

GIFT of HOPE

2022-23 REPORT

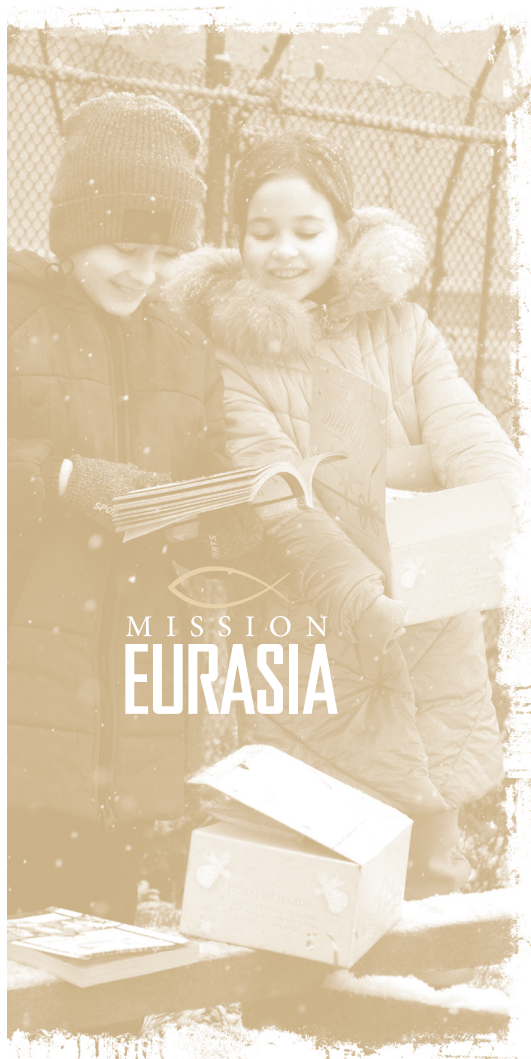


BRINGING
HOPE TO THE
SUFFERING CHILDREN
OF UKRAINE

Thank You for Your Partnership in Ministry!

GIFT of HOPE

When Hope Means More Than Ever ...



Each year at Christmas time, Mission Eurasia's **Gift of Hope** program brings joy to needy children throughout the region.

But this year was different.

The horrors of war in Ukraine lent a special urgency and poignancy to our efforts in 2022. Thousands of innocent children have been displaced and traumatized by the relentless violence. It was clear that “business as usual” would be impossible.

In response to this historic calamity, our Gift of Hope program focused on the thousands of war refugees in the western part of Ukraine, as well as those who sought refuge in neighboring Poland and Moldova. Their stories here will inspire and encourage you—even as they break your heart. They portray a real-life human drama that is still unfolding.

The war in Ukraine has revealed the cruelest sides of human nature—but also God's unfailing love in the midst of tragedy. With the Gift of Hope program, we stand as a witness that God is present and active, even in the darkest circumstances.

That's why we are so grateful to you for your generous partnership that helped us bring the **Gift of Hope** to thousands of displaced and Ukrainian refugee children this past Christmas season. Because of your support, many of these children learned about God's love for them for the very first time and have started on their journey of faith and healing from the trauma of war. On behalf of these precious children, thank you!

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” – Psalm 23: 4 (ESV)

WAR HURTS CHILDREN THE MOST

Russia’s war on Ukraine has disrupted the once-peaceful lives of countless innocent people. More than 7 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced while 12 million more have fled to neighboring countries for safety. Half of those refugees are children, including many who will never see their fathers again. The total number of people killed in the conflict has been estimated as high as 100,000. But in the ongoing chaos, no one can be sure.

What is certain is that the most vulnerable victims, as always, are the children. They didn’t cause the violence that has descended around them. And they surely can’t understand it. But they suffer its effects in ways that will haunt them throughout their lives.

A MOMENT OF HAPPINESS

In the midst of this human tragedy, the Gift of Hope program brings a rare and welcome moment of happiness to these distressed children. And that alone makes it all worthwhile.

Each Gift of Hope contains practical items like socks, mittens, and hygiene products. There are toys and sweets to brighten a child’s day. Most importantly, there are Scripture resources to point them to the God who cares for them. This year, we provided three specially designed, age-appropriate versions of Scripture in the Ukrainian language, including *My First Bible* and *Jesus Storybook Bible* for younger children, and the *Action Bible New Testament* for older kids.



GIFT of HOPE

2022-23 DISTRIBUTION

With your generous support, Mission Eurasia distributed **100,000 Gifts of Hope**, each containing a children's Bible, to displaced and refugee Ukrainian children in 2022-23.



As always, the Gift of Hope program this year complemented our other outreaches in the region, including the iCare food and Scripture distributions, School Without Walls, summer Bible camps, and so much more.

And as always, Mission Eurasia leaders relied on our vital partnerships with local churches and

volunteers to make it all happen. Their efforts, along with your prayers and generous financial support, have made the difference in lives too many to count.

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” – Matthew 19:14

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY!

Dear Ministry Partners,

Thank you for helping to share the joy and hope of Jesus with suffering displaced and Ukrainian refugee children this Christmas season through your generous support of our Gift of Hope program.

Your compassionate and timely response has brought healing to thousands of traumatized children and has also touched the hearts of their parents who have learned about God's love for the first time. To see the impact that our Gift of Hope program has made on the hurting children of Ukraine please visit this link: <https://youtu.be/J6LH7LgpUno>

We look forward to partnering with you to continue providing the hope of the gospel and life-giving aid to the suffering people of Ukraine.

Most gratefully in Him,

Sergey Rakhuba
President,
Mission Eurasia



Kindness is Contagious

The refugees we help are always deeply grateful for the kindness they receive through Gift of Hope and other programs. Many of them respond by volunteering to help pack the Gift of Hope boxes and then distribute them to others.



Ukrainian refugees in Poland express their gratitude by volunteering to help.

Your support for Gift of Hope and other programs has a lasting impact that affects more and more people as it spreads outward. **This is how God's kingdom multiplies.**

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.” – Matthew 13:31-32 (NIV)



ANYA*, 16, FROM LUTSK

“I really liked the story about Christmas. You know, I’ve always celebrated Christmas, but I never thought [about] why we celebrated it.

“We left Ukraine when the war just began. We live here as refugees and can never afford to buy these sweets. I will definitely use the lunchbox that you gave me, and also gloves and pink socks. I also want to especially thank you for the book and comics Bible. I’ve never seen a Bible like that, and I always thought it was a boring book that I would never understand. But now my friends and I will come to your youth club, and I will even bring my brother.”

*Not her real name



GIFT OF HOPE *in Western Ukraine*

Moving from big cities to the countryside in western Ukraine to seek shelter from the war is a big change for many children. They feel confused when they have to make fire in the stove, walk to school on muddy village streets, and not have familiar playgrounds or Internet. All of this, together with a constant sense of military threat and lost relationships with friends who are scattered all over the world, puts constant pressure on the child. With Christmas approaching, instead of the familiar holiday atmosphere, it is dark, dirty, and cold at home, and everything familiar and beloved has been left somewhere far in the past.

There are many children like that on the streets of the villages of western Ukraine. And while their parents are trying to solve problems and earn something somewhere, they walk the streets trying to get their bearings in time and space.

One of the goals that School Without Walls leaders of one of the villages in western Ukraine set was to find those children, wish them a Merry Christmas, give Gift of Hope gifts, and invite them and their families to local churches to Christmas events.

One of the girls, **Yasya**, was so happy to receive a Gift of Hope! Flipping through the pages of her new Bible, she exclaimed, “Thank you for the gift; I even forgot that a holiday is coming up! My dad is on the frontlines and my mom goes to work. I study at school online and sometimes go out for a walk. My mom said that we wouldn’t have a Christmas tree because we didn’t have enough money to buy it. I really miss my home and friends. I pray to God that the war ends soon.”

As Mission Eurasia staff and volunteers talk to children, more than anything they want to help them adapt to the new realities and problems, understand their needs, and see how they could help best. Most of all, they hope to introduce them to Christ who is their close friend and can change all the hard and bad things and give them joy.

And yes, the scale of the problem is huge, and the efforts of a few people seem small, but the Lord can turn even smallest things into something big and good.

FINDING HOPE *in the Midst of Loss*

Igor is from a village in southern Ukraine that was liberated from the Russians. His home was destroyed, so he lives with his parents at a neighbor's house. People in the village only have electricity for two hours a day, and they have little access to food supplies and other necessities. But Mission Eurasia's iCare team comes here on a weekly basis to provide food and spiritual encouragement for everyone, including children like Igor.

During the Christmas season, the team came to Igor's village and had a very special celebration with the children. Together, they sang Christmas carols, played games, and enjoyed treats. Each child in the village received a special Gift of Hope that contained sweets, toys, and a children's Bible. Igor received his Gift of Hope with great excitement and a real desire to read his Bible.

Two weeks after the Christmas event, when our iCare young team visited Igor's village again, he joyfully shared that he and many other children now pray to Jesus themselves.

Because of your generosity, Igor now has hope. He knows that there is a God who loves him, and people who remember and pray for him and his family.



Igor lost his home in southern Ukraine—but found Jesus through the Gift of Hope program.

OLGA AND KATERYNA—a Divine Friendship

Kateryna is a volunteer with Mission Eurasia's iCare program. She became an older sister to Olga, a girl from eastern Ukraine. They met at the Christmas event that Olga attended. Olga shared some of her story with Kateryna about how she had to evacuate from her town with her parents when it became the frontline. She said, "The last thing I remember about my city is that it was all empty. There were lots of burned cars on the streets and many dead dogs. A week after we left home, we learned that our home was also completely destroyed by the missile that hit it. We now don't have anywhere to go back to."

When Kateryna heard Olga's story, she couldn't just give her a gift and pray for her. She started calling Olga, supporting her and even helping her with her homework online, and she visits her twice a week.

When Olga's parents saw the way Kateryna treated their daughter, they welcomed her to their home and were very interested to hear the message she shared with them about the Lord. The people who are receiving Olga's family in their home also come when Olga arrives. So now, there is a small group of people who are looking for hope, support, and warmth in this little town that may also be affected by the devastating war any day. Kateryna and her friends from the local church, who are in hard circumstances themselves, find strength in God to serve these people and bring them words of hope.



STORY OF SAMMY: A Joyful Reunion



One year ago, Sergey Rakhuba, president of Mission Eurasia was in Moldova where he met Sammy, a little refugee boy from Ukraine who came with his mother and brother to seek shelter and help at our refugee assistance center in Chisinau. Sammy couldn't stop asking Sergey when he would see his daddy again, who stayed behind in Ukraine to fight for his country. Sergey promised that Mission Eurasia would do everything we could to help Sammy and his family, but never thought that he would see them again.

Last Christmas, Sergey was back in Moldova for our Gift of Hope Christmas distribution and couldn't stop thinking about Sammy and his family. So he asked our team in Moldova about them, and was told that they had moved on from the refugee assistance center and were somewhere in Europe. Others thought they had gone back to Ukraine.

Sergey then left Moldova for Ukraine and spent the final days of our Gift of Hope distribution in the cities of Kherson and Mykolaiv. He carried a couple of Christmas ornaments in his pocket that Mission Eurasia designed and gave to donors as a way to thank them for their support of Ukraine during the Christmas season. The ornament was made in the shape of Ukraine and had a picture of Sammy on the front, clinging to his favorite blanket.

On the last day before leaving Ukraine, Sergey asked his host family if they had ever seen the little boy on the Christmas ornament. He was stunned by their response. They told him that Sammy and his family were now living just across the street!

As Sergey shared, "My heart started trembling as we took two Gifts of Hope and an iCare food package across the street and knocked on the door. Sammy, who was almost year older, opened the door. Still clinging to his favorite blanket, he gave me a big smile and said, 'I remember you!' His mother, older brother, and father then came to the door and joyfully greeted me.

I gave Sammy the last Gift of Hope of the season, showed him our Christmas ornament, and told him how his story had inspired so many others to give the joy of Christmas to refugee children just like him. Sammy was delighted by the Gift of Hope he received. But, most of all, he loved the children's Bible and began reading it right away. Please visit this link to watch the story of Sammy:

<https://youtu.be/ivUAbIQ-HwU>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY!

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