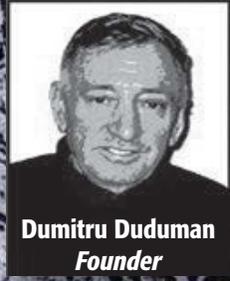


Hand of **HELP**

*From Hope to Ashes
to Hope Again!*



Dumitru Duduman
Founder



February

March • April 2017

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From Hope to Ashesto Hope Again!

We have known the Bacarau family for a very long time. When Virginia first came across this family the children were small and they needed a place to live. With God's help and yours as well, Hand of Help built the Bacarau family a house, and as of the end of last year, there were fifteen people living in Maria Bacarau's home, including two of her married children and their spouses.

It was tight quarters to be sure, but it was a roof, and it was heat, and it kept them from being exposed to the elements. Romanians, by their very nature and the

circumstances into which they are born, are resilient people, and they make it work, even if things get a little claustrophobic from time to time.

The older children gathered wicker and made baskets which they would later sell for extra income, the cow we purchased for the family last year provided milk and cheese, and things were going as well as could be expected for the Bacarau family until the night of January 14, 2017 when an electrical short circuit, that was later determined to have been caused by an



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Hope to Ashes continued.....

The Warmth of Hearth and Home

electrical panel that the electrical company had worked on the previous day, set the house ablaze, and within the span of an hour, all the memories, all the security, everything was gone.

There is something very basic and primal about fire, and no matter how often we write about a family that



lost their home to fire, it never fails to send chills down our spines.

If there is a silver lining in all of this, it is that the Bacarau family managed to save the cow, but as far as the house is concerned, all that is left are the ashes and the cement blocks.

As was to be expected, the electric company is not willing to take any responsibility for the fire even though it was demonstrated that the fire started from a short in the electrical panel.

Currently the family is living with neighbors throughout the village, each household taking in as many as they can make room for, and praying for a miracle.

When we heard about the fire we went to visit and dropped off supplies as well as some money, but as soon as spring comes, the Bacarau family will need help rebuilding their home because even the most generous of goodwill runs out eventually.

As we were leaving with the promise to return with more help, sister Maria said, "We have seen the Hand of God over our family for our entire life. It would be nothing less than betrayal to begin doubting Him now. We know we love Him, and in the end all of this will somehow work for good."

Please keep the Bacarau family in your prayers. And if the Lord leads to help with the construction of their new home in any way, know that it is a true and noble cause.

In His Grace,
Hand of Help Staff



We've all been cold. At some point or another in our lives, to varying degrees, for longer or shorter periods of time, we've all been cold. Although being cold is relative to each individual, some who live in places like Arizona shivering at the thought of sixty degrees, there comes a point wherein the notion of cold is no longer a relative concept, but an across the board reality.

When you start to shiver and you can't stop, when your teeth start clattering, when you can see your breath in the air as you exhale and can feel icicles forming around your nostrils, then it's cold even by Minnesota standards.

When we are cold, most of us have the luxury of running into a warm home, of lighting a fireplace, of throwing on a blanket or two, or even turning on the stove and feeling the warmth radiating from the burner. Most of us have ways of getting warm when we're really cold. We know exactly where the thermostat is, and for the more rustic among us, we know exactly how much it takes for the wood in our stove to start crackling, and for it to get toasty warm.

I've been told I have a vivid imagination. I can put myself in other people's shoes readily enough, I can sympathize to a certain degree with their predicament, and I can understand what they are going through mentally, given a certain set of circumstances or a specific situation.



Imaginative as I can be, there are two things I cannot imagine no matter how hard I try. There are two things I can't see myself being able to do, or being able to cope with, no matter how often I think back on them.

The first of these things is kissing my wife and daughter goodbye every morning, strapping on a uniform, and not being sure I will ever see them again if perchance someone I pulled over on a deserted patch of highway decided this would be the day they snapped. Rationally speaking, I know that the potential for my not seeing my wife and daughter again exists every time we say goodbye, but the increase in probability due to the inherent dangers of certain careers is what I can't wrap my head around.

The second thing I can't imagine is being cold, really cold, shivering, chattering, can't feel my extremities kind of cold, and having absolutely nothing I can burn for warmth even though I am sitting in my home, staring at a cold stove, covered in the two or three ratty blankets I pulled off the bed hoping to find some warmth.

It happens every winter, and it never gets any easier hearing about it. With the advent of the cold season,

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it seems like every two or three days there is a news report of another elderly person who froze to death in their own home because they had no firewood, and had nothing left to burn.

The reason I find such news so disheartening and painful is because of the preventability of the situation. It's not as though they got hit by a bus, or they slipped on the ice and broke something. These people just needed some wood to burn, and they would have had warmth, and by having had warmth they would have seen another sunrise or another sunset.

This year we plan on buying more firewood than any other year because the need for something as basic as warmth during the winter months has also risen exponentially. Not only are we buying cords of wood for individual families, we've even bought wood for the assisted living facility in Tinca. They wrote us a few weeks back informing us that they would not make it through a month's worth of cold weather with the wood they had in reserve, and that they had no money to buy any more. They informed us it would take eight truckloads of wood to carry them through the winter, and with God's help and your kindness we were able to provide them with eight truckloads of firewood.

It is an unspeakable blessing to be a blessing to other ministries, and knowing the good work that they do, it

was a humbling honor to be able to meet this need for this ministry.

Call me cynical, but between financing a new leer jet for a televangelist or ensuring that someone stays warm this coming winter, I'd go with keeping someone warm, even though there are no accolades or plaques in my name for doing it.

You've been with us long enough to know that what we do saves lives. We may not send out plaques, or have a special wall with your name on it, but somewhere in heaven there is a book and that book has accumulated a lot of names of men and women and children and orphans and widows whose lives you bettered, whose lives you brightened, and whose lives you saved. Thank you for being a part of the F.I.R.E. project (Firewood Initiative for Romania's Elderly)!

With love in Christ, Michael Boldea Jr.



The Daring Ones

I am not at all impressed by people who set out to be remembered and memorialized. Especially in today's modern culture, there are so many souls who perversely set about doing something so cringe worthy and unprecedented as to ensure that their names will live on long after their passing that it has become cliché. The lust for attention and recognition is so overwhelming for some that they will go to great lengths, including butchering their own bodies and altering themselves, in order to stand in the spotlight for a second before it moves on to the next individual who has done something even more appalling. The only emotion I can bring myself to feel regarding those whose end goal is for their names to live on in infamy is pity, because they spend their entire lives scheming, only to discover that they will likely be forgotten as soon as they return to the earth from which they came, if not before.

What does impress me to no end are those whose names are remembered millennia after their passing, not because they wanted to be remembered, but because they accomplished great and memorable things simply by living their convictions, and working toward something greater than themselves. These are men and women who tirelessly and consistently worked toward the goal

of seeing the manifestation of their calling, and though many of them did not see it during their own lifetime, they established the foundation of what would later become a great and noble work.

In a world where a vast swath of the populace is attempting to claw their way to the limelight even if it means compromising themselves and their beliefs, it is refreshing and eye opening to discover that you can be a man or woman of character, you can be a man or woman of conviction, you can simply go about fulfilling the calling to which you were called to the best of your ability, and be remembered.

Individuals are remembered for different things. Whether it's for their boldness, their leadership, their wisdom, or their willingness to sacrifice of themselves, we can pinpoint those throughout human history who stand out like beacons in the night, men and women whose existence and exploits will have been remembered even if humanity were to continue its course for another five thousand years.

If one were to take the time and analyze these world changers, these men and women whose lives were more profound than the sum of who they were as individuals,

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they would be quick to discover that to the last, these individuals who are rightly immortalized and spoken of hundreds and thousands of years later were the daring ones of their generation. They were men and women who were not self-seeking, whose end goal was not the betterment of their own condition, but who dedicated themselves to an ideal, who lived out their convictions, and who labored tirelessly toward the goal of achieving their calling.

So why speak of this now? What is the relevance of this within the context of the times we are living in? The simple answer is because we need men and women of character and conviction within the household of faith today more than ever before. The simple answer is because we need daring men and women standing for truth and righteousness once more, if we hope to affect any sort of change in this dying world.

Those who came before us were not made of something better. They were not special in the sense that they were born with more opportunities, or had a better education, or were inherently braver. On the contrary, especially when it comes to opportunity and overall education, chances are most of them did not measure up to today's standards, but what they did have was a willingness to see

beyond themselves, beyond the now, beyond their own comfort and ease, and sacrifice themselves for what they recognized as a once in a lifetime opportunity to change the world.

I firmly believe we have a small but closing window to do our utmost in reaching the lost, in preaching the Gospel, in building up the Kingdom of God, and affecting change. Seeing as this is a unique moment, all that remains is for the new crop of daring men and women to stand in the gap, to forfeit this present life, to deny themselves, and boldly set about doing the hard but lasting things required in order to achieve change.

So, if I can in some small measure encourage you to seize the moment, if I can in some manner convince you to walk in the authority rightly yours as a son or daughter of God, if I can only persuade you to be one of the daring ones who will live their convictions and speak the truth without fear, then I pray this writing will be the catalyst to do just that. As others who have come before us have answered the call to be a change maker, it is now our turn to answer the selfsame call. One thing is certain: we will never get another opportunity like this.

With love in Christ, Michael Boldea Jr.

One would naturally assume that winter would be the most difficult time for those who are barely making it even during the best of times, but with a noticeable consistency, life seemed demonstrably harder for them once the spring months rolled around than during the winter months.

As we began to think through this and ascertain why this would be the case, we realized that there was a logical explanation for the increase in the number of those with the look of hunger about them once spring rolled around.

For most Romanians, especially those living in the rural areas, it is well known that during the fall months you can your vegetables, you cure your meats, you salt your cheeses, you store your flour, potatoes, and other essentials, because winters can be brutal, and if you don't have enough of a food reserve for the winter you will likely go hungry or worse.

People do the best they can, and they take preparing for the winter and making sure they have as many provisions as they can afford seriously, but for most of them, by the time the last snow falls and spring begins to inch its way to the forefront, they have run out of their provisions.

Couple that with the fact that spring is when you have to exert more energy in order to till, plant, and patch up what was damaged during the winter months, and you have the perfect recipe for hunger.

The fortunate ones still have a little left over from their winter provisions to carry them through, but for the vast majority, the harvest is still half a year away, and they've run out of the most basic essentials required for survival.

Spring is almost upon us once more, and we have been praying diligently asking the Lord for direction, and

wondering what we could do to mitigate and minimize the look of hunger on the faces of those we will be visiting shortly.

We have come to the conclusion that it would not be an outlandish hope to put together at least 1,000 food packages for the coming spring season, and begin distributing them as soon as possible. For ministries larger than ours, 1,000 food packages would be as nothing at all, but for a ministry such as ours it is a bold hope, and a high mark to reach for. By the same token, the goal of 1,000 food packages is not the ceiling but rather the floor, so if the Lord provides for more than 1,000, then we will make more.

The cost of a food package delivered to a family runs about \$25. If a family is large, and most families we visit are, then we leave multiples, but one of our packages includes enough food staples to alleviate a small family's burden for a couple weeks. We include essentials from rice, flour, oil, sugar, to canned meats and pastas and other basic foodstuffs that can be stretched and also prepared quickly.

If ever you have seen the look of hunger you already know it is something unforgettable, and something you never want to see again. In the latter we have no choice, for we know full well that we are bound to see it more often than not, but if we can decrease the numbers of those going hungry, even by a thousand, then it will have been worth the effort and cost.

Thank you for praying about this project, and if the Lord leads you to support it in any way, know that it will go towards saving a life.

In His Grace,
Hand of Help Staff

The Spring Project

Hunger has a look about it. It matters not what continent or country you find yourself in, you learn to spot the telltale signs, you learn to recognize it, and even if the individual in question doesn't say anything, even if they're just passing you by on the street or standing in their yard, the look of hunger jumps out at you each and every single time.

Unless they've traveled abroad, unless they've been to nations wherein hunger is an ever present reality, many in the west would not know the look of hunger if they chanced upon it. The look of hunger isn't so much the outward manifestations of rubbing one's stomach, or making the international sign for hunger of bringing one's hand to their mouth in short bursts, it is subtler and more nuanced.

When someone is hungry and has been so for some time, the skin takes on a specific kind of pallor and the gauntness

around the eyes and the cheeks becomes undeniable to the point that one simply can't look away. The worst of it is seeing the look of hunger in children because in children it is more pronounced than in adults.

No one has to say anything, no one has to ask for help or insist that they are struggling to the point of giving up, the look of hunger says it all, and in a far more impacting way than their words ever could.

Throughout the years, having visited thousands upon thousands of homes and families, we have noticed a disturbing pattern. At first this pattern made no sense, but once we actually sat down and thought through it logically, it made all the sense in the world.

For the past few years, at least for as far back as we began noticing it, the look of hunger seemed pronounced on the countenances of more individuals during the spring months than in the winter months.

Tiny Church, Big Move of God

We have come to think of churches as spacious edifices. Here in the West, it seems there is a competition of sorts among pastors as to who can build the biggest building and the most gargantuan structure, so much so that one is likely to require a walking stick and a ration of water if they wanted to walk the entire length and width of the sanctuary and not get parched or worn out.

Gone are the days of cramped quarters and small, steeple churches, at least for the most part, and one needs both



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a coffee bar and a juice bar in the foyer before they can even be considered for the revered title of mega church pastor.

As a friend of mine is fond of saying, these are first world problems, and while some churches are trying to purchase the lot next door in order to build a parking garage, other congregations have to do without a pulpit because the square footage they currently have available simply won't permit it.

The church in the village of Vladeni is a new church. It was only in March of 2016 that the congregants began to gather together, and in May of the selfsame year, they had their official opening having received authorization for the small room to be used as a gathering place. The day the church officially opened there was a baptism, followed by another baptism just a week later.

The individual who allowed the brothers of Vladeni the use of his property lived another six months after it was officially dedicated as a church, then died suddenly at the age of 56.

The church was small to begin with, but the congregation has outgrown it, and if they hope to accommodate those still coming to the saving knowledge of the truth, they need to either build a new sanctuary or somehow retrofit the one they are currently occupying to fit more people. Although the former is costlier, the latter is nigh to impossible as there are only so many benches you can

put in such a small space and there is nothing left to sacrifice, including a pulpit, in order to make more room for the congregants.

A family in the village has already donated the necessary land to build a sanctuary, with enough land left over to likewise have a handful of cemetery plots since the Orthodox church will not allow a burial in their cemetery if someone in the community happened to convert to protestant Christianity.

We know that God does not despise small beginnings. We likewise know that if God's Hand is upon any given endeavor everything falls into place at the appropriate time. Having land upon which to build the new church was a seemingly insurmountable hurdle for this small congregation, yet here they are in possession of the necessary lot.

Having the funds to build the church is just another hurdle that they will have to overcome by faith, and knowing that our prayers are aligned with theirs, we are living in a state of expectancy to see what great thing God will do.

Please remember the church of Vladeni in your prayers, and if the Lord leads you to help in any way know that it is a much needed endeavor.

With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.



March's Child of the Month

Iulia Olariu, born in July 2006, and her sister Georgiana have been with Hand of Help since 2009. The parents of the two little girls are both suffering from schizophrenia and often times the children were abandoned and neglected for days. The community where the family belongs asked for our help and consequently, Iulia has become a part of our family.

Iulia is suffering from a neurological disorder and is experiencing delays in her mental development. As a consequence of her hard time adapting to a normal school, we decided to enroll Iulia at a special needs school for arts and crafts in 2014 in a nearby city. Iulia currently attends the classes at that school but spends some of her weekends and all her holidays at the Hand of Help orphanage.

We are grateful to see major changes in her behavior - she is more responsible, communicates more fluently, she has even changed her negative conduct towards other children. We constantly talk to her over the phone and try to get involved in as many projects as possible with her school.

We are also responsible for her medication and for all her expenses, such as clothing and school supplies.

Her parents refuse to keep in touch. They are both under the care of the Neuropsychiatric hospital; her father comes by our center just to ask for money and never to see the girls.

We hope that a special class will be soon established at a nearby school. We would like to be able to have Iulia closer to the orphanage so that she can stay in our center and be close to her sister. It is her deepest wish to not be separated from Georgiana. We pray that this change will soon take place.

Please join us in praying for complete healing, mentally, emotionally and physically, and for the Lord to fill the void in her little heart.



Dear Brethren,

Proverbs 9:9-12, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it."

Mark 9:42, "And whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."

It seems there's been a run on weed whackers of late. I don't know what it is, maybe there was a sale, or they

were giving one away for free with the purchase of a happy meal, but everywhere you turn there's a Christian holding a weed whacker getting to go to work.

Pulling the weeds would have been far too time consuming, a delicate, precise task that's not nearly as fun as the bluntness of a weed whacker. The only problem with the blunt, indelicate approach is that you are just as likely to destroy the wheat as you are destroying the weeds, in essence doing the exact same thing you were attempting to prevent by appointing yourself weed whacker wielder in chief.

If I come off as a bit terse, it's been one of those months. Rather than be about the work of the ministry, I've been

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dealing with the fallout from overzealous believers who feel as though it is their sworn duty to clear the field even if doing so means destroying all the wheat in the process.

“But what can be wrong in attempting to do away with the weeds that have sprouted? They were, after all, planted there by the Master’s enemy, were they not?”

Yes, the weeds were planted among the wheat by the enemy, but if we study the parable that Jesus spoke, we come to discover that the Master cares more about the safety of the wheat than he does about the destruction of the weeds, at least until harvest season comes.

What I’ve seen happening of late, and it has been frequent enough to warrant this writing, is that in their misplaced zeal to do away with the weeds, there are many self-appointed horticulturists who never bother to ask the Master whether or not He wants them to go and pull up the weeds, but simply proceed to slicing and dicing, relishing the idea that they are saving the wheat, when all the while they are damaging it at best, and destroying it at worst.

Just for my own peace of mind, just so I could stand before God one day and proclaim without any nagging doubt that my hands are clean and free of men’s blood, let’s dissect the parable of the weeds for just a little while.

We know that there is a field, there is one who owns the field, the enemy of the man who owns the field, and the owner’s servant who was tasked to oversee the field. The man who owned the field sowed good seed in it. The seed was not mediocre, it was not subpar, it was not castoff, it was good seed because it was in the owner’s best interest to have as good a crop as possible.

While everyone was sleeping, and there is an entire teaching that we can finesse from just this line, the owner’s enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. We could ask the obvious question of why was no one watching the field, or the even more obvious question of why was everyone asleep?

This would simply be a futile intellectual exercise because what’s done is done, and now we find ourselves in the predicament of having a field sowed with good seed, and weeds, and the truth of what transpired will only be evidenced once both the wheat and the weeds begin to sprout.

The difference between the wheat and the weeds is only obvious after germination, after they’ve had a chance to sprout and grow and begin to mature. Again, another lesson for another time, but a worthwhile one because far too few believers today take care as to what is being

planted in their hearts to the extent that when what has been planted sprouts, they realize there is no wheat. There is nothing that can sustain.

And now we have come to the part that many a believer simply skips over: the servant came to his master, to the owner of the field and asked, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

There are certain situations and circumstances wherein it is a noble thing to take the initiative. Others, however, require us to submit ourselves to the authority of the Master, and before doing anything, before starting up the weed whacker, before pulling on anything whether it be weed or wheat, ask Him if it is what He desires of us.

The Master’s answer was short and to the point, “No, because while you are pulling the weeds you may uproot the wheat with them. Let them both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: ‘First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then collect the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The Master knew that there was a chance the wheat might be uprooted if they began pulling the weeds, and so he told his servant to just let them be. It would be the harvesters who would deal with the separation of wheat and weeds, one being bundled to be burned, one being brought in to his barn.

It is the survival of the wheat that is paramount, not the destruction of the weeds. Toward that end, as long as the wheat is not in danger of being chocked off and altogether destroyed, it is not my duty to play at being a harvester and start separating the two.

Much of the household of faith has already failed at staying awake and preventing the enemy from sowing weeds among the wheat. My hope and prayer is that we don’t compound our failure by frantically yanking at both weed and wheat in the hopes that our previous shortcomings might be overlooked.

May the wise hear and increase their learning.

Psalm 37:7-9, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.”

With love in Christ,

Michael Boldea Jr.