



NEŠTO VIŠE

Zajedno kroz život, stvoreni za više.

Special Edition — Our Response to Ukrainian Refugees

This report is a little longer than usual, because of all that has been happening here. Steve has been working closely the last two months with 22 Ukrainian friends who have come to Croatia, seeking refuge from the fighting in their country. These are all contacts from when Steve lived in Ukraine. It has required a lot of time and effort from him, as well as our friends and co-workers, Tom and Sandra Sibley, and several other people from our church. Igor and Mateja have also been helping, serving and getting to know these Ukrainian friends, while they have been keeping our usual youth ministries running. You will read the stories of these Ukrainian friends at the end of this report, after our usual news about our youth ministries.



Lana, Tesa, Magdalena, Irina, and Marija

Mateja has a special relationship with these girls. She is talking with them about God, and the different things that they are going through. Please pray for each one of them, and other girls from our youth ministry, and for their open hearts.



Petar, Adam, and Petar's brother, Ivan

Petar and Adam

These boys are new to our youth ministry. Adam wants to come every time, but since he is best friends with Petar, he is always waiting for when Petar can come. Pray for Petar and his schedule, so he can come regularly to our youth meetings.

Spring Magazine Published

At the beginning of the month and before Easter, we published our spring magazine edition for youth. The theme of this edition is, The Modern Age. The main thought was to talk about God and faith, and compare them with the instant results and quick and easy solutions that many are seeking in life. The idea is that God himself is our

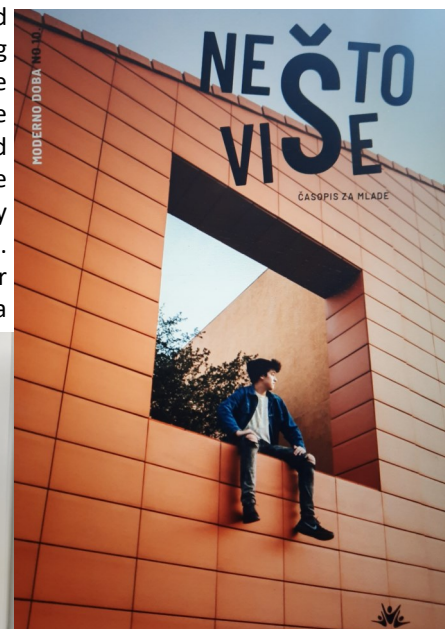
solution for problems in life. As always, we had one youth who knows Jesus share a testimony in an interview. This time Daniel Pintarić shared with us.

Prayers

- Steve, Igor, and Mateja, for health, wisdom, and strength
- Youth and music ministry
- Personal contacts
- Preparations for camps
- Our Ukrainian friends, for peace in their hearts, and in their country.
- Thankfulness for Igor and Mateja's apartment they just moved into.



Daniel Pintarić



Music Band and Choir

Igor is leading his music band/choir and he is excited about every rehearsal. He hopes that this little band can play this summer for our Champs Camp parents.

Youth Meetings

This month we had a few youth meetings. Our group is very open to God and new friendships. Lovro's father said that Lovro is always looking forward to our meetings. His sister, Marija, also became more open and she asked some questions. Last Friday, as they had Spring Break, we took them to the movies, and we all had a nice time together. We want to show them that we are here for them and sometimes we take them to different places so we can know them better and enjoy fellowship together.



Our Ukrainian Friends and their Stories

Dema and Yulia Grishchuk



Dema worked with Steve in orphan ministry in Donetsk, Ukraine. Dema is now a teacher at the Ukrainian Bible Institute in Kyiv. Yulia is a musician and is involved in organizing Christian choirs and singing festivals. They minister with a Church of Christ in Kyiv. In the early days of Russia's current attack on Ukraine, they, along with various church members, made their way to the city of Uzhgorod, on the western border with Slovakia. The women and children traveled by train and the men by car, eventually all arriving into Uzhgorod. Dema and Yulia have a six-month-old infant with whom Yulia traveled on the train, along with their other two girls. The journey from Kyiv to the border with Slovakia is usually about a 10 hour trip. It took them seven days to complete that journey. As the men stayed behind, the

women crossed the border into Poland, wives being separated from husbands. The women stayed several days in Poland, which has been overwhelmed with those fleeing Ukraine. Yulia and their girls, along with Yulia Zolotaryova and her children (story below), eventually found their way to us in Zagreb, Croatia. Our church here has rented them apartments and is helping them settle in, for however long they will have to be here. Their husbands have stayed behind in Ukraine, traveling with several other men in a convoy of vehicles. They have been traveling back and forth across the country, taking assistance and supplies to those in the east who need it, and then filling up their empty vehicles with people who are trying to evacuate, taking them back west toward safety.

Denis and Yulia Zolotaryov

Denis and Yulia's story is one of God's provision and redemption. They were both orphans. The picture on the left shows Denis at second from top left, at a camp in Ukraine where Steve taught in the late 1990s. Denis was probably about 10 years old in this photo. He and Yulia both lived in the Transitional Living Center for orphanage graduates that was run by Jeremiah's Hope (the ministry Steve worked with in Ukraine), in the city of Mariupol. The center was housed in the building of the Church of Christ in Mariupol. Denis and Yulia became Christians there; they married; they started a family; and, along with Dema and Yulia (story above), they are now leaders in a Church of Christ in Kyiv. In the early days of the current war, they also made their way across the country toward the western border, along with Dema and Yulia and members of their church. Yulia traveled, along with their two children, and along with Yulia Grishchuck, across the border and into Poland, eventually making her way here to us in Zagreb, Croatia.



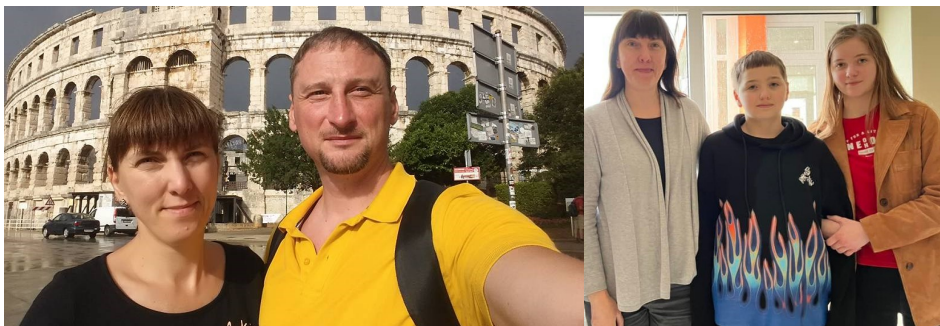
“Jeremiah’s Hope” Rescue Shelter Children



This is the ministry Steve worked with when he lived in Donetsk, Ukraine. The ministry is run by Steve’s co-worker, Andrew Kelly, and is now located near the town of Ivankiv, between Kyiv and the Belarus border. Their ministry property houses a camp facility for orphans and at-risk children, as well as a children’s Rescue Shelter that is approved by Ukrainian State Social Services. The shelter mostly houses, on a temporary basis, children whose parents’ rights have been terminated. This area was invaded and occupied early in Russia’s current attack on Ukraine. The camp and Rescue Shelter was completely surrounded. The 10 children in the shelter had to hide with

their caretaker, Xander, in a cold, moldy root cellar, sleeping on the dirt floor of the cellar, with bombs and missiles flying over and going off around them. A bridge was destroyed between Kyiv and Ivankiv, and so most of their staff was not able to get to them. One of their neighbors tried to leave their village in his car and the car was destroyed by a Russian tank. After about two weeks of this, in a daring before-dawn escape, the children’s caretaker loaded them in their van and drove them out of the village, under danger of being hit by tanks or other armaments. After a long journey, they found themselves in a refugee shelter near the western Ukrainian city of Ternopil. During this time, our church in Zagreb was busy getting ready for their arrival here. We rented them a large house, got furniture purchased and assembled, bought initial groceries, and began interfacing with local city government officials and other local authorities, working through the bureaucracy necessary to be able to receive them here. In the meantime, these children stayed another three weeks in western Ukraine, moving around every few days between different refugee shelters, sleeping on cold school floors, with little heat and poor food, as we and their caregiver worked through the necessary bureaucracy, both in Ukraine and Zagreb, that finally allowed them to leave Ukraine and arrive here in Croatia. They eventually traveled across the Ukrainian border into Slovakia, then through Austria and Slovenia, finally arriving to us in Croatia, where we are now helping them get settled in the house that we prepared for them, just outside Zagreb. In addition, we also rented an apartment for the mother of the children’s caregiver, received her, and helped her get settled.

Sasha and Sveta Kobzev



Sasha was the preacher of a church Steve was involved with when he lived in Donetsk, Ukraine. They visited us in Zagreb a few years ago. The photo above is them on that visit to Croatia. They have four children, two who are grown adults, and two still at home. When Russian separatists took control of the Donetsk region in 2014, Sasha was taken captive and held for several weeks. They also lost their home they had built in Donetsk. Since then, they

moved to Kyiv, where they now live in a village on the southwest border of the city. They worship with a Church of Christ in Kyiv. When the current invasion began, Sasha was in the city of Dnipro, working with foreign journalists. Sveta stayed at home near Kyiv with their two younger children. She was at first reluctant to leave. Sasha eventually convinced her that she had to leave. She and the children boarded a chartered bus to Bulgaria, eventually ending up on the coastal city of Burgas. They stayed in a hotel there for one week, but were not allowed to stay longer. Not knowing what to do, Sasha called Steve, and we got them on transport to Zagreb. They arrived with only three small backpacks and one carry-on size suitcase, wearing heavy winter coats and boots. We rented an apartment for them just outside the city, and have been helping them to get settled.

In all, we are helping and working with these 22 Ukrainians in Zagreb, Croatia. We have rented them all apartments or houses, got them set up, and have been helping them get settled, for as long as they have to be here. Most of them have arrived with only some hand luggage, and heavy winter clothing and shoes. They have needed almost everything, and help with accessing everything from health care, to groceries, to clothes, to cell phone and internet service, etc. We are hoping and praying that this war will soon end and they will all be able to return home. In the meantime, we are doing what we can to help them. Thank you for your partnership in this.