



## **HILFE KONKRET E.V.**

Information summer 2022

*Ladies and gentlemen, dear sisters and brothers, dear friends,*

*We are happy to pass on this report by Zeljko Mraz, pastor and general secretary of the Baptist Union in Croatia, as interim information. He reports on the Easter service with people from Ukraine, which took place on April 24, 2022 in Zagreb. We are grateful for the spiritual and practical help we can provide together as a team. We are also very encouraged, that friends from the Middle East, who fled to Croatia themselves, are supporting people who have fled from Ukraine. See also attached photos. The number of people who have fled to Croatia from Ukraine has now risen to over 20.000. We continue to help with accommodation, food and transportation costs. We also support with accompaniment to authorities, medical care and support in everyday school life. With your help, we were able to buy special mattresses for people with disabilities. In the coming months we will also be involved in the earthquake area, in refugee aid in Bosnia, in the camp work this summer as well as in the work of the Protestant school and the further expansion of the new building.*

*Many thanks for all intercession and past and future help!*

*With kind regards*

*Johannes Neudeck and the team from Hilfe konkret.*

**Reason for Living Hope! Easter celebration with Ukrainian refugees in Croatia**



On Sunday, April 24, 2022 in Zagreb, an Easter celebration was organized with refugees from Ukraine in Croatia, under the title **Reason for Living Hope**. About three hundred Ukrainians responded to the invitation, including about a hundred children, and all of them have been in various ways connected with the Baptist Union of Croatia, the House of Hope Zagreb and other evangelical churches in the Republic of Croatia. They have come to Croatia from Bucha, Irpin, Kharkiv, Kiev, Kramatorsk, Mariupol and other places. Some of them are now located in

Zagreb, and some came to the celebration from different places in Croatia. A joint transport was organized for all participants, and specialized transport was provided for one group because they were people with disabilities. The main initiator of this event was the House of Hope under the leadership of Pastor Mihal Kreko, and the whole event was organized under the patronage of the Baptist Union of Croatia as part of the "Serving Together" initiative. The Republic of Croatia, and its citizens, in different ways have shown great sensitivity to the people of Ukraine, so it was no problem to get free use of the hall for this celebration.



Pastor Zeljko Mraz, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Croatia, greeted all guests with the traditional Ukrainian Eastern greeting: 'Christos voskres!' (Christ has risen!). He gave thanks to all of the churches and individuals who have helped take care of Ukrainian refugees, as well as the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which has provided care for people with disabilities in specialized institutions. After reading biblical verses from the Book of Isaiah 53: 4-5, pastor Mraz gave a

short message of encouragement pointing to a God who understands man, who is alive, who heals our weaknesses and takes our sins upon himself. The program was continued exclusively in the Ukrainian language. A special greeting arrived from Ukraine in the form of a video of the Easter greetings addressed to all Ukrainians by the President of The All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Churches, Pastor Valerii Antoniuk.

The program in Zagreb was led by Pastor Serhiy Bochko from Kiev, and at the beginning he was joined by his wife Natalia, who addressed the audience in a particularly emotional way. She spoke as a mother in exile to other mothers, many of whom were present in the hall. Pastor Bochko led the worship time with the great support of the musicians from Croatian Baptist churches. After that he conveyed a message from God's word based on the text from the Gospel of Luke 24: 1-36. He emphasized: "When we think that darkness has conquered our world, we need to come closer to the Risen Lord; When we want to see the Lord in our lives, we need, like Mary on the day of the resurrection, to look back, and we can all see God's hand over our lives; Jesus is stronger than death, so we have nothing to fear!" Finally, the pastor called on all those who now feel the 'stone' of fear, anger or bitterness in their hearts to ask Jesus to remove the stone from their lives.





During the program there was a special time for prayer in small groups with an emphasis on praying for peace in Ukraine. Pastor Bochko called on those gathered not to forget that the main war is not between different nations but in the spiritual world, emphasizing that when they are praying for their own country and their own people, they should not forget to pray for their enemies. In the end, the whole hall united and with tears in their eyes sang the now well-known song 'Prayer for Ukraine'.

At the same time, a special program for children was held in the House of Hope, organized by volunteers from the Baptist churches of the city of Zagreb. After the program, the children were given small gifts that, in addition to sweets, also contained some things important for school children.

After the end of the official program, there was an opportunity to talk, meet, exchange contacts and discover old friends. It was most beautiful to witness the reunion of old friends from Ukraine who had fled to different locations, and until this event they did not even know they were in the same country and even in the same city.

The Risen Christ, the true reason for living hope, was present at this event, which brought great encouragement to all gathered, whether they were from Ukraine or Croatia.





## Two stories to warm your hearts

### Mila and David



*Their names are Mila and David. In Kiev, they went to kindergarten together and were great friends until that terrible day, February 24, 2022, when their lives changed completely. Their families left from their home in Kiev, each to his own destination. Mila and David hadn't seen each other since. They are slowly coping with new life circumstances and finding new friends here where they now live. Mila and David are too young to understand what is happening and*

*although there are a lot of changes in their lives, the most important thing for them is that their mom or grandma is with them (when dad can't be around for now...). One sunny Sunday, April 24, 2022, in Zagreb, Croatia, Mila and David saw each other in the park in front of the hall where the Easter celebration for Ukrainians was held. Their mothers and grandmothers also recognized each other, but none of them knew until that moment that they were in the same country, and also in the same city. Yet nothing compares to that sincere childlike joy of Mila and David meeting again. They ran towards each other, jumping next to each other and holding hands - they couldn't stop smiling. The cameras flashed as if they were famous movie stars. Mila and David are two great stars, and we pray they will*

continue to shine in their homeland Ukraine again soon. Until then they are enjoying the newly discovered opportunity to play together in Zagreb, Croatia.

### **Serving People With Disabilities**

The Government of the Republic of Croatia responded positively to the request from Ukraine to accommodate about thirty people with disabilities who came to Croatia through the Christian organization 'Preporod Ukraine'. Some of them are located in and around Zagreb, and one group is located in an appropriate institution near Karlovac. Contact has been established with all of them and efforts are being made to help them in various ways. Many of them had a special transport organized so that they



could be part of the Easter worship in Zagreb. It was especially moving to see how some of the volunteers who helped them on their arrival were our brothers and sisters who had already found their new home in Croatia as refugees from Iran. The group, located near Karlovac, came along with their Croatian pastor. Ladislav Ruzicka, pastor of the Karlovac Baptist Church, very soon after the first meeting with this group of believers, with the help of an interpreter established a warm relationship with them and continues to visit them regularly. Thus, Karlovac BC has been enriched by the group of believers from Ukraine for whom they organize transportation every Sunday to the worship service. They also provide translation for them so they can more easily participate in the worship time. During the weekly meetings with Pastor Ruzicka, who visits them regularly, an interpreter is no longer needed because the speech of a heart that glorifies God is easily understood, and a common love for Christian songs unites them in a special way.

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