

LIGHT FOR CHILDREN

AGM REPORT

29th January 2019

Thank you all for attending the meeting this evening and for your ongoing and much appreciated support over the last twelve months.

1. Medical news

We are delighted to be able to tell you that both of the girls who have been fighting leukaemia are doing well. Our 14 year old finished her chemotherapy twelve months ago and our 6 year old completed her chemotherapy in the summer of 2018, just in time to be able to start school. Both girls continue to have regular blood tests and other checks but currently enjoy good general health.

For many years we have helped an autistic boy, who is now 14. With the support of his family, he has made remarkable progress and has been able to keep his place at mainstream school. He has gone through different phases as he has grown up but the thing that he insists on doing at the moment is his homework! His conscientious and enthusiastic attitude is an example to the rest of his class! We continue to support his family with £40 a month towards the medication that he needs.

We met a special boy when he was 5 and came into the care system following an accident at home. He had wandered outside of his garden in the village and had been electrocuted by an overhead pylon, receiving such severe burns to his right hand, that his arm had been amputated just below the elbow. Following the accident, he was taken from his family and came to live in the state run apartments in Dorohoi. He learned to adapt very quickly and although he attended regular appointments with an orthopaedic specialist, was told that he couldn't have a prosthetic arm until he was 14. In the summer of 2015, we helped him to receive his first prosthetic arm and in the summer of 2018, we helped him to receive a newer model, as he had grown so much. For this, the government covered two thirds of the overall cost and *Light for Children* contributed just over £475. Having the new arm has given him so much more confidence and self esteem.

We have continued to support the apartment children by paying for their **optician** appointments, **glasses** as required, **dental work**, medical tests and **medication** for acute illnesses.

We have continued to pay a **speech therapist** to work with several of the apartment children individually. The speech therapist also works one day a week in the school that the children attend, so he is able to observe and support them generally in their school lives, which is fantastic.

2. Educational news

A **17 year old young man** who has been brought up in a foster family just outside Dorohoi, joined our orchestra several years ago, playing recorder, clarinet and violin. A talented musician and preacher, he was selected to attend a new Christian high school in Targu Mures, some 300km from Dorohoi. There he has the opportunity to study in English and develop his talents in a particularly supportive environment. Since he enrolled at the school in September 2017, we have supported him with £50 a month towards his living expenses.

Since September 2013, we supported a widow with six children, to enable her eldest two daughters to attend university. For the first three years, we donated £100 a month to her and then for a further two years, gave her £50 a month. In the summer of 2018, we decided to stop this support, as the girls had completed both BA and Masters Degrees. Their brother had also started a course in engineering and we felt that they should now be able to help each other. The family were very grateful for the support that they received and we are sure that it has made a big difference to the young people and their futures.

In September 2018, three young people from the state run apartments were able to start **university courses**, as well as three young people from our church in Dorohoi. The young people from the care system have their fees and basic living costs paid for by the government but we were able to help each of them with the clothing, bedding and food that they needed to start them off. One of the three young people from the church needed financial support for the first couple of months but has since been able to receive a grant towards her living expenses.

We have also been able to support a young Romania lady who lives in Barnsley and has started to study Archaeology at Leicester University. Having known her for many years, we felt that it was very appropriate to offer her our support and encouragement by making a one off donation of £200 towards her initial university expenses.

The **children from the state run apartments in Dorohoi** attend a number of local schools. Teachers are paid by the government to teach primary aged children from 8am until 12pm but for a fee of £4 a week, parents can choose to pay for their children to be taught by the same teacher in the afternoons, from 1- 4pm. This is of great benefit to the children, so wherever possible, we pay for the apartment children to do this. This academic year, we have 11 children who can benefit from **afternoon schooling**.

The apartment children receive exercise books and basic stationery from the child protection authorities but there is no provision for their **text books**. Parents usually pay for their children's books, particularly Romanian and Maths books, so again we step in to provide for the apartment children.

3. Extra curriculum activities

We didn't organise our own **camp** during the summer of 2018 but did sponsor a number of the apartment children so that they could attend a Christian camp in the Romanian mountains, run by an American charity called "My Brother's Keeper". The children were very excited to be able to travel by train to the campsite and despite very wet weather, were still able to enjoy participating in a wide variety of activities, including crafts, lessons and outdoor games. The campsite had its own obstacle course with zip lines through the trees, similar to "Go Ape" in the UK. We were pleased that Bob and Jan Baxter from *Alba Aid* in Scotland, who have supported *Light for Children* for many years, volunteered to work at the camp with the Dorohoi children.

For **Christmas 2018**, we decided to do something slightly different for the apartment children and instead of making up small individual parcels of sweets and fruit, we bought a kit for each apartment to make a **Gingerbread house** together. We delivered the kits on the evening of 5th December, when the children had prepared their boots for the arrival of Saint Nicholas. We asked that the children worked together and took photographs to show us how they got

on. They were very excited, especially when they realised that they could then eat the Gingerbread houses!

A 10 year old boy from the apartments had written a letter to Saint Nicholas, asking him for a **trumpet**. He had been learning to play at school but without his own instrument, couldn't practise at home. We had a spare trumpet at our church which was not being used, so we made arrangements for him to find it next to his boots on the morning of 6th December. He was very excited!

The **church orchestra** continues to rehearse weekly and we have enjoyed playing in our own church as well as other local churches throughout the year. New songs this year have included "Eternal Father, Strong to Save", "The Day Thou Gavest", "There is a Higher Throne" and "Auld Lang Syne". Several of the older children will be moving on to university in the next 1-2 years, so in November, we started a group for beginners. Twelve young children aged between 5 and 11 years attend regularly and have already been able to play a simple song in church. Four of the younger children have learned so quickly that they have already moved up into the main orchestra. Costelus is one of the four.

Just before Christmas, we took the children from the church orchestra to listen to the **Botosani Philharmonic Orchestra in concert**. It was a lovely evening, as the Christmas lights had been switched on in the town and a new pizza restaurant had recently opened within walking distance of the concert hall!

4. Our family

An 11 year old boy had been spending weekends and school holidays with us for the last four years but in the summer of 2018 we applied for him to join our family in full-time foster care. He moved in on the last day of school in the middle of June, the first day of the three month school holiday!! We were very fortunate to be able to come to England for the month of July. He loved being able to spend a lot of time outside, visiting Redwood Park, Chase Terrace Park, Beacon Park and Wolseley Nature Reserve. He attended Burntwood Swimming Pool regularly, becoming a strong swimmer. He also enjoyed taking part in an archery course. He loves cars and was delighted to be able to try go-karting for the first time in Fradley. A highlight of his holiday was a surprise ride in a Ferrari! Towards the end of our time in England we travelled by train to Rhyl, where we met

up with Lynn, Sarah and family for the day. He saw the sea for the first time and enjoyed swimming and playing in the sand.

He and I will be coming home for Romanian half-term during the first week of February. Now that he is so familiar with the local area, he has been able to tell me exactly what he is looking forward to doing. The two main things on his agenda are to go swimming “as often as possible” at Burntwood Swimming Pool and to eat a sausage sandwich in the cafe at Waitrose in Lichfield! It will be a little easier to organise than a ride on a London bus!!

In particular, we would like to thank:

- *the LFC committee who work so hard to support and encourage us;
- *Mary Aplin and Karen Proctor for all that they do to keep the accounts in order;
- *St John’s Community Church for their ongoing support;
- *those individuals and churches who support us practically, prayerfully and/or financially.

Helen and Costel Cosman.