

QUO VADIS LIVING HOPE?

"What's next?" "What are your plans for the future?" "Will you continue to work in Ukraine?" -These and similar questions have been asked by many friends and people we know in the past weeks and months. In this newsletter we want to give a short report on what we have done in the first 5 months of 2023 and also try to give answers on how the work of "Living Hope" will continue.

Visits to Ukraine

I am very grateful that I was able to visit Odessa already twice this year. Even though travelling to Ukraine has become more difficult since there are no direct connections and often long waiting lines at the borders, it was a blessed and important time, especially to find out together with Slavik what the future could look like. Despite the many changes in Odessa, it was still a "homecoming". Our rented buildings are all undamaged, but have been empty for more than a year. Since the kindergarten where our first day centre in Odessa was located is completely closed and not suitable for working with children due to the lack of bomb shelters, we decided with a heavy heart to terminate the rent contract. We cleared the rooms and handed them back to the municipality. It is important to mention that all the staff as well as a large number of the children with their families who regularly used this facility have fled abroad in the meantime and are safe. We are still in contact with many of those who stayed behind and support them in word and action. Letting go of the place where it all began was not easy for any of us and cost a lot of strength. Nevertheless, we have inner peace about this decision.

The visits to Odessa also offered the opportunity to finally see faithful partners and friends again. When I had to leave Ukraine in February 2022, like so many others, it was not clear whether we would ever embrace each other again. Looking back on these encounters, I am filled with great gratitude. Together with Alexandra, who has been running our centre in Petrovka for many years, we worked our way through old memories, documents and photos, sorting, archiving and putting things in order.

Odessa has changed. Many internally displaced people from Kherson, Nikolayev, the occupied territories and Kharkov now live here, and you can see the terror they went through. Young men in civilian clothes are seen less and less, often men in particular are asked for their identity cards, and frequent air-raid alarms are a constant reminder that everything is different now. And yet life goes on: children are born, weddings are celebrated... The costs of living have risen sharply. Prices for food sometimes exceed those in Germany. If I had to sum up the mood in the country with one word, "fatigue" comes to mind. People are tired of the struggle of survival, of the bad news, the bereavement announcements, the fear of the future. This is also a reason why we will continue the work of our NGO in Ukraine. We want to continue to spread living hope, rays of hope. That is why I will return in June and we will restart the existing projects - of course adapted to the changed conditions.



Living Hope for Ukrainian Refugees

For many of the families we have cared for intensively over the past 15 months, big changes are also on the way. All those who have been living in the Hermannsdorf parish house (my home village) will be moving into their own flats in Annaberg (a small town in the south east of Germany) from June. They will live, work and go to school in Germany until the end of the war. At the moment we are setting up the flats and taking care of all the important formalities. Many thanks to everyone who supports us in this!

It was a special blessing for me to accompany a woman who managed to escape from Mariupol with her injured husband and two children in March 2022 during her third pregnancy, which was crowned with the birth of a healthy boy in March. Every new life is a miracle!



This year we have already been able to send many relief supplies to Ukraine. In addition to medical supplies, bicycles and furniture, food parcels were also distributed to families whose father died in the war. A fellow activist from Dresden, who is a friend of ours, organises humanitarian aid transports, which reach those who are in the most need. At Easter, he had the opportunity to distribute our parcels on site himself. Many thanks to all who took part in this project!

Future plans

As mentioned earlier, I plan to go back to Ukraine after the Ukrainian families which we have evacuated to Germany have moved into their own homes. We want to continue to support people in need, support children and youth and help them become well educated and responsible adults. In addition, we are working on creating a place of rest for traumatised people and families. This new project is very close to our hearts. Therefore, in the past 5 months I have completed further training in trauma counselling in order to be able to provide qualified support to people. In the coming months, you will receive regular updates on how the situation in Odessa and the surrounding area is developing, as well as on the work of Living Hope.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your prayers and gifts and for your faithfulness over so many years. It is a great blessing to be part of such a precious community in these challenging times.

Sincerely
Nicole & Slavik Borisuk