

# DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



## Chaplaincy Profile: The Anglican Church of the Resurrection, Bucharest, Romania

### 1. Where we are

The Church of the Resurrection is in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. Romania has seen huge changes since the fall of communism over 30 years ago. Bucharest today is a vibrant, successful European capital with a rich history, excellent museums and galleries and outstanding music and cultural



life. Beyond Bucharest, Romania offers amazing opportunities for travel and tourism. There is much to see and experience, from the Carpathian mountains, the hospitable, historic villages and fortified churches of Transylvania to the painted monasteries of Bukovina or the wetlands of the Danube delta, to name but a few highlights. Romania is an increasingly popular long-term home for expats and a large percentage have settled in Bucharest. In general, Romanians are exceptionally friendly towards foreigners and in Bucharest English is widely spoken.



The church building is situated in the centre of Bucharest, close to several Embassies, including that of the United Kingdom. There is a small public park to one side and good public transport links available close by. Bucharest international airport is 10 miles to the north of the city, approximately 30-40 minutes' drive. The flat we provide for the chaplain is only a short walk away from the church.

We have been without a chaplain now for nearly two years and before that our chaplain was resident in Bulgaria and travelled to Bucharest for services most weekends. There is huge potential for the new incumbent to reinvigorate the community and work of the Church of the Resurrection. The church has a long and fascinating history in the capital and a strong core congregation. We are praying for a resident, ideally part-time (approximately 80% - but negotiable up to full-time) chaplain who will build on our historic foundations, expand the congregation and community, be inspired by the opportunities to make a difference in Romania and enhance the relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church.

### 2. Our physical church

You could be forgiven for thinking that our red-brick Edwardian style church building had been somehow transported from an English city. It was in fact built



largely due to the will and influence of Queen Marie of Romania, granddaughter of Queen Victoria, a few years after Marie's marriage to Ferdinand of Romania. Construction began in 1913 but World War I halted progress and the first recorded service was on Easter Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1920, with the church building formally dedicated in November 1922. (We had been planning a wonderful centenary service for April 2020, but of course that was one of the many victims of the pandemic). The ground on which the church building stands is owned by the British Government, although the Government makes no financial contribution to the church.



The tall, light church building can seat a congregation of around 110. It has remained open for services throughout most of its history, except from 1941 to 1944 during World War II, and again in December 1989, when services were suspended for one week during the Romanian revolution, which resulted in the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime. It is the only East European Anglican Church to have remained open throughout the Communist era. It was therefore with great sadness that we

had to close the building for services in spring 2020 at the height of the Covid pandemic. Since September 2020, however, we have been able to hold physical services again, roughly fortnightly, despite the lack of a priest (and observing Covid restrictions of course).

The building is in relatively good condition; however, a lack of ongoing preventive maintenance over the years has left its mark and we sometimes find ourselves struggling to meet the cost of repairs. The church has a vestry, toilet facilities and a relatively small meeting/Sunday school room with limited kitchen facilities. To the right-hand side of the chancel is also a small area, which we normally use to serve refreshments after worship. The church also has a very good Wyvern electronic organ, with speakers hidden discreetly behind the pipe façade of the old pipe organ. With our excellent organist, this is a real boon for services.

### **3. Who we are and how we worship**

Our core congregation (pre-Covid) was usually between 20–40 people for our Sunday service (with approximately 25 on the electoral role in recent years). We are a diverse and interesting group: a mixture of long-term international residents of varying nationalities (some of whom moved to Romania in the years following the fall of communism); more short-term internationals who are either attached to embassies, business people, teachers, or people working with non-governmental agencies throughout Romania; and we also have a number of Romanian members. As well as the core congregation of British, Americans, Dutch and Romanians, the congregation variously includes other attendees from other European countries, Canada, Africa and Asia. As a snapshot, our current wardens are the wife of the British Ambassador (who has been in Bucharest since 2018) and a long-term Romanian resident originally from Sri Lanka and married to a Romanian. Our council Secretary is a British journalist who came to Romania in the 1980s to cover the revolution and never left.





Our church welcomes all members of the Christian faith and children also receive the sacrament in accordance with the traditions of their home churches. For many years our tradition has been to offer a service in English every Sunday morning at 10.00am, with Holy Communion when we had a chaplain or a locum available. The form of the services is based on Common Worship. When the chaplain is absent, worship usually takes the form of

Morning Prayer or communion by extension led by lay members approved by our Archdeacon. The congregation has been numerically stable over the past several years. Attendance at services can be variable, reflecting the transient nature of the community. However, for special services such as Easter Sunday and Christmas, including the traditional Nine Lessons & Carols, the church is usually full, with over 100 in attendance. Since the last Chaplain left in Spring 2019, we have welcomed a number of locums for periods of 6-8 weeks, and in the 'gaps' have maintained continuity of worship with services led by laity.

Our services are designed to welcome all who profess the Christian faith, regardless of which 'wing' of Anglicanism they come from or whether they herald from a different denomination. Vestments are usually worn by the celebrant. Our wardens and two previous wardens are authorized by our Archdeacon to lead services in the Chaplain's absence and our current lay team have been determined to keep worship and fellowship going through the period of the pandemic. We held several outdoor services over the summer and have managed services for up to 30 people in the church since September, following strict distancing guidelines. We would like our new chaplain to encourage the lay team, support us spiritually and continue to involve the congregation in services, through reading, musical contributions etc. We can promise in return an enthusiastic lay team and a dedicated church council!



Music deserves a special mention since it has become an extremely important part of our services, having been developed by previous chaplains. The congregation are seeking a chaplain who will consider it important to maintain this legacy. We have an excellent professional organist who plays the hymns for all services. Congregational singing is based on standard Anglican hymnals, with hymns for services being chosen by the priest and/or warden, with the aid of the

organist. Before the pandemic we had a thriving church choir of around 15 people who were enthusiastically rehearsing anthems for our centenary service. Even with congregational singing banned and no choir allowed, we have maintained hymns as part of our services by having a soloist or very small group sing from the front of the church.



Before Covid, we were offering Sunday school nearly every week for a small number of children (usually between 3 and 8). Several older children were prepared for confirmation by our former Chaplain, Revd Paul Goodridge, and were confirmed in April 2019 by Bishop John Flack. Unfortunately, families with children have mostly stopped attending church during the pandemic and our safeguarding lead and key member of the lay team was forced to return to the Netherlands. We

would expect a new chaplain to develop the possibilities for children and young adults within the church and to re-kindle a children's church programme, as more families join. Space within the church building is a limiting factor, since the 'meeting room' can only hold about a dozen people. So, we would be praying for some vision and creativity!

The lack of a permanent, resident chaplain for the last few years has meant that 'extras' like mid-week services, regular prayer or Bible study groups and fellowship groups have been few and far-between. We hope that our new chaplain would wish to offer the spiritual guidance and stimulation to expand opportunities for these different 'expressions' of church. Our lay team and congregation are blessed with many talents, but we are urgently seeking leadership.



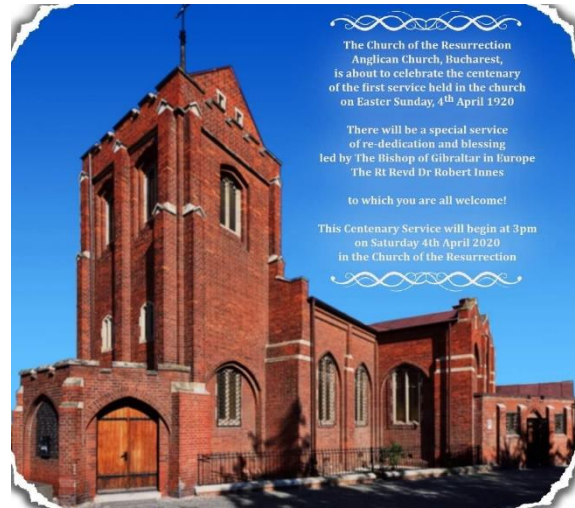
#### 4. Our community context & what we do

Our church community has, over the past 5-10 years, developed a variety of special events and opportunities for fellowship including: concerts by the church choir or musicians linked to the church, usually for charity or fundraising purposes; art exhibitions in the church; a 'garden party' at the British Ambassador's residence; our annual Advent fish & chips supper in the church and summer picnic in one council-member's garden;



and even the occasional theatrical production. The British School holds its annual carol service in the church and the Chaplain has traditionally maintained links with the school and spoken, for example, at their Harvest assembly. Most of these social activities have had to be suspended during the pandemic, but we would like to see them return once restrictions start to be lifted.

We hope that we will be able to re-instate the special service, due to be led by Bishop Robert, to celebrate the centenary of the first service in the church (Easter Sunday 1920). Invitations had already been issued for April 2020; we then hoped we might manage April 2021, but this was also not to be. A new chaplain would probably have this joyful celebration of 100 years of continued Anglican worship in Bucharest within his/her first year. Possibly a great way to re-launch after all the trials of the pandemic!



The church building is used for services by some other denominations in Bucharest, including a local Baptist congregation as well as a branch of the Lutheran Church. Other appropriate local groups have used the church or meeting room for regular gatherings, for example: choirs and music groups wishing to rehearse or make recordings (the acoustic is excellent); or the Romanian branch of Alcoholics Anonymous and their Families' Association. During the pandemic all but the Lutherans have ceased to meet in the church, but we aim to encourage the use of the church in this way once restrictions are lifted, not least since these 'lets' are an important source of income.

Many couples ask the church to bless their wedding, especially if they are inter-denominational, since some Orthodox priests will not bless a wedding between an orthodox partner and a non-orthodox partner. We are pleased to offer this service and it is a helpful source of income also. For example, in 2019 the Chaplain carried out around 10 such wedding blessings. We are an open and inclusive church, and by this example we hope to bring members to the Church. Further, we are open to baptism as a way of introducing young families to the church.



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The Anglican Chaplain in Bucharest has in the past been the Archbishop of Canterbury's Apokrasarios to the Patriarchs of both the Romanian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches. More recently he has been appointed only to the Romanian Orthodox church. Although a relatively minor duty in terms of the time it consumes, it is in other respects a very important role - maintaining and developing Anglican/Orthodox dialogue. Relationships are currently good between the two denominations. Any prospective chaplain must be willing to undertake this representative role and should be interested in and sensitive to the perspectives of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

There continues to be slow movement towards more ecumenical openness in Romania, although many obstacles remain. The Anglican Church has traditionally been well placed to help ecumenical relations, and the new chaplain would be expected to continue this work, seeking to build understanding with the Orthodox Church as well as with other non-

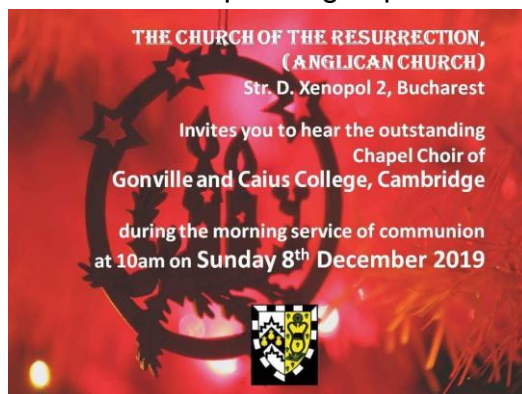
Orthodox Christian Churches in Romania, which include the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Armenian Church, the Lutheran Church, the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Baptist Church and the Pentecostal Church. Our church usually takes part in and hosts an ecumenical service during the week of Christian Unity in Bucharest in January, although we had to decline to be involved this year due to our lack of a priest and our Covid regulations.

In recent years the church's charitable giving has included donations of firewood and foodstuffs at Harvest and during Advent to villagers living in extreme poverty in a village just outside Bucharest (where we have local contacts) as well as fundraising through concerts and appeals for a number of NGOs working with deprived children. We managed to increase our giving during the pandemic and the church council is keen to expand the charitable and outreach work of the church.



## 5. Finances and financial outlook

Over the last several years, the level of financial giving has improved, enabling the church fully to recover from past periods of debt. The regular offerings have been enough to cover normal operating expenses. Congregational giving has been augmented by third parties' use of the church building as well as wedding blessings and the use of the building for ad hoc filming. The council believes that, as has been the case in the past, with a resident, committed and dynamic chaplain the Bucharest Chaplaincy has the potential to be financially self-sufficient enough to support the costs of such an appointment. Extra fund-raising will be required, but the council is determined and is actively exploring ways to raise the necessary funds.



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## 6. Diocesan context

The Church of the Resurrection is part of the Diocese in Europe, led by Bishop Robert in Brussels, and belongs to the Central Deanery within the Archdeaconry of the East. Our Archdeacon, The Ven. Leslie Nathaniel, is based in Stuttgart and has been very supportive during the difficult period of the pandemic. The chaplain and two elected lay representatives would normally attend the annual meeting of the Archdeaconry Synod (usually in September), for which the church provides travel costs. We hope that Bishop Robert will be able to visit Bucharest to lead our service to mark our centenary when we eventually get the chance to re-instate our celebrations.

## 7. Future vision

After a long time without a resident chaplain, coupled with the struggles of the pandemic, we are a dedicated lay team who have 'held the course' but are now in eager search of a chaplain to guide us spiritually and re-invigorate the life, work and community of the Chaplaincy.

We pray that our new chaplain will, with our support, be eager to:

- return to offering at least a weekly Sunday communion service, with church choir and congregational involvement (when restrictions allow);
- build a larger core congregation, by increasing outreach work and being present and engaged in the international community and wider society in Bucharest and Romania;
- continue to improve our financial sustainability with more fundraising and by increasing regular gifts and sponsorship;
- expand our charitable giving, in this country where poverty and child deprivation remain such serious issues;
- expand opportunities for different 'expressions' of church, like prayer meetings, Bible study or other discussion or fellowship groups;
- strengthen the Apokrasarios role and engage sensitively and creatively with the Romanian Orthodox Church;
- expand the possibilities for children and young adults and develop a children's church programme as needed.

