

# Moldova News

We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached



## A drop of faith and a God of love (p.4-5)

*It was not the mission experience they had expected, but even in unusual circumstances, Moldovans on the Logos Hope saw God.*

## Transformed / Love in practice (p.6-7)

*Her past held no promise, but God's love transformed Catea and now flows through her at a new Elderly Care project.*



Reading this edition of Moldova News, my thoughts are going to Matthew 13. In this chapter, Jesus is talking about the same kind of seed, but different kinds of soil. The results depend on the environment of the place where the seed fell, even though the quality of the seed might be the same.

As human beings, we expect the same results from our work, but Jesus is telling us that only some of the seeds will bring fruit. As I am thinking of the work of our pastors and missionaries, their dedication, all the effort, the diligence, the sacrifice and the sweat, they all want to see fruit from their work, but not all the time you can see it. Even though you put the same work in sowing, it truly depends on the kind of ground the seed falls on.

That's exactly what we can see in our ministry and partnership with church planting work. I see how much of the seeds are falling on the path, rocky places or among the thorns. Many pastors and missionaries are getting discouraged to see this. On top of this, you still meet a lot of opposition. So, church planting requires much work and persistence, but it's good to be aware of what Jesus is teaching us.

However, "we are more than conquerors through him", and we continue to rejoice in the fruit from the good soil. Recently I heard about a pastor whom we have helped with ten food parcels to be distributed monthly to needy people. Out of those ten people, seven started to come to the church. This is something to celebrate and continue praying for more seeds to fall on good soil.



Eugen Ciumac  
Field Leader, Moldova

## Rise up, Church of Moldova!

A few hundred young (and some not so young) people from all over the world, reaching out to communities all over Moldova, sharing the gospel and showing God's love through children's programmes, practical help, home visits etc. - this is what a normal summer has looked like for us for many years. This year we face another unusual summer, as international travel is still quite restricted and short-term options we can offer to foreign participants are very limited. However, this gives us the chance to focus in a special way on the potential of the Moldovan Church. We are passionate about seeing Moldovans take their part in missions - in their own country as well as around the world - and for this summer have prepared several short-term options for outreaches and missions training, which we offer to Moldovan believers. We appreciate your coming alongside us through your prayers for these programmes throughout the summer:



Impact is a missions training programme for Moldovans, which we have newly developed: a one-month training course, combining teaching sessions with lots of on-the-job training through outreaches. We will run this course twice this summer (9 June - 3 July and 14 July - 7 August).



We also invite Moldovan church youth groups to do a short-term outreach together, spending a week reaching out to several villages in one of the little-reached regions of Moldova. We hope for several teams during each of the four different time periods.

We also pray it will be possible to take some Moldovan teams on a few short-term outreaches in other countries, to give them a taste of cross-cultural missions.

*Of course, all of these depend on the development of the Covid-19 situation, so please pray that it will be possible to run all these outreaches and that regulations will allow the necessary freedom for public activities and interaction with people. Pray also for participants for all these programmes, that the information will reach all the different churches throughout the country, that many Moldovan believers will respond and allow themselves to be challenged to take part in missions, and that God will use this experience to call and equip more workers.*

## Firstfruits from thorny soil

Besides mobilising new workers for missions, our summer programmes and courses like the Missions Basics Training (MBT) also aim at supporting church planting work in the least-reached regions of Moldova. For their first outreach in Moldova in April, the MBT participants came alongside the ministry in Soroca - a region with 68 locations and a population of about 100.000, but in the whole region there are only six evangelical churches with a total number of 150 members. Our Local Ministry Team there is working together with the church in Soroca to reach several villages in the area and have started a church planting ministry in Egoreni - one example of a village where local opposition is still severe. They see first fruit, like Larisa, who recently came to faith, despite concerns what others around her would think, and subsequent rejection by her family who consider her decision to be a betrayal of their own traditional faith. Obstacles are still great - there, and in many other similar places around the country - requiring much prayer and practical involvement.



*Larisa is taking care of her two granddaughters, while their parents work abroad in order to be able to pay off their debts. Benefitting from relief projects and frequent conversations with our local workers helped her come to faith.*



## Learning to trust God's purpose

*Our regular Mission Discipleship Training, MDTe<sup>3</sup> 2021, had to be cancelled because of the global Covid-19 restrictions. However, wanting to offer an alternative, the MDT team at short notice put together the Missions Basics Training (MBT), which we can run with a very small group. We are thankful for the five participants, who despite uncertain circumstances embarked on this journey of faith with us at the end of January, plus two more who could join for the second part after two months. The course still runs until early summer. Despite changing local situations and restrictions, it was possible to organise teaching sessions and even outreaches in Romania and Moldova.*

*About mid-way through the course, Lara (one of the participants) shared about her experience:*

### Why did you choose to join MDTe<sup>3</sup>/MBT?

After finishing school, I really wanted to do something different to discover if I could imagine living as a missionary somewhere else. With that in mind, I had heard about MDT and thought that it sounded great and I wanted to do it.

### Where have you see God at work in your outreach experience? What have you learnt about God?

I learned in a really practical way that God answers prayers. For example, I was praying for a family during a week of outreach. The father lives in Sweden and the mother wanted to go to visit him for a month and left her five daughters at home. The oldest is 10 years old and had to take care of her younger siblings during this time. One night, the first night when the girls were alone at home, I was praying that God would protect them and I was hoping/praying that I could see the girls again. On the next day we visited them, and it was so special for me to see that they were doing well and nothing bad had happened during the night. I also saw that God would give us everything we needed, especially energy after the first 10 days of outreach. We were all quite tired but after moving to the next places we suddenly had enough energy again to continue.



*Part of the MBT teaching happened online.*

### What were some of the trials and what helped you to get through them?

One of the hardest things for me was to see how unfair this world can be and how far away God can seem. We were on outreach in a village and worked a lot with Roma people and heard a lot of sad stories, especially about young girls who were sold to different families to marry a son and to live the rest of their life similar to a slave. I really doubted God's goodness at this point. Why do children have to suffer so much? What really helped me was prayer. I would pray that God helps me to understand that He has the power to change anything, even cultures and traditions that have existed for a long time, and also that His plan is good even when I don't see it. Another thing that helped was talking things through with the others, who had the same experiences, and entrusting the children into the hands of God.

### How has this ministry changed you?

I have learned a lot about the body of Christ and me being part of it. I was insecure about my role or my place in this world and couldn't understand why God would choose me to be part of His kingdom and would want me to go out and make disciples. Now I understand better how God can use our willingness to be a testimony and also that I have gifts that I'm supposed to use to glorify God and serve others. I also learned a lot about friendship and what it means to trust people.

### Why would you recommend MDT to others?

It will definitely get you out of your comfort zone and away from a 'boring' Christian life. It will probably change the way you see the people around you and what it means to make disciples of all nations. It's a great opportunity to grow in your personality and your faith. And it also is fun.



## A drop of faith and a God of love

“What am I doing here? I am cleaning toilets and doing many other things, while I already know the way God has called me to serve Him - and this does not seem to be the place where I am supposed to be.” These thoughts and similar doubts frequently went through Liuda’s mind as she spent her first few months on OM’s ship, Logos Hope.

In truth, the ship had not been her desired destiny. When Liuda had shown an interest in global missions while serving with OM in Moldova, the ship had repeatedly been proposed to her as a good starting point, but Liuda had refused three times, having set her heart on Central Asia. Only after consecutive attempts at joining different countries in Central Asia had all failed, she agreed to apply for the ship in early 2020 - at that point expecting this would turn out to be a closed door as well. However, things fell into place and only a month later she was already on her flight to join the ship - but still not quite convinced this was where she should be.

To make matters worse, very shortly after her arrival, the first global wave of the Covid-19 pandemic caused many countries to close their borders and go into lockdown, and the ship’s crew was forced to isolate, too. The normal ministry of the ship - work on shore and receiving visitors - became impossible, while adapting to team life on the ship was also a challenge for Liuda, who found it difficult to suddenly be faced with the reality that believers from all around the world had differing points of view on certain issues, some of which were not what she had been taught to believe, or the way she understood it from the Bible.

Frustration and doubts were ever-present throughout the first half-year. “Looking back, I see it was very difficult physically and emotionally”, Liuda explains, “but from a spiritual point of view I grew a lot. I could really feel God’s presence; His strength and grace surrounding me - it was a powerful experience.”

God started to teach her to look to Him instead of people, and to work on her own relationship with Him rather than judge other people’s faith. “While studying the Bible passage that says *‘They honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me’*, God showed me that first of all I have to apply this to myself, and see if I am truly living for Him with my whole heart.” When she felt the need to talk to someone but didn’t know who to tell the things that were pressing on her mind, she felt that God was telling her, “I am here. Why can’t you pour out your heart to me? Why do you look for people, who come and go, when I am always with you?”

Liuda remembers that when she had a hard time, she would often go onto the deck of the ship, lie on her back and look up into the sky. On one such occasion she saw a tiny cloud overhead and told God, “I want to feel your power and blessing and how close you are to me. I want you to send a raindrop from this cloud.” After waiting almost five minutes with nothing happening, Liuda was disappointed and told God He wasn’t listening to her. “Exactly at that moment not one, but three drops fell”, Liuda remembers. “I started to cry, and I asked God for forgiveness that I had been so childish, and that I so often

want things my own way, here and now, when God has His own timing.” From then on Liuda started to always tell God everything, however small, and saw how God provided even when she hadn’t shared her needs with any person.

After finishing one year on board the Logos Hope, Liuda returned to Moldova in early 2021. “I do not regret that I went to the ship”, she concludes as she looks back, “because there God showed me what matters most: not so much my service for Him, but my relationship with Him - without which I will not serve Him the way I should.”



## The joy of seeing clearly

*Cristi is another Moldovan who experienced the challenges of Covid-19 restrictions on the Logos Hope. He discovered the importance of remembering how God spoke in the past and the joy of seeing clearly - physically as well as spiritually.*

When many things did not go as planned regarding his own involvement, Cristi became discouraged: “Many thoughts and doubts went through my mind, and I questioned whether my decision to extend my time on the ship had been right. But then I opened my journal to the page where I had earlier noted down all the confirmations I had received from God about this extension. Reading all this was like a ‘stone of remembrance’ and it lifted up my spirit and encouraged me that even though things did not go as I had expected, God is the One in control and His will for me is to be here now and to love the people surrounding me.”



In autumn 2020, when the ship visited an area that had been severely affected by hurricane Dorian a year before, the crew had opportunities of participating in construction work (fixing roofs) as well as offering medical services. Cristi could be part of a ministry testing people’s eyesight and providing glasses. “What really made my day was seeing people’s joyful reactions when they could finally see well again”, Cristi shared, “and this also gave me a beautiful illustration of the Bible passage in 2 Corinthians 3. Before knowing Christ, we all had a veil obscuring our sight, but when Jesus called us to follow Him, He took that spiritual veil away and gave us the joy of being forgiven and of sharing Him with others.”

“God showed me what matters most: not so much my service for Him, but my relationship with Him - without which I will not serve Him the way I should.”

*Please pray for all our Moldovans currently serving in or preparing for global missions: On the Logos Hope we currently have Cristi, who is in his second year there, while three more Moldovans are preparing to join the ship. Pray also for a few more who are getting ready to start working in East Asia and Central America. Pray especially for the Moldovans who have already been serving for many years in North Africa and the Middle East - whom we cannot write about as openly, but who need our prayers just as much (if not more).*



## Transformed

Her past and background held no promise, but God's love and power transformed Catea and now flow through her to others needing hope.

When Catea started visiting the elderly in Vorniceni with food, it was not only the long-awaited launch of this Elderly Care project, but also the next big chapter in the story God is writing in Catea's own life.

A few years ago, this young woman would not have been able to imagine herself in such a role. Having grown up in an orphanage and then returning to her family, which was marked by poverty, alcoholism and drug abuse, Catea seemed destined for failure. Most children in similar circumstances grow up to live on the streets, become victims of human trafficking, turn criminal, develop addictions to alcohol or drugs, or commit suicide. Catea herself had never experienced love or a healthy family life, never received affirmation or appreciation, and lacked self-esteem. Moreover she suffers from a physical handicap - one of her legs being shorter than the other - which exposed her to contempt and ridicule, even more so in a culture where people with any handicap are often disregarded and hidden away, and may be treated as mentally retarded, even if their limitation is only a physical one.

About two years ago, Catea, who is from Vorniceni herself, came to faith. Not long after this, our local workers encouraged her to join OM's "Challenge into Missions" training. Catea accepted the challenge and flourished at the course. She built friendships, learned how to share her faith, and developed confidence and the conviction that God can use her. At the end of the course she expressed her desire to keep on visiting people in need and her determination to continue sharing the gospel with others, no matter whether they welcome it at the time, knowing that sometimes seeds only bear fruit after a long time. Both of these desires are now put into practice in her ministry at the Elderly Care project - and also towards her own family.

Catea's family situation is still difficult: Her father died several years ago. After his death, her mother started drinking heavily, her health began to rapidly deteriorate, and after a fall she became bedridden and has to be looked after. Catea's oldest brother hardly stays in touch, while the two brothers who are currently living at home both drink too much alcohol, and one of them also takes drugs. Drinking routs with friends often lead to fights, and on several occasions the police was called to their home. For Catea it is hard to live with her family, who do not respect her and treat her almost like a slave to clean, cook, wash their clothes, repair what gets broken in fights etc. The workers in Lozova have taken Catea into their home for the time being, and she very much enjoys being part of a Christian family for a while, but she still takes responsibility for her mother, going there every day to help around the house and take a warm meal to her mother. God's love flows through Catea towards her mother, just as towards all the other elderly in need she visits daily. She knows God's transforming power, which changed her own life, can also transform them - though the seeds she sows may take time to grow and bear fruit.



## Love in practice

The new Elderly Care project in Vorniceni impacts the lives of the people benefitting from this help and demonstrates God's love in practice to a still sceptical community.

"Will you really come every day?"  
"Is it free? No one gives anything for free these days."  
"Will I receive less pension if I accept your help?"

These were some of the questions put by the elderly in Vorniceni, when they started receiving a daily warm meal through the recently opened Elderly Care project. As with many of our relief projects, beneficiaries at first found it hard to believe they'd receive help for free, without cost or any other obligations attached - but once convinced of this truth, people are usually really grateful and many develop a curiosity about the motivation of those helping them.

For our church planters working in Vorniceni, together with the small church in Lozova, getting this project started had been challenging: For months they had planned to launch it and also entered into a dialogue with the local authorities, but first the restrictions connected with Covid-19 made a start impossible, then the lady who had been supposed to do the daily visits dropped out. After many months' delay, finally in mid-March all things were in place: The mayor's office had put together a list of 10 recipients who should receive a meal five days a week, a contract was made with a local restaurant to provide the needed number of meals each day, and a young local believer, Catea (29), was approved for the job of delivering it to the beneficiaries. Another member of the church in Lozova agreed to drive Catea around, as she has a walking difficulty, while the church covers the transport costs, thus also contributing to the project.

On the first visit, the local social worker joined Catea to show where each of the elderly lives; after that Catea was on her own. She was quickly able to connect with most of the elderly; by now they are already used to having a daily visitor and when Catea arrives a little later than usual, she is asked why she is so late. As soon as the elderly saw that Catea reliably comes five days a week, they started to ask

her to also run errands for them: get a bucket of water from the well, or drop by the shop or the pharmacy to buy some milk or some paracetamol etc. Catea helps out whenever she can, and the elderly are very thankful for her assistance as well as her company.

One of the elderly Catea visits every day is Petru, who is over 80 years old and lives by himself. He is always eagerly waiting for Catea to open the door and start a conversation and likes to talk to her about the many experiences he has had in life. When he found out that he would receive a warm meal every day, he shared that during the war there was no food and they had to eat grass to stay alive. This makes him appreciate how fortunate he is now to be given a good meal every single day. After several visits and getting to know each other better, Catea started to read some verses from her Bible and to share about God's love for all people. When asked if he had a Bible, Petru replied that he didn't, but that he would like to read one. So Catea brought him a Bible which he is able to read, printed in Cyrillic script, and now they can occasionally discuss truths from the Bible when she visits. We pray that through God's Word and Catea's lived-out example of faith, Petru will get to know Jesus in a personal way.



She knows God's transforming power, which changed her own life, can also transform them - though the seeds she sows may take time to grow and bear fruit.

## Church planting in Vorniceni: Patient work towards a slow change

The church planting ministry in Vorniceni remains challenging, as continued opposition from prominent people in the community intimidates others. During much of the Corona-period, ministry was limited to home visits, as official gatherings were not allowed. Around the turn of the year, a few Sunday afternoon services could take place. These were well-attended (15-20 people) whenever the meetings were combined with the distribution of food parcels, but not otherwise. Whenever a special event takes place at the church in Lozova, they also invite the people they know from Vorniceni, pick them up and bring them to Lozova. In this way they are in contact with a group of 10-20 people, but it is more difficult to do anything in Vorniceni itself. A lady from the church in Lozova works together with some women from Vorniceni, who told her that they would like to come to the church gatherings but are afraid of the local Orthodox priest. Our workers are thankful for finances to continue construction and install a heating system in their building in Vorniceni, but also ask for prayer for wisdom to plan and re-start activities there. We hope and pray that the new Elderly Care project will also help to overcome prejudice, by being a practical blessing and a good testimony to the people of the village. Pray that people will overcome their fears and accept God's truth!



some of the many faces of church planting in Moldova - reaching out to people on many levels, wherever they are...

## Get involved:

- PRAY** for our ministries  
or  
**GIVE** towards a project  
or  
**GO** - join a programme:  
Love Moldova (2 weeks)  
MDTe<sup>3</sup> (5 months)

We are also constantly looking for people to join us mid- & long-term.

Please contact us for more information about current needs and opportunities!

## "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

### The sacrificial service of church planters in Moldova's unreached places

Svetlana is passionate about Jesus and about making Him known to others. Although she has an apartment in the capital, throughout the week she stays in a small house in the village of Susleni, simply because she wants to bring the gospel to this place that has no church or believers. Almost every single evening she organises different activities - Computer lessons, activities for girls, meetings for parents etc. - where she shares her faith. In summer they meet in a tent, in winter they squeeze into her tiny house. Svetlana has no helpers; not even her husband supports her in this work, as he does not share her faith, but still she tirelessly works to be a light and reach this village with the gospel.

Svetlana is just one of the local believers we partner with in our efforts to reach the regions and villages of Moldova that have no presence of the gospel yet. In this national aspect of our ministry, a crucial role is played by these church planters and other local workers, who often serve at a personal cost and face many challenges:

- When starting ministry in new places, believers often face much opposition, prejudice and suspicion, sometimes even outright threats or violence.
- Local churches, which reach out to other villages or send workers, are usually very small themselves, with an average of no more than 20 people, many of them elderly. In addition, many people (including church members) are leaving the villages - especially young people move either to the capital, or go abroad altogether, thus leaving pastors and church planters with few or no active helpers.
- Besides their ministry, pastors and church planters need to also work in regular jobs, to earn money and provide for their (often big) families - and making a living is difficult enough in Moldovan villages, even without additional ministry. It is quite common even for pastors and church workers to go abroad for several months at a time in order to make ends meet.

Thus, these workers often lack finances, they have few resources, they lack people to help them in their ministry, and besides all this receive little emotional support and encouragement.

Our Local Ministry Teams are one way we can come alongside a few of them. Another way we support many more of them in ministry is through our various projects which they can use as outreach resources to help build bridges, show love and share the gospel. One of the church planters we partner with recently shared that already six families from a nearby village started coming to church, as a result of the regular food parcels we had enabled him to provide in that village over the previous few months.

In other places, especially where initial prejudice and opposition are severe, results do not come as quickly, but even in such cases - though it may take many years - we have seen and heard many testimonies of how churches have grown and become an accepted and respected part of the community through the faithful witness and practical concern for those in need, shown by the first believers.

*Thank God and pray with us for these church planters and pastors, who continue to take their stand and share Christ despite many difficulties and challenges.*

*Pray also for us as we continue to offer projects to help them reach out to others, and are looking into some new initiatives to help church planters make a living themselves.*

*Finally, pray for workers for our Local Ministry Teams - we need some replacements in our existing teams in Sorooca and Vadul lui Voda, and also want to start more teams in other places.*

### info & publications:

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