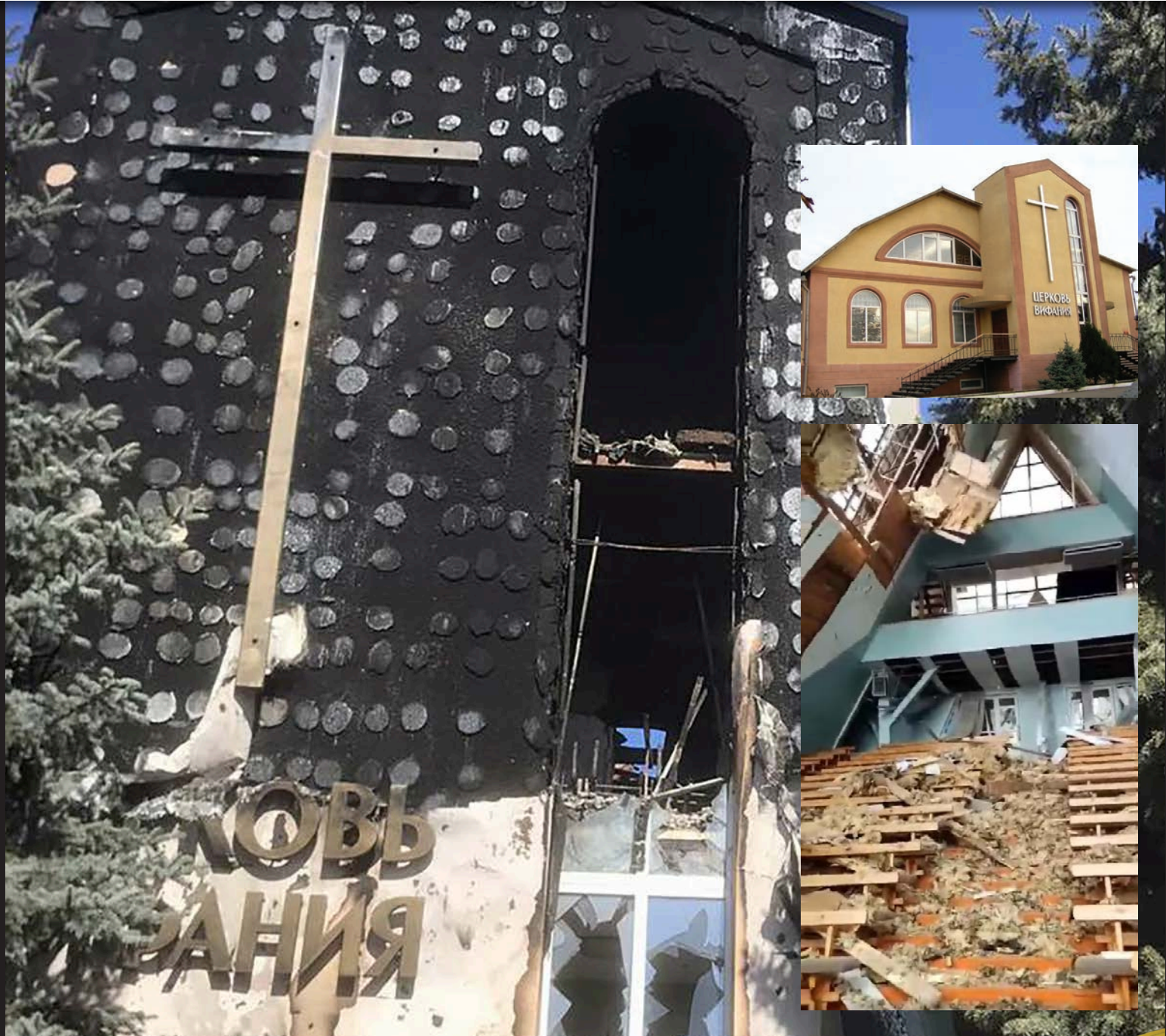




Slavic Gospel News

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News from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Central Asia



How SGA is Bringing Hope
Amid Death & Destruction

Lyena's Letter



You have asked us to share our story.

It turned out that Makariv in Kiev Region became a convenient road for the enemy to reach the capital. It was the road where there were lots of enemy vehicles. The road is very close to our house. We live in Makarov, next to a quarry that is no longer functioning. In the last 5-7 years a small district has been formed behind the quarry. This area is considered to be Makarov too, but it is a bit detached. We could never have thought that our quiet remote area could be the epicenter of the events.

On February 25, enemy vehicles began to drive on the road nearby, and on this day we almost ran into a tank column. We were rescued by a shot car, which was driving, trying to escape, towards us. There were 2 wounded men and the third one was fine. We helped them to get to the hospital. At that time we did not know that the enemy vehicles were running near our house.

We returned home, with our hearts full of fear from the things we had seen. But at that moment we didn't know that it was just the beginning.

We could hear the sound of the engines almost all the time. On February 27 our servicemen started to dislodge the enemy at noon and had been doing that till night. On striking the target, there were large pillars of fire for a few kilometers.

The enemy began to flee from the road, and capture our area, which is far from the main part of the town. On the 4th or 5th day of the war, the houses next to the road had been already captured. A raped girl with a slit throat was found in one of the houses. On the first days one man was shot there. The man was my father's director's brother. At that time we were afraid to go outside because there was constant close combat with machine guns and sub-machine guns. Our artillery tried to knock the enemy out of the area, and the enemy had been firing at our town and civilian's houses for hours.

We had to run away then on the first or second day, but my mother was at work (she works at the hospital canteen) and she had stayed at the hospital for 5 days. The situation near our house became even worse and very dangerous. By that time, there was no electricity, running water, gas and telephones were out of range in Makarov. We were worried about my mother as the hospital had been periodically shelled. We didn't want to leave without her as we could miss her and lose contact with her.

When my mother returned home, we cried, because another bombardment had started and she had to walk straight through the fire. Praise God for His protection!

A few days later, when my mother returned from work, enemy soldiers visited us for the first time. They were

looking for weapons and generators. They checked the phones as well. If the telephones were on, they just broke them. Ours were turned off. There was no electricity and we couldn't charge them, therefore they didn't touch our telephones. On the walkie-talkie they asked who was in the house.

At that time, our entire isolated area was already under occupation, and our house was the last one, where they had not been yet.

They themselves wondered how we could survive, as the houses in our area were damaged by the shelling, because everyone knew that the area was under occupation, and the only thing that could be done was to destroy civilian houses. The invaders lived in the people's houses in our area.

On that day the occupants thought that our house would be destroyed and they told us to pack and leave. My father asked if we were being taken prisoners, and they said no.

They took us to a house far away from ours for safety's sake, but a day later in the morning a shell hit the house next to this one, where we were.

Almost all the time there were explosions. It is even hard to imagine now what might have happened. It seems to be a real nightmare. It's a miracle but our building remained intact. We had never prayed so much before, probably never in our lives. And I had never read the psalms so thoughtfully before, it was the encouragement, that brought tears of gratitude and joy. I realised that only when you walk through the valley of mortal darkness, you learn to completely trust God, and then you are not afraid, because the Lord is with you.

Death was close, but it didn't scare us. It's scary to get fatal injuries, and die slowly, and know that no one can help you because you are in a captured area.

After a shell hit the neighboring house to the one where we had been taken, we were sent home because there was no safer place.

It was impossible to escape, as they put tanks and enemy equipment in every yard next to our house. There were no tanks in our yard as it was closer to the edge of the town, where our Ukrainian servicemen were and they bombarded the enemy from there.

Two days later, invaders visited us again, but those were different soldiers. They did not take food, did not frighten us either. They said that they did not want that war, because they had relatives in Ukraine. They had to fight as they had no choice, because if they lay down their weapons they might be put into prison as traitors. They said that almost all of them are contract servicemen and they could retire at the age of 35.



The thought about retirement at that age made them happy. March 11 and 12 were the longest and the most difficult days in our life. Because they were not shooting at the road where the tanks were running, or just in the area where the tanks were, but practically at us, where there were many tanks.

On March 12 my mother said that God had not let her sleep all night, and filled her with the thoughts that we should leave despite the fact that the barrel of a tank or a machine gun is aimed at your back, because there were many snipers among the occupiers.

It was clear that staying there was a danger and death. To stay there meant to tempt God. My mother was about to die, because her heart just couldn't stand it, as there was not enough oxygen, she was shaking from every explosion, and she started losing her heart. As we had no cellar we had to sleep on the floor. Only few hours of rest during a day, constant explosions made us leave.

In the morning of March 12, we started packing. We had only five minutes to take our documents and money. When we were leaving the house the tank was standing nearby, but we kept walking without looking back, like Lot was leaving Sodom and Gomorrah. We were walking and the tank started moving. We quickly went into a low-lying quarry, where we couldn't be seen. At that moment I thought they were following us, but praise God we got out and went to Makarov.

All this time we had been without news, and did not know what was happening in our town that by March 13, more than half of the town had been destroyed. Of course, we didn't know anything about the evacuation.

We wanted to stay at someone's house from the church, but there was no one left in the town.

We got into one sister's house and stayed there 2 days. The bombardment in Makarov hadn't stopped. We didn't have food and our parents decided to look for volunteers, but we found the guys from territorial defense forces instead. The guys told us about the situation and that we should flee then, because Makarov was being leveled to the ground.

On the same day, March 15 we came to the evacuation, but because of a curfew on that day we had to stay in Makarov for one more day. On March 16 we left for Zhytomir.

The bus we were supposed to ride shocked us as soon as we saw it. The windshield was broken, and it was ready to fall out. The other windows were broken too, but they were covered with various cabinet doors.

While we were riding there was non-stop shelling. All of us on the bus were worried and scared. We could see shot cars on the side of the road. But the Lord had mercy on us.

We were welcomed at a school building. They gave us food and made beds for us! Praise God for the people who are ready to serve others in need!

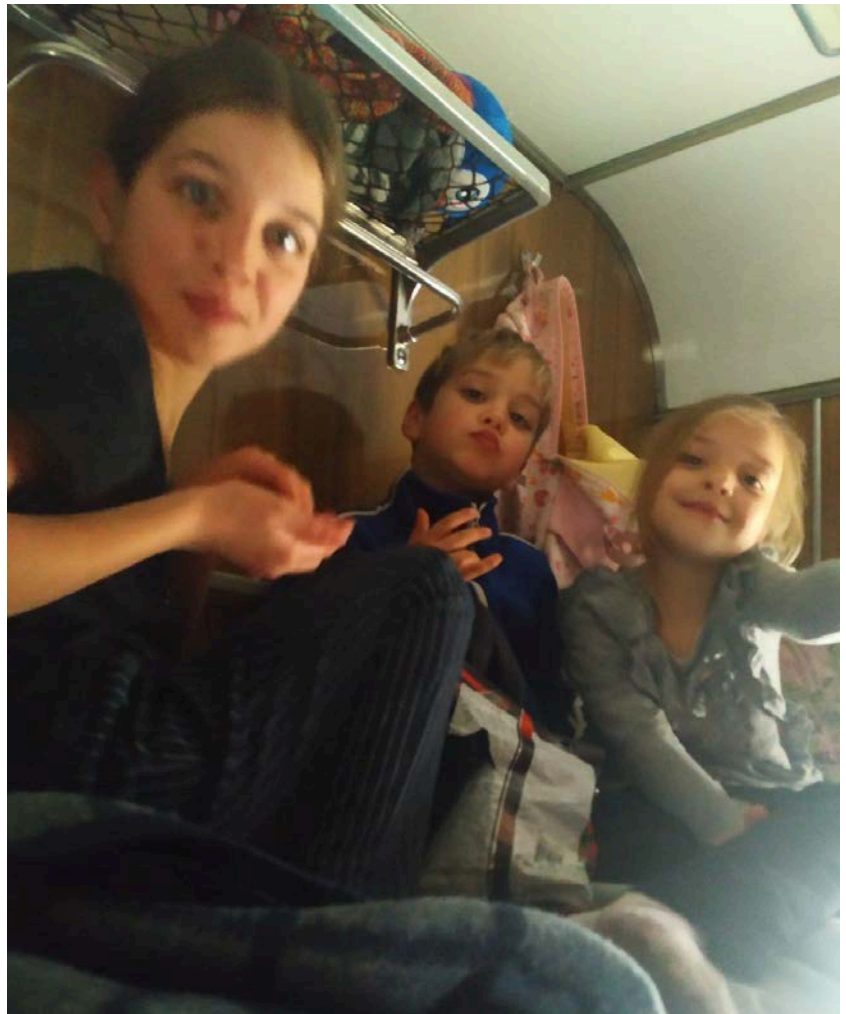


ESCAPING MARIUPOL

As we read the reports that come in from Ukraine every day, such a sweep of emotions can come over us. We feel sorrow, anger at such brutality, and compassion for the individuals and families caught up in such death and destruction. Mixed in this is a sense of great admiration for the great courage being demonstrated, as well as a deep burden that the life-changing Gospel be shared with each opportunity that God provides, as that is the only true source of peace and reconciliation with God. Every day, we come across people and hear their testimonies about what they are going through. Pastor Andrei shared the following account of one more day in a warzone.

“The story of this family is impressive - it is a story of a mother with two children: a son who is a second-year student, and a daughter. They are from Mariupol, which has sustained very heavy shelling for weeks. When the hostilities began, everyone thought it would be over in a few days, but instead, everyday things only got worse. They had to stay in the basement of a pharmacy for 19 days, without taking off their shoes and clothes, and without a shower. They had only a bag with important documents with them. The most difficult thing was that the people were without water. They melted snow to get water, or they drained it from car radiators, getting a rusty liquid and needing to try and strain it. Vladislav, a 19-year-old boy, would go risking his life under fire for about two hours to get some water. Daily in their “bomb shelter”, which was hard to identify as such, at first 2-3 people came to hide, but by the time of their escape, there were about 90 people crammed in there. It was cold outside, only -11 degrees C, and people would freeze and die from low temperatures. The other problem was a lack of medicine - one parent was ready to pay all the money he had to buy antibiotics to save his child, but unfortunately, people did not help. They were afraid that they would need them too.”

“So, the family decided to escape the besieged city, and their neighbour helped them. He took them 12 miles to the city limits of Mariupol; then they had to continue their road on foot, then to Berdyansk in a van, stuffed with different cargo. From Berdyansk, they traveled to Zaporozhye in a bus that traveled 124 miles within 33 hours, having passed 23 checkpoints where the Russian military ordered them to take off their clothes to check for traces of the use of weapons, asking provocative questions, or forcing them to say things against their wills. Only the Lord knows what these people have gone through. They told about a neighbour who had a fragment of a shell in his body but he could not get to the hospital as it was occupied. Now these people are safe in Rivne. It took them a week to get here, but thanks to volunteers and Christians, they experienced the love and hand of God acting in their lives. Another man from Irpin testified with tears in his eyes that he has become an internally displaced person for the second time. The first time was in 2014 when the war broke out in eastern Ukraine, specifically Donetsk, and now from Irpin. He married a year and a half ago and has a little daughter. His family is abroad in safety, and he has not seen his mother for six years, watching how she is turning gray when they talk via video link. We are sending humanitarian aid every day even as far as the Donetsk region. Please pray for us!”



▲ Children are seen here, on a train that is evacuating citizens out of the eastern regions of Ukraine. They will have left their toys, pets, school and friends. Life for them will never be the same.



▲ On the first day of war, a regional child-minding centre was moved to Kherson Baptist Church. 57 children from zero to four years old, along with all the staff, stayed in the church basement.

The church was also able to contribute funds to supply 3-4 days worth of baby food, products and nappies, and church members were volunteering there on a regular basis. We do not know what developments have taken place since then, but we hope that all these children are safe today, wherever they are.



▲ Polish and Ukrainian children laugh and play together after a church service. Many Polish households have accepted refugee families and are bearing much of the burden to feed and house thousands of refugees.



▲ These children, in a Ukrainian village, came to receive free food and literature from a church-run delivery van.



▲ A Ukrainian boy shows his works of art, which he made while staying in a church-run refugee centre in Poland.

THE LAUGHTER OF CHILDREN

- from Pastor Oleg, Ukraine

While I am writing these words to you, I am crying. We have got the news that the commander of the 25th special Dnepropetrovsk brigade has been killed. My wife Anya's brother serves in this brigade. It is very difficult to write anything when there is so much grief around. They don't tell and show us much in the news. We have begun to really cherish every peaceful day. When food was distributed to refugees at the church today, one pregnant woman said she was glad just to see the sun shining. Twice, while she was escaping Kiev, she thought she was about to give birth.

We continue to serve displaced people. There are a lot of needs. More than 700 refugees have been registered in Poninka alone. It's good if people can stay with relatives, but there are some who need both bread and utensils, which are not available where they are living now. We try to prepare all that is necessary for people with different needs: food, hygiene products, nappies, blankets and mattresses. But the most important thing, especially today, is to talk to people and give them hope - even just to listen to them. Last Sunday, there were people in our church service who had arrived from Mariupol, Shostka, Kyiv and Luhansk Regions. Praise God, in our area we've had almost heavenly conditions. Because if people can walk with their children out in the open air - it's great! It's great that we don't see dead bodies of children or empty strollers. Rather, we hear lively and loud laughter and see happy children. For many people, these conditions are heavenly.



▲ These orphans were evacuated out of the eastern regions early in the war. The van they travelled in can be seen behind them. But these days, the vans that transport children are covered in bullet holes, and plywood replaces the glass. Paper signs that say "children" are often written on paper and taped onto cars (sometimes it is even spray-painted directly onto the vehicles) in the hope of appealing to the compassion of any Russian soldiers they come across on their treacherous journey.

WE HID IN OUR CELLAR

-from Pastor Peter, Losynivka, Ukraine

I am writing you this letter with tears in my eyes. On February 24, at four o'clock in the morning, our lives changed, our daughter Victoria said **"Papa, please don't worry. The war has started"**. I turned on the TV and I heard the news. From the very beginning, rockets flew at civilians, at houses, hospitals, children's boarding schools, bomb shelters where people hid, at railway stations, in columns of people who went to evacuate with a white flag. They completely destroyed those villages and towns that were under occupation. They mocked people, raped women and children, cut off their limbs, burned their eyes, threw them on the ground or burned them.

My village Losynivka, where we live, was also occupied by Russians. They lived in our village and controlled the road to the capital of Kiev. Shops were bombed in our village and people were shot at. We had no bread, no food. We all hid and sat in our shelter, kneeling and praying. My wife, who is currently sick, hid with me and Victoria's daughter as we sat in the cellar. But when columns of military equipment, such as tanks, missiles, and many other kinds of equipment, started firing and passing through the streets, we were forced to flee our homes, taking our children and grandchildren.

In the first days of the war we could not escape from our village. Many people left, but not all reached their destination because the Russian soldiers killed these people. We did not have green corridors in Chernihiv region. We lived for more than a month under occupation and we thank our dear God that we are still alive on this earth. Every morning, every evening and at night our village was shelled. We did not undress day or night. We were on our knees, crying, and there was great pain in our hearts. We prayed to the Lord day and night. When they fired, the houses shook. Windows and doors flew out, and the gas exploded. There was a fire on our street, near our house, that endangered my whole family. But prayer makes miracles.

My wife and children and I all began to pray and God turned the wind in the other direction and it departed. My 7-year-old granddaughter was very scared all the time, she hid under the bed and prayed that we would all stay alive. And although we are not under the occupiers at the moment, the war continues and rockets are flying. In the east and south there are fierce battles and every day we look forward to the victory of our country. We pray that God will save our nation, Ukraine.

Dear brothers and sisters, pray for us, for our churches, our homes, our children, our grandchildren, for myself and my wife - that the Lord may give us the strength to endure all this grief. The pain in our souls remains.



▲ In the background of this photo of President Zelenskyy greeting citizens, you can see some white iCare boxes that were sponsored by SGA and are ready for distribution.



▲ The Lutsk printing factory is being used as a humanitarian food distribution centre. Many volunteers are busy packing boxes.



▲ The Action Bible New Testaments that have been part-funded by SGA-supporters, are being printed and distributed through the humanitarian aid program, along with Bibles for adults.

WE RECITED PSALM 90

-from the Ukrainian Baptist Union

We met a woman named Oksana, and her son who miraculously escaped from Mariupol. We believe the Lord Himself helped them. At first they were in the basement and constantly repeated Psalm 90. They asked God to stop the enemy's attacks and become a wall of fire around the basement where they stayed. Oksana told us about it...

"One day our houses were shelled with 'grad' (multiple rocket launchers) four times, and we were ready for death, but the shelled miraculously flew over our basement and exploded nearby. My son said, "Mama, let's pray the prayer of repentance," and we prayed. Next morning, we heard someone calling us. It was our friend who managed to break through the shelling to pick us up and take to the evacuation site. We could hardly believe it! Immediately we grabbed what was at hand and left. We were carried to safety by strangers. All the way we continued to pray, asking God to accompany us on our way, and we again recited Psalm 90. We just prayed and prayed..."

"When we arrived to a safe place at last, my son said, 'Mama, it's a miracle. God has created so many miracles in our lives!'. It was so true. I wept. The next day we learned that after our leaving, a bomb had hit the basement where we were hiding. The Lord brought us out and took care of us through people that we never met. We still have relatives that stayed in Mariupol, and we haven't heard anything about them for two weeks. But we believe that God can and will save them, because the only hope is in Him."



THE SOLDIERS WERE DISSUADED

"Sometimes the stories break our hearts, and they bleed for those people," Pastor Vladimir says. And he shares one of these stories he was told below. While it is hard to read, it also is reality for our Christian brothers and sisters whose lives have been forever changed by the violence, bloodshed, and destruction from the war in Ukraine...

"Another family has been living with us for the second week now. They are a husband and a wife and their two children. They also lived under fire in a village not far from [a Ukrainian city]. One morning they decided that it was the time to look for a quieter place. The husband's mother and his sister are still in that house, where they lived together. They thought the war would bypass them and soldiers would not get to their village."

"When our friends left the home, a couple of hours later, their village got invaded and occupied. A column of tanks and combat vehicles drove by and shot everything on the way. Many people from the village were killed, ordinary people who had not expected to see the enemy there. Our friends had time to escape, but their relatives stayed at home. They are really worried about the mother and the sister and try to constantly be in touch with them."

"One morning the man's sister called and said that guns had been set up near their house and she sent him a picture of it. Their house is located near the field. And the worst thing they had been afraid of happened to them. The invaders came and climbed over the fence."

"The women realised that it was better to open the door themselves, as they had heard that those who did not open got shot immediately. Two soldiers with machine guns entered their house and told them that the women should not worry as they were not going to kill them. They searched the house, rummaged in their belongings, and found nothing. The militants left."

"After a while they returned with other intentions in mind, putting a machine gun to the mother's head, the soldier told the daughter to satisfy him. It was very scary but the Lord was with them and is still with them. He gave the girl the right words to say, and she miraculously dissuaded him from doing that and the soldiers left the house. Being frightened, they locked the house and ran to their grandmother's house, and they still live there with no light or gas."

We hope you will pray with us for the women in the story above – as well as for Pastor Vladimir and his family.



It Takes Time, Money and Effort



- from the Polish Baptist Union (working with SGA)

In our centers for refugees there are mainly women and children. They are waiting for the end of warfare in their country and the possibility to return to their fathers, husbands and sons (if they are still alive!) We are constantly expanding the accommodation in the shelters and buying necessary things such as beds, as you can see on the pictures from Wrocław. Food is an everyday necessity. Lunches are usually delivered from catering and breakfasts and dinners are prepared by volunteers together with refugees.

We have to make small repairs in our centers and maintain cleanliness. With so many people, especially children, it is a challenge. Many of the Centers have coordinators that we support financially on a monthly basis. They have the responsibility of managing these places and planning everything that is necessary for the refugees to be safe there. These coordinators and volunteers provide health care (medical appointments), legal advice (documents, travel plans to other countries around the world) and documentation for children. Psychological care, spiritual care, help in getting a job, learning the language and many other activities that make up the daily life in such places.

Washing machines that have been working around the clock, and other household appliances, have started to break down. The biggest challenge at the moment are the bills for water, light, heating - gas, coal etc. These bills are a challenge for every family that helps refugees and for each of the 80 or so refugee centers run by our churches.

There is also a lot of travelling, i.e. driving refugees to new places/cities where they go to live and work, or for other reasons e.g. to the hospital, or to do paperwork at offices and embassies. It costs a lot of time and money, and the drivers usually have to be paid because they spend the whole day on these trips. Even if it is close, you have to wait in the office sometimes for several hours until the matter is settled, or when the doctor's appointment is over. These are the kinds of things that these invaluable volunteer people are needed for, everyday things and everywhere. They are already a little (or very) tired. Yet we do not give up on our service and help.

Tomorrow we are receiving more Christian literature in Ukrainian that will arrive in Warsaw, this time for children. It will have to be sent to various places in the country. Today we are also sending four cartons of New Testaments to Latvia, where missionaries who work with refugees are waiting for them to give to their charges.



43 ORPHANS WITH LEUKEMIA

-from Pastor Henryk, Chelm, Poland

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, our church has hosted Ukrainian foster-families. On average, they have 5-6 orphans per family. All these families have since moved on from here to Germany.

Something else that has happened here in Chelm County, was the sourcing of accommodation for 43 orphans suffering from leukemia, together with their guardians.

Jerzy Kwiatkowski, who is the vice-mayor of our district, and a member of our church, made the decision to transport these forty-three families to one of the main registration centres. It was enormously expensive, as twelve of the children were in a serious condition and three of them were in critical condition. Within a few days the children were all taken to Polish medical clinics, and the three in the worst condition were put on chartered planes to Italy. I personally believe that God used Jerzy, by pouring out blessings through him.

From the account of our city mayor, Mr. Jakub Banaszek, I have also heard about cases of children arriving in Chelm, without parents or guardians. All these cases need to be investigated by the Polish prosecutor's office so that reliable data about their origins can be obtained. I also heard that the mayor of Szczyrk agreed to take responsibility for a whole orphanage of more than 60 children.

Local citizens have heard about all these children in need of care and we have had several phone calls from residents wanting to take in orphans. Handicapped people are also in need. There was a group of eighteen handicapped people that came through our church and they were directed to Baptist churches in Latvia because, among others, the Baptist Union of Latvia cooperates with our Christian Transit Center here in Poland.



ELENA'S ESCAPE INTO POLAND

Elena is 47 years old, and she has a daughter, Alisa, who is 11. They came to Poland from the city of Kharkiv and this is their story.

At 5 a.m. on February 24, strong explosions were heard coming from the Russian border-city of Belgorod and on from the outskirts of Kharkiv, where Elena lived with her husband and daughter. Elena's family woke up surprised. They couldn't believe that war had broken out so they thought it was just a disaster, like the ones in the city of Balakleya, where military warehouses had exploded before.

After a while, the explosions subsided. But at 7 a.m., heavy artillery fire began, so they took warm clothes and went to find shelter in the basement of the local kindergarten. From then on, they spent all their nights in that basement where, apart from their family, there were 70 other people every night. The kindergarten director gave out mattresses to everyone, and people put sandbags on them. And so, they slept right on those sandbags.

Once, when the shelling stopped for a while, they quickly ran to their apartment to get blankets and then returned to the basement. At 10 p.m. the shelling intensified and continued throughout the night. Every morning for the first four days, they came out of the basement and sometimes managed to run home to cook something quickly and then go back to the basement. Then saboteurs turned up in their neighborhood so the kindergarten director forbade everyone to go outside, even to the bathroom. They locked themselves into the kindergarten. Everyone in the basement had to use the same bucket to go to the toilet. It was terrible, but they had no other choice.

On the 5th day of the war, Russian warplanes started flying and it was incredibly scary. At such moments, all the people in the basement took the children's chairs in the kindergarten and sat on them along the walls so as not to be blocked off by the possible debris of the building. It was no longer possible to go out at all. There was incessant shelling and air raids all the time. The children started crying, and the adults tried to comfort them as best they could. And the adults were scared, too.

Starting from the 6th day of the war, people began to leave the basement, and it gradually became empty. There were now only 30 people left, including Elena's family. Now they never left the basement for a minute.

On the 7th day of the war, a shell hit their apartment building. It was only the next morning when they saw that half the apartment building was gone, and the windows of the other half were completely blown out. At that point, a lot of people jumped out of the basement in the small gaps between explosions and left the city.

More and more people were leaving the city but Elena and her husband didn't have a car. So they stayed in the basement during the shelling. There was no bread, and they started to run out of all the food they had. Volunteers didn't come to the area and there was no support from the city authorities either. So they ate everything they had left. All the people shared their food, giving everyone just a little bit. All the stores in their neighborhood had been looted. For ten days, no one could find any food anywhere. A famine was approaching, so Lena and her family began to worry and think about what to do next.

From February 28, while constantly living in the basement, Elena and her husband tried to find a car in which to leave but they couldn't find one. All the cab drivers simply refused to come into that area. It was very dangerous. Elena had a panic attack when they ran out of food and water.

On March 2, Elena, her husband, and her daughter ran home from the basement and started making calls to everyone they knew, to find any way of getting out of the city. And a miracle happened. Elena remembered the doctor who helped her when she was pregnant. She called him, and he offered them his car. He told her where to find the keys and also arranged for a volunteer driver to take them to the car.

On the morning of the 8th day, a volunteer picked them up, under shelling, and quickly drove them to their relatives who lived in the center of Kharkiv. They waited there another night to get the keys to the doctor's car. And the next morning they were shocked to find out that the keys to the car were locked in the safe of a company, which was already completely closed. And there was no way to get there. The doctor told them they had to get out of the city center on their own. Alisa's uncle picked them up in his car and took them to the train station, but all the entrances were restricted as Ukrainian men were not allowed to board any trains in case they left the country. So Elena had to say goodbye to her husband Alexander, and Alisa had to say goodbye to her father. They said goodbye and sobbed so loudly that all the people at the train station could hear them. Alexander stayed with friends in Kharkiv and since then, he has joined the Territorial Defense Forces. He cooks food for the soldiers and volunteers.

Elena and Alisa didn't get on the first train. They only managed to get on the second one. And once they were on the train, they had to sit in the aisle, on their bags, for 30 hours. All the carriages of the train were packed, and people were sitting in every nook and cranny. Elena and Alisa were scared as the train passed through Kyiv in complete darkness. The train conductors told them that they had been working for seven days straight and could not even get out of the train.

When Elena and her daughter arrived in Lviv, they had to find a place to stay because there was no transportation from Lviv to Ternopil. Lena ran around the train station, looking for any opportunity to get out of the city and God showed another miracle in Elena's life. An elderly man, a complete stranger, was there picking up some refugee children he knew, to drive them from the train station to Ivano-Frankivsk. And God touched his heart to invite Elena and Alisa to stay with his family. They had dinner there, stayed the night, and in the morning, the man dropped them off at the bus station and gave them some food, hot tea, and clothes.

So Elena and her daughter traveled by bus to Ternopil where they were met by old friends. Although it was calm and quiet outside, Lena and Alisa were still afraid to go outdoors (because of their trauma). Elena began having severe panic attacks and even in peaceful Ternopil, she and her daughter slept in the bathroom because they were afraid of being bombed again. Elena started taking sedatives that were given to her by total strangers.

Eventually she found a way to get to Warsaw and a volunteer met them there and took them to a refugee center. Later, she was moved to a church building. There were already 28 refugees there. Yet, even so, Elena was glad that she and her daughter didn't end up in a regular hotel. They ended up in a church, sheltered with other people, and were very well received. Elena and Alisa hope that God will continue to show His Grace in their lives.



Bethel Baptist Church, Vinnitsa

- Relief Center for IDPs
- warm meals
 - coffee
 - tea
 - shelter



Yaltushkiv Baptist Church

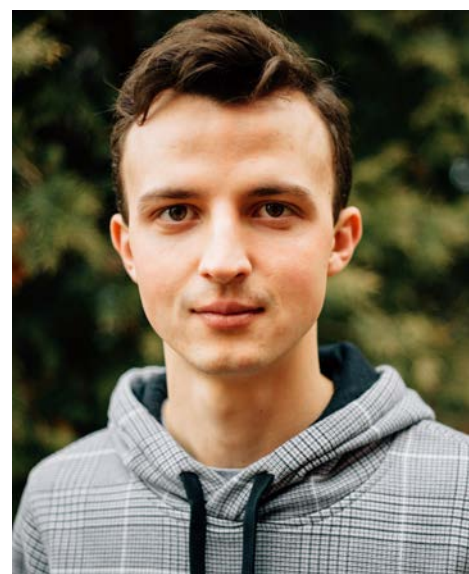
- House of Prayer
- Free
 - Coffee, Tea
 - Toilet



▲ This is Oleg. He is from Zolotonosha Baptist Church, and his pastor wrote that at the beginning of the war, Oleg was doing the same thing as many other church volunteers - making regular trips to Kharkiv. He would bring humanitarian aid to the city and on his way back home, he would evacuate people out of danger.

One day, on his way to Kharkiv, Oleg was stopped at a checkpoint because they were imposing a curfew. None of his pleas worked, and Oleg was ordered to stay the night in the nearest village. While he was there, a man he'd never met came up to him saying, "Peace be with you!" The man went on to say that he was the pastor of a local village church, and he had just been praying for some way of getting 200 loaves of fresh bread to Kharkiv the next day.

So Oleg added the loaves of bread to his cargo and the next day, took the bread to Kharkiv. What an answer to prayer!



◀ This is Sasza. He crossed the border into Poland at the beginning of the war.

The pastor of the church in Chelm (Poland) said that Sasza came via Chelm's Christian Transit Center, among the first wave of Ukrainian refugees. He had traveled from Dergacze, near Charków, with his mother, brother, aunt and two cousins, and sought shelter across the border as their home was no longer safe.

Even though his family eventually left Poland and travelled onwards to the Netherlands, Sasza stayed in Chelm to work as a volunteer - to help in the effort of receiving a flood of Ukrainian refugees. His knowledge of Ukrainian, Polish and English has been invaluable, because one of the main problems they have been facing is the language barrier.

The pastor in Chelm is so grateful to Sasza, saying he has worked tirelessly to register refugees and find them places to sleep. They have been encouraged by his attitude - never taking praise for himself, but giving all the glory to God.

At the age of 20, Sasza had decided he wanted to become a missionary and spend his life serving others. Now he is able to fulfill his desire in an unexpected way.

Please join us in prayer for Sasza, the Polish pastors and volunteers, the Ukrainian refugees, as well as the safety of Sasza's father who is still in Ukraine.

Let Us Not Lose Heart in Doing Good



It's been months since the start of the heartbreaking war in Ukraine. Disturbing reports and images seem to come our way every hour. Many are starting to wonder if the bloodshed and destruction will ever end. But what gives me hope in times like these is how friends like you are caring for our brothers and sisters who are facing unimaginable difficulties every day. I am deeply thankful for the gifts shared, as they are providing real, tangible support to people desperate for help and hope.

I thank God that every gift to SGA results in a sharing of the life-changing hope of the Gospel in the middle of all of this pain. I am encouraged as I read the frequent updates from SGA-supported pastors and churches who are serving suffering people amid this tragic war. Our team is working hard every day to post these field reports for you as quickly as possible so that you can see what is happening — and read stories that you won't hear about from secular news outlets.

Between the lines of the many SGA missionary pastors' reports, you'll see that they are weary. And that's only natural, this side of heaven, with a world in constant turmoil. And that's why your ongoing prayers and gifts are so important to them. I want to offer you this encouragement today: do not give up. For the sake of our faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who remain in Ukraine, for those churches in neighboring countries like Poland and Georgia, let's hold fast to Galatians 6:9 and "not lose heart in doing good for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."

Pastor Evgeny, who is an SGA-supported pastor still serving with his church in Ukraine, shared with us recently that He is thankful to God for this opportunity to be useful to Him in his bombed-out city... to serve the weak and the needy and those who are unable to evacuate... to continue worshipping the Lord with his brave congregation. "We do not know what awaits us tomorrow," he says. "But if we are alive and it is the will of God, then soon we will again let you know about how we live and serve our Lord in our difficult circumstances."

The best way we can help SGA-supported pastors like Pastor Evgeny is to answer their pleas for help. We must continue equipping SGA missionary pastors through financial support and fervent prayer — so that they can keep sharing the hope of the Gospel as they meet ongoing, urgent physical needs.

I am very grateful for friends like you who are supporting SGA's network of pastors and churches in Ukraine. And even though we do not know or understand God's timing — and what awaits us tomorrow in this war-torn country — we cannot give up now. People need food, clothing, shelter, and medicine to survive. They need to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. The work to deliver spiritual and physical aid must continue to help Ukrainians rebuild their lives ... by God's grace. As I ask the Lord to renew the strength of weary pastors in Ukraine, I pray the same for you.

Please continue to stand with SGA-supported pastors and churches in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Your gift will help us continue equipping them as they minister to people who have lost so much in this war and support them in doing good with your gift. We might feel like these times of suffering are a waste. But from the testimony of Pastor Evgeny and other servants of the Lord, we know that they are not. Hurting Ukrainians are seeing God now like they've never seen Him before and are opening their hearts to Jesus. May knowing that give us all fresh hope for today and in the days to come.

In His love and service,
Michael Johnson
President, SGA United States

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How to Help

If you feel led to support the advancement of the Gospel through the ministries of Slavic Gospel Association, or want to help fund a particular project or need, we gratefully accept cheques, credit card payments and direct transfers.

Cheques: Send to 'Slavic Gospel Association, PO Box 396, Noble Park Vic 3174' with your details.

Credit Card Payments: Please post (or email sgaaust@outlook.com) the following details: credit card number; expiry date; dollar amount; your contact information and choice of project.

Direct Transfers: Deposit funds directly into our account using the following information:

Account Name: Slavic Gospel Association; **BSB:** 033-126 (Westpac); **Account Number:** 127-841

Praying for the work is a great way to help, either in conjunction with finances or when unable to give. We have also received a number of enquiries about how to bequeath a portion of one's estate to SGA upon passing. Please contact the office, or visit our website if you would like more information.