



Heart for Orphans

Providing loving, nurturing, Christ-centered homes and programs for orphaned children.

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ON FEB 24TH, RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE

HOPE HOUSE

“On the second day of war the Russians dropped several missiles on our local airport. When we heard the explosions we were terrified and decided to flee to the Transcarpathian mountains. We prayed, packed in 20 minutes, piled into cars (3 children sat on each adult’s lap) and quickly left. There were several families – 50 people in 5 cars! The road was long and hard, and traffic was bumper-to-bumper. There was almost no gasoline anywhere! We were only allowed to get 20 liters (5.28 gallons) at a time. So, we stopped at gas stations frequently, and waited on long lines each time.

We drove like that for almost a day, with the sirens constantly howling! The sound of the sirens caused us to panic even more! Finally we arrived at our friends’ home where we spent the night. The next day we learned that there were others coming to stay with them, so we knew we needed to go elsewhere. There wasn’t enough room for all of us. But where do we go? The main thing was to get across the border as soon as possible! So we drove on to the border and waited a whole day. The whole time we prayed and worried whether our documents were in order. Thank God we crossed the border into Hungary on February 28th!

“When we went abroad, we had no fear that we would be alone here. We were not afraid that we would be lost or have no place to live. We remembered that our Heart for Orphans family promised to help us. You had our backs! Knowing this gave us strength and confidence! Thank you so much!”

We still had no idea where we were going. So we started calling all of our contacts and praying to get some direction. Soon it was clear: we were going to Slovakia! After driving another 700 km (about 435 mi), we knew we were at the right place. We were totally exhausted! But then, God began to show himself even more. In Ukraine the ATM machines were out of money, and we only had 10,000 hryvnias (\$300 USD) in cash. We spent a lot of money for gas on our trip, and didn’t have much left. We didn’t know what would do when we got there. Where would we stay?

Thankfully, our Christian friends met us in Bratislava. Both the local church and a hotel took care of us! Everyone had a place to stay! Fifty of us stayed in three hotel rooms for a week. They helped us make phone calls, provided food for us, and helped us to get around town. A week later the church found our family a beautiful, large house downtown. A generous man is allowing us to stay for free temporarily while it’s for sale!

We are so grateful to God for bringing us to Bratislava! Our Ukrainian Baptist church is here and the children can attend Sunday school and have a sense of normalcy.”

*-Julia
House Mother*

MEL'S HOUSE

When the war broke out, the Mel's House family was without transportation. Their 19-seat bus needed a new engine, and one couldn't be found in all of Ukraine! With the financial support of our donors, they finally sent it off to get rebuilt and hunkered down in a root cellar, amidst the bombing and air raid sirens outside.

Once the engine was repaired, the family quickly packed and left. So quickly that housefather Volodymyr later realized that he left in his bedroom slippers and a light jacket! They drove for three days through explosions and constant air raid sirens. Each night they would stop at a church where dinner was waiting, and a warm pew would be their bed.

God blessed them in many ways. At one gas station the attendant could see the bus was full of children. He filled the gas tank to the top and wouldn't accept any money! When they stopped for the night at one church, a man came in with a brand new pair of shoes in Volodymyr's size! The

man said God told him that someone would need those shoes! Another church provided Volodymyr with a warm coat.

The group of 29 finally arrived at a house on the border only to learn that boys over 18 cannot leave the country. The law says they must fight. Several of the orphaned girls also had issues with their documents, which wouldn't allow them to leave the country either. The teens were crushed! Although they have no choice with the boys, the house parents decided they would not leave without all of the orphaned girls. So, for the past nine weeks they have waited, trying to get the document issues resolved. Finally, on May 3rd they were cleared and they crossed the border to a new life in Romania! Praise God!



Sleeping in church pews on their long journey to the border



Mel's House group sheltering in a root cellar



The boys from Mel's House say goodbye to house parents. They are awaiting a date to report to boot camp



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ANASTASIA'S HOUSE

“Ever since war broke out in 2014 we have been hearing that the Russians were coming back and would try to take more of Ukraine. It's been eight years and there have been many skirmishes, but mostly it has been peaceful. You can't live in fear. But nothing could have prepared us for the horror we experienced when we woke up early from all the explosions. No one could have even imagined that Russia would start bombing the entire country of Ukraine!

Once we got to safety and started to process everything that happened, we realized that God had protected us and directed us the whole way. Let me explain.

Over the last few months we were in the process of receiving three new foster children. I didn't understand why everything was so rushed. We had to be approved, pick up the kids from the orphanage and have the paperwork finalized all very quickly. Now I understand that God needed us to have guardianship over them so we could leave the country with them.

All of our foster children have special needs, but the youngest Vika, has a serious heart condition. She needed surgery, and needed it quickly. We were waiting for a month for a consultation with a pediatric cardiologist in Kharkiv. The atmosphere in our city was getting tense. We kept getting advice to leave the city. But we needed to keep the appointment with the pediatric cardiologist - and schedule the surgery soon!

Also, our son Benjamin has cerebral palsy. He was scheduled for physical therapy in Kharkiv in February. I was so upset when it was cancelled! But now I understand that God protected us. I can only imagine how difficult it would have been to escape Kharkiv during the bombing attacks!

We didn't want to leave. We wondered whether it was even safe. And then we prayed and God spoke to us clearly and said GO!

We drove for five days stopping at churches to stay the night. We didn't know where to go, but each day God showed us - just like the Israelites crossing the desert to the Promised Land. Finally we got to the border and there were people waiting 3-4 days to cross. When the border guard saw us with five children, he sent us up to the front of the line! We didn't have to wait!

We drove on through Romania and were so exhausted, so we stopped at a hotel. The proprietor invited us to stay as long as we wanted for free - including all our meals! She even offered to babysit!!



Finally we arrived at our destination: Oradea. Heart for Orphans contacted a missionary there who offered to help us. Not only did she find us an apartment and provide us with food, she had a friend who is a physical therapist who comes to our apartment weekly to give Benjamin therapy! We didn't even have this luxury in Ukraine! I always took Benjamin to another city for therapy.

Through all this, we were so worried about little Vika and her urgent need for heart surgery. We prayed God would take care of all of the details. Within days of arriving we received amazing news: There is a famous surgeon from Italy who specializes in this surgery. He comes to Bucharest every month to perform this surgery on Romanian babies. There is a long waiting list, but our missionary friends were able to get Vika scheduled for surgery two days later! Not only that, but she also arranged a flight to Bucharest, our housing, food and transportation. She even arranged babysitting for the other children! All of this at no cost. Her church in California paid the bill! Praise God!

I don't think I've ever heard a clear voice of God like this before. Praise God for His guidance and His blessings. He provided everything we needed!"

*-Natasha
House Mother*



BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS

New



On Saturday, March 5th, for the first time since 2019, we gathered in-person for our 10th Annual Fundraising Dinner & Auction. What a fun and meaningful event! We can't thank you enough for the outpouring of support.



Together, we raised over \$179,000 for orphans in Ukraine, Belarus and Kenya! Hallelujah!

