



The Timisoara Times



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Times of the unspeakable...

I have to admit that writing doesn't come easily to me, but I also have to confess that it was never as difficult as it is now. It feels like writing about anything during this COVID-19 pandemic seems pointless... There is so much suffering around. There is dying, anxiety and despair. Words seem unhelpful now. Rather, reflecting and praying in silence may bring us more comfort. Yes, neither anxiety nor dying are new to us as human beings. But they were never so visible, never so widely spread, never spread at such speeds. We all witness an unprecedented disruption of life as we know it! Things seem to be, at least at this moment, totally out of our control. Human understanding, despite all of its unprecedented technical and scientific progress, seems to be surpassed. Our science will eventually come up with some solutions, but the damage and the suffering produced are permanent. There will be no way back to business-as-usual.

However, I cannot see what is happening now as "divine judgement", but rather as another terribly painful experience, in which God Himself is *present* among us, and is suffering *together* with us. He is with us in this same boat, through the raging storm. Such times are more like mirrors put in front of us, inviting us, perhaps even forcing us, to face our true selves. Asking who I am, what I really value most, where my deepest allegiances go, in whom do I ultimately put my trust, cannot be avoided anymore. Who really is at the helm of my life? Isn't it that only when losing control of our own life, somehow paradoxically, we start truly gaining it? The meaning of Jesus' words seems to make way more sense in such times: "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it."

During this lockdown, our Areopagus team has been constantly praying, fasting and listening to God's voice in these times of sadness, and also regularly meeting online. Now is less about our deeds, and more about being differently close to the people we are trying to help. We can still bring God's hope and love in the midst of their vulnerability, showing that we care, we are together in this and together we will come out, closer to God and closer to each other. We therefore, invite you to join us in this ministry by contributing with anything the Lord leads you to, in prayer, financially or in any other ways, asking the Lord to help us being a solid support for the families and children we work with in Timisoara and beyond.

May God's presence be with us all as we partner together in praising Him!

In the Risen Christ,

Silviu Rogobete

Update on our projects:

- ◆ The Biblical counseling training program is running online. Our trainees have access to course support, videos and online literature. Students receive help with assignments and supervision of their counseling cases. Also, our counsellors have continued to meet online with their counselees.
- ◆ Romanian language courses are taught online. We are grateful for this opportunity and for being able to raise some support through these courses.
- ◆ The training program in Family Therapy is proceeding successfully through various online platforms and students are grateful for being able to do this from their homes (especially those that are from other counties).

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- ◆ The Master's Program from the West University of Timisoara became an online program due to the pandemic, with excellent attendance of the students. Evaluations and exams will be on line as well, as schools and universities are closed until fall.
 - ◆ The Cambridge Papers Project— translation and publishing of various Christian academic articles into Romanian language (available for free on our website) is another project that we are able to continue although the center is closed down.
 - ◆ The Social Projects (Day-center for HIV- positive patients and The After-school Program for Children coming from low-income families) suffered various changes as well. We could only meet online with our beneficiaries or talk on the phone, trying to provide support through this crisis. Also, our staff provided food and other necessities to needy families.

Facing difficult times

In the last few months, life has changed for all of us. There are so many things that we take for granted in life, but we only discover their value in times like these.

As many other NGOs and businesses, we have to do most of our work online. It has not been the same but we all are participating in this effort of keeping each other safe, and protecting our beneficiaries who already have health issues (HIV- positive group, needy children from our social projects, families in rural areas, etc.)

We have been in touch with the children's families attending our after school program, trying to provide not only emotional support, but also spiritual and material. Some of the children's parents lost their jobs, others are working part time and have significantly lower incomes. There are families where one of the members has chronic illnesses and a significant part of their income is spent on medication and doctors. But one of the issues that the pandemic revealed, is the lack of IT equipment for online classes for children. Since March 11, 2020 children have not been attending school. Most of their classes are online, but many of them do not even have a smartphone that they can use for school. Others have to share the same phone and choose which classes to attend. It has been very difficult for families that have more than a child to keep up with the demands for the online schooling. We have contacted all the children in our program and we are in the process of helping them with some old computers that they can use for school. However, their needs are bigger than our resources.



Apart from IT equipment we are helping families with food, cleaning products, clothing and personal care products. Our desire is to come along side those that are struggling the most during this pandemic and ease their burdens through small acts of kindness.

We do not know now how the future will look like for our staff and for our projects, how this crisis will affect our ministry and finances, but we trust in Lord and we will continue the good work of serving those in need. We ask you to join us in our efforts of supporting families in need to get through this difficult season that that we all are facing. The amount is not important, but our attitude toward those in need is important.

We all have been blessed beyond measure, and it is our turn to bless others and store up treasures in heaven!

For direct donations to Areopagus Center please visit our [webpage](#).

Please follow us on [Facebook](#) for more information and updates on our social projects.

For donations through [Areopagus Romania Foundation](#), please contact John Livingstone, jlivingston@arfus.org

Please direct any support for the Areopagus Center to:
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