

the Gazette



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Winter Camp Recap



Using the Sacred Classics to Proclaim the Gospel to the Country of Ukraine and the World.

OUR STORY

Since 1992, Music Mission Kiev has served as a beacon of hope to those in Ukraine through sacred music.

Over the last three decades, God has transformed Music Mission Kiev from a small orchestra and chorus to a dynamic evangelistic ministry that serves people in Kyiv and reaches beyond the borders of Ukraine to other countries in the former Soviet Union.

Music Mission Kiev uses sacred music to share the Gospel with a country that lived under years of spiritual suppression. Music and evangelism come together to serve those in need.



Ukrainian-led
American-supported

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No Child or Adult Hungry: Our Goal for 2023

By Serhiy Basarab, Vice President of Ukraine Operations

Pastor Ruslan Marchenko and I still remember the conversation we had with Valentyna P. from Mariupol whom we interviewed from our Widows Program. It was difficult to hold back tears as we listened to the story of how Valentyna and her relatives, including six children, ate unwashed potatoes—to save water—or melted snow from the car rooftops to let three people share a glass of boiled water. Just one shared glass for the whole day! And one unwashed potato per person!

We thought incidents like this would be inconceivable again in the country that experienced three famines in the 20th century. And yet, Valentyna and other residents of Mariupol dealt with hunger on a daily basis.

Fortunately, she and her family managed to escape from Mariupol. They no longer count and ration potatoes, nor melt snow for drinking water. But many people in the hardest hit areas of Ukraine, and those who were forced to leave their homes, are still struggling to feed themselves and their children.

This is why we are so thankful to William Lowry, president of No Child Hungry in Apopka, Florida, who reached out to us to offer 40,000 packets of nutritious oatmeal for the struggling people we serve here. We didn't just talk on Zoom. William, along with a large team, came to Ukraine! They visited several cities, including Bucha, a war-torn site where terrible atrocities were committed by the Russians, and distributed lots of meals there. When William was in Kyiv, Pastor Ruslan and I met with him to learn more about No Child Hungry, and its partner organizations, to understand how we can collaborate with these good people.

We met on January 19, 2023, and several days later, a large van arrived from Odessa, Ukraine, bringing 185 boxes of food earmarked for us. Pastor Ruslan and our team unloaded the shipment at a warehouse operated by the ICF Kyiv Church. Just as these meals were prepared in partnership



with many volunteers in Florida, they are being distributed in partnership with many churches and individuals in Ukraine.

We have already handed out some of these meals to families with autistic children served by our mission. On Saturday, February 4, Pastor Ruslan distributed more meals to a large group of internally displaced people. On the following day, Andriy Ivanov, senior pastor of ICF Kyiv and his team, will be doing the same at their church. We sent several boxes of these precious provisions to the partner churches in Druzhkivka, which is approximately 28 miles away from Bakhmut, where the fighting rages between the Russian invaders and the armed forces of Ukraine.

Pastor Ruslan Attends Special Seminar

By Serhiy Basarab, Vice President of Ukraine Operations

“Our military protects us at the front, and those in the rear should help them and their families.” This profound statement was made to challenge everyone attending a special, two-day seminar regarding how to come alongside individuals (and families) who are facing new challenges in life after losing a limb(s) during the war with Russia.

Pastor Ruslan Marchenko attended the seminar which was held on February 1 and 2. The training helped him gain a better insight of what these crippled men, women, and children go through as amputee victims. The speakers addressed how to best support and understand their psychological, spiritual, and physical needs as part of their continuing rehabilitation.

A person who has lost a limb needs help in understanding how they may need a new purpose in life. Their life’s goals may also change. Having the necessary tools to develop their lives anew, regardless of their physical circumstances, is a must. These tools include a plan, starting with a positive mindset, to help integrate them back into society to start living with a renewed purpose.

It is imperative for these afflicted individuals, young and old, to know that the seemingly impassable road ahead is indeed passable; through nurturing assistance and understanding, they are not alone. The “rear” is prepared to do their best to help the military and their families.



Yuri Amelin is Working Toward a Better Ukraine

By Yuri Amelin, Pastor of Small Groups

I recently joined the MMK team approximately five months ago. I believe that I came at the right time for the mission and for our country. Now is the essential time to stop doing what we normally do, refocus, and start helping those in desperate need.

The opportunity to offer financial and spiritual support to teenagers, widows, and families with autistic children, brings me great joy. I understand what hardships these people endure—the constant deafening shrill of sirens, anxiety, fear for the future, all coupled with social impoverishment. It is truly rewarding to be an integral part of this worthy ministry and place all my efforts to help change and better the catastrophic conditions in war-torn Ukraine.

At present, in addition to my social work, I conduct groups for Bible study and offer spiritual support such as leading a prayer group, another group for new church members and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from flashpoint areas, two groups for families with autistic children, and a club meeting with teenagers.





Generator from Belgium

By Sergey Kuchma, I.T. & Media Specialist

My dear friend Olivier is a Frenchman who lives in Belgium. As a child, he had to stay in a boarding school for several years. Olivier knows far too well from his own life experience how much support and attention children in boarding schools need, especially now, in dire situations such as war. He is alarmed about the war and is looking for innovative ways to provide humanitarian assistance to Ukrainians, like so many Europeans.

When Olivier found out about utility services challenges at the Stara Basan orphan boarding school in Eastern Ukraine, he chose to act. The boarding school is plagued by daily power outages. This translates to no running water, as well as heating difficulties.

The solution for Olivier was simple, yet brilliant. He decided to donate a powerful (16 kW) generator. This generator is so forceful, it is capable of covering all the basic electrical needs for the children's orphan boarding school.

Olivier loaded the heavy generator—700 kg or approximately three-quarter ton—onto a truck and transported it, himself, from Belgium all the way to Ukraine, straight to the orphanage! He also brought children's clothing and other donations collected from people in his native village. And, of course, lots of sweets for the treasured youngsters.

This is a prime example of what caring, generous people can accomplish to make the lives of Ukrainian kids a little brighter and warmer. This benevolent deed sheds a glimmering light on the horizon so the children can begin to grasp the vision of Ukraine's victory.

Fire of Friendship

WINTER CAMP RECAP

By Yuri Amelin, Pastor of Small Groups



The Music Mission Kiev (MMK) team took part in organizing a winter Christian youth camp, Fire of Friendship, in the Carpathian Mountains located in Central and Eastern Europe. This outing provided the team a great opportunity to introduce and spread the ministry of Christ to teenagers from Kyiv and Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) children. (IDPs are people who are forced to leave their homes but remain within their country's border.)

Much gratitude to Yuri Amelin who coordinated and organized the event, and Oleksandr "Sasha" Agriyants who provided technical support. Also, many thanks to Daniel Dooley and Tim Petersen, representatives of Teen Missions International (USA), who created the program and provided financial arrangements.

St. Paul's Church, which MMK operates from in Kyiv, sponsored four teenagers who were able to attend the camp for free. Valia, a young girl from the eastern region of Ukraine where the war is currently raging, came to a teenage meeting at St. Paul's Church only two months ago. So moved by the youth camp experience, Valia shared that she aspires to continue to spiritually grow and become an assistant camp leader in the future. Numerous teenagers expressed a desire, as well, to follow Christ and His ministry.

On the whole, the experience was a wonderful and inspirational time. The youth camp gave the teenagers the opportunity to expand their faith, while providing a safe environment to relax and take a slight respite from the daily terrors of war that invaded their families, homes and country.

Thank you so very much for your support in making this Christian youth camp possible. It was obvious that many young lives were changed as the Lord worked in their hearts. Preparations are underway for another summer camp aimed at helping even more teenagers cope through this difficult time.



Get to Know Vika Rybchynska

OUR VERSION OF THE ENERGIZER BUNNY

By Vika Rybchynska, Children's Music Club

I came to Music Mission Kyiv (MMK) in June 2022. Before that, I was a chorister in the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus (KSOC). My ministry efforts are varied and equally fulfilling.

On my first day of work at MMK, I started visiting and communicating with widows of the Widows Program. Every Thursday now, I complete questionnaires with updates and/or information about various widows and submit these for translation into English. I also help to hand out gifts and other items that our mission provides at various holidays or special occasions.

I invited new children to join MMK's children's club during the summer of 2022; we now have 11 beautiful children in the club. The youngsters sing, play bells, dance, and recite poems during services at St. Paul's Church, in Kyiv. Unfortunately, many families had to leave Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine.

I also give individual and group music lessons to autistic children every Saturday. The autistic kids proudly performed at St. Paul's Christmas Concert along with the kids from the children's club.

I now lead music classes and prepare performances with children at the Kyiv orphans boarding school, number 22, in 2023. Every two weeks we visit the orphans' boarding school in the town of Stara Basan and bring sweets, water filters, and various toys (balls are always a delight), as well as clothes, shoes, stationery, etc. The children always look forward to music classes, Bible studies, and games. Volunteers from St. Paul's



Church and the Widow's Thursday Bible Study group very often join us on such visits.

In August 2022, I attended a workshop on trauma healing organized jointly by the American and Ukrainian Bible Societies. After that training, we started the Trauma Healing Ministry for internally displaced persons (IDPs) which takes place every Tuesday. It gratifies me tremendously to see individuals who lost everything (their homes, family, relatives or friends) find the courage to continue living and psychologically recover.

Within the framework of our Help the Military project, I visit the wounded in Kyiv hospitals and bring them donations from our mission, including various heart-warming, handmade crafts from our kids in the children's club. We have been able to provide thermal clothing, raincoats, power banks, batteries, first-aid kits, and freeze-dried staples have already been delivered, or are to be delivered, in the near future.

Female members of the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus are presently preparing for a tour in the U.S. in September and October 2023. During the preparation period, as well as for the entire duration of the trip, I am very honored to have been appointed assistant conductor.

I am grateful to God for the opportunity to work at MMK and the privilege to pursue my passion to not only sing, play music and cultivate the love of music in children, but also to participate in numerous diverse projects as part of the social ministry of our church. I additionally sing hymns, and sometimes conduct worship, at the beginning of services at St. Paul's Church.

Working for the mission helps me to develop professionally and enriches me spiritually. A win-win! I can serve God and Ukraine. It's so much more than a job, it's a way of life!

New teen worship band practice



Olga Volunteers to Help Wounded Soldiers

By Olga Alexeeva, KSOC Bookkeeper

My name is Olga Alexeeva, and I serve as the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus bookkeeper. I am also a masseuse at the hospital on Saksagansky Street in Kyiv. We are pleased to report positive changes at the Department of Mental and Physical Rehabilitation which is housed in the hospital. The plan was to start admitting amputation patients in January 2023, but construction is running behind schedule. Some necessities, such as wheelchair ramps and elevators, are still in the blueprint stage. On a good note, there are already special verticalization equipment and movement simulators for the therapy of the upper and lower limbs. In the photo, you can see one of the oncology patients working out on the equipment.

The third-floor area in the large hall of the hospital now has floor mats for physical therapy supplied by MMK. A group of up to eight people is currently able to exercise there. All these significant achievements are thanks to the financial support of Music Mission Kiev (MMK). The state usually pays for the hospital's expensive property and equipment, which often requires certification or licenses, but there are not enough funds to cover smaller, necessary expenditures.

In January 2023, two more small rooms for pressotherapy and massage were added. Before that, treatment sessions like pressotherapy, physical therapy, breathing exercises, massage, and simulator took place in one room. We have to be resourceful and always search for necessary supplemental items. For example, my friend donated her massage table, which was greatly appreciated. But it is pretty unpleasant when it's freezing to have to lie down on a cold, bare table! MMK purchased two rolls of invaluable disposable sheets. In addition, MMK provided the means to replace the cheap, inefficient heaters that burned oxygen in the rehab room. When there are many big men in the room, enough oxygen is a must!

The hospital has had the same cost-effective drug supplier since



November 2022. MMK purchased 100 packages of Enterogel, a gel-like product that absorbs harmful substances in the stomach. Most of our patients have high levels of toxins in their blood due to exposure to toxic evaporations, i.e., explosions, smoke inhalation, or other unimaginable war-related atrocities. MMK also purchased (see picture above) Cerebrolysin from the same drug supplier at a 30% discount. Cerebrolysin is a drug that helps regain and maintain the independence of patients with cognitive loss by stimulating neuro recovery.

When MMK staff visited the hospital, the traumatology department was crowded with patients crippled with arm and leg injuries. It became apparent that the wounded needed special clothes, such as T-shirts without side seams with Velcro fasteners and track pants of the same design. It's complicated and painful for injured patients to undress and dress during examinations and bandaging. We ordered 15 sets of such garments and can now make treatments a little more comfortable for approximately 30 Ukrainian warriors. We are currently exploring ways to economize by having seamstresses sew these garments rather than purchasing retail for an estimated 30-40% savings. Some of the soldiers I spoke with said how much these alterations are a great help, not only for a week or two but sometimes for up to two to three months of therapy. How much pain do these guys have to endure?

I enjoy my work as a massage therapist. Hearing the soldiers telling me that the therapy feels like a psychotherapy session after two or three massages is so gratifying. The power of prayer is a testament to my contribution to the healing of these spirited men. One soldier, wounded in Bakhmut in June 2022, is adamant that his company got out alive because "someone" prayed for them.

Honing Our Edge

A WORD FROM THE CEO

There are multiple stories of woodsmen who are great at cutting down trees. The point of many of these tales is how the woodsman who takes time to sharpen his axe always comes out with better production than those who work harder and harder with no visible improvements. This principle has not been lost on me as I read the stories in this Gazetta's edition.

I continue to be amazed at the opportunities and partnerships God continually brings to Music Mission Kiev (MMK) as I ponder all the accounts of the fantastic work our team is doing in Ukraine.

“More service and aid are being provided to those in dire need than at any other time in the 30-year existence of our mission.”

The diversity of situations and people we are serving should be encouraging to you too.

At the February 2023 MMK Board of Directors meeting, I shared how what we are achieving now is at least as important as what we began in 1993, if not more so. However, Ukraine's people and needs differ from that time and era. We must adapt and overcome obstacles for this challenging period in the history of these great people through the work and good news of Jesus.

Some of the many medical supplies we send



KCOC member, Ivan B. (on right) with gifts from the children





Women's Bible Study



Pastor Ruslan preaching in Belgium

Knowing it is a different time with new demands means we must keep “sharpening our axe” as we work to meet the people’s felt needs. MMK continues to review its five-year plan to determine where we need to branch out, update or make changes in an effort to be better and more efficient with our schedules and resources. We prayerfully lay our work and plans before the Lord and ask Him to make straight the path He has for MMK.

Our staff is our most important resource. The toll this past year has taken on them is obvious to us. Providing nourishing respite care for our leaders is a top priority.

MMK is envisioning hiring more staff in Kyiv to help distribute the workload and allow us to continue to forge ahead into new areas of need, such as in the small villages around Makarov, to the west of Kyiv. The needs of each day are overwhelming in Ukraine. It is imperative that we align ourselves to be prepared and positioned to continually respond faster to these needs than ever before.

We are pursuing partnerships/opportunities that specialize in areas MMK does not. We visualize the boundaries of MMK being expanded in beautiful ways. Therefore, our leadership is also striving to stay vigilant of the needs of our teams and the people we serve.

The content in this edition is a reminder of all the incredible ways your support is being played out daily in and around Kyiv. What we do together makes a difference. So, we covet your prayers for God’s wisdom and discernment as we venture further into uncharted areas to make life-impacting relationships and partnerships to help restore and rebuild war-torn Ukraine.

Grace and peace,

Greg

Greg Kannon
CEO





PO Box 161849
Altamonte Springs, FL 32716

Website:
musicmissionkiev.org

Office Phone:
407-699-7172

E-mail:
info@musicmissionkiev.org

Visit Us on Facebook:
facebook.com/musicmissionkiev

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