

Mississippi church is answer to Romanian pastor's 30-year prayer

*By Sue Sprenkle
Baptist Press*

Thirty years was a long time to wait for help. Yet, the Romanian pastor had faithfully prayed since he was 8 years old for someone to come alongside him to serve and love his people.

Meanwhile, Jan McMurphy sat in Olive Branch, wrestling with God about an “itch” for the mission field she couldn’t shake. For 16 years she served on short-term medical mission teams with other Mississippi Baptists. The last few years she brought her church, Longview Heights Church, to work with International Mission Board missionaries in Ukraine. But it wasn’t like they could go back with the ongoing war.

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dnA medical team from Longview Heights Church, Olive Branch,

'tworked alongside Romanian churches to host clinics in
jucommunity centers. The team helped create Gospel access for
stlocal believers to share Christ with their neighbors. (Photo
si credit: Provided)

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She called Linda Gray, an IMB missionary they worked with in Ukraine. Gray's team relocated to Romania due to the war. The missionary explained she'd just met a pastor asking for help and wondered if McMurphy's team might be an answer to his 30-year wait. A medical team could help this pastor make some inroads in communities steeped in legalistic traditions.

When the team of medical workers showed up months later, the pastor seemed shocked. He showed them around his community then asked McMurphy's team an important question.

"Are you OK working with Roma and Gypsies?" he asked, referring to people groups often thought of as outcasts in this area of the world. "You don't mind working with us?"

McMurphy teared up. The question hurt her to her very core. It never occurred to her or her team that they would hesitate to serve a particular group of people.

"We are honored to serve you and do whatever you need us to do," she replied.

The medical team distributed vitamins and medicines and conducted vision exams. They took blood pressure and did other minor exams. The real medicine, though, came in the form of sharing the Good News. In each community, they worked alongside local believers and helped provide Gospel access outside the church walls.



A Romanian pastor waited 30 years for someone to come alongside and help reach his community. Longview Heights Church, Olive Branch, was an answer to his prayers. (Photo credit: Provided)

When the medical team packed up and went home, the pastor's wife pleaded with McMurphy

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The team leader smiled. She knew this was just the beginning of their partnership. Longview Heights’ missions philosophy includes longevity. The church tries to go to the same place at least three years in a row, if not longer. They want to establish deep relationships, and that’s exactly what happened during the medical trip to Romania.

“The pastor who coordinated the team’s schedule recently came to the United States for a conference and detoured to visit

our church,” McMurphy said, noting how much it meant to return his hospitality. “He said there were still pastors in Romania talking about how the medical team opened many doors for them to share the Gospel.

“We are so excited to go back in April and work alongside these believers and love on their people.”

McMurphy encourages anyone experiencing a similar call to missions to go to imb.org/trips for information. For opportunities specific to healthcare strategies, visit imb.org/healthcare. Someone is probably praying for help right now.