

2016 Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma



April 8, 2016, is International Roma Day, a day set aside each year to celebrate Romani culture, history and people. It is also an opportunity for those of us who know little about the Roma people (sometimes referred to as “Gypsies”) to learn about them, and to move past stereotypes and media depictions.

Who Are the Roma?

The Roma, who reside throughout the world, are the largest minority group in Europe. Like “Native American,” “Roma” is an umbrella term for many subgroups. Ashkali, Kalderash, Manouche and Lovari are among those considered to be Romani,

each with their distinct cultural and linguistic traditions.

Many of Europe’s 10 to 12 million Roma face discrimination that bars them from the basics of a good life. Hundreds of thousands of Roma lack secure housing, dependable food, potable water, electricity, heat, education, health care, employment and even safety, as hatred and fear of Roma sometimes turns into violence.



Roma mission center in Csonkapapi/Carpath-Ukraine

Learn More

- Burkhard Paetzold is the PC(USA)’s regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe. He facilitates the denomination’s work with the Roma in that region. Al and Ellen Smith (Russia), Nadia Ayoub (Ukraine) and Karen Moritz (Czech Republic) also serve as PC(USA) mission workers with this community; learn more about these mission co-workers’ experiences at www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/find-mission-worker.
- Presbyterian Women published resources for prayer and thanksgiving for the Roma in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. Find them at www.presbyterianwomen.org/mission under “PW Development Projects.”
- Order the March/April 2009 issue of *Horizons*, which covers the 2008 Global Exchange. That Exchange is where Presbyterian Women began its relationship with the Roma people. Order item HZN06210 by calling 800/524-2612; \$4 plus shipping.
- The European Roma Rights Centre is an international organization working to combat racism against Romani people through education, research, policy development and more. Find out more at www.errc.org.



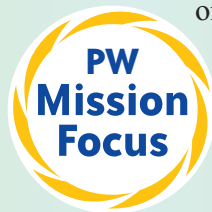
How You Can Help

Support the ministries of Burkhard Paetzold, Al and Ellen Smith, Karen Moritz and Nadia Ayoub. Their web pages (link above) include links for email subscriptions and financial support.

Support Presbyterian Women by promoting its resources and/or making a financial gift. Since 2008, PW has steadfastly supported ministries and partners in Central and Eastern Europe. Learn more or give at www.presbyterianwomen.org.

“Regarding the situation of Gypsies across the world, it is ever more necessary to elaborate new approaches in the civil, cultural and social sphere, as indeed in the church's pastoral strategy, to take on the challenges that emerge from modern forms of persecution, oppression and, sometimes, slavery too.”

—Pope Francis*



Prayer

Compassionate and merciful Creator, please forgive us for not remembering your children who are daily deprived of clean water, safe housing, employment, health care and even safety. We pray that you touch the hearts of those who encounter Roma people, reminding us that all your children are precious. We pray for your mercy and pray that we remember to extend mercy. We rejoice in the One who came to free all of us. Amen.

*As quoted by Lizzy Davies in *The Guardian*, June 5, 2014, “Pope Francis defends Gypsies in Vatican address”



Roma community, village of Botragy in Carpath-Ukraine.

Photos courtesy of Burkhard Paetzold