

## Sheppersons in Slovakia

### Growing Tension in Europe

Although the characteristics of the crisis have changed over the last months, the overall situation is still very tense. Millions of Ukrainians (mostly mothers and children) are displaced. Humanitarian systems are being stretched to the limit. Families are in confusion. A free country is being violently overwhelmed by a superpower. Here are some of the events happening around us here, as a war rages across our border.

### Ukraine Crisis Update



This is Natasha and Emilia. They are from the devastated Bucha, Ukraine (pictured above). Natasha had served as an intern at a local church in our town some years ago. She and her mother fled from Buča early in the war and came to our city. Her husband and father are still in Ukraine. They have lost everything because of the bombing. We are doing what we can to help in this one family's catastrophe. But our efforts often feel too small when they have lost everything.



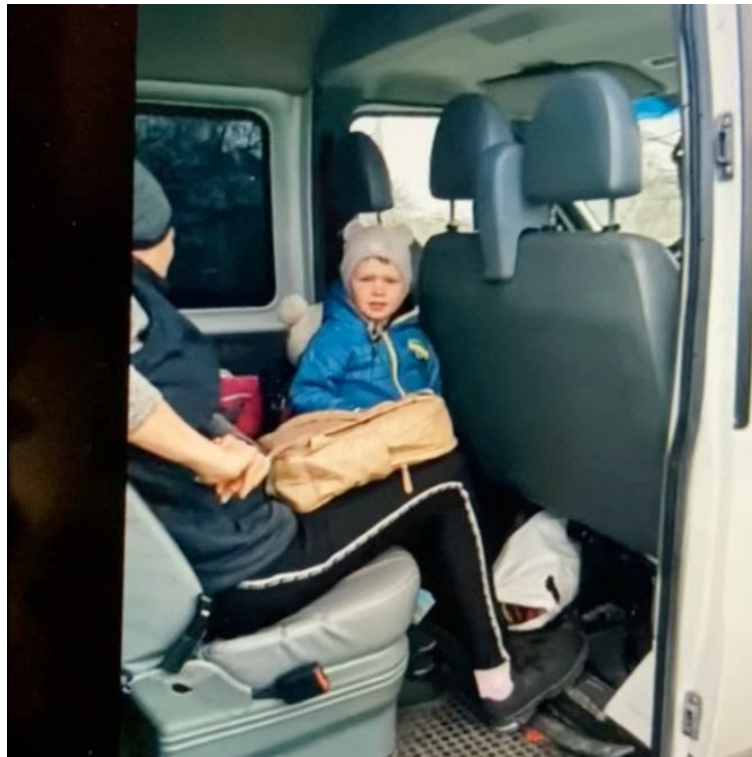
The flow of refugees has slowed significantly in Slovakia. Those who are still fleeing the fighting are often choosing to stay in the Western Ukrainian territories instead of crossing borders. We continue to care for several Ukrainian families that have settled in our town and church. We keep praying for more influence in local Ukrainian circles. There are always financial needs among those we know. We are so thankful for those who have given financially to help specifically in those situations. Sometimes it's clothes, sometimes it's food, sometimes it's household furnishing, sometimes it's a gift of encouragement. It's such a pleasure to have the capacity to help!



Nine Slovenians and I comprised the last team I organized for Ukrainian border work last month. Each team member was so mature, ministry minded, prayerful and diligent. We touched hundreds of people that week, passing out physical and spiritual food, prayer, care and compassion. We stood in the gap as those who are in such desperation passed through our border to safety.



Kim purchased a van in coordination with one Slovak relief organization, to be used by a Ukrainian local church to rescue those being bombed out. It is still being used to rescue people and transport supplies. Those of you who have given special support for Ukraine were a part of that purchase! Thank you!



CLICK THE PICTURE ABOVE to see a short video clip taken by one of the brave drivers of the van in Ukraine. By now the van has transported many loads of refugees to safety.



I met Masha and Natalia immediately after they crossed the Ukrainian border early last month. When we asked them, as usual, where they were going, they said Japan! Why Japan, we asked? They said, "God called us to be missionaries in Japan some months ago. And we've already learned to speak Japanese. But the problem is, Japan doesn't allow Ukrainians to come to Japan. So, we've been waiting until now. But, as soon as the war started, Japan opened its borders for Ukrainians! So, we're going!!" Interestingly, the borders closed again to Ukrainians about one month later. But they made it through the "window". Now they are in different cities there in Japan following God's call. War can open some doors when nothing else can! We are now supporting them on an ongoing basis. If you would like to help these brave girls in Japan, I can let you know how:)





This is Anna (Center). She is from Ukraine and is 17 years old. We first met her and her family back in early March on our first days on the Ukrainian border. They lived with us for some weeks and now have their own house. Anna has been attending church and youth group regularly since she arrived. She says she accepted Christ just months before the war broke out. She said the other day, "I feel a new passion to help other people that I never had before". We are inspired when we realize how God brought her into our lives. And we are excited to witness her growth, hunger to serve and live like Christ.

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In the middle of one long night on the border, a bus came through with a Ukrainian women's choir. They were traveling to several European cities to perform as a thank you for supporting Ukraine. They graciously sang one song for us. Click the picture to listen.

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## OTHER NEWS!

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Last month, Sam completed his 13<sup>th</sup> year of Slovak school. He was the only one of our kids who entered the 8 year High School (instead of the normal four years). He aced his final exams and will be our first child to attend university here in Europe where he plans to study engineering. He is also serving this summer as a camp intern. Camps are our most effective evangelistic outreach through the years. He has lots of experience leading camps. So, we believe he will be a strategic help and inspiration for the team.

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In February, Sam decided to join the youth group leadership team for the Jr High youth ministry. He has a huge physical presence that seems to match his sizable influence on people around him. Hampton is actually now under his leadership. His relationship has completely changed toward Hampton during this time, to be more gentle, kind and considerate. So for us, this is enough evidence that it is a helpful direction for him.

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This was Hampton's last year of Jr High. Now he moves on to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. But entering High School here is almost like entering College. You have to choose a school, a major, pass an entrance exam and make it into the top percentile of applicants. Last month he successfully passed the exam for the school he most wanted to attend and has been accepted as a student for next year! God's favor was on him and the process all the way. We are so thankful and proud of his progress.

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In all the busyness of the Ukraine crisis, I forgot to mention that Kim delivered a baby. Now we have five kids! Just kidding! But here's the crazy story. Kim had agreed to take her pregnant friend to the hospital if she needed, because her husband is often out of town. She called Kim at 4:00am one morning and said "it's time and my husband isn't home". So, we rushed to her home in the ice and snow, only to find that she was too far along to make the trip. So, Dr. Kim did her first home delivery! Elizabeth was born at 4:40 am healthy and happy. The ambulance team arrived about 30 minutes later! We are really thankful to God that there were no complications.

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This is a recent picture of our Slovakia staff. Such a skilled and passionate group of workers. It's an honor to work with this team!

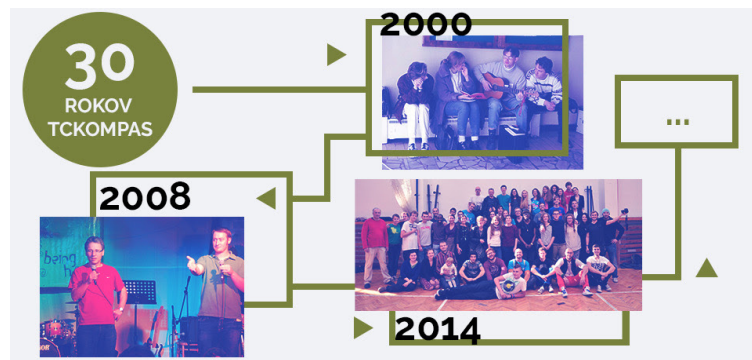
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Many of you may remember my spiritual son (Matthew) in Kenya, from my ministry days there back in 1990. He was 14 years old at the time. Now he is the founder and director of a Christian school there. Last month he visited Poland for a leadership conference. I was able to drive there and visit for a couple of days. He is a huge voice to the next generation of young people in his community and he leads more people to Christ than anyone I know. I'm so proud of him and count it as one of my life's honors to know him. If you are interested in investing in the next generation of Kenyan's, let me know and I will help you get connected.

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Thirty years ago, God gave Danny Jones (Kompas founder) the vision of a training organization for youth leaders in Slovakia. Last month, we celebrated that anniversary and also the passing of the leadership baton to the next generation. Timothy Mahrik will serve as director for our team of over 40 staff members. We have been honored to have been a part of what God is preparing for the next generation.

Thank you for taking time to read our news. We appreciate you as friends and partners even though we don't see each other very often. Your faithful connection keeps us in a position to do what God has called us to do here. If any of you are coming to Europe during the summer, please give us a call. We would love to meet you somewhere for a visit! Europe is not that big that we couldn't make it happen:)

If you would like to take more action, click the button of choice below.

[Click here to PRAY specifically for Ukraine on the Josiah Venture online portal](#)

[Click here to help Ukraine through the Josiah Venture Crisis Fund](#)

[Click this link to give to us more directly OR contact us by replying to this email update.](#)



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