

# HUNGRY FOR THE GOSPEL

## LUTHERANISM IN ROMANIA

**T**he small village of Malancrav, Romania, sports dirt roads and houses depreciated by poverty. A cascade of homes trickles down a hill topped by a historic Lutheran church. The village became a Lutheran community in the mid-1500s, shortly after the Reformation,

and this church acted as its theological and sacramental lighthouse. However, communism, rapid emigration of German groups including Lutheran Transylvanian Saxons (Siebenbürger Sachsen), and current liberalism in

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the church have since tried to snuff out the light of the Gospel. The appointment of a woman as pastor has caused despair amongst the church's parishioners, but they remain because, for them, to leave the church is to leave God. There is a need—a hunger—for the pure Gospel, which is why Pastor Sorin Trifa and his son Sergiu Trifa, a vicar and third-year student at

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), work faithfully in spreading it.

Pastor Trifa, superintendent of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Romania and Moldova, is the pastor of Biserica Lutherană Confesională Sfânta Maria, Braşov, in the heart of Transylvania. In his unabashed promotion of Lutheranism for Romanians, he seeks to preach Christ crucified, being both missional and confessional. Through Pastor Trifa, God is stirring up a sort of second reformation in Romania and surrounding countries like Greece, Moldova, and Italy. The foundation on which these growing confessional churches are built is Christ, and built on this Rock “the Church shall stand / Even when steeples are falling” (LSB 645:1). This hymn, “Built

on the Rock,” is a fitting confession that God’s church stands. It lives whether infiltrated by the liberal state church or the synergism of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Pastor Trifa is not alone in spreading the Gospel. He has missionaries in the Eurasia region by his side and receives support from CTSFW. In collaboration with the Office of International Mission, eight students from CTSFW and Director of International Studies Dr. Detlev Schulz visited important centers of the Transylvania region, such as castles and churches established by the Teutonic knights, and experienced the reemerging Lutheranism in that region. To support Lutheranism in Romania, Prof. Robert Roethemeyer, the Wakefield-Kroemer Director of Library and Information Services, and Kay Roethemeyer, Library and Assessment Analyst, coordinated the gift of a 647-volume theological library to Biserica Lutherană Confesională Sfânta Maria. Vicar Trifa previously brought 159 volumes to Romania, and the CTSFW group brought the remaining 488 with them. This study collection will be of great use to the pastors and missionaries of Romania and thereby benefit the growing number of parishioners in the region.

Christ says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37b–38). The church needs laborers to bring the light of Christ into dark places. Although international mission work is not everyone’s calling, the Office of International Mission allows CTSFW students to experience the church in international contexts and witness God’s care for His laborers at home and abroad while encouraging them to prayerfully consider serving as missionaries. 📖

Article contributed by Peter Ventimiglia (primary author), Jackson Atrops, Matthew Byrd, Wesley Clark, Jonathan Schulz, Nathan Shelton, Corrie Steel, and Caleb Swor, all of whom are Master of Divinity students at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

*Opposite page, clockwise from upper left: The Lutheran church in Malancrav, Romania (photo by Kay Roethemeyer); Bran Castle in Braşov, Romania (photo by Kay Roethemeyer); A Lutheran service in Bucharest, Romania (photo by Nathan Shelton); The CTSFW group poses with the books they helped bring to Braşov (photo by Kay Roethemeyer).*



