

CHRISTMAS LOVE IN A BOX

Winter 2020/2021



To cure, sometimes; To help, often; To comfort, always

Children
in Distress



CHRISTMAS SHOE BOX MINISTRY 2020

Children in Distress has given shoe boxes of gifts to the needy and marginalised in Romania for 30 years. This program has provided hope, love and connection to thousands of Romanian children, their parents and the elderly. The year 2020 was a challenge for all of us, including the shoe box ministry, because of COVID 19 and the

subsequent lockdowns in the UK and Romania and related economic crisis, and the uncertainty of Brexit. CiD faced significant practical and legal questions related to whether to proceed for Christmas 2020. After speaking with a wide variety of people we determined to go ahead. The decision was the correct one.



UK – PUTTING THE BOXES TOGETHER

Without the great efforts and dedication of CiD's friends in the UK, 2020's campaign would not have happened. It was not easy in COVID times to purchase and handcraft gifts and wrapping paper, collect boxes, warehouse the boxes and prepare them for transport to Romania. Despite these challenges, many regular donors contributed boxes, and twelve new contacts joined our work. One of the new collection points gave in excess of 500 boxes. The team in Keyworth, England, collected 1,000 shoe boxes – this was accomplished because of the tireless efforts of Trish Witcomb and Nuala Snow. The Archbishop of York Junior School in Bishopthorpe,

knowing that they could not collect boxes inside the school, organised an open morning in the school yard and collected almost as many boxes as usual. The school participants increased their financial contribution to pick up the slack.

In the end, compassionate and caring people donated 5,300 (!) filled and wrapped boxes. Generous financial contributions also were made through the Gifts from the Heart program, including from people who had donated filled boxes in past years but were not able this time. The Gifts from the Heart donations gave CiD the means to supplement a good bit of the shortfall in boxes caused by COVID.



The collections in the UK went well overall, especially considering the limitations. One unanticipated wrinkle was the breakdown of our van just as the collections were starting. We were told the van could not be repaired, so we hired a replacement van to continue the collection.

We assembled twelve pallets of boxes and other aid in a Potto, North Yorkshire warehouse. Due to COVID the warehouse team was reduced this year and there was no overall team lead-

er. Nonetheless, the warehouse team did a sterling job. Roy Wheeler, who has assisted for 30 years, acted as coordinator and dealt with queries and arrangements. Tracy England, manager of our Guisborough charity shop, worked hard to collect the boxes that Roy had collected in past years. John Burns also spent hours and hours collecting boxes, often accompanied by his spouse Jenny. Gerry Houston saw a flyer in one of our charity shops and stepped forward to volunteer as a collection driver.

Gerry made many trips around northern England and at least one to Scotland to pick up shoe boxes. Gerry's skill, help and good cheer made a significant difference to the operation.

Many, many people made this effort possible. Thank you to everyone in the UK and Germany who donated boxes or made a contribution through Gifts from the Heart, collected boxes, and

stored them and prepared the lorry for transit to Romania. Thank you to Alison Hayes, a women's clothing design and manufacture company, for generously donating all costs of transport to Romania. The complications and restrictions of late 2020 caused the lorry to depart a week later than planned, but the boxes arrived in Bucharest with enough time to distribute them all by Christmas Eve

ROMANIA – GIVING OUT THE BOXES

The lorry arrived 9 December in Bucharest, a week later than usual. Nonetheless, CiD managed to distribute the 5,300 shoe boxes in time for Christmas!

Bucharest staff unloaded the lorry 10 December and over several days various churches collected boxes to distribute. Churches were the primary places where children could be given their gifts as all schools and kindergartens were closed due to COVID lockdown. There was a positive aspect to this because it created an extended and intensified partnership between CiD and the Orthodox Church.

We aim to continue and deepen this relationship in coming years. Shoe boxes were distributed by churches in Bucharest and the metro area, the cities of Pitesti, Curtea de Argeş, Slobozia and Calarasi, and poor village communities in the counties of Arges, Ialomita, and Calarasi. In Arges county, the Arges County Education Department, our partner in CiD's Dr Michael Janson Scholarship program, also assisted in the distribution process. They organised centres where children could come individually, based on an appointment, to collect their boxes.





Other boxes were hand-delivered by our own Father Christmas up through Christmas Eve. Father Christmas delivered boxes to children at the St Sophia afterschool program in Bucharest, the St Stelian day education centre in the village of Urlati, and to the residents of the All Saints' (Precupeții Vechi) elders' home in Bucharest. Father Christmas also delivered shoe boxes and food packages to many of the very poor children of CiD's St Christopher's centre and their families at their homes in Arges.

CiD's shoe box distribution was covered Trinitas TV, the network

of the Orthodox Church. Trinitas TV filmed two stories on separate days. In the stories the network interviewed CiD's CEO Valentina Zaharia, children and priests and Father Christmas. The TV stories may be viewed on our Romanian and UK websites, www.children-indistress.org.uk and www.cid.org.or. We also know of three newspaper articles that were published about Father Christmas' visits.

On Christmas Eve, Father Christmas visited our St Margaret's hospice. The children were surprised by, and overjoyed with, his visit. There were screams of delight, frenetic tearing of wrapping paper, and racing around with the presents to

show each other what they had been given. Father Christmas also gave boxes to the children confined to their beds and opened them for them so they could look at, and in a few instances clutch, their gifts.





Together, CiD, because of the help and care of so many of you, again brought joy and happiness to thousands of children, their families, and seniors. By the bright smiles you can see that everyone greatly appreciated their gifts. Yet what mattered most for them was to know they were not forgotten, that someone cared for and about them. A headmaster of the primary and middle school in Berevoiesti village put it best: “I wrote to say that they were not just some presents for

the kids from my school, they were the ‘approval’ that they actually count for somebody – my children felt that somebody cared about them enough to bring them gifts”.

We are so grateful for our friends in the UK and Germany who made this year’s shoe box ministry possible. You, our dedicated supporters, gave from your hearts and truly showed your care and compassion for your brothers and sisters in Romania. Thank you!!

Children in Distress seeks volunteers for our Christmas Love in a Box ministry this Christmas 2021 to assist in the Potto, North Yorkshire warehouse to sort, label, stack or load boxes.

For your questions or to volunteer please contact Lesley Connelly (Glasgow office), +44 7341 493 888 , lesleyann.connelly@childrenindistress.org.uk.

Children in Distress is VERY grateful for the volunteers and supporters known to us who supported our Christmas 2020 Shoe Box Campaign in so many different and generous ways:

- Alison Hayes – women’s design & manufacture clothing company
- Revs Frauke & Lutz Ackermann & St Boniface Church, Augsburg, Germany
- Mary Agius
- Janet Alridge
- Georgina Anelay & Bunny Primary School, Nottinghamshire
- Catherine Ather
- L Baguley
- Christine Baldwin & St Martin’s Church, Nottingham
- Lorraine Box
- Susan Boyes
- Gina & Andy von Bradsky
- Jenny & John Burns
- Linda Byfield & St Peter’s Church, Nottingham
- Marie Catchpole
- Alison Carpenter & United Reformed Church, Pontefract
- Janet & Andrew Catton
- Kim Challands & Inner Wheel Club of Hucknall
- Kim Challands & Kim Marie’s Hair Salon
- Kim Challands & West Hucknall Baptist Church
- Jo Chappelle
- Kath Charter & Flyingthorpe Methodist Church
- Bryn Clode
- Yvonne & Phil Cockcroft
- Vanessa Cole & St Peter’s Church, Ilford
- Christine Cook
- Dee & Martin Cook-Rollinson
- Rachel Cooper & Inner Wheel Club of Melbourne
- Victoria Cowper & St Luke’s Church, Nottingham
- Naomi Croxton & Grange Yard Fire Protection Company
- Sam Davies
- Yvette Drabble & St Lawrence Church, Scalby
- Cath Drake
- Sue Dymond & Inner Wheel Club of Sutton in Ashfield
- Anne Fishburn
- J Flewker-Barker

Roisin Flynn & Flynn Interiors
Catharina Ginsel
Heather Gray
Ruth Green & St Mary's Church, Barkby
Catherine Green & Inner Wheel Club of Wollaton Park
Ben Gunter & St Peter's Church, Malton
Julia Handcock & St Mary's Church, Nottingham
Linda Hanson & St Mary's Church, Selston
Sarah Harper & Meadowfield Nursery School, Malton
Anna van der Helm & QRO Solutions
Christine Henderson
John Henry & Guisborough Methodist Church
Joyce Hicks
Jaqueline Hillen
Bernadette & Derek Hodge
Isobel Hopkins & Inner Wheel Club of Alfreton
Gerry Houston
Gill Howdle
Lorraine Hughill & Gillamoor Primary School
Lucy Irvine
Alison Kittermaster & Cranbrook School
J Knott
Michael Lawson & Jet2 Birmingham Cabin Crew
Lucy
Maureen Macdonald
Joyce Maciver
Veronica Malkowski & Inner Wheel Club of Mansfield
Gwen Matthews
F Mattingly
Mrs May
Maggie McCormack
Maureen Mcdonald
Margaret & David McGuire
Aideen McNestry
Janice Meredith & Newton Wallacetown Parish Church
Edith & Andy Moon
K Moore
Melanie Morgan
Brendan Murray & Alwick Church, Nottingham
Jessina O'Connell
Kaye O'Connell
Nick O'Connell
Gillian Oldroyd & Inner Wheel Club of Matlock

Liz Orland & Danby Primary School, Whitby
Paddy
Anne Pealing
Alison Pegg
Bernice Pettipher & St Luke's Church, Nottingham
Paul Peverell
Alison Phillipson & St Nicholas Church, Guisborough
Rachel & Andy Profitt & Keyworth Methodist Church
Lindsey Riley & St Peter's Primary School, Wigan
Robin
Lynda Robinson & the Churches in the United Benefice of Orsett, Bulphan and
Horndon-on-the-Hill
Monsignor Gerard Robinson & St Francis of Assisi Church, Middlesbrough
Joan Sales
Alison Saunders & St. Lawrence CEP School, Sevenoaks
Stephanie Shellabear
Yvonne Shorten & Tollerton Methodist Church
Rev Steven Smith (Father Christmas in Romania)
Nuala Snow
Nuala Snow & St Margaret Clitherow Church
Nuala Snow & Our Lady of Grace Church, Nottingham
Maryann Stockhill
C Stringer
Sue Sutherland
Sally Sutton & Archbishop of York Junior School, Bishopthorpe
Kenneth Taylor & Christ Church, Great Ayton and Yarm
Sarah Thorne & St Mary's Church, Cambridge
Jane Thorpe & Hunmanby Parish Church
Margaret Thorpe & Bolton Road Methodist Church, Bradford
Roisin Unthank & St Peter's Primary School, Saltburn-by-the-Sea
Denise Vitale & Inner Wheel Club of Heanor
Pauline Voce & St Mary the Virgin Church, Nottingham
George Watson & Raine & Co
Marion Whatmore
Roy Wheeler
Barbara Williamson & St George's Church, Nottingham
Trish Witcomb
Trish Witcomb & Inner Wheel Club of Keyworth and Ruddington
Trish Witcomb & Keyworth Post Office Staff and Customers
J Withey
Natalie Wright
Ynez
Linda Yorke



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