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## Reflections...

*Thoughts from the Editor...*

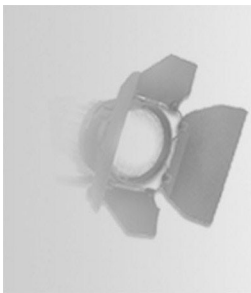
Isn't it funny how something that is extremely valuable to one group of people can be considered essentially worthless by another? Have you ever thought about the value of gold? This rare, shiny yellow metal has been considered valuable for centuries, and especially in more recent times. Part of the reason for the high value of gold is its rarity: the sum total weight of gold in the world, from the beginning of history to today, is something on the order of 120,000 metric tons. Compare that with steel: the total production of steel in 1995 in the United States alone was approximately 90,000,000 tons—in just one year! Gold's value is also due to its physical properties, which make it useful in a wide variety of industrial and commercial applications, as well as its aesthetic appeal (i.e., its "beauty"), which makes it prized for jewelry and decorative uses. Gold has been used as a standard and measure of currency value for hundreds of years in virtually every country in the world. However, although we know that gold was in use in ancient Egypt for decorative purposes, the commodity used in that civilization for the medium of exchange was barley, not gold. One of the most advanced civilizations in history used grain rather than "precious metal" for commercial interchange. Why would that be? Undoubtedly the reasons are many, not the least of which being that the value of barley in that economy was high, coupled with the population's relative indifference to gold. The fact that one society does not see the same value or intrinsic assets in gold is of no real consequence: the value, in a very real sense, is in the eye of the beholder.

Kathy and I recently had the privilege of traveling to Romania for a brief trip. The purpose of our visit was to complete some paperwork relating to one of our pending adoptions and to visit the two children whose adoptions we are prosecuting. While we were there, we had for our escort and guide TSC's very own Alison Gutterud.<sup>1</sup> Alison has a deep love for Romania and her people, and she permitted Kathy and me to see this country and its inhabitants in a light that few, I think, are able to enjoy. Alison took us to one of the hospitals in Bucharest, one which serves abandoned as well as sick children. We held babies in our arms who are destined to live out their lives in a hospital ward, not because of a chronic or incurable illness, but because they have been abandoned and have no one to give them a home and family. This situation, while sad enough in its own right, is compounded by the fact that current adoption laws in Romania prohibit adoptions of Romanian children by non-Romanian citizens. (See our Spotlight article in this newsletter for more information on the current situation in Romania, as Alison shares some reflections following her recent six-week sojourn in that country.) There are many stories I could tell, and I wish I had more time and space to do so. But I do want to introduce you to one little boy we got to spend time with, a boy we already knew of through Alison but whom we had not previously met. This little boy's name is Ionut (pronounced, roughly, Ya-noots). Ionut suffers from congenital brain damage of non-specific origin. His limbs are drawn into fixed and unnatural positions, he is

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## TSC Spotlight

# Romania

By Alison Gutterud



Alison, with TSC-child Cristian Dimitru

Romania is a country that is near and dear to my heart. I lived there as a missionary for two years, and I have been able to go back several times to visit since returning to live in America. During the months of August and September, I was able to spend six weeks in Bucharest, Romania, checking on some of The Shepherd's Crook children waiting to come home to their forever families. I also spent time just generally ministering to the people and children of Romania.

Before I share some of my thoughts and observations from my recent trip, I want to give you a little bit of history and information on the adoption situation in Romania. In 2001, Romania issued a moratorium on international adoptions as a result of pressure by the European Union. In June of 2004, Romania passed a new law on adoptions that essentially precluded international adoptions. There are several problems with this. The first problem is that there are about two hundred families, nine of them being Shepherd's Crook families, who have adoption paperwork submitted to Romania and have yet to have their adoptions completed. There have been many promises and speculations about what will happen to these "pipeline cases," but we have yet to see any movement that offers hope for these waiting children and their families. The second problem is what this halt on adoptions means for the children who are born and abandoned each day in Romania. UNICEF estimates that 9,000 infants are abandoned in hospitals in Romania each year. This number does not include older children who are left on the streets, in orphanages, or in hospitals. Of these 9,000 abandoned infants, only about 1,000 are adopted domestically by Romanian families; the other 8,000 children are shuffled around the child welfare system. It is evident that the end of international adoptions in Romania has only worsened the situation for abandoned and orphaned children there.

As a ministry that is called to rescue the neediest orphans from all over the world, our calling to bring children into loving, adoptive homes is clear. However, what is not so clear is what we are to do when there is no possibility to adopt from a certain country. Do we move on to another country that has just as many orphans and is allowing adoptions? After all, isn't it our goal to bring these little ones into our families and our homes? How wonderful it would be if I could once again list these little Romanian faces on our Web site

and watch their adoptions and homecomings unfold before my eyes.

On this most recent trip to Romania, the Lord broke my heart for the children who have been left behind—those who desperately need a family but are not allowed this because of the law Romania has established. Just as it was when adoptions were taking place, there are children born each day that will never be brought to their mother's arms. They will begin their lives in a cold, metal crib they will come to know as home.

On one of my first days back in Romania, I went to the abandoned baby hospital where I had spent two years caring for the children. Upon walking into the ICU, I was instantly drawn to a small child who was barely existing with just skin hanging on his sharply protruding bones. At nearly three months of age, Marin weighed less than six pounds. He stole my heart from the first moment I saw him. Over the next several weeks, I was able to take time to feed, hold, sing, and talk to him. It was amazing to watch the Lord heal this child before my eyes. Six weeks later when I left, he weighed almost eight pounds and looked like a completely new child! Without being touched, loved, and nurtured, these children will die.



Marin

Sometimes, even despite all the love and nurturing we can give them, some children still die. Ricardo was another beautiful child I was privileged to care for while in Romania. He had a disease that left his muscles weak, and when he contracted pneumonia, he was not strong enough to fight it off or to even cough to clear his lungs. Even as sick as he was, though, he



Ricardo

would always greet me each morning with a weak smile and then whimper to be held. His mother had left him in the hospital because she was too poor to care for him and didn't have the resources to meet the needs of a sick baby. Following Ricardo's death, as I placed his limp body into the lace-lined coffin, I thanked God for the way this baby touched my life. I thanked Him for the honor of showing Ricardo what it means to be loved.

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## TSC Spotlight *(Continued from page 2)*

So, what can we do? Marin and Ricardo are just two examples of the thousands of children in Romania longing for a home, a name, someone to cry for them when they die. Of course we can't all move to Romania to care for these babies on a daily basis, but there are many other ways to care for the orphans of Romania. As of now, The Shepherd's Crook has helped to place and provide continued support for three children in foster care. Many children are in need of surgeries that are very expensive. For example, six-year-old Maria needs surgery to correct severe strabismus in one of her eyes. Or there is three-month-old Ianis who has parents, but his parents cannot afford to pay for the surgery he needs for spina bifida and hydrocephalus. The generous donations of many Shepherd's Crook supporters have already helped pay for surgical procedures for several children in Romania, including Ali, a little boy suffering from a life-threatening heart defect called tetralogy of Fallot. Ali has had one corrective procedure and is now much healthier and happier. He is, in fact, now healthy enough for a final corrective surgery, which is to be done in November.

There is one thing each and every one of us is called to do to help the children of Romania:

*"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)*

It is our prayers that will make a difference in the lives of these children. I believe that God's heart breaks for this country and especially for the children who are seemingly forgotten. In response to the cries of Romania, missionaries will be sent, babies will be held, children will be placed in homes, and most importantly, hearts will come to know Him. What an honor it is to be a part of God's plan in Romania.

Not one day goes by that I do not pray that international adoptions will again open in Romania. At the same time, I cannot turn my heart from the pain and suffering of today. I am so thankful that each one of The Shepherd's Crook children waiting in Romania is in a loving foster care home and not an institution. How wonderful to know that this handful of children have families dedicated to them and the hope of one day coming home. Please continue to pray for all the abandoned children of Romania, and ask the Lord to show you how you might change a life for Him.

In His Service,  
Alison



*If you would like more information about how to get involved in the work The Shepherd's Crook is doing in Romania, send an e-mail to [romania@theshepherdsbrook.org](mailto:romania@theshepherdsbrook.org). If you would like to contribute toward the medical and surgical needs that The Shepherd's Crook is helping with, you can send a check, made payable to "The Shepherd's Crook," to our mailing address; be sure to designate **"Romania-Medical"** on the memo line of your check or in your correspondence.*

## ***Did You Know...***

Did you know that we are able to receive gifts of stocks and other securities (e.g., mutual funds, bonds)? The donor must simply sign a letter of instruction authorizing the transfer of securities from the donor's account to The Shepherd's Crook, Inc.; our account information is as follows:

FSC Securities Corporation  
Pershing Operations Department  
2300 Windy Ridge Parkway, Suite 1100  
Atlanta, GA 30339  
Account # 3MD-301064  
DTC #0443



"I will seek **what was lost** and bring back what was driven away."

Ezekiel 34:16

The following Shepherd's Crook children have come home to their families since our last newsletter was published.

## *What was Lost*

### **Eliana**



*Before, in a Korean foster home*



*After, in her Bethel, PA home*

### **Danielle**



*Before, in a Kazakh orphanage*



*After, in her Sidell, FL home*

### **Kristina**



*Before, in a Russian orphanage*



*After, in her Zanesville, OH home*

### **Amanda**



*Before, in a Guatemalan orphanage*



*After, in her Pickton, TX home*

### **Braedan**



*Before, in a Guatemalan orphanage*



*After, in his Cincinnati, OH home*

### **Linnea**



*Before, in her Chinese orphanage*



*After, in her Cincinnati, OH home*

### **Isaac**



*Before, in a Kazakh orphanage*

(( After picture not available))

*After, in his Eben Junction, MI home*

### **Alejandra**



*Before, in a Guatemalan orphanage*



*After, in her Pickton, TX home*

### **Matthew**



*Before, in a Guatemalan orphanage*



*After, in his Williamstown, NJ home*

### **Angelica, Edward, & Victoria**



*Before, in a Russian orphanage*



*After, in their Acworth, GA home*



## Reflections *(Continued from page 1)*

unable to move on his own, he is unable to utter voluntary sounds, and he is now essentially unable to recognize and acknowledge personal contact. Kathy stood at his bedside and stroked his face while she talked to him, attempting to let him know that someone was there, that someone was nearby who cared. We had no indication that Ionut even knew we were there, much less that he understood what Kathy was trying to communicate. Because of his disabilities, he was formerly fed via a feeding tube. However, the doctors recently determined that the continuous stress on Ionut's esophagus was causing damage and exposing him to the risk of developing cancer, and so they have removed the feeding tube. They now do the best they can to feed him orally, but his lack of motor control renders this virtually impossible. Ionut appears to be starving to death. And this is the life this child has to look forward to: lying in a bed, unable to move, unable to care for himself, unable to interact with other human beings, until his life finally ends due to starvation.

Many, I know, who read this account of Ionut would reason that his life is not fit to live, and that perhaps something should be done to end it. What a raging debate there is in this country right now about the so-called "right to die"! The reasoning of those who advocate such a "right" is that a person should be allowed to decide when his or her life is no longer worth living, and upon having made that decision, should be permitted to end that life. Those who are opposed to such a position generally argue that only God has the right to decide when a life should end, and any attempt to take that decision unto oneself is an attempt to usurp God's prerogative, and is thus sin. Proponents of a "right to die" would be inclined to argue that Ionut is living a life bereft of basic human dignity, and that it would be more humane to end his life than to force him to continue living such a miserable existence. But we who have communion with the Giver of life know that He places a value on life that is sometimes beyond our ken. Every life has intrinsic value because every person is created in the image of God. And because every life is both created and valued by God, only God has the right to determine when a life should end. (I'm not even hinting at engaging in a discussion on capital punishment; that is way beyond the scope of this column.) As Kathy, Alison, and I stood there in the hospital in Bucharest looking at Ionut, and as Kathy stroked his face, we knew, deep in our being, that God has placed a high value on the life of this little boy. It makes me think of my own Kathryn, the youngest of our fourteen children. Before Kathryn came home to us, we saw her CT scan and showed it to a number of doctors, including a couple of well-qualified neurosurgeons. The prognosis, based on the look of her brain scan, was that she would be little more than a vegetable and would probably never even recognize or

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## *Urgent Ministry Needs*

*Please be in prayer over the following needs of this ministry:*

1. One of the kids from last year's Ma Jia Le Memorial Project surgery trip to China, whom we named **Daniel**, is now under the care of Hope Foster Home in Beijing. Daniel suffers from significant hydrocephalus and received a shunt as a result of our surgery trip. Hope Foster Home provides excellent, Western-quality medical care—virtually unheard of and almost impossible to find in China—for all of the children, but this care is expensive, to the tune of **\$400** per month. We would like to take over the responsibility for these costs. If you feel led to help with this ongoing expense, please write to us at [majiale@theshepherdscrook.org](mailto:majiale@theshepherdscrook.org), and mention that you would like to help with the ongoing **Foster Care for Daniel** in China. Although this is a large amount for one person to commit to, it might be an ideal project for a Sunday School class, church small group, etc.
2. Through the generosity of some TSC supporters, we have been covering the foster care expenses for a little boy in Romania named **Marius**. Marius suffers from profound visual impairment and has been associated with this ministry for several years now; his adoption by a TSC family is still in process but stuck, like so many others. However, the cost of that foster care has increased, and so we are asking for some other TSC supporters to come forward to cover these additional costs, which equal \$50 per month. If you feel led to help in this way, please write to [romania@theshepherdscrook.org](mailto:romania@theshepherdscrook.org) and indicate that you would like to help with the ongoing **Foster Care for Marius**.
3. We are still in the process of raising the necessary funds to cover the Director's salary. We are funded through the end of this calendar year, but we do not know how we are going to cover this need after the first of the year. Please pray and ask God whether He might be leading you to support us in this way. Also, read the accompanying letter with this newsletter, for additional information on this important matter.



Daniel



Marius



“I will bring them **out from the nations** and ... into their own land.”

Ezekiel 34:13

**Adoptions have been started on the following children since our last newsletter was published.**



**Raya**

*Currently waiting in a Russian orphanage  
Will soon be with her Kelso, WA family*



**John**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Hudson, OH family*



**Joshua**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family*



**Elena**

*Currently waiting in a Kazakh orphanage  
Will soon be with her Cincinnati, OH family*



**Joseph**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan foster home  
Will soon be with his Charleston, WV family*



**Sergio**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage  
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family*



**Hai**

*Currently waiting in a Vietnamese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family*



**Cristian**

*Currently waiting in a Romanian foster home  
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family*



**Christa**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with her Kings Mill, OH family*



**Judith, Camilo, Ismael,  
and Hector**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage  
Will soon be with their Scott, LA family*



**Dulce**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan foster home  
Will soon be with her Woodinville, WA family*



**Anna**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage  
Will soon be with her Helena, AL family*



**Alexander**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage  
Will soon be with his Cincinnati, OH family*



**Jonathan**

*Currently waiting in a Russian orphanage  
Will soon be with her Cincinnati, OH family*

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## Out From the Nations *(Continued from page 4)*



### Simon

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Eudora, KS family*



### Faith

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with her Anthony, FL family*

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## Reflections *(Continued from page 6)*

acknowledge us. Kathryn was born with a condition known as bilateral closed- and open-lip schizencephaly. Her CT scan indicated, in addition to her schizencephaly, that portions in the frontal lobe of her brain were not even there. And so, when we brought this beautiful child home from Guatemala in January, we fully expected that her life would be little more than sitting in an infant chair, virtually catatonic and unresponsive. However, the little girl God sent us from Guatemala is nothing like the one the doctors told us to expect. She has been home roughly eight months now, and she is amazing all of the healthcare professionals who have been watching her progress. She can, at sixteen months old, nod her head “yes” and shake her head “no” appropriately; she can sign “thank you,” “more,” “hold me,” “eat,” and “all done”; she can, on command, point to her hair, her teeth, her toes (“piggies”), her nose, her tummy, her glasses, and her diaper; and she lights up a room with her smile, and all of her brothers and sisters constantly vie for the right to pick her up and hold her at virtually any time of the day or night.<sup>2</sup> How can I describe to you the joy that this child brings to our family. And, in addition to that, I know that I often have to push not only past every other member of my family to get to her, but also past the unmistakable sensation of powerful wings against my face and through hints of heavenly fragrances. Kathy and I wonder if these special ones given to us by God are not attended by a greater number of angels than “ordinary” children. Truly God places a high value on all people, but His Word indicates that He has a special place in His heart for the disadvantaged and downtrodden.

This brings me back to the concept I began with. Much of the world around us considers broken and damaged children to be of lesser value, and in some cases, to be not quite fit to live. But they measure value by a different standard than God uses. We don’t fully understand His mind—indeed, we never will—but we know that He never discards children, or adults for that matter, simply because they are not able to contribute to society in a commercial or aesthetic way. Who knows how much they do contribute, even those who are unable to speak or move or interact with those around them. How dare we consider something made by God as being of no value, and how dare we do anything less than fight with all our might to protect and preserve those considered unfit by the rest of the world. God, please give us the vision to see as You see, and the energy to fight in Your cause in ways that are honoring to You. Thank you, Father. Amen.

1. Alison, in addition to serving on our Board of Trustees, fills quite a number of other volunteer slots with The Shepherd’s Crook. She is our Russia Family Coordinator, our Ma Jia Le Memorial Project Coordinator, our Romania Family Coordinator, and our Managing Coordinator. Most importantly, she in many ways serves as Kathy’s and my right hand in running this ministry.

2. Kathryn is undeniably brain-damaged. Her cognitive development in many ways appears to be close to age-appropriate, but her motor development is somewhere below the six-month level. She exhibits many indicators of cerebral palsy, which we were told to expect, and her brain scan (EEG) has us alerted to the fact that she could at any time begin to suffer seizures—another common consequence of schizencephaly.

## Mark Your Calendars Now!

*The Fifth Annual Shepherd’s Crook Celebration Banquet is scheduled for June 24, 2006, at Receptions banquet facility in Fairfield, Ohio. More details will follow in later newsletters, but we wanted to give all of you the opportunity to set aside this time before your schedules for next summer fill up. This is an important and rewarding event for our ministry and all of our supporters, and we encourage you to plan to attend if at all possible.*