

# Saving Starfish!

We have often told the story of the little boy walking along the beach where thousands of starfish had been washed up. He was slowly tossing some of them back into the sea, when a cynical man passed by and mocked the boy, saying, "You don't think you can save all of those starfish do you?" The little boy replied, "No, but I can give this one a chance ... and this one ..." We have held on to this story for many years, knowing we cannot save Bulgaria but we can give some a chance.

Earlier this year, Brian & Chris Clarke had the joy of being at the opening of a new church centre of one of our partners in the north of Bulgaria. Also attending was a family they had known from about ten years ago, when members of our team had made a significant impact on the life of the eldest daughter, who is blind.



After much research about her condition, the whole family had been helped to relocate to the City of Varna, where there was a specialised school that could teach her independent living.

She is now nineteen and a truly beautiful young woman. The family came back to their roots for the opening of the new church and there she stood with, incredibly ... a beautiful starfish slide in her hair. It was the most amazing encouragement to us and a reminder that God changes lives - and that the Church is in the same business. Thank you Lord!

## Mission Possible

Vera Russell spent more than 15 years working as a missionary in Kenya with her husband Len, who sadly died last year aged 80. In his honour, Vera decided to join one of our teams to Bulgaria last Spring, making an age difference of 75 years between the youngest and oldest team member. Here are some of her observations ...

"All the Bulgarian people we have met have been so very kind to us, and very appreciative of anything we have tried to help them with. The team have done lots of things, going to children's homes, to an orphanage and a safe house.

"They have been an encouragement to the people and staff there. They played with the children, sang and danced with them and made crafts too. The children who went out with us, Nathan, Greg and Sam were great and played happily with the children they met. We are proud of them.

"I was more involved at the Blue House, with a group of ladies who wanted to learn patchwork and quilting. They were amazing and very creative. They quickly devoured the beginners stuff I had prepared and were looking for more of a challenge. It was lovely to see how they enjoyed access to such lovely material. They said you cannot get anything like it in Bulgaria. By the end of the week, they were asking for more patchwork designs to make things from. It was very rewarding teaching them.

"For the last few days after the Easter break, I was working with Rumiana, the manager of the Blue House Shop, who is going to be making things to sell in the shop. She will also be running workshops to raise money, so that the Blue House can become self-supporting. The shop is lovely, with lots of things for sale of really good quality, ceramics, jewellery and glasswork. Now there will be patchwork and quilting goods for sale too.

"After being there for a while, I realised that if the Blue House had an embroidery machine, it would really open up the sewing project. There are so many avenues to explore with an embroidery machine. Even simple things like names on T shirts and caps can



bring customers and help provide income to the Blue House. There are many household things which can be made very beautiful by the addition of some embroidery and can be made into gift items for special occasions .

"Seeing what Krasif Aid has accomplished over the last fifteen years is an inspiration. To see the children now and hear how it used to be, makes you realise all the work that has been done. God has so blessed this work."

In many instances, these children have gone on to lead successful, independent lives. Krasif Aid has been privileged to be involved and also to have given encouragement and support to staff facing daunting obstacles and a lack of resources and training. ■



# 25 Years so far Faithful Servants

## 1989 - 2014

It was 25 years ago this September that we took our first steps into International Mission. On the 17th September 1989 we took the short flight from Birmingham to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. Together with our two young sons, Steven & Michael, we joined a Discipleship Training School at the Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Training School. It was the start of five years serving the Lord in 'Sin City'. It would prove to be absolutely foundational to our lives and ministry ever since.

But the winter of 1989 was also an historical and incredible time in Europe. It was the heady days of Gorbachev's 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika'. Freedom and openness started to flow throughout the Eastern Bloc, symbolised most graphically by the fall of the Berlin Wall on the night of 9th November 1989. We made a memorable visit to Berlin just two months later. Heading through the famous 'Tiergarten' park towards the iconic 'Brandenburg Gate' and the infamous wall provided an experience that will remain with us for the rest of lives.

The closer to the wall we came, the louder the sound 'chink, chink, chink' became, until we saw the lines of East and West German people stretching back into the distance as they painstakingly demolished the wall, piece by piece, with hammers and chisels! The air of freedom was tangible. It was deeply moving to see the people acting as one, to end the decades of control, intimidation and division. It was the first signal of sweeping political changes throughout the whole of Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria.

We still have a few copies of our book "I don't want to go to the Red Light District tonight" which tells the whole story, so please ask if you want a free copy.



Political protest outside Sliven Town Hall

For many in Bulgaria, the last 25 years have been a great anticlimax. 'Freedom' offered so much. The reality, however, has been crushing and the freedoms illusive. The latest coalition government lasted just 18 months before resigning, unable to agree on workable policies. Do pray for the elections in October and please pray for the work of Krasif Aid and ourselves personally, as we continue to serve God and those who are still in great need in Bulgaria.

With Many Blessings,

Brian & Chris

*Psalm 96 v 2 - 4: 'Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.'*

Evelyn Wilson, a retired Social worker from Holy Trinity Church Wimbledon, has been conducting training seminars for local care staff in the Sliven area for a number of years. In April 2013, she and another professional colleague, Cynthia Ransley, provided a 2½ day training programme for staff at the Home for Elderly People in Sliven. Here is the letter she received from the Director some time after the training, giving feedback on what they have put into practice and how it is working.

Dear Cynthia and Evelyn,

*After finishing the training, the three social workers started implementing it in their direct work. The thing I have in mind: Upon the arrival of a new client a research is done, using your questions and methods for assessment of the needs. Two weeks after that we carry on with conversations, observations and after this we proceed to finalise the individual plan. The practice showed that now it meets the needs of the users to a greater extent.*

*In solving conflicts and created tension between the users and the staff by using the 3-steps approach, we managed to solve 5 very difficult conflicts. In one of the cases, the conflict was about attitude towards the staff and the rest of them towards the users. In the beginning, we almost did not believe that things will work on the field but it turned out that we were wrong. There were positive results. With the achieved confidence from the results, we intend to continue to apply what we have learned.*



*I would like to use this opportunity to thank you for your help and knowledge. I would like to thank Genka, (Director of the Blue House) who made it possible for us to meet you. I wish you, above all, lots of health and endless patience with students like us. I wish myself to meet you again and to receive some more of your knowledge. We all who have worked with you, love you and are looking forward to the next meetings with you. Personally from me, wholeheartedly thanks and greetings.*

Iliana Slavova, Director of the Home for Elderly People - Sliven



# Feeding the Poor

Richard & Chris Page, long-standing Krasif partners, have headed up the work into Bulgaria from the Warfield Group of Churches in Berkshire for many years. Here are extracts from a recent update to their church ...

**Social Kitchen** Since 2002 we have been involved in feeding the vulnerable and poor through a food project working through Sliven Baptist Church. Warfield Mission Committee funds have aided this project in various ways. Initially, a Social Kitchen was run at the local church, feeding twenty five people daily throughout the year. This was also part funded by German Churches. Our involvement over the years has also been hands on, taking visiting teams.



We have served food, shared the word of God, prayed with people and given them much needed warm clothing provided by friends and members of Warfield Church. The project later became fully funded by Mission without Borders, until early 2013 when it closed.

**Where do we go from here?** During our visit in October 2013, we spoke with Pastor Iuri and his wife Plamena about our vision for the feeding of the poor. The poor and vulnerable still needed to be fed, but we felt that a different approach was required to make the project more sustainable and become self-funded. After prayer and much discussion, we came up with a wish list. Before revealing our list, we met with Iuri and Plamena and asked them what they felt was needed. They came up with all the items on our list! Inspired by God? Why not!

**Manna Kitchen** (This was the 're-branded' name God gave to Richard & Chris, as they sensed his leading to take the kitchen more into the heart of the community and to make it more accessible). As winter was fast approaching, there was an urgent need to provide food for the coming months. The long-term vision for Manna Kitchen would take time to raise funds, develop and implement. We would need to find a café, someone to help, and funds to pay for food for the immediate need. In the meantime, a total of £1450 (3337 Bulgarian Leva) was allocated just for last winter. Iuri found a suitable venue willing to host the project at a good rate. One of the unemployed Church members was able to coordinate the kitchen, which ran for a period of fifteen weeks between 16 December and 11th April, feeding thirty people daily.

An email from Plamena on the last day of operation says it all... "All the people were full of gratitude for all that they had received

through this project. Some want to write letters to you to express their gratitude. One of the men, Tsvetan, shared that he has not eaten such good food since he was a student, thirty years ago!"

One of the men who was helped, Alexandar, now attends Church regularly. Sadly, he survives by collecting waste paper at night in order to get a few coins (called stotinki). A kilo of paper would give him 7 stotinki, worth about 3 pence!

Discussions are currently underway in both Bulgaria and the UK to establish Manna Kitchen as an ongoing ministry jointly with Sliven Baptist Church and the Blue House. We would greatly value your prayers for this.

## Burzitsa, Heaven & the Holy Spirit

Steve Gaskin writes... Anyone who has the misfortune of living in an orphanage misses out on so much; the love of parents, siblings and friends. That is why I will always be grateful to Christ and Norwich Central Baptist Church for pointing me in the direction of this remote eastern Bulgarian village, housing a facility for fifty young children in the care of the authorities.

For five years, our Lord has given me the privilege of working in Burzitsa, alongside both church and un-church friends. Who would have thought an aged, ex-Metropolitan Police detective could make an impact on a community so far away! But my story is not about my fellowship with my beloved children. It is about a profound experience in the Holy Spirit. This was an experience of the Holy Spirit that I had not had before; even with the hindsight of an Alpha Course and fifteen years as a Christian!



I went to Burzitsa in August 2014. As part of that preparation, I rewrote ten bible stories to tell the children. There was a heavy dose of physical activity with them; relay races and gathering of bible 'stickers'. As I was preparing the stories, it struck me that they all had a beautiful, common denominator: LOVE!

Most dramatically, each time I delivered the stories to the children, I was completely overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit ... a sense of unbelievable encouragement from Christ Himself. How do I know this to be true? Well, the 'filling' came from the heart outwards and I truly felt empowered to do anything. I will never forget this gift. The number of children listening to the stories grew day by day.

I am blessed by Jesus Christ Himself and I am proud to say I am the dad of thirty or so children. Three daughters of my own and any child from Burzitsa who Christ sends my way!

"Neither Heaven nor earth will ever separate me from the love of our Lord"  
(from Romans 8:38)

**Human Trafficking:** is a huge international problem which affects Bulgaria badly. Over the past year a number of key people have expressed interest in helping with this difficult and, at times, dangerous area. We have recently held meetings in Bulgaria and the UK to take matters further.



**Freedom in Christ:** We are most grateful to Aldridge Parish Church, Walsall, who have generously donated £5000 to cover the cost of translation into Bulgarian and initial printing costs, to enable this excellent discipleship course to be launched as a resource nationally in Bulgaria. We are currently working through the process which will be overseen by our partners, Pastor Iuri & Plamena, at Sliven Baptist Church.

**Family Ministry:** It's been another busy summer of ministry and travel for Brian & Chris in their teaching role. They started in Bulgaria in April and May, with Marriage & Family Seminars for the Baptist Churches in both Sliven and Varna. They moved on to three more Youth With A Mission Family Camp weeks in Denmark and Slovakia in July and August. Board members Alan & Gillian Winsor also participated in a number of these events. Brian & Chris plan to return to Denmark in October to speak at the YWAM Discipleship Training School in Randers.

**Burzitza:** Hannah Worsley writes ... Another year, another trip from Norwich Central Baptist Church, Redhill Baptist Church and friends. Twenty one people in two teams visited the newly named 'Centre for the Development and Rehabilitation for Young People'. There are a lot of unknowns hanging over the home, staff and particularly Director, Mrs Zlateva, at the moment. She remains in our prayers.

It was nice to have our 'regular' time running a holiday club with the children, as we have done for well over a decade. The moment that made this trip for me was while experiencing a real sense of disappointment – the children were talking and plaiting hair through the Bible stories. It was then our interpreter Bruce said, 'It doesn't matter, they're still here and you don't know how much they're taking in.' As Radostina (the one who did engage with every single story) then answered one of the questions, I had an overwhelming sense of God saying, 'even if it's only her that this makes a difference to, it's still important to keep telling these stories – she's important to me.' Amen!



**Slovakia/Bulgaria link:** YWAM Slovakia is currently trying to acquire ownership of a former YMCA camp facility as its permanent base. Please pray for this. Following our visits the last two years, there is talk of the Slovaks inviting some Bulgarians to their camp next year and then maybe helping establish future camps in Bulgaria. This could prove to be a strategic link between these two Eastern European nations.

## KRASIF Response Slip

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