

OCTOBER 1, 2009

## Minute for Mission

### Steps Toward an Inclusive Community in the Ukraine



Evelin reads in her classroom in the Roma school. Photo courtesy of PC(USA).

Most of the Roma people who live in Central and Eastern Europe face segregation, severe poverty and significant social challenges. In Szürte, a village in Transcarpathia, Ukraine, the divisions between Roma and non-Roma are clear: the Roma live in a camp on the outskirts of the village. Almost ten years ago, a Hungarian missionary, Karoly Kozma, was sent to serve among the Roma. He saw that the greatest need was for intensive education for the Roma children, who lagged behind their non-Roma peers. He began teaching the children in makeshift classrooms, and they began to learn to read and write.

Now there is a building in the camp devoted exclusively to children's education. Among those teaching have been Young Adult Volunteers from the PC(USA) and other churches. The volunteers participate in the Roma Gadge Dialogue Through Service program where they learn about and work toward building bridges between Roma and non-Roma peoples. With the help of many teachers and volunteers, several of the Roma students are now performing up to grade level and are ready to attend school with their non-Roma peers. The school that Karoly Kozma began has brought many blessings to the children and made many small steps toward overcoming long-standing divisions in the community.

**Prayer:** Compassionate God, bless the Roma children. We ask that they may experience your love in the community around them and that they would be a part of creating an inclusive community. Help to heal divisions that exist among your people throughout the world. Amen.

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