

BLYTHSWOOD NEWS



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Maria is determined to complete her education

HELPING VULNERABLE CHILDREN TO PERSEVERE AT SCHOOL

Give a child an education – Gift code R2

Maria is 14. She attends an after-school programme run by Blythswood Care in western Romania.

Her parents – who abandoned her long ago – have been offered a dowry of €7,000. Her grandmother, who cares for her now, has said no. And, more significantly, so has Maria who is determined to complete her education with the help of Blythswood supporters like you.

Adrian Popa, who directs Blythswood's work in this region, says: "Maria has promised herself, solemnly, not to give in, and not to get married before she is 18. She has made up her mind that she is going to complete at least the first stage of high school."

First opened 13 years ago, Talita Kum offers nutrition, hygiene and educational support to 40 primary school children from low-income homes while TK2 extends this

vital help to young people at junior secondary level.

Your support for this project allows young people like Maria to break free from low expectations and achieve their full potential.



Blythswood's Gift Catalogue is full of ideas to help and encourage others – as these stories show. For a gift that really will make a difference, go to blythswood.org/gifts or call 0845 456 9460

Chef's family saved from hungry Christmas by Highland Foodbank

Provide food for a family in crisis – Gift code UK2

It was Christmas Eve and Maria* didn't know how she was going to feed her family over the next two days. The fridge was empty and she had no money.

Her husband was out at work – yes, he had a job – but his pay cheque had not come through. Working as a chef he could get only casual employment and his contract was due to finish that day. Maybe that was why his pay was late. Maybe he would have a cheque in his hand that night. But by then the supermarkets would be closed.

"It was Citizens' Advice Bureau that give Maria a Foodbank voucher," says Lorna Dempster who runs Highland Foodbank in Inverness and Nairn. "At that stage she was about 30 weeks pregnant and she had their lively two-and-a-half-year-old son to look after, too.

"To save them a long walk back to their flat, we borrowed a car seat for the little boy and offered them a lift. Maria was overwhelmed by the kindness they experienced and so appreciative of the food, the extra Christmas treats and a little toy for their son.

"I don't know if the family received the pay cheque that night but Foodbank was certainly a lifeline at a time when everywhere was about to close for Christmas."

*not her real name



File photo

LITTLE LEAFLETS THAT CHANGE LIVES

Enable 5,000 people to read about Jesus – Gift code CL2



Agnes had her view of the world – and of herself – turned upside down by a leaflet entitled *Are You Born Again?*

Written by an Anglican bishop more than a century ago, the gospel tracts of John Charles Ryle strike some readers as hopelessly old fashioned.

To others they are dynamite. Last year Agnes had her view of the world – and of herself – turned upside down by a leaflet entitled *Are You Born Again?*

It was her 29th birthday. Times are hard in Monrovia, Liberia's capital city, but all the more reason to party. Everyone got dead drunk, the celebration ended in a

free-for-all fight and Agnes' husband was injured and had to be rushed to hospital, unconscious.

When she got home, Agnes opened her bible. After all, she went to church every Sunday. She was a Christian. At least she thought she was. Wasn't she?

In her bible she found a leaflet she had been given a year previously, posing the question, *Are You Born Again?* Only now it seemed to be talking about her – "It's not enough to reply: 'I have been baptized, and go to church, and

I suppose I am."

"Agnes had been living a miserable life," says Rev Charles Johnson who has observed the change in the young woman's attitude and behaviour. "She didn't know Christ, nor what it meant to be saved or born again.

"She told me that that night she was convicted and was down on her knees asking God for forgiveness.

"And God is faithful. There and then he brought her into the glorious liberty of his born-again children."

Saving unemployed families from going hungry

Provide a family with regular food – Gift code DA7



Teodora and her husband have donated two of the piglets to help another family in similar circumstances

The gift of a pig for Teodora and her family in 2013 was multiplied many times over when 11 piglets arrived at the end of last year.

"Your gift has been such a blessing for this family," says Zhani Slavcheva who works for Blythwood's partner organisation in Bulgaria. "The sale of the piglets will help them with the monthly payments on their home."

Teodora's husband is willing to turn his hand to all sorts of work in building or agriculture but can only get casual employment: his income and the social aid they receive for their four children is barely enough to keep them alive.

"Blythwood's help has saved this family from going hungry in the winter when there is no work," Zhani says, adding that the children are now old enough to really appreciate the help that the family receives. The eldest daughter, now 16, hopes to train as a hairdresser.



Mareyamma (left) has found companionship in the care home run by Blythwood's partners in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Loneliness. That's what Mareyamma remembers when she thinks about her past life. And the biggest difference your gifts have made to this 67-year-old lady in Andhra Pradesh, India, lies in the companionship she now enjoys.

Today Mareyamma no longer feels lonely.

In the care home run by Blythwood's partner organisation, there are other advantages too. Four years ago, she was sleeping in the corridor of someone else's house. Now she has the comfort and security of a bed of her own when she lies down at night.

Previously she survived on other people's scraps. Now she enjoys two good meals every day, which she is able to help prepare.

But it's the companionship that Mareyamma has experienced in this Christian community that makes the biggest difference of all. Having been abused by a husband who liked to drink, and eventually abandoned by her children whom she had struggled alone to bring up, she really appreciates the friendship of the people around her.

"Mareyamma is happy with the other women who are in our home," says Mary Kumari, president of Alpha Educational and Welfare Society. "And she moves happily amongst the children in our care and always encourages them to study well.

"She is sending her thanks to you all. Please remember her in your prayers."

SETTING THE SOLITARY IN FAMILIES

Care for a widowed lady – Gift code OH7



Gabriella at camp: as parents go away to work, many teenagers in east European countries pay the price in broken family relationships

CAMPS BRING HOPE TO CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Give a child a week at camp – Gift code SC2

Gabriella's parents are well-educated people who got into difficulties when they decided to borrow money to finance a move to another city.

Unable to manage the debt, they felt they had no option but to seek work abroad, like so many others from Moldova's working-age population. At first only her father went, but then her mother, too, travelled abroad for work and ended up in a relationship with another man.

For 14-year-old Gabriella her parents' divorce was a traumatic experience – so much so that she thought of taking her own life.

It was in that state of turmoil that she attended a children's camp last summer, run by Moldovan charity Copii pentru Hristos. There she was able to take time out from her troubles and enjoy playing volleyball, singing and listening to Bible stories.

And more than that, she found adults with whom she could talk through her fears and difficulties. Last summer, having attended camp several times before, Gabriella became a Christian.

Sadly, Gabriella's problems are far from unusual. Many of the children and young people who attend camps supported by Blythswood Care have experienced broken family relationships as their parents travel to other parts of Europe or to Russia looking for work.

By paying for a child to attend camp, you are giving them access to the practical and spiritual help they need to survive the harsh realities of life today on the eastern fringe of Europe.



Easier access to water is especially important to those who are not fit to carry it



The new well supplies 500 families

THINGS NECESSARY TO START LIVING AGAIN



A Bucket of Love contains basic items chosen to help people who have lost everything

Buckets of Love –
Gift code BOL

When the cyclone called Hudhud hit eastern India in October 2014 it tore apart the roof of the terminal building in Vizag's international airport.

And in the inland village of Singavaram, Appaiamma's thatched hut was one of thousands of homes to be ruined by the storm.

Workers from Blythswood's partner organisation Sathyam Ministries met the elderly lady standing in front of the debris of the house which she shared with her daughter and three grandchildren.

"The cyclone turned her world upside down," reports Sathyam chairman CV Vadavana. "Her home was completely destroyed.

"The Bucket of Love gave her hope and something to hold on to. It contained some of the things she needed to start living again – food, towels, hygiene items and of course the bucket itself. Her look of helplessness gave way to beams of happiness and relief."

'SWEET AS COCONUT WATER' – LOW-INCOME FAMILIES ENJOY NEW WELL

Help provide clean water to thousands – Gift code OH6

Having a reliable water supply close to home is vital for a good quality of life even for those are fit and well. How much more important it is for those like Jaypaul who have disabilities to contend with.

Five hundred families in one of the poorer districts of Karnool town, near Hyderabad,

India, now have 24 hour access to safe drinking water in their own community, thanks to a new well funded by Blythswood's Gift Catalogue in 2014. Previously they had to carry their water a distance from a government supply available to them for only one hour in the morning and again in the evening.

"They told me they had been praying for this for nine years," says Pastor Samuel Babu, director of Dayspring House. "The whole colony came to witness the digging of the bore-well.

"Now they have a good supply, sweet as coconut water. Their joy is immeasurable."

MOSQUITO NETS REDUCE A MOTHER'S FEARS IN LIBERIA



Mosquito net Gift – code OH5

In Monrovia, Liberia's capital city, Fatumata and her five children sleep under two mosquito nets funded by Blythswood Care's Gift Catalogue. "Malaria used to be a big problem for my children," she says. "I took them to the clinic many times for treatment and sometimes they were on a drip.

"Since I received the nets, not one of my children has needed treatment. You can see them now, happy and playing. The mosquito nets have taken fear out of my life."



Rajulamma loves to share her faith

SUPPORTING CHRISTIANS IN INDIA AS THEY SHARE THEIR FAITH

Enable an evangelist to do her work – Gift code CL4

For most of her life, Rajulamma was a Hindu. Now she is a Christian who openly shares her faith on the street, reading the Bible and offering to pray for people.

What changed the outlook of a mature and traditional lady in Andhra Pradesh?

Six years ago she was ill with a fever. “You have TB and typhoid,” a doctor told her. “Soon you will die.”

Her grown-up family would not come near their widowed mother, nor would her friends and neighbours. They were all afraid of infection.

The only people willing to cross her doorstep were a Christian pastor and his wife. They visited her frequently, feeding her and praying for her.

“They prayed and fasted for her,” says Mary Kumari, whose organisation now channels a small monthly allowance from Blythswood to Rajulamma, to support her in her work as an evangelist. “Our great God heard their prayers and healed her completely.

“So she accepted Jesus as her Saviour and was baptised and started to attend church. Slowly she started to read the Bible.

“Now she goes from house to house telling people about Jesus. She has a desire to lead people to Christ, especially those who have problems or are sick.”

Help a disabled person become mobile – Gift code R3

A bed is not usually regarded as a mobility aid but for Mira it is. The adjustable bed, which she received from Blythswood in January, enables her to raise herself to a sitting position. And that is progress for the grandmother from Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia, who experienced partial paralysis of her left side when she suffered a stroke last year.

“The hydraulic bed is more comfortable for Mira and also a great help to family members who care for her,” says Dragisa Armus, director of Serbian charity, Love your Neighbour. “Most people here with disability have no way of paying for the equipment they need. They are dependent on humanitarian help.

“There is need here for all sorts of equipment – sticks, walking aids, wheelchairs and hydraulic beds.”



Mira's new bed enables her to raise herself to a sitting position

HELP FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY IN SERBIA



Pastor Peter Kolev is seeing people coming to faith every week

SUPPORT ENABLES PASTOR TO BE THERE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Help support a pastor for a week in Eastern Europe – Gift code CL3

When Peter Kolev became the pastor of a village church in Sliven Province, Bulgaria, he had been a Christian for just five years. And the church had only 12 members.

Now a congregation of around 50 people meets for worship three times a week and the Sunday school with 55 children has to be divided into two classes.

But although the church is stronger in numbers, support from Blythswood Care remains important to Peter's ministry.

“The people are poor and most of them are unemployed,” says Zhani Slavcheva



These girls were delighted with their new satchels and other things for school

Giving children something of their own

Send a Christmas gift to someone in need in India – Gift code OH8

New school bags! And notebooks and pens and pencils and lunchboxes and all the things necessary for children going to school.

These are some of the gifts that your donations bought for children in the care of Alpha Educational & Welfare Society, in Andhra Pradesh, India.

For a child who has been orphaned or

abandoned, it is a great feeling to receive something new – something of their own.

Blythswood's chief executive James Campbell says, “While we cannot send boxes from Blythswood's Shoe Box Appeal to India, we still have the opportunity to brighten the lives of these children by giving them gifts that are really useful and give them a lot of pleasure.”

who knows the situation in Orizari well. “Some of them go to Greece for seasonal work and one young man works on his father's farm but the rest are dependent on social help from the government.

“Peter could go abroad to seek work like so many other men of his age but feels strongly that it is his duty to stay in the community and to be there for his people.”

In recent months the church at Orizari has experienced revival with new people coming to repentance every week – many of them young men. Peter explains:

“We started to gather every night in the church or in someone's home to pray and to preach. God is doing miracles and heals the sick, which strengthens the faith of all of us, especially the new believers. The men's prayer group meets twice a week and once a week the whole church gathers for Bible study. We are studying the Gospel of John.

“At the moment God's blessing and favour are abundant in our church. Praise the Lord for that.”

Blythswood supports 10 pastors in Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria and Serbia.

