

NOVEMBER 2026

GOD, PLEASE DEFINE US

Praises

- New friendships and clarity from our trip to Romania in August.

Prayer

- That God would continue to define us and our roles in ministry.

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

PSALM 90:12 (ESV)



At Camp Falcon Rock with Tamas and Tunde

One of my (Jon's) big prayers lately is that God would define me and place me in the role he uniquely created me for. That sounds a bit like a wishy-washy prayer when I am already on a path to missions. I reflect on much of my life and see it as having been a struggle to define myself and create my own path, often equating significance or success with peoples' recognition rather than that deep inner sense of operating in God's design and resting in who He says I am.

How is that related to missions? Well, I grew up on the mission field and have had a pull to missions ever since. Yet even within that pull, I think much of my journey in that direction has been my own doing up until now. This current journey was initiated by someone else and examined and prayed over by a whole team of people.

Another aspect of personal definition in its relation to missions is that the change of living environment and role brings with it all the questions of what it will look like when the move has ended and the dust settles. Will we be serving as we preconceived it to be, or does God have a surprise or two in store for us? God is full of surprises. Thus, the walk of faith; and thus, the prayer, "God define us."

Jeni and I traveled to Romania for the first time at the end of August. As we went, we prayed, "God, please give us clarity." Ironically, we received an email from the ministry team in Romania with the expressed desire that we would give them some clarity on ourselves and on what we perceived our role there to be.

The first day or two, we felt a bit like fish out of water. We met with the Hungarian Baptist Board. We were asked a lot of questions, questions that reflected some of

the board's priorities and desires with a new set of missionaries. We expressed our willingness to work together with them, as well as communicated our own perception of what God has gifted and trained us for and our desire to serve in those ways.

In the days to follow, we acclimatized to our environment and grew in love for our new friends – Tamas and Tunde; Vern and Gloria; Miriam; Robi (via Zoom); Pastors Mickey, Lotsi, and Elemer and their families; Randy; and others.

The following are some highlights from people and conversations we had in Romania that helped clarify my perceived role when we get there:



Mickey is a "retired" pastor. He now only serves three churches; before, he served six or seven. On top of this, he runs a grain mill and takes care of his own farm. Apparently, pastors serving several different churches is fairly common there.

Another planted and pastors a church in Carei. He asked, "How do you keep from burnout?"

The board told us that seminary and Bible school attendance is way down.

Testimonies from the men in church where Lotsi pastors reflected a deep sensitivity to God's Spirit and his movement in their lives and a willingness to serve the church in addition to serving their farms.

We were told that many of the younger generation move to other countries for better jobs.

I asked Pastor Mickey how he mentors and passes on his role to the next generation, and he said to me, "I'm too old; that job is for you."

Reflecting on these conversations, I recognize a huge need for more leadership within the Hungarian Baptist churches. I also wonder if some of the obstacles to raising up more leadership are the time and distance required for training and the idea of a pastor being a full-time vocation. Maybe there is a way of making training more accessible and of promoting bi-vocational ministry? Maybe even the camp could be tested and used for some of this training when it is not interfering with the youth or family camps? These are the questions that go through my head as I process where God might have me plug into the ministry in Romania.

Then I look back at my journey. I planned on being a missionary when I finished seminary; God molded me while I was a pastor of a church in need of revitalization. I settled into the idea that God might have me be a pastor at that church for the rest of my life; God moved me to a millwork facility to teach me more about shepherding in the workplace. I applied to serve as pastor of other churches.

God taught me through serving in leadership and on the mission's committee of our own church. I thought, "Maybe this is it;" God said, "What about missions?" Maybe God has been defining me this whole time and preparing me for a role of raising up leadership for the church. But enough of me. Here are some of my wife's reflections.

Hello! This is Jeni. One of the most frequent questions we get from people is, "Why Romania?" As Jon said, when we were praying about our trip in August, we were asking the Lord to give us clarity about how He wants to use us amongst the Romanian and Hungarian people.

One of my gifts is hospitality. I feel the joy of the Lord when I am welcoming people into my home, feeding them, and listening to their stories. Jon and I were so blessed to be on the receiving end of this from everyone we met. I look forward to being able to host neighbors in our own home once we move there. Our heart's desire is to live in one of the Hungarian villages neighboring Camp Falcon Rock. Living amongst the people in a nearby village will give Jon and I the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the culture and get to know people in their natural rhythm of life.

While visiting with Tamas and Tunde on one of our last days with them, Tunde was sharing her excitement of how she envisions using the camp's facilities to expand beyond the kids and family camps. Last year, they were able to host a women's conference. She mentioned how she would need help to make more women's and potentially men's conferences come to fruition. My heart literally leaped inside me. "I would love to help you with that!" I joyfully exclaimed.

Thank you to all of you who support us. Your prayers mean so much, and your financial support makes it possible for us to extend the work of God through you into Romania. If you are not a part of our support team yet, we would love you to join.



Our hope is to visit Romania this coming summer so we can participate in some of the kids camps at Camp Falcon Rock. Our estimated time for moving there is the summer of 2028.

Jonathan & Jeni Bransford

JONBRANSFORD@NABCONF.ORG | JENIBRANSFORD@NABCONF.ORG
NABONMISSION.ORG/MISSIONARIES/JON-AND-JENI-BRANSFORD