



MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS

# VOICES IN THE SHAD OWS




STORIES OF  
RESILIENCE  
& CONNECTION







A small, light-colored dog is sitting on a patterned blanket inside a wooden bunker. The dog is looking towards the left. The bunker's interior is made of dark wood planks. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a sense of comfort and safety.

**PRAISE BE TO THE GOD AND FATHER OF  
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER  
OF COMPASSION AND THE GOD OF ALL  
COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR  
TROUBLES, SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT  
THOSE IN ANY TROUBLE WITH THE COMFORT  
WE OURSELVES RECEIVE FROM GOD.**

**2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 (NIV)**

In the heart of a war-torn region, a man seeks refuge in a bunker with his loyal dog by his side. This poignant moment was captured during a visit by Mission Without Borders, highlighting the resilience and companionship that endure even in the face of conflict.



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**Thanks to your invaluable support, we made a tremendous impact in 2023. Our Family Sponsorship Program impacted 2,692 families, while our Child Sponsorship Program transformed the lives of 8,026 children. We served 169,209 warm meals to those in need, distributed 79,308 Bibles and Christian books, and delivered 87 truckloads of aid to 44,000 people across Eastern Europe. Your contributions are driving real change, bringing hope and relief to countless lives.**



Barry Raeburn,  
National Director

To our wonderful Supporters,

As I write this, no one could have imagined that the conflict in Ukraine would still be ongoing. More than ever, there is a need to pray for God's intervention. On February 25, 2024, we organized a Global Call to Prayer event for Ukraine, marking the two-year anniversary of the conflict. Thousands in Churches worldwide joined in solidarity, praying for the people of Ukraine. Thank you to all who joined us in prayer that day and continue to keep Ukraine in your prayers.

Over the past two years, we have witnessed the immense challenges faced by families in Ukraine who cannot flee the conflict due to extreme poverty. Reports of children and families traumatised by the harsh realities of war have reinforced the urgency of our mission. Our dedicated team of over 60 staff and hundreds of volunteers continue to work tirelessly on the ground, providing essential aid to those affected by the conflict. Our coordinators in Ukraine are actively providing emotional, spiritual, and material support to those in desperate need.

Your contributions have been crucial in enabling us to assist those living in extreme poverty. In 2023, our Family Sponsorship Program supported 2,692 families, and our Child Sponsorship Program helped 8,026 children. We provided 169,209 warm meals to those in need and distributed 79,308 Bibles, New Testaments, and other Christian books. Furthermore, we delivered 87 truckloads of aid, reaching 44,000 people in communities throughout Eastern Europe.

We have just loaded our second 40-foot container of warm blankets, clothes, school supplies, and hygiene products to be sent to our field countries. We are incredibly grateful to the thousands of Operation Cover Up knitters who have helped make this possible. On behalf of the thousands of vulnerable people living in temperatures as low as -30°C who will be provided with warmth and hope, we want to extend a huge Mission Without Borders thank you.

In October 2023, I had the immense pleasure and privilege of visiting our work in Moldova. Our Moldovan Director, Tudor Langu, shared the story of a Church they partnered with that initially had dwindled to only a handful of people. After a couple of years of our working with them, the Church grew to the point where it had planted four other Churches.

I visited a Church in Lupusna, Moldova, where they were celebrating one year of working with Mission Without Borders. The Church was full of over 300 children involved in our programs, singing and having fun. I wish I could have bottled up that joy to share it with all of our supporters.

We have so many wonderful supporters like you in New Zealand who make all these things possible. From the bottom of my heart, I want to say a huge thank you.

God bless,

**Barry Raeburn**  
National Director



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If you wish to receive the information, stories, and/or photo reports that we publish on our website in response to our magazine, please let us know. Our magazine is available upon request in PDF form. The use of QR codes makes it easy for many readers to respond online immediately. If you do not use a smartphone or the internet but still want to receive more information, do not hesitate to give us a call.

**Front Cover** Claudia, 13, lives with her family in extreme poverty in the Nisporeni district of Moldova. "I couldn't read until now," says the young girl from a difficult background, who is now receiving much-needed educational and emotional support.

**Back Cover** Summer camp is a place where children's laughter echoes, where they can play, sing, and dance in a safe environment, creating joyful memories they'll treasure for a lifetime.

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## BREAK THROUGH THE FEAR AND IGNITE YOUR FAITH!



## GETTING TO KNOW US

# EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, TRANSFORMING LIVES

## WE ARE AN INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION, DELIVERING HUMANITARIAN AID TO MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE.

Our mission is to combat poverty by offering practical support in education, livelihoods, and working in relief, all while introducing people to the love of God alongside tangible assistance. With the aid of local offices, dedicated volunteers, and compassionate partners, we strive to bring hope and encouragement to those facing difficult circumstances.

### WE WORK TOWARDS

#### Poverty Alleviation

We aim to alleviate poverty by meeting immediate needs and promoting sustainable development. This includes food and clothing distribution, clean water access, and supporting livelihood programs.

#### Education and Vocational Training

We believe education is critical to helping break the cycle of poverty. We help give access to education through providing After School programs, school supplies, scholarships and vocational training.

#### Family and Child Support

We provide safe environments for vulnerable families and children. Through partnerships with local churches, we offer services like education, counseling, and crisis support.

#### Elderly Support

We address the unique needs of the impoverished elderly, providing companionship, practical assistance, assist with medical care, and resources to improve their quality of life.

#### Emergency Relief

In crisis situations, we swiftly provide emergency relief, including food, water, shelter, and other critical supplies.

### WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE

#### We Are Christian

We're dedicated to empowering individuals out of poverty while sharing the transformative hope of Jesus Christ. Our passion is to alleviate suffering and foster journeys towards a life free from poverty.

#### We Partner

We collaborate with local churches and local leaders, enhancing community engagement. Our partnerships with generous donors allow them to see the tangible progress and impact of their sponsorship.

#### We Journey

We journey with people from all walks of life, cultivating connections through regular visits. By providing support within the context of meaningful relationships, we assure individuals and families that they are not alone in their challenges.

#### Nurturing Hearts: A Summer of Joy, Nourishment, and Faith in Ukraine

In Ukraine, vulnerable children are pictured here having loads of fun, enjoying tasty meals, and learning about the love of Jesus. Summer Camp provides not just nourishment, but also a safe and nurturing environment where they can learn, play, and grow within a supportive community.



# THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT

With your help, Mission Without Borders transformed lives across Eastern Europe in 2023. Together with our local staff and church partners, we supported families, children, and vulnerable adults in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine.

**191**

PEOPLE RECEIVED  
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

**133,368**

SOUP KITCHEN MEALS  
WERE SERVED

**5,696**

CHILDREN ATTENDED  
SUMMER CAMPS

**8,403**

BACKPACKS WERE GIVEN  
TO STUDENTS

**2,692**

FAMILIES WERE  
SUPPORTED

**8,692**

PEOPLE RECEIVED MONTHLY  
BIBLE TEACHING

**8,027**

CHILDREN RECEIVED  
DIRECT SUPPORT

**489**

STUDENTS RECEIVED  
SCHOLARSHIPS





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**“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**  
— Matthew 20:26-28 (NIV)

**TĒNĀ KOUTOU - COMING INTO THE ROLES OF CHAIR OF THE NZ BOARD AND MEMBER OF THE GLOBAL BOARD WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, I HAVE HAD THE GREAT HONOUR TO MEET AND WORK WITH PEOPLE DEDICATED TO SERVING CHRIST, BOTH HERE IN NEW ZEALAND AND AROUND THE WORLD.**



Nga mihi nui

Tom O'Neil

**NZ Board Chair &  
Global Board Member**

In both positions, I am continually astounded by the stories of hope and joy our team has been active in, advancing the cause of Christ within Ukrainian war zones, as well as supporting highly marginalised communities throughout Eastern Europe. All credit and glory go to God for His work in their lives.

In terms of governance, we welcomed Terese Marr to the national board, who has within a very short time, already proven to be highly knowledgeable in this space. We also bid a happy yet sad goodbye to board member Julian Browne, who is stepping down from the board, however, is taking up an operational role within MWB Head Office.

I am also very grateful for your outpouring of support and prayers which have been instrumental in helping our team do the vital work of sharing Christ, in both word and deed. Your love and support of these beautiful individuals and families on the other side of the planet is genuinely inspiring, and we are all so deeply thankful for your commitment to Mission Without Borders.

**Our NZ focused strategic goals for the upcoming year include:**

- **Launching our new "7 Days of Courage" Church Engagement initiative and increasing our Church footprint.**
- **Partnering with Christian publications to share our work and vision.**
- **Exploring new and innovative ways to provide information and care to our amazing sponsors and supporters.**

Again, one more big thank you for your prayers and support over the last 12 months. In spite of the challenges and cost of living crisis, we continue to see an increase in interest in and support for our work, particularly our response work in the Ukraine. We look forward to the coming year ahead, trusting that with God's grace we can continue to make a positive impact in the lives of those in need.



# THE HIDDEN POWER OF SUMMER CAMP: TRANSFORMING LIVES BEYOND THE LAUGHTER

## THE INVISIBLE GIRL: TRANSFORMING LIVES BEYOND THE LAUGHTER

### **When We Publish Pictures From Our Summer Camp, They Always Showcase Happy Faces, Carefree Play, Laughter, And Joy.**

These images encapsulate the most beautiful gift we offer children: a childhood as it should be, in the truest sense of the word, or how it should look in an ideal world. Each child, however, carries their own story, often untold and unseen behind the smiles. Today, I want to share one such story—a story without pictures or names—that reveals the profound and meaningful impact of our Summer Camps and the impact you have as a supporter of Mission Without Borders.

### **A Safe Space For Sharing**

This year, we introduced small group discussions at the end of each day's program. These intimate gatherings created a space for the children to share their thoughts and feelings, fostering a sense of community and support. I was privileged to lead a group of girls who bravely shared their burdens with each other. Amidst the tears, encouragement, and hugs, one girl's story stood out.

### **A Story Of Pain And Resilience**

For the past year, she has been a victim of severe peer violence at school. The relentless bullying had driven her to retreat into her home, only stepping out when absolutely necessary. She felt invisible, her identity as a person shattered. This beautiful young girl didn't know how to cope with the cruelty she faced daily. During our sessions, I noticed she would always cry when we sang the song "I Know Your Name." It was clear she felt unseen and unvalued.

### **Steps Towards Healing**

Every day, I reminded her of how wonderful and beautiful she is, and that she is loved just as she is. We discussed the steps she could take to address the bullying, encouraging her to seek help from her school's expertise team. Together, we laid out a plan to help her reclaim her sense of self and stop the ongoing violence.

### **The True Essence Of Summer Camp**

This story, shared by Matea Jevric our Bosnia-Herzegovina Communications Manager, highlights the true essence of our Summer Camps. It's not just about the laughter and fun, but about providing a safe place where children can be seen and heard. It's about giving them the opportunity to shed their invisibility and embrace their worth.

### **A Heartfelt Thank You**

Thank you for supporting our mission and for giving children the chance to come to a place where they can find solace and strength. Your support helps us create an environment where every child can feel valued and visible, and where they can begin to heal and thrive.



**This Little Girl Is Deeply Lonely.**  
The loneliness of being invisible.







# THE LITTLE BOY IN THE BLUE BLAZER: A JOURNEY OF FAITH AND COMPASSION

**I want to take you on a journey into a world that profoundly impacted me. In May this year, I visited a small village called Danes, about 1.5 hours outside of Sibiu, Romania.**

During my visit, I witnessed a community deeply stricken by poverty. Homes with crumbling facades lined the unpaved and dirty streets. The absence of basic infrastructure like clean water and reliable electricity floored me and deeply burdened me. Yet, amidst these harsh conditions, I saw joy, kindness, and a warm community.

I felt pain, heartbreak, and a burden to share my experience with people like you, and to present the urgent needs of these dire places. The economic hardship and the living conditions these precious people endure filled me with profound sadness and helplessness. However, amidst these challenges, the resilience of the residents was remarkable. They exhibited a strength and sense of community that left a deep impression on me.

Most striking was the children's laughter and joy, which served as a powerful reminder that Jesus is alive and present even in the most difficult circumstances. This visit has forever changed my heart and I called out to Jesus in a deeply burdened way like I have never before.

During my time in Danes, I encountered a little boy in a blue blazer whose eyes reflected a deep well of loneliness and neglect. His small frame seemed burdened by the harsh realities of his life, evident in his eyes. Unlike the other kids, he didn't smile; he couldn't because he hadn't been loved, cared for, or valued. Meeting him was deeply painful for me. I wanted to take him home and give him the love he

deserved. But it also highlighted the urgent need for compassion and support in the lives of vulnerable children like him. This encounter reinforced the importance of the work I'm doing, the work YOU are doing, and the mission we all share in Christ's name.

This little boy will stay etched in my mind forever, reminding me of the work that still needs to be done to create a more loving and compassionate world, as Jesus taught us.

My faith in Jesus guides my mission and strengthens my commitment to making a difference in the lives of those who need it most. It is through His love and teachings that we can bring hope and healing to places like Danes. Let us continue to strive together to fulfil this calling, spreading His light and love wherever we go.

This vital work continues because of the generous support of people who give their hard-earned money, ensuring that children and their families hear the gospel of Jesus.

A massive thank you to everyone who contributes, whether through prayer, financial support, or volunteering.



**Richelle Raeburn**  
Communications Manager



# A NEW BEGINNING: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF CHILD SPONSORSHIP

“GIVING MY LIFE TO JESUS WAS THE BEST DECISION I COULD EVER TAKE,” SAYS MELISA, A 17-YEAR-OLD WHO GREW UP IN POVERTY. HER FAMILY’S MEAGER INCOME WAS LARGELY CONSUMED BY RENT AND BILLS, FORCING HER FATHER TO SEEK WORK ABROAD. LIFE WAS TOUGH, BUT THINGS CHANGED WHEN MELISA WAS ENROLLED IN MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS’ CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM AT AGE 10. THE FAMILY RECEIVED FOOD, CLOTHES, AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES, GIVING MELISA AND HER BROTHER THE CHANCE TO ATTEND SCHOOL AND ENJOY SUMMER CAMP.







Today, both of Melisa's parents are employed, and they own their home. Life remains challenging, but they have come a long way. Despite attending church regularly, Melisa struggled with committing her life to Christ. One day, a visiting preacher's sermon stirred her, but she hesitated. The thought lingered, and when the preacher returned a year later, Melisa knew she had to act. She answered the altar call, leaving behind a past of partying.

In September last year, Melisa was baptized along with ten others, including six connected to MWB. She found joy in Christian Outreach meetings and summer camps, deepening her understanding of God. Initially, she doubted her decision, but with prayer and support from her parents, Melisa now knows it was the right choice.

Melisa's favourite Bible story is David and Goliath, and she aspires to David's faith, courage, and obedience. "I feel so much more relaxed and peaceful now," she says. Melisa actively seeks to grow in her relationship with God, attending church for orchestra practice, prayer, and children's activities, and never missing Sunday services.

Melisa hopes to study paediatric nursing and dreams of traveling to South Korea. She enjoys drawing, dancing, and music, and has even started learning Korean. "I don't want to live in my village after high school," she says. "I want to study in a big city and explore the world."

But Melisa's story is just one of many. There are children just like her who are waiting for someone to invest in their future. Your sponsorship can be the turning point in a child's life, offering them hope, education, and a chance to experience God's love.

## YOUR SPONSORSHIP CAN TRANSFORM LIVES. JOIN US TODAY AND HELP CHILDREN LIKE MELISA ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

Child sponsorship secures a young person's future and gives them access to emotional, spiritual and material support.

CALL US TODAY 0800 469 269  
or go online: [www.mwb.org.nz](http://www.mwb.org.nz)





FAMILY SPONSORSHIP

# DESPAIR TO HOPE: FAMILY SPONSORSHIP TRANSFORMS LIVES IN ALBANIA





Kristian was just 15 when his family moved to the barren and desolate Shkodra region in Albania. With no roads, no infrastructure, and no community, they joined other families from remote mountain villages, all hoping to escape a cycle of poverty and despair.

*“My father, relatives, and I fought against the unforgiving landscape, breaking rocks to clear land for homes and crops,” Kristian, now 36, recounts. “It was backbreaking and dangerous, but it was our only hope for a better life.”* They built stop banks, filled the land with soil, and managed to cultivate crops and construct makeshift homes.

Despite their tireless efforts, Kristian and his wife Paqsore, who is illiterate due to her remote upbringing, still live in dire poverty with their four children. Kristian takes on any temporary work he can find, while Paqsore stays home, raising their children in a constant struggle to make ends meet.

Their plight caught the attention of Blerina, a compassionate family coordinator for Mission Without Borders. When MWB began its work in the Shkodra region in 2021, they found families like Kristian’s who were overwhelmed by loneliness and despair.

## “When we first met them, they were barely surviving”

Blerina said. MWB enrolled them in a family sponsorship program, providing monthly food, hygiene items, and regular visits from Blerina for support and love.

Paqsore’s mother, who endured severe poverty under the Communist regime, sees a glimmer of hope in her daughter’s improved circumstances. *“MWB has given my daughter’s family a chance for a better life,” she said. “They now have a more stable home and healthier food.”*

Despite her lack of education, Paqsore is determined to give her children a brighter future. *“Blerina helped me see the opportunities my children can have if they work hard at school,”* she said, her voice filled with hope.

Her eldest son Aleks, 12, lovingly helps his younger brother Antonjo, 10, with his reading, while her daughter Angjela, 7, dreams of becoming a chef to provide good food for her family. With the continued support of generous sponsors, these dreams are within reach.

# “WE’VE STARTED SMILING AND HAVING HOPE” – A FAMILY IN ALBANIA ARE ENCOURAGED BY SPONSORSHIP



Paqsore said, *“This is a bitter land, but we are trying to sweeten it, and Mission Without Borders is helping us to do it. Ever since MWB and Blerina, the coordinator, came to our home, we’ve started smiling and having hope. There’s more life in our family.”*

**IMAGINE THE DIFFERENCE YOU CAN MAKE. YOUR SPONSORSHIP CAN TRANSFORM LIVES, BRINGING HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY TO FAMILIES WHO HAVE KNOWN ONLY HARDSHIP.**

Join us today and be the beacon of hope for a family in Eastern Europe.

**FOR JUST \$45 PER MONTH YOU CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**



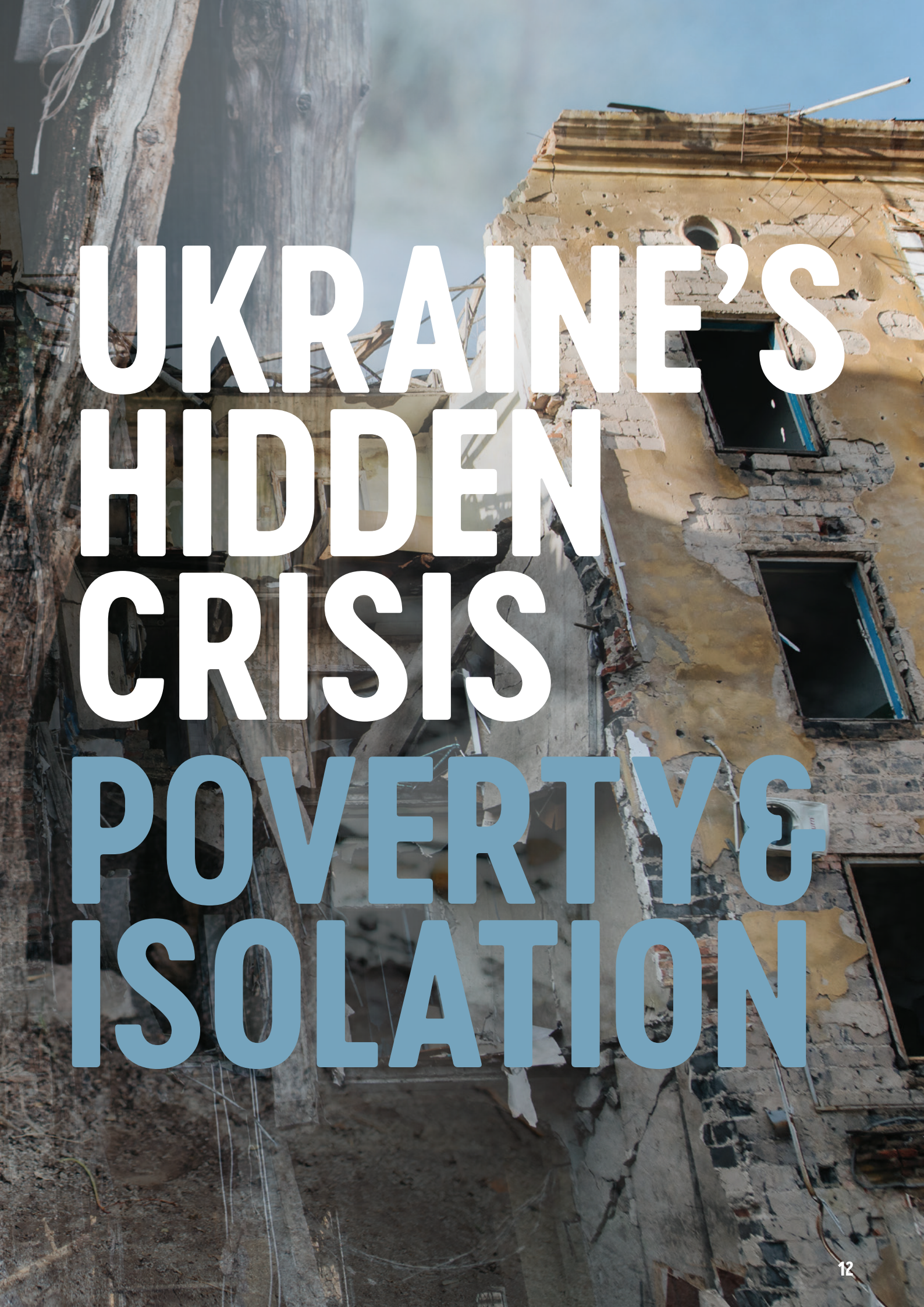
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**OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
WWW.MWB.ORG.NZ**









**UKRAINE'S  
HIDDEN  
CRISIS  
POVERTY &  
ISOLATION**



**“SOMETHING IN US HAS  
CHANGED FOREVER” -  
A DISPLACED FAMILY  
TRAUMATISED BY WAR  
RECEIVES REGULAR  
SUPPORT FROM MISSION  
WITHOUT BORDERS**



**MISSION WITHOUT BORDER'S SUPPORT  
IS A LIFELINE FOR DISPLACED FAMILIES,  
BUT MANY MORE NEED HELP.**

To support these families in Ukraine, go to our website [Join our Ukraine Response Team \(mwb.org.nz\)](https://www.mwb.org.nz) to learn more and make a difference.



## FEATURED STORY UKRAINE

**LESYA BIENKO'S VOICE SHAKES AS SHE TELLS HER FAMILY'S STORY. THEY ARE FROM MARIUPOL, UKRAINE, ONCE A LIVELY CITY NOW TURNED TO RUINS BY 80 DAYS OF CONSTANT ATTACKS. LESYA'S STORY IS ONE OF FEAR AND BRAVERY. "WE LIVED IN FEAR EVERY DAY. MY FIVE BOYS SAW THINGS NO ONE SHOULD EVER SEE," SHE SAYS, HER EYES SHOWING THE PAIN OF THOSE MEMORIES.**

In February 2022, the war began, and Mariupol was quickly surrounded. Phones stopped working, and Lesya and her husband had no idea what would happen next. "Mariupol became a trap. People trying to escape were attacked," she explains. For two long months, they hid in a basement, hoping for safety. Even stepping outside was dangerous.

"We cooked on a woodfire and used melted snow to wash," Lesya remembers, her voice breaking. They faced the threat of being taken to Russia but managed to escape to a safer area. In the chaos, her husband joined the military, and they lost contact. "When I finally heard his voice, he was relieved to know we were alive. He kept fighting, always worried about us," she shares.

Lesya and her children found a fragile refuge in Sarny, western Ukraine, living in a crowded dormitory. She is now in severe poverty and isolated without her husband, home,

and old life. "We are safer now, but something in us has changed forever. The worry about our future never stops," Lesya confides.

Mission Without Borders has been a huge help to the Bienko family, providing food, hygiene items, and emotional support. "Sergiy and Lyudmyla Soroka from MWB have been amazing. My younger kids have found friends in the teen club and Sunday school they run," Lesya says with gratitude.

MWB's coordinator, Sergiy, talks about their struggles: "Lesya is exhausted, carrying the family on her own. Her hope for her husband's safe return fades as the war goes on." He highlights the many challenges families like the Bienkos face.



**DRAWING FOR DAD, BUT  
WHEN IS DAD COMING BACK?**



# A CATASTROPHE UNFOLDS: FAMILIES DISPLACED BY WAR

Sergiy – the MWB staff member who visits Anna’s family – said, “We see you; we see the suffering you’re enduring, and we want to be around to bring you relief.”

Fourteen-year-old Anna was forced to flee her hometown in Eastern Ukraine with her family. Now, they reside in a dilapidated house in Western Ukraine, shared with other displaced families. The house is in dire need of repair, with crumbling plaster, damaged floors, broken windows, and pervasive damp and mold.

As Christmas approaches, the holiday season feels like a distant memory, belonging to another life that seems lost forever.

Anna’s former home on the main street of Soledar in the Donetsk region has been destroyed. Soledar, once a strategic salt mining town, now lies in ruins, along with the peaceful life Anna once knew.

Anna’s mother, Oksana, recalls, “I remember looking out from the evacuation bus at the place where I grew up and where my children grew up. It was an overwhelmingly heavy feeling of loss and insecurity.”

*“Nobody believed this war would actually happen,” she added. “Even after the first few days, we all hoped it would end soon. But eventually, everyone realized: this is a catastrophe.”*

*“The bombings grew more frequent, and it became dangerous to go outside. The town filled with Ukrainian soldiers and military equipment, preparing to face the Russian armada, which was ten times larger than our army. Many Ukrainian soldiers sacrificed their lives to delay the Russians, giving us a chance to escape.”*

**HAVING TO LEAVE YOUR HOME AND BEING DISPLACED, LOSING YOUR OLD LIFE. LOTS OF POVERTY, NO OLD FRIENDS AND CONNECTIONS AROUND.**



**MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS CHRISTMAS BOXES ARE LIKE A MIRACLE AND HELP WITH LONELINESS AND POVERTY...SOMEONE CARES AND LOVES.**





# “THE WAR HAS CHANGED EVERYTHING. MY HOME, MY FRIENDS, MY SCHOOL— ALL GONE.”

*“First, my children were evacuated,” she continued. “They stayed in a temporary shelter, worrying about me and our relatives, especially during periods when there was no mobile phone connection.”*

*“When the Russians approached our area, I packed a few suitcases with clothes and boarded the evacuation bus. At a refugee camp, there was a program for refugee allocation. I went to Sarny with one group, and soon my children joined me. When we reunited, we smiled and cried, and the children clung to me for a long time, finding security in our embrace.”*

Oksana and her children, Anna, Kyrylo (12), and Oleg (11), now live in Sarny. They share an old house provided for free with two other families from eastern Ukraine. Families like Anna’s are extremely vulnerable, facing poverty, trauma, loss, and the challenge of integrating into a new community all at once. To support these families, Mission Without Borders (MWB) provides regular assistance to displaced families in Sarny.

This Christmas, MWB aims to ensure that families like Anna’s can celebrate. Despite being far from home and fearful of the future, they find hope in Christ even in the darkest circumstances. MWB distributes thousands of boxes filled with food and treats to families and elderly people living in Ukraine and throughout Eastern Europe. Each box also includes Christian literature explaining the true meaning of Christmas.

Sergiy, an MWB staff member who visits Anna’s family, said, “Some might say this is just food, but we know the One who stands behind it. We know His power and Love, and we want to be His hands reaching out to those in need.”

For Anna, Oksana, and many others, MWB’s Christmas boxes are like a miracle. Simply surviving day to day is an ongoing challenge, and knowing they have enough food for Christmas fills them with hope.



**3.7 MILLION PEOPLE ARE STILL DISPLACED WITHIN UKRAINE, MANY OF THEM LIVING EVERYDAY WITH TRAUMA, POVERTY AND UNCERTAINTY.**



# MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS GLOBAL CALL TO PRAYER: A UNIFIED EFFORT FOR HOPE AND HEALING

In February this year, Mission Without Borders held a Global Call to Prayer, uniting supporters from around the world in a powerful display of faith and solidarity. This event, deeply rooted in our mission to provide hope and practical support to those in need, brought together individuals, families, and communities to pray for the countless lives affected by war, poverty, and loneliness.

The theme for the Global Call to Prayer was “Hope and Healing,” reflecting our commitment to addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of the vulnerable populations we serve. With the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the plight of refugees, and the pervasive issues of poverty and isolation, the need for collective prayer and action has never been more urgent.

Participants from over 20 countries joined the call, each bringing their unique prayers and reflections. From small, intimate gatherings in local churches to larger online events that transcended geographical boundaries, the spirit of unity was palpable. The prayers focused on various aspects of MWB’s work, including:

**WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN OUR ONGOING MISSION. TOGETHER, THROUGH PRAYER AND ACTION, WE CAN BRING HOPE AND HEALING TO THE WORLD’S MOST VULNERABLE.**

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us.  
May God bless you and keep you.



# KEY UKRAINE STATISTICS

## MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

ALMOST 10 MILLION PEOPLE IN UKRAINE ARE AT RISK OF DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS. AMONG THEM, 1.5 MILLION CHILDREN REQUIRE SUPPORT TO MANAGE STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.

## AID DISTRIBUTION

THIS YEAR, WE DISTRIBUTED 1,800 OPERATION CHRISTMAS LOVE FOOD BOXES IN EASTERN UKRAINE AND 8,200 IN WESTERN UKRAINE, PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES TO FAMILIES IN NEED.

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

OVER 1,000 UKRAINIAN CHILDREN FOUND RELIEF FROM DAILY HARDSHIPS BY ATTENDING OUR SUMMER CAMPS, OFFERING THEM A SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT.

## CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS

AS OF 2023, MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS IS COLLABORATING WITH 192 CHURCHES TO EXTEND OUR REACH AND IMPACT ACROSS THE REGION.

1. Praying for Peace: With the ongoing war in Ukraine and other conflict zones, prayers for peace and safety were at the forefront. Participants prayed for an end to violence, the protection of civilians, and the reunification of families torn apart by war.

2. Supporting the Displaced: Special prayers were offered for refugees and displaced families, particularly those receiving support through Mission Without Border's programs. Stories like that of Lesya Bienko, a displaced mother from Mariupol, highlighted the harsh realities faced by these families and the critical support provided by Mission Without Borders.

3. Combating Poverty: Prayers also addressed the crippling effects of poverty, asking for divine intervention to break the cycle of destitution. Mission Without Border's efforts in providing food, hygiene products, and emotional and spiritual support were lifted up, seeking strength and resources to continue this vital work.

4. Healing from Trauma: Recognizing the deep psychological scars left by war and displacement, participants prayed for healing and resilience. The

emotional and spiritual care offered by Mission Without Border's staff and volunteers was a significant focus, asking for wisdom and compassion to effectively minister to those in need.

5. Strengthening the Mission Without Borders Team: Finally, prayers were extended for MWB's dedicated team of coordinators, volunteers, and partners. Their tireless work on the frontlines of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis was acknowledged and uplifted, seeking endurance and encouragement for their invaluable service.

The Global Call to Prayer not only strengthened the bond within the Mission Without Borders community but also served as a reminder of the power of collective faith in Jesus. It was a moment to reflect on the profound impact that dedicated prayer and concerted effort can have in transforming lives and bringing hope to the hopeless.

As we look back on this inspiring event, we are filled with gratitude for the global community that supports Mission Without Borders. Your prayers, your support, and your commitment to our cause enable us to continue making a difference in the lives of those who need it most.



# SURVIVING WINTER ALONE

## A WIDOW'S JOURNEY THROUGH POVERTY AND RESILIENCE IN MOLDOVA

In the heart of rural Moldova, where winters are harsh and opportunities scarce, Ecaterina's family grapples with the bitter cold and the heavy burden of poverty. Three years ago, cancer claimed her husband, leaving her alone to care for their three young children in a crumbling house beset by structural issues and the biting Moldovan winter.

Ecaterina, 42, lives day to day, relying on seasonal work in spring and sporadic cleaning jobs in winter to make ends meet. These meagre earnings are no match for the soaring costs of heating and electricity during the coldest months. Her modest home, a single room where the children sleep, doubles as a kitchen and a makeshift laundry room where clothes hang above the stove.

Despite these challenges, Ecaterina is resilient. She recalls how her husband, before his health failed, began repairing their dilapidated home—an effort she continued after his passing. With limited state support, she managed to replace the drafty windows, offering some relief from the biting cold that once seeped through every crack.

The family's lifeline during these bleak winters comes from the Mission Without Borders supporters, who provide essential support. Through MWB's family sponsorship program, they receive warm clothing, firewood, and regular food parcels. Pavel, their dedicated coordinator, visits often, bringing not just supplies but also a sense of companionship that helps alleviate the loneliness Ecaterina feels in her struggle.

For many like Ecaterina, surviving the winter isn't just about

staying warm; it's about maintaining hope amid adversity. Moldova's economic hardships hit single parents and widows particularly hard, with limited job prospects and mounting responsibilities. MWB's assistance is a beacon of hope, bridging the gap between despair and resilience.

Recently, Pavel arrived with winter supplies—a moment of joy for Ecaterina's children, who eagerly donned their new coats and boots. Sebastian, the eldest, proudly declared his intent to wear his new attire to school, a simple pleasure he hadn't experienced in too long. The twins, Alina and Carolina, giggled with excitement, their laughter echoing through the modest home now warmed by Pavel's delivery of briquettes for the stove.

As winter settles in, the family gathers around the crackling fire, finding warmth not only from the briquettes but from the bonds of solidarity forged by MWB's support. Ecaterina reflects on the relief these supplies bring, enabling her to stretch her meagre income further, ensuring her children can attend school and kindergarten without the anxiety of being underprepared.

In Moldova's chilly villages, where poverty often isolates and burdens weigh heavy, organisations like MWB stand as pillars of support, offering tangible proof of care and compassion. As Pavel aptly puts it, "The winter support we provide is a lifeline for families in poverty, showing them, they are not forgotten." Through their efforts, MWB embodies the warmth of community, spreading hope where it's needed most.





# FROM ISOLATION & LONELINESS TO COMMUNITY

## HOW A SOUP KITCHEN TRANSFORMS LIVES IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

In Glamoc, a town in southwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mission Without Borders runs a Soup Kitchen that provides daily hot meals to those in deep poverty—mainly the elderly, but also families. Here, God’s provision is evident, meeting each person’s needs in beautiful ways. Where there was loneliness, He provides fellowship and a new family. Where there was sadness, He brings hope and comfort. Hunger is replaced with a feast, and feelings of isolation are transformed by eyes that see, ears that hear, and hands that embrace.

At the Soup Kitchen, women of different generations support each other despite their own struggles, and men gather to play chess and build community. Those housebound due to health issues find hope in the visits they receive, knowing they are not forgotten.

Thanks to Mission Without Borders’ supporters, we can extend

help to vulnerable people when they need it most.

One such person is Stana, an elderly woman who initially was closed off but now sees the Soup Kitchen staff as her family. Blazenko Soldat, the coordinator of the Soup Kitchen, has known Stana for over 20 years. Living alone without family, Stana has found a community that has even saved her life multiple times. Her favorites at the Soup Kitchen are four-year-old Stojana and five-year-old Stojanka, who bring great joy to her and others who view the sisters as their grandchildren.

Stojana and Stojanka come from a large, impoverished family dealing with domestic violence. The Soup Kitchen staff, including Blazenko, have worked with social services to address these issues, and recent reports indicate a positive change. Stana loves the girls’ company, and they, in turn, receive much love and attention from her.



*“Even to your old age and grey hairs  
I am he, I am he who will sustain  
you. I have made you and I will  
carry you; I will sustain you and I  
will rescue you.”*

Isaiah 46:4



The Soup Kitchen is more than a place for a hot meal; it’s a community hub. Elderly men like Nedeljko Meseldžija, 86, enjoy chess games there. He lives alone in modest conditions but also volunteers to deliver meals to those who are housebound, creating a cycle of support and community



# LETTER FROM LIZ



### HELLO DEAR FRIENDS,

I love this time of year when spring is nearly here. So many spring bulbs in our pots and garden beds are pushing their way through the soil ready to make a wonderful display of colour to be enjoyed by all who see them.

The past 12 months have proved very difficult with lots of treatments for acute pain. Barry has been amazing doing all the housework and gardening, even weeding! Hopefully I will find a resolution to the situation soon.

We have had a lovely Mexican couple living with us the past 9 months. The man (Manny) frequently calls me 'His Resilient Lady.' A rather lovely event happened a few months ago at a time when I was really struggling with life.

The couple had to go up to Auckland on business and as he left Manny hugged me and said 'My Resilient Lady.' While they were on their way to Auckland I was standing at the kitchen bench thinking about a song I used to really like in the 1960s, when immediately it came on our local radio station!

Very soon after this happened I received a text from Manny with a photo. They had gone down to the Auckland docks to look around and in front of them was a huge cruise liner and they looked up to see the name and it was Resilient Lady!!! Quite remarkable and encouraging.

I am sure many of you would have also been facing health or other of life's challenges and would have been able to find

resilience. Where do we get that from? I know that hope in the Lord renews our strength and forms resilience in us during life's difficult times. I can certainly attest to that.

I am so very grateful for everything that each one of you do to contribute to the wonderful continuing success of Operation Cover Up. Mother Teresa said "We ourselves feel that we are a drop in the ocean, but the ocean would be less because of that missing drop". How true!

Going back to boats, I am so grateful for the two ships that are taking the bounty of this year's collective effort to Eastern Europe. What a magnificent effort. I have heard of many encouraging stories from all around New Zealand. What we have achieved together is so amazing.

We read of stories of families in the Ukraine who have had to find the resilience to carry on in spite of what is taking place in their country. It is hard for us to imagine living in our beautiful country. It is heartwarming to know that we have been able to bless many with the warmth of what we send each year to make life a bit more comfortable, both in the Ukraine and the other field countries. Thank you so very much.

**Liz Clarke**  
Operation Cover Up

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E [suzanne.lane381@gmail.com](mailto:suzanne.lane381@gmail.com)

or go online to: [mwb.org.nz/contact/knitting-coordinator](http://mwb.org.nz/contact/knitting-coordinator)





# WHAT'S NEEDED FOR 2025

## BRAND NEW KNITTED ITEMS

- Jerseys, cardigans, socks, 3-piece sets of hats and gloves (or mittens) and scarves. Knitwear for children, (however baby's items are not required)
- Blankets (or sewn quilts) — large size only see 'preferred blanket size' information.

## BRAND NEW NON-KNITTED ITEMS

- Clothes and shoes for children aged between four to 15 years old.
- Clothes and shoes for adults.
- Hygiene items (soap, flannel, stick deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb or brush, hair ties).
- Sports and games equipment e.g. balls for soccer, volleyball, tennis, basketball, inflation pump, baseball set, pole tennis set, hula hoops, frisbees, water guns.
- Sewing machines (new or used in good working order). Stationery (exercise books, notebooks, pens, pencils). Linen (sheets, pillowcases, duvet covers, towels).
- For the homeless: sleeping bags, warm men's trousers, jackets, jerseys, warm socks, gloves and hats, backpacks, disposable shavers/shaving soap. .
- Sanitary products, small bottles of hand cleansers, disposable razors and blade.

We received an abundance of beautiful blankets and knitted items—truly amazing! However, I need to remind everyone that we only accept new items, not second-hand goods. This year, we received quite a few second-hand items, which takes a lot of time to sort and dispose of, ultimately leading to unnecessary effort and waste.

## CRAFTING BEAUTY STITCH BY STITCH

### PREFERRED BLANKET SIZE

At least 160cm x 140cm. Seven strips measuring 160cm in length make a blanket. Use size 8 (4mm) needles. Cast on 40 stitches and knitting garter stitch (plain knitting) to 160cm in length. For the homeless, darker colors, heavier wool and even larger sizes are required and blankets must be made of pure wool, not acrylic as it doesn't retain the same warmth. For more information, contact a local coordinator.

### FUNDS FOR SHIPPING FREIGHT TO EASTERN EUROPE

We need your help to cover these costs. Each container costs over \$10,000 all up, so as a guide, we ask for a donation of \$5 per blanket. Payments of \$5 or more qualify for a tax rebate receipt (name and address are needed).

### PAYMENTS CAN BE MADE

By credit card: phone Mission Without Borders (toll free) 0800 469 269 or through our website [www.mwb.org.nz/donate](http://www.mwb.org.nz/donate)

By direct deposit or online banking to Mission Without Borders' ANZ account:

North Island: 06 0185 0122206 04  
South Island: 06 0185 0122206 05

Call, email or write to us with the details of your donation so we can send you a receipt. Email: [nzadmin@mwbi.org](mailto:nzadmin@mwbi.org)

Phone: 0800 469 269

Mission Without Borders PO Box 76141,  
Freeman Way Manukau Auckland 2241



## 7 DAYS OF COURAGE

# BREAK THROUGH THE FEAR AND IGNITE YOUR FAITH!

**In a world where sharing your faith can feel daunting, we invite you to embark on a transformative journey with our 7 Days of Courage challenge.**

### What is 7 Days of Courage?

7 Days of Courage is an initiative designed to encourage individuals to take meaningful steps in their faith and daily lives over the span of a week. Typically, a church or Bible study group undertakes the challenge together.

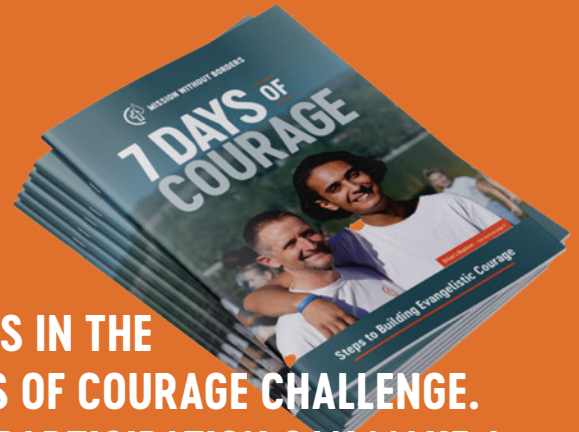
Each day highlights a different aspect of courage, such as overcoming fear, sharing your faith, or standing up for what is right, all with the aim of deepening spiritual growth and fostering a supportive community.

Through daily challenges, reflections, and acts of bravery, participants are inspired to live out their faith with greater confidence and purpose. This challenge empowers you to express your faith in Christ boldly, helping you overcome common barriers like fear and hesitation. With the right steps and encouragement, you can make a significant impact and bring hope to those in need.

**FEAR NOT, FOR COURAGE  
IS JUST A STEP AWAY.**

### How to Get Involved

- Encourage your church community or Bible study group to sign up and take on the challenge together.
- Signing up for 7 Days of Courage is easy! Simply visit [mwb.org.nz/get-involved/7-days-of-courage](http://mwb.org.nz/get-involved/7-days-of-courage), scan the QR code provided, or call us at 0800 469 269 to register.
- You will then receive a pack that includes a detailed brochure with steps on how to complete the challenge. Additionally, you'll gain access to digital social media advertisements, a PowerPoint presentation to share with your church or Bible study group, a detailed video about Family Sponsorship, and much more.



**JOIN US IN THE  
7 DAYS OF COURAGE CHALLENGE.  
YOUR PARTICIPATION CAN MAKE A  
REAL DIFFERENCE AND SPREAD A  
MESSAGE OF HOPE!**

- Sign up for 7 Days of Courage today.
- Encourage your church community to join and amplify the impact.

To register for 7 days of courage or to learn more visit: [mwb.org.nz/get-involved/7-days-of-courage](http://mwb.org.nz/get-involved/7-days-of-courage) or scan the QR Code here.





## ACTIVITIES

# BLINI'S (UKRAINIAN CREPES)

**Blinis are a delicate Ukrainian crepe that can be enjoyed with a variety of sweet or savoury toppings, making them a versatile and a delicious choice for breakfast or brunch.**

### Directions

1. In a blender, combine eggs, flour, milk, and sugar. Blend until smooth. The batter should be runny but slightly thicker than milk.
2. Heat a pan and lightly coat with sunflower oil.
3. Pour a small amount of batter into the pan and swirl to cover evenly. Use about 1/4 cup of batter for larger pans, less for smaller ones.
4. Cook until the edges are golden and the blini lifts easily. Flip and cook for 30 seconds more.

### Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup sugar (1/4 cup for savoury)
- 2 tsp sunflower oil
- Butter (for brushing)



5. Transfer to a plate and brush with butter.
6. Top your blini with honey, jam, Nutella, or savoury options like cream cheese and smoked salmon for a tasty breakfast or brunch.

## SCRAMBLE UNLOCK THE VERSES

1. "AECH FO YOU DHOSUL GIEV HWTA YOU HAEV EIDECID IN YOUR HTRA TO EIVG"

2. "FI ENONAY HAS AILTMRA SOSNIPESOS AND ESES A RTOHER OR SITESR IN DNEE"

3. "NI EVRYHTNIGE I DID, I OHSDEW YOU THAT BY THIS KIDN OF DRHA WOKR WE STUM HELP THE WKEA"

4. "LOEV YOUR NOBHIGER AS YOURSELF"

5. "GOD DNA FATHERS OVED US SO HHTA WE SUHLD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD"

1. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give."  
2 Corinthians 9:7

2. "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need,"  
1 John 3:17

3. "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak."  
Acts 20:35

4. "Love your neighbour as yourself."  
Mark 12:31

5. "God and Father loved us so that we should be called children of God."  
1 John 3:1

## EMPOWERING LIVES WITH A LEGACY OF HOPE

By including Mission Without Borders in your Will, you have the power to create a lasting impact in the lives of disadvantaged families, children, and the elderly across Eastern Europe. Your gift of hope will ensure that your compassionate heart and cherished values continue to make a difference long into the future.

Whether you're updating your Will or creating one for the first time, it's easy to do. Contact us today, and we'll guide you through each step to make your legacy of love a reality.

[HTTPS://MWB.ORG.NZ/GET-INVOLVED/GIFT-IN-WILL](https://mwb.org.nz/get-involved/gift-in-will)





# CREATING POSSIBILITIES: A VISION ROOTED IN FAITH AND ACTION



Stephen Young  
International CEO

Every day, we witness the challenges faced by those living in poverty across Eastern Europe. From children in remote villages who leave school early to support their families, to elderly individuals struggling with loneliness and limited resources, the reality of unfulfilled potential is ever-present. We also see refugees who have lost everything and families who can barely survive, let alone dream of a better future. In these situations, the lack of opportunities often seems overwhelming.

At Mission Without Borders, we are deeply committed to creating opportunities that empower people to break free from the cycle of poverty. Whether it's through ongoing initiatives like our after-school clubs, which support children in their studies, or one-time interventions like providing tools to a "would-be" mechanic, we believe in planting seeds that will bear fruit in time. These opportunities, whether big or small, are the first steps toward restoring what God has made good and helping individuals see themselves as He sees them.

Our work is not just about meeting immediate needs but also about nurturing the potential within each person we encounter. We understand that change doesn't happen overnight. It requires patience, perseverance, and, most importantly, faith in God's promises. As we labour to open new doors and provide new ways forward, we trust in the slow work of God, knowing that He has a plan for each life we touch.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11) This scripture is at the heart of our mission. It is our firm belief that every person, regardless of their circumstances, has a future filled with hope because of God's unfailing love.

We also recognize that many of the ways we nurture potential—such as sharing God's word, building supportive relationships, and providing encouragement and support—cannot always be easily measured. Yet, these acts of love and care are crucial in helping individuals see the possibilities before them. We play our part as catalysts for change, knowing that true transformation comes from God alone.

The opportunities we create, with your support, are life-changers—whether it's the chance to earn a living, a week away from life's challenges at Summer Camp, or a scholarship that opens the door to education. These are the moments that make a lasting impact, not only for those we serve but for all of us who are privileged to witness God at work.

Thank you for joining us in this vision. Your partnership is invaluable as we continue to share God's love and create opportunities for those in need. Together, we are guiding the way toward brighter futures and lasting change.





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**Charity Info**

Charity Number: CC37218  
Annual Report: [www.mwb.org.nz](http://www.mwb.org.nz)

**Ways to Give**

Online: [www.mwb.org.nz/donate](http://www.mwb.org.nz/donate)  
Direct Credit: Account Number 06-0185-0122206-12  
Phone: (free) 0800 469 269

**Contact**

P.O Box 76141, Manukau City, Auckland 2241  
[www.mwb.org.nz](http://www.mwb.org.nz)  
0800 469 269  
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# JOIN US IN TRANSFORMING LIVES

**1. YOUR GIFT**

\$

MONTHLY

ONE-OFF-GIFT

**I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO PARTNER WITH MWB MINISTRIES:**

SPONSORSHIP  
[\$45] A MONTH

FAMILY

CHILD

JOIN THE UKRAINE RESPONSE TEAM  
[\$45 A MONTH]

**PLEASE SEND ME INFORMATION ABOUT:**

LEAVING A GIFT  
IN MY WILL

ARRANGING  
A SPEAKER

**2. YOUR DETAILS**

FULL NAME

SUPPORT ID

EMAIL

ADDRESS

PHONE

**3. I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE BY:**

**OPTION 1: DIRECT CREDIT**

ACCNT: 06-0185-0122206-12  
REF: YOUR NAME, SUPPORTER NUMBER AND MAG24

**OPTION 2: ON OUR WEBSITE**  
[WWW.MWB.ORG.NZ/DONATE](http://WWW.MWB.ORG.NZ/DONATE)

**OPTION 3: CREDIT CARD**

VISA  MASTERCARD  AMEX

NAME ON CARD

CARD NUMBER

EXP

SIGNATURE





**JOIN US IN TRANSFORMING  
LIVES IN JESUS' NAME**



**MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS**