks across the Highlands and one in southeast Edinburgh

When the relationship status of a social security claimant changes, he or she must reapply for assistance. Existing payments stop and in the meantime they can find themselves with nothing to live on. In that situation only Foodbank prevents someone from going without food.

Claire* was a single mum to her two boys when she met Bill*. When they started to live together they had to make a new claim for benefits, meaning that their previous payments stopped.

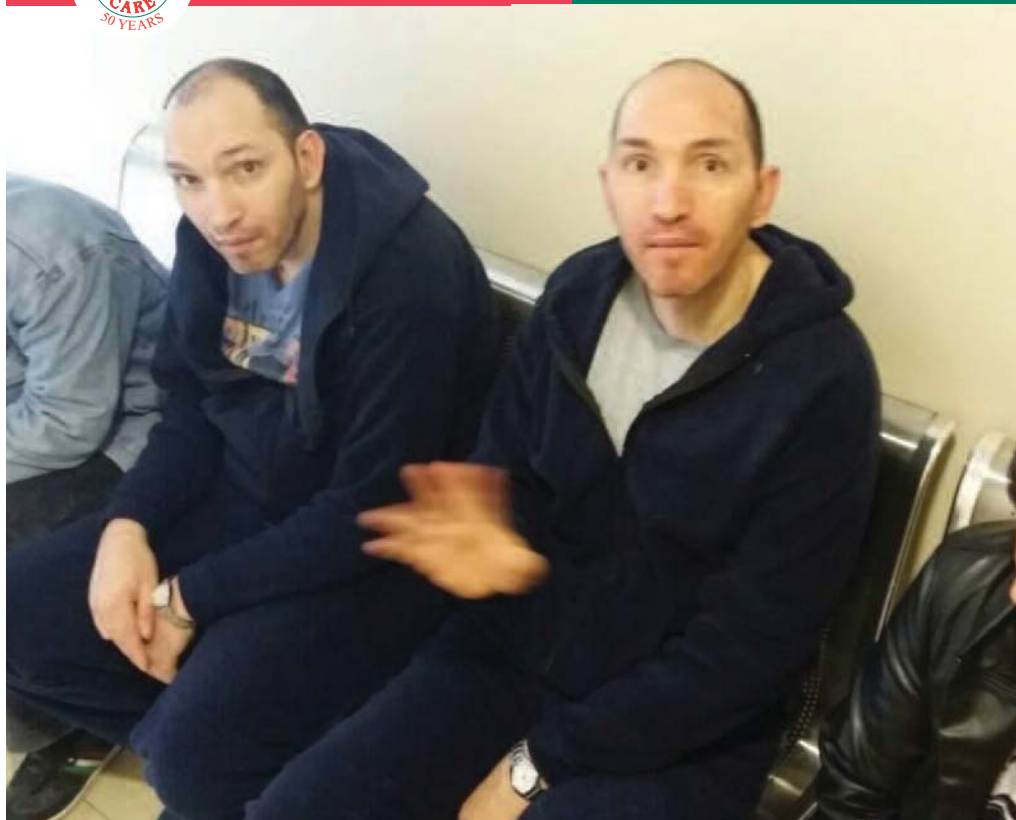
“Bill and Claire have been referred to Highland Foodbank

over several weeks by Social Work while their Universal Credit is being processed,” said Lorna Dempster, Highland Foodbank coordinator for Inverness and Nairn. “Claire mentioned today that they had been promised their first payment at the end of this week.

“Meantime they have been surviving on Child Benefit with the help of food from Highland Foodbank. It's only the kindness of people who donate to Foodbank that prevents families in this situation from going hungry.”

*not their real names

HIGHLAND FOODBANK PREVENTS HUNGER WHEN PAYMENTS STOP



The provision of transport by Blythswood has enabled the twins to make regular hospital visits for treatment which has transformed their lives

Pastors' transport touches hundreds of lives

A minibus provided by Blythswood Care has played a crucial role in the successful medical treatment of twin brothers in Bulgaria.

Milen and Marian appeared to be fit young men and had already completed their national military service when their health started to deteriorate. They suffered bone fractures and also started to display psychological problems. Both were admitted to a psychiatric hospital on four occasions without a satisfactory diagnosis being reached.

As the condition of both young men grew worse, their mother Elena had to give up work, becoming their full-time carer and so plunging the family into poverty. No

longer able to walk, Milen depended on a wheelchair. Elena had to do everything for them – washing, shaving, feeding and helping them onto the commode.

After seven years, she felt desperate. “I remember running out of the house and crying out to God to take me or to heal my boys,” she says.

Elena began to see an answer to her prayer the very next week when a doctor referred the twins to a neurological clinic in Sofia. But how could she transport her sons to a hospital 300 km away?

She shared her predicament with Margarita Dimitrova, one of a team of church workers with pastoral care for congregations in 30 villages within a 65km radius of Sliven. Within minutes, Margarita had arranged for the team’s minibus to take the two men in their beds to the clinic.

Tests revealed a little-known genetic condition caused Wilson’s disease which causes toxic levels of copper to build up in the liver. Within two months of starting treatment, the young men were able to walk again.

“They have made a much quicker recovery than the doctors expected,” says Margarita. “Blythswood’s provision of transport has been such a blessing for this family and for many hundreds of people in the villages here.”



The bore well is drilled to a depth of 480 feet

PROVIDING SAFE WATER IN RURAL INDIA

Three hundred and twenty five villagers in Maharashtra State, India, have been enjoying the benefits of a safe and convenient drinking water supply since August, when a new well came into service, sponsored by Blythswood Care.

Lata, aged 47, is typical of the women who no longer have to spend hours each day carrying water from ponds or the river, two kilometres from their village.

“She says the bore well has been a blessing for her and for her family,” says Sam Vadavana who organised its construction and has seen the difference it makes to the routine of about 100 families.

“The water they used to collect was neither drinkable nor sufficient,” he says. “It smelled bad and contained worms and caused sickness. Now it is a great relief to them to have a safe water supply near their homes.

“The incidence of stomach upsets and diarrhoea has reduced and the children don’t have to miss school to fetch water.”

The well, which cost over £2,000, is drilled to a depth of 480 feet and has an electric pump. As the original budget had allowed for drilling to 700 feet, the extra money was used to create a rainwater harvesting panel using gravel, sand and mud. “This mechanism is not very common here,” Sam explains. “It means the well will be replenished when the rains come.”



The therapy course at Ozd enabled András to confront his weakness and to trust in God

András was a talented and successful fencer. His parents were so proud of him when he was a teenager and honoured him for his achievements in his chosen sport.

Perhaps this was why they were slow to notice that their son was making some bad choices in life. He looked down on others. He neglected his school work. He dabbled in drugs. And he embarked on a long and destructive relationship with alcohol.

At first he drank only at parties but as the

CHRISTIAN THERAPY COURSE OFFERS FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

years passed it became a daily routine. Separated from his wife and children, he returned to his parents but eventually even they were too afraid of him to allow him in their apartment.

A whole winter of living in an abandoned car brought him to realise that he did not want to live this way. After an unsuccessful suicide attempt he decided to ask for help.

His parents had heard about the rehabilitation programme in the Transylvanian village of Ozd, Romania, run by Bonus Pastor Foundation and supported by Blythswood Care. At first András didn't want to know. "I thought it was some kind of sect where people were praying all day," he said.

But with no other options, he went for interview and was accepted. His first participation in the residential therapy course lasted for just three months in 2010. On his third attempt he completed the eight month programme.

It was not easy. At first the biggest challenge

was to accept that he was genuinely respected and even loved. Clean, ironed bedsheets and comfortable accommodation were such a contrast to his previous way of life.

Then there was some painful self-knowledge he had to acquire and face-up to – recognising his pride, admitting his weaknesses and learning to respect other people's opinions.

And he admits now that the most decisive thing for him was his personal encounter with God. Now living in Hungary, András is rebuilding his life and seeking to mend relationships. His wife has divorced him and his children are distanced from him but he has a good relationship with his mother and brother and is doing a job that he really loves as a fencing coach for children.

In the past 11 years, Bonus Pastor's therapy centre at Ozd has given supportive shelter to 302 people. Of these, 175 are known to be living sober lives, able to sustain normal family relationships and to hold down jobs.

COMFORT FOR MAN WHO LOST HIS SON

Feodor has been homeless for 19 years. He is 68 years old.

Born and brought up in Odessa, Ukraine, he married a young woman he met when he was 30. They moved to Moldova where they worked their own farm. Life was good.

But when their son, their only child, drowned in a lake, their lives changed forever. Feodor's wife suffered a nervous breakdown and he did his best to care for her, making sure that she received treatment in a psychiatric hospital.

One day, when she was alone in the house, she set it on fire and died in the blaze. Feodor was a broken man, becoming homeless and using alcohol to dull his pain. Since then he has been living

in the streets, sleeping in basements, in parks, under bridges, in the forest, in boxes.

Valentina Federova is a voluntary worker, distributing aid from Blythswood to homeless people in Chisinau, many of whom are elderly. "I've told Feodor that Jesus is close to him and knows his situation," she says. "He is thankful for the food and clothes.

"I have given him a New Testament and I pray for him, that one day he will understand the love of Jesus.

"Thank you for supporting this important ministry."



Feodor – 68 years old and homeless

Foster Mum in Hungary helped by Christian books

When the four little boys for whom she had been caring were put up for adoption, foster-mum Eszter was inwardly devastated. She knew it had to happen but they left a big gap in her life.

So her visits to a Sunday morning service in a village 30 minutes' drive away took on a new significance. "This was when Eszter realised that only God could fill the gap in her life," says Lilla Kiralyne, who assists Hungarian charity Good News Foundation. "She gave her life to Jesus and just recently was baptised."

Eszter is a keen reader and makes good use of the church's small library of Christian books in her own language, including some specially produced for Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal over a number of years.

She is also grateful for a set of crutches supplied by Blythswood to help overcome her mobility problems. "The icing on the cake was when she realised she could



Eszter (right) on the day of her baptism: 'the gap is God-shaped – only God can fill that in'

adjust their length," Lilla says. "No more problems with having to cut pieces off!"

Now Eszter and her daughter Kata provide foster care for five more children. Lilla says: "When the kids are in school,

the ladies have some free time and volunteer to help sort clothes when a lorry arrives with aid. They believe it's better to give than to receive and to help rather than be helped."



CONFERENCE IN CLUJ

Rev Levente Horvath chaired a conference in Cluj, Romania, in early October to mark the 50th anniversary of Blythswood Care. Around 75 participants from 18 partner organisations in nine countries were encouraged by addresses on the theme of servant leadership. Blythswood's chief executive James Campbell says: "It was worthwhile bringing so many Christian organisations together, not just to share what we do but to consider how we do it."

By the end of September, the Seafarers' Centre in Invergordon had welcomed 4,552 sea men and women through its doors, coming mostly from the 64 cruise ships that called at the Highland port during the summer. Sailors' Society port chaplain Drew Anderson shares a message of thanks from one recent visitor.

"John came in looking for internet access so that he could contact his family at home. I logged him on to the internet and left him in peace. Later I had a chance to speak with him over a cup of coffee. He had a technical position on a small vessel taking shelter from the stormy weather affecting the North Sea. His home, wife and family are in Australia and he wasn't due to end his contract for a further month.

"He had a loose connection with a church at home but didn't possess a bible. He readily accepted the offer of a modern English bible, a copy of Daily Bread and two other Christian leaflets before returning to his ship.

"A few days later I received an email: 'I am really amazed and humbled by your hospitality and generosity. I found the bible study guide (Daily Bread) is very useful to understand the Bible and is encouraging me to read it daily.'

"We believe the Lord will use every Bible



John (left) with Drew: with 90 cruise ships expected to call at Invergordon in 2017, the Seafarers' Centre anticipates visitor numbers to increase by 40 percent

BODY AND SOUL CARE FOR THOSE AT SEA

and booklet that we give out. It's encouraging to receive positive feedback so quickly. This year we have given out 1,867 bibles in over 20 languages, some to non-believers. Many bibles and booklets were supplied by Blythswood Care.

"Many seafarers we meet are poorly paid and send home almost all of their wages. We frequently give warm jackets and other clothing to those in need. We are very thankful for Blythswood's assistance in providing for the practical as well as the spiritual needs of these seafarers."

GOSPEL BROADCAST ENABLED ESTHER TO FORGIVE

Esther lives in the centre of Burundi, a small country at the heart of Africa's Great Lakes region. Recently she made the two-hour journey to the city of Bujumbura, to meet with a counsellor from Radio Ivyizigiro.

The Christian radio station, supported by Blythswood Care, broadcasts gospel messages and health advice in Kirundi, French, Swahili and English. As a result, listeners in sometimes desperate circumstances make contact with the station, seeking to apply the Christian message to their own troubled lives.

Esther, now a young woman, had been



A pastor is interviewed for Radio Ivyizigiro: some listeners seek further advice on issues affecting their lives

sexually abused by three half-brothers from the age of seven, but had not dared to talk to anyone about it. "She had been deeply distressed at the time she heard our broadcast," says Delphine Ndayikeza, director of the station's parent organisation, World Outreach Initiatives. "She came to meet us seeking deliverance. Now she has

forgiven her brothers and is free. Her life will never be the same again."

The message of repentance and forgiveness broadcast by Radio Ivyizigiro – the name means Hope – has wider relevance to the whole nation as post-election unrest in 2015 has led to thousands of people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

Building support in Southeast England

Susi Shears, Blythswood's area fundraising manager for southeast England was approached by a major employer in the London area to organise a team-building exercise around Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal. "I discovered that their workforce included employees from Hungary, Serbia, Moldova and Romania," she says. "They knew first-hand what living standards are like for the poorer people in their own communities and were very enthusiastic about the Shoe Box Appeal."

Susi understands the commercial workplace having worked as an interior designer for David Lloyd Leisure and in HR at Reebok. She also knows the voluntary sector – she organised a Salvation Army gap-year programme for a team of young adults based in South Africa and served in TEAR Fund's learning and development team, supporting workers in various roles within the organisation.

In 2015, when her youngest child had turned seven, Susi was looking to return to paid employment when she heard that Blythswood was looking for someone in her area. "My mum has been a volunteer in Blythswood's Glasgow depot for many years and I knew Blythswood was a Christian organisation but I didn't realise the full extent of what was going on," she says.

Beyond the Shoe Box Appeal, Susi's main focus is building and developing new relationships within the southeast as well as strengthening relationships with Blythswood's existing supporters.



Susi Shears

"There are people here who have been involved in different ways for many years," she says. "Their support is so important to Blythswood. I'm keen to raise Blythswood's profile in this area and to communicate our message of transforming lives through to Christian care for body and soul to a wider audience."

Susi is available to present Blythswood's work to your church, school, workplace or other group. She can be contacted on 07823 401081 or by email susi.shears@blythswood.org.

Jamie wants to tell it as it is

Jamie McIntosh joined Blythswood Care in October as the organisation's Fundraising Manager. He comes to the role with experience of working in three other organisations in the voluntary sector.

Since completing a degree in Business Studies and Accounting at Edinburgh University, he has worked for Bethany Christian Trust, Scottish Refugee Council and The Leprosy Mission Scotland.

Outside work, he has a life-long interest in the Boys' Brigade having started as an Anchor Boy and now serving as Captain of his local B.B. which is 80 strong.

During his time with The Leprosy Mission Scotland Jamie travelled in India and is convinced of the importance of telling the story as it is. "Some people think it is exploitative to use pictures of people with that terrible disease," he says, "But we do them a disservice if we do not show the challenges that they face."

His first awareness of Blythswood was through the Shoe Box Appeal when he was a pupil at Graeme High School in Falkirk. "We also support the appeal in my church," he says.

Jamie's immediate priorities are getting to know the people and processes that make Blythswood work. "My main objective is to grow support for Blythswood within churches," he says. Based at Blythswood's Glasgow office his new role will take him all over the UK, supporting area fundraisers and volunteers as they raise awareness of the organisation's work in churches, schools and workplaces. Jamie can be contacted on 07801 550213 or by email jamie.mcintosh@blythswood.org.



Jamie at a leprosy mission in India: "we need to show the challenges that people face"



Blythswood people share stories of God's faithfulness

Wonderful!

What makes Blythswood Care the organisation that it is today? The answer lies in the personal stories told in this book. They range from Scotland to Eastern Europe to Equatorial Africa and from WW2 to the present day. But there is one common thread: God hears and answers prayer.

In this book, thirteen individuals who work with or for Blythswood explain how they came to believe in Jesus Christ and how they put their faith into practice in their own communities.

Available in our shops for £4.95 or for £6.95 by mail order – call 01349 830777 or go to Blythswood.org

Phil Morrison (left) and David McConville cycled from Belfast to Cluj to raise funds for Blythswood's Daniel Centre. The 1,500 mile journey across nine countries took 19 days and raised almost £18,000.

Phil had previously spent two years as a support worker at the Daniel Centre. "I had

seen young men with many problems being transformed and educated, enabling them to live normal lives and participate in society," he says. "I'd seen them come to understand that even if they had been abandoned by their parents, there is a God in heaven who will never forsake or leave them."

When Ina Sinclair and her husband James retired to the Fearn peninsula 20 years ago, she did not anticipate starting another job. Already she had worked for 42 years as a nurse.

But in 2001, two years after James died, a friend suggested to her that she might enjoy volunteering for Blythswood.

"I do enjoy it," says Ina, who continues to come in one day a week to Blythswood's Deephaven depot where she works alongside others, sorting donated textiles. "Maybe it's because I was a nurse I enjoy helping others. Everyone in Deephaven is so pleasant and we all work together."

Facility manager Murdo Mackay says: "Ina and the other volunteers here get through a power of work and they clearly enjoy the company, too."

To offer your services as a volunteer, call 01348 830777 or email personnel@blythswood.org.



Ina (right) with fellow volunteer Mina Munson in Deephaven: 'we all work together'

Ina volunteers for Blythswood



**SPONSORED CYCLE
RAISED £18K FOR
DANIEL CENTRE**

SO MUCH POTENTIAL IN INDIA



Sam delivering flood relief from Blythswood

Sam Vadavana started work with Blythswood in September to oversee projects in India.

He brings to the role his professional training, with a Master's degree in Business Administration from Mahatma Gandhi

University in Kerala State, India. He also brings years of experience of managing projects for another Christian organisation in India, and the ability to communicate in Malayalam, English and Hindi.

He sees his first challenge as bringing to

completion one of Blythswood's four special anniversary projects – to provide an additional floor of accommodation for the 64 children now living in Dayspring House, Hyderabad. "We aim to have it completed within a year," he says.

In the longer term, he aims to make projects self-sustaining by identifying and developing business opportunities. "There is so much potential in our country," he says, citing the possibility of tailoring bags from jute. "Businesses like that can also provide training opportunities, developing our own people."

He admits it's a novel concept for Christian charities in India which have tended to depend on funding from overseas. He would also like to retail Christian books, subsidising the business with the sale of gifts and t-shirts.

Blythswood's chief executive James Campbell says: "Sam's experience and enthusiasm will be a great support to our projects in India as we seek to encourage them towards self-sustainability."

Sam is married to Asmita, a graduate in international business and they have a baby daughter, Eva. They live in Mumbai, India's biggest city.

DEREK REPRESENTS BLYTHSWOOD IN EAST MIDLANDS



Derek during a recent visit to the reception centre in Presevo, Serbia, where migrants are helped by Blythswood

When Derek McDonnell's mother died in 1992, he looked at all the charities she had been supporting. "I liked Blythswood because of the balance between aid and gospel," Derek says. "That's when I became a supporter."

Later when he retired, Derek offered to help and found himself organising a team of volunteers checking boxes for Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal. "We processed 1500 boxes on my driveway in temperatures of 4 degrees," he says. "Now it happens in Little Hill Church in Leicester with sixty volunteers from various

churches and some non-Christians too. We send out about 5,000 boxes from this area."

Derek is a seasoned deputation speaker for Blythswood, having done 174 talks since 2009, around two thirds of them in churches but also in schools and other places around the East Midlands. "One care home for senior citizens in Cambridgeshire always fills boxes for Blythswood," he says.

In his previous employment as export director of a toy company, he visited 63 countries. In recent years he has travelled at his own expense to visit projects supported by Blythswood as far afield as Serbia,

Hungary, Romania, Zimbabwe and India. Being involved with the Open Air Mission he feels a particular affinity with projects that focus on the gospel such as Good News Foundation in Hungary and the ministry of Dragisa Armus in Serbia.

Based in Leicester, Derek covers an area of the Midlands from Doncaster to Northampton, including postcodes DE, DN, NG, CV, LE, LN, NN and PE. To invite him to talk to your church, school or other group, phone 0116 247 8920 or 07748 444135 or email derek.mcdonnell@blythswood.org.



Eszter felt lost when the foster children in her care moved on to permanent homes. But her life changed when she discovered that Good News Foundation which had given the children shoeboxes had good news for her too (see page 11).

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Lamentations 3: 22 & 23 ESV

NEW EVERY MORNING
In Blythswood's 50th anniversary year I've had reason to reflect on the Lord's faithfulness. I've experienced it in the actions of staff, volunteers and supporters at home and abroad. Extraordinary things are achieved by ordinary people ready to serve when need or opportunity arises.

Education is central to what Blythswood does. Achieving literacy and numeracy transforms the prospects of children like Pari (see page 3). Advice and encouragement at summer camps equip young people such as Alina to cope with difficult circumstances at home (see page 4).

Community is another of our goals. The Basis Project restores dignity to people marginalised by poverty, such as Arpad and Maria (page 7). A safe water supply changes a village in India, reducing disease and giving back to women especially a little bit more of their lives (page 9). Compassion shown to migrants by our

colleagues in Serbia (page 7) reflects the experience of our Saviour: I was a stranger and you took me in.

Gospel has to be the motor that drives it all: we call HIM Jesus because he has saved us from our sins. That's been our message since the first days of the Blythswood Tract Society. Without it, we would lose our purpose. Somewhere on the deep blue sea John is on a voyage of discovery through the pages of his Bible (see page 12). There are thousands more like him – with Bibles, books, tracts and calendars provided by Blythswood Care. Pray that God will bless his word to each one.

Thank you for being part of this great work. I wish you every blessing for 2017.

James Campbell

James Campbell
Chief Executive

Yes, I do want to support the work of Blythswood Care

Here is my donation of £.....

(please make cheques / CAF vouchers payable to Blythswood Care)

I am a taxpayer. Please send me a Gift Aid form ☐

If you can give us your email address, it will allow us to acknowledge your donation without incurring postage costs. Your email:

☐ Please tick if you do not require a receipt

Please send me information on:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> 2016/2017 Gift Catalogue | <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving a legacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering for Blythswood | <input type="checkbox"/> Blythswood Care support groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a speaker at our church/club/school | |

We also accept donations by (please tick):

- ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ CAF ☐ Charity Card ☐ Switch/Maestro or online at www.blythswood.org

Card number

Start date

Expiry date

Issue no.

3 digit security number necessary

Name on card

Signature

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other) First Name

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Please return completed form to:

Blythswood Care, Deephaven, Evanton, Ross-shire, IV16 9XJ

Tel: 01349 830777 • email: info@blythswood.org

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Your Bank Account:

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From my account please pay £.....

Every ☐ Month ☐ Quarter Until further notice

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Please make sure all backdated payments are credited.

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