Philippines
Bringing Joy in the Wake of a Typhoon
Philippines
Christmas brings islands of joy amid a sea of disaster.

Syria
Special delivery of gifts for Syrian children living as refugees in Iraq.

The Greatest Journey
A shoebox gift can be the first step of a lifelong walk with Jesus Christ.

Ends of the Earth
Your global passport to a few of the places we delivered shoebox gifts.

Gifts from Uncle Si
Still a boy at heart, Uncle Si has fun packing shoebox gifts.

A Note from Franklin Graham

Dear Friend,

When Samaritan’s Purse first began collecting shoebox gifts in 1993, we thought 28,000 gifts was a lot. Twenty years later, in 2013, God worked through people like you to reach almost 10 million children.

I believe that the Lord has supplied all these gifts for one purpose—“to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24, NKJV). Already, we have seen 1.1 million shoebox recipients trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through Operation Christmas Child’s discipleship program, The Greatest Journey. Many of them are now little evangelists, eager to share their faith with family and friends. Praise God!

We look forward to seeing millions of lives transformed around the world through the gifts, prayers, service, and support of everyone involved in Operation Christmas Child. Thank you, and may God bless you.

Sincerely,

Franklin Graham
President, Samaritan’s Purse

A total of 9,985,210 children in 112 countries are getting shoebox gifts collected in 2013 by Operation Christmas Child. We praise God and thank everyone who participated.

Worldwide, we have distributed 113,705,780 shoebox gifts since 1993. If all those boxes were laid end-to-end, they would extend over 23,000 miles, almost encircling the earth.

In just the last four years, over 1.1 million children have prayed to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through Operation Christmas Child’s follow-up discipleship program, The Greatest Journey.

From jumbo jets to rickshaws, delivering shoebox gifts can be an adventure. This small boat, called a panga, is ferrying cartons of gifts across a lake in Mexico.
A SPECIAL REPORT FROM SAMARITAN’S PURSE

A Rainbow after the Storm

As Samaritan’s Purse ministers to typhoon survivors, a special airlift of 65,000 shoebox gifts brings a timely reminder of God’s great love.

Leyte Island, Philippines
But there was nothing left to celebrate after Typhoon Haiyan ripped through the islands November 8 with some of the most powerful winds ever recorded. Over 6,000 people lost their lives, and 4 million more saw their homes destroyed or damaged.

As Christmas approached, the shock was finally wearing off and signs of hope were appearing. Samaritan’s Purse had immediately responded by chartering two jumbo jets loaded with emergency supplies, as well as sending doctors and relief workers to restore medical and water services. Then came another jumbo jet—this one carrying gifts from Operation Christmas Child for 65,000 Filipino children. Most of these gifts had been packed in New York by survivors of Hurricane Sandy.

One of the gift-filled shoeboxes made it into the hands of CJ Alojacin, an 11-year-old Filipino boy whose short life has been ravaged with heartache and sadness. CJ was born to a teenage mother who could not care for her infant son. His grandmother tried to raise him but could not give CJ the structure and discipline he needed. “I was always getting into trouble and being disobedient,” CJ said. “I was a bad boy.” He was just six years old when his beloved grandmother died. By then, his mother was nowhere to be found, and his father wanted nothing to do with him. For three years, he survived on the streets, scavenging through trash for food.

CJ was rescued from the gutter by Pastor Pepe Gueranagas of Holy Faith Baptist Church. “When CJ came to us we loved him, but he was disobedient,” Pastor Pepe said. “We disciplined him, and he ran away. It wasn’t until this October that he came back.” Pastor Pepe welcomed CJ back with open arms. Just as CJ began to feel like a member of the family, his life was once more thrown into chaos by Typhoon Haiyan, which crashed into Leyte Island with winds almost 200 mph and storm surges over 20 feet.

Holy Faith Baptist Church, with its strong concrete construction, served as the evacuation center for hundreds of men, women, and children.

“When the winds started blowing, we knew this storm was different than any other,” Pastor Pepe said. “We told people to come to the church for safety.” As driving rains pelted the church and wind shredded the adjoining school, people inside the sanctuary cried out to God. “We prayed hard,” Pastor Pepe said. “And we encouraged people to trust in the Lord.”

(continued)
Many of the shoebox gifts that Samaritan’s Purse airlifted to the Philippines were packed by New Yorkers who lost their homes during Hurricane Sandy and have a special heart for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan.

“When you see what happened in the Philippines, you know those kids don’t have anything now,” Sue Giuffrida said. “But God has a plan for these kids.”

Sue’s home in Island Park, N.Y., was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy and rebuilt by crews from Samaritan’s Purse. Her church was also flooded and reopened just in time for shoebox collections in November. For the past four years, she has volunteered with Operation Christmas Child to collect shoebox gifts on Long Island.

She wants the people of the Philippines to trust that God can deliver them from their suffering. “God talks about storms in the Bible all the time,” Sue said. “People go through all kinds of storms in life. But with storms like this, God washes away all of the unfit things inside. It’s devastating and it wrecks you, but He rebuilds.”

Almost 300 shoebox gifts on the airlift were packed by the Queens Bible Church, where the congregation is 95 percent Filipino. Operation Christmas Child “gives us the opportunity to share these blessings from our church straight to our country, to the Philippines,” said church member Rowena Gaspar.

News of God’s great love for us, no matter what storms we may face in life. “I used to not believe in God,” CJ said. “Now I know the truth. I pray that I’ll be a good man, a helpful man, a man of God.”

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Families living in tents to escape the war in Syria experience God’s unconditional love through shoebox gifts.

Bringing Gifts in Jesus’ Name

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

SAMARITAN’S PURSE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

SYRIAN REFUGEES
Above: When gifts were handed out in Arbat, the haunting memories of civil war seemed far away.

Below: Excitement raced through Arbat camp when gifts were handed out. Samaritan’s Purse also built a playground and soccer field for these children.

Right now, that’s better than their homeland, where over 100,000 people have been killed in three years of brutal civil war.

Kawergosk is one of nine camps in northern Iraq for Syrian refugees. It is a collection of thousands of dusty white tents in a windswept, treeless valley, surrounded by chain-link fence, barbed wire, and armed guards. Here and there are water tanks perched atop outhouses, and clothes draped across lines between tents. Makeshift schools and shops have been set up, but this is no place anyone wants to live.

These families came from a part of northeastern Syria that had been relatively safe from the fighting until last August. When their streets and neighborhoods came under attack, they fled in waves into northern Iraq, often bringing nothing but the clothes they could carry.

Samaritan’s Purse sent food, blankets, shoes, and warm winter coats to people living at Kawergosk camp, near the ancient city of Erbil, as well as Arbat camp near Sulaymaniyah. We provided 2,000 kerosene heaters to help comfort the residents of Kawergosk, where temperatures often drop below freezing at night.

Nearly half the refugees at Kawergosk are under 18 years old. Most of them have never celebrated Christmas.

That’s why Samaritan’s Purse organized a special airlift to provide shoebox gifts for almost 70,000 Syrian children living in Kawergosk, Arbat, and other refugee camps in northern Iraq.

The gifts were a glimpse of hope for many, like a young teenager named Heyat. She lives in a tent in Kawergosk with her mother, three sisters, a mentally disabled brother, and a nephew. Her father and five other brothers are still in Syria, waiting for the border to open so they can join the family.

They will never forget the day an aircraft dropped a bomb near their home in Derik, Syria. “When I saw it, I was so scared, because if they threw the bomb on our house, it would all be destroyed,” said her mother, Khokha. “Nobody would survive.”

“We heard the sound of the bombs,” Heyat said. “I saw people get shot and killed. I was so scared and my mother was so scared, she decided to bring us out of there.”

As she opened her shoebox gift on a peaceful, sunny afternoon in Kawergosk camp nearly three months after their escape, Heyat’s clear brown eyes sparkled and her grin spread into dimples. Her shoebox was packed by an 18-year-old girl named Megan who lives in Watkinsville, Georgia. Several pairs of neon socks and sparkly bangles poked from the top of the box, nestled among soap, toothpaste, a bath sponge, and other toiletry items.

“The children love these things,” she said. “I really appreciate those people who are thinking of us and taking care of us, sending things for us.”

Her mother was grateful as well: “We are very happy, because the people here are very poor and need the help,” said Khokha.

Samaritan’s Purse is working with ministry partners in Iraq to share the Good News with the refugees. As they seek safety from war, pray that Heyat and the thousands of other refugees will come to know Jesus Christ as their ultimate protector.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, NKJV).

Life is bleak in the Kawergosk refugee camp, but for the 13,000 Syrians who live there, at least it is relatively safe.
Above: Veronica Miranda in Guadalajara, Mexico, is among nearly 60,000 volunteer teachers in over 90 countries who have been trained to lead children in Operation Christmas Child’s discipleship program, The Greatest Journey.

Right: These children in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, are enthusiastic about sharing the Bible stories they have learned through The Greatest Journey.

Colorful confetti rained down as 30 smiling children dressed in black graduation gowns tossed their hats high into the dusty air of Guadalajara, Mexico.

Many of the children living at Fundacion Emmanuel have been orphaned, abandoned, or neglected. But they had plenty to celebrate last May after spending 12 weeks studying Bible lessons through Operation Christmas Child’s discipleship program, The Greatest Journey. Each of them had completed the lessons and received a New Testament along with a graduation certificate.

“The graduation today was another step for my life,” said Viridiana Miranda. “When I was in The Greatest Journey, I was so happy because I understood more about God and His love, and I received Jesus in my heart during the classes.”

Since 2009, 1.8 million children in over 80 countries have graduated from The Greatest Journey, and over 1.1 million of them have prayed to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Through The Greatest Journey, children learn about the love of God and how they can be saved through repentance and faith. They also learn how to share the Gospel with family and friends.

Around the world, nearly 60,000 volunteers, including Viridiana’s older sister Veronica, have been trained by Samaritan’s Purse to teach the discipleship lessons. “I can see in these kids how God is planting a seed in their hearts, and how The Greatest Journey has been a great project for them,” Veronica said. “Now, I can see them walking in the way of Jesus.”

Pray that God will continue to use The Greatest Journey to help children follow Jesus.

“Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight” (Matthew 3:3, NKJV).
Cameroon: Churches like Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise in Kribi helped hand out gift boxes to 312,000 children like this girl. Kribi is a coastal village, and many children here are unable to attend school because they have to help their families sell dried fish.

Kosovo: Operation Christmas Child has distributed over 1.1 million shoebox gifts in this fledgling nation since the 1999 war against Serbia. There are few evangelical churches in Kosovo, so most of the shoebox gifts are handed out in schools. We are thankful that many of these schools allow children to receive Gospel booklets along with the gifts.

Lebanon: Five-year-old Albert was recovering from a two-week bout with pneumonia when he received one of the shoebox gifts handed out at the hospital in Beirut.
Mexico: Hilario Morales volunteers with Operation Christmas Child in Mexico’s Jalisco state and helped hand out shoebox gifts to these boys and girls in the El Zalate neighborhood of Guadalajara. The gifts help churches reach out in the Name of Jesus to children who are vulnerable to gang activity, drugs, and exploitation.

Papua New Guinea: Children adore colorful stocking caps even in the tropical climate of Papua New Guinea, an island nation near Australia. They speak a creole language called “Tok Pisin” that includes traces of English. “Tenkiu tru” is “Thank you very much.” Nearly 42,000 children in Papua New Guinea received shoebox gifts this year.

Because of the shoebox, my parents now fellowship at church with me.
— Terry, Cameroon

In places where trucks can’t go, a horse like this one in Mexico can carry enough gifts for over 100 children.
The Beginning of My Faith

Alex Nsengimana paused in the muddy schoolyard at Gisimba Memorial Center in Kigali, Rwanda, staring past the patchy grass and dark red soil pockmarked with tiny footprints. “I was standing right there on that low wall,” Alex said, recalling the moment in 1995 when he received a gift-filled shoebox from Operation Christmas Child.

Alex graduated last year from Bible college in Minnesota and returned to Rwanda with Operation Christmas Child. He had the opportunity to hand out shoebox gifts at the same orphanage where he lived for eight years after surviving the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

“Receiving that shoebox was just the beginning of my faith,” Alex said. “Standing here and getting ready to hand out other boxes, it’s just amazing.”

About 200 kindergarteners packed inside a classroom as large raindrops began to fall outside. Excitement in the room was palpable as the children eagerly waited to open their gifts.

“Three! Two! One! Open!” shouted Alex, followed by joyous shrieks from the kids. Several of them quickly piled onto his lap. As he helped children discover their newfound treasures, he reflected over what his own shoebox meant so long ago.

“When I received my shoebox, I was reminded of God’s love for me and the hope that I had in Him,” Alex said. “I hope and I pray that will be the case for these kids, that whatever they’re going through in their lives, they can be reminded that someone out there loves them. But the most important thing of all is that Jesus Christ loves them and cares about them.”

Alex believes that the message of Christ’s love is exemplified in each shoebox gift delivered to a child, and that Operation Christmas Child can play a part in reconciling people in Rwanda and around the globe.

“Operation Christmas Child has spread the Gospel around the world,” he said. “Without a doubt, it can have a big part in bringing hope and love to the people of Rwanda, using one simple box that carries a powerful message of Jesus Christ.”

Alex in 1995

Above: Alex Nsengimana hands out shoebox gifts at the Gisimba orphanage in Rwanda where he grew up.

Georgia: Not far from the site of the 2014 Winter Olympics, children in the former Soviet republic of Georgia are still coping with the effects of a 2008 war with Russia. The lion is a national symbol for Georgia, so this cuddly lion brought special joy.

South Asia: Samaritan’s Purse reaches a number of countries through Operation Christmas Child that we cannot publicize for security reasons. God uses shoebox gifts to connect children like these to local churches and earn a hearing for the Gospel.

“Receiving the gift and coming to know Jesus as my Savior opened a new world for me.”

— Jocelyne, Nicaragua

Savior

Receiving the gift and coming to know Jesus as my Savior opened a new world for me.

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20 OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM SAMARITAN’S PURSE 21
Ecuador: Boys in the indigenous Kayambi tribe received shoeboxes and booklets where they can read the Gospel in their native language. Since 1997, more than 936,000 children in Ecuador have experienced the joy of opening shoebox gifts.

Peru: A new jump-rope lights up the smile of a girl in Lima, Peru. These gifts were distributed by a house church which is working to protect local children from drug use, alcoholism, and physical abuse that are rampant in the neighborhood. Almost 220,000 children in Peru received shoebox gifts in 2013.

“Nobody had given me a gift like that. God sent the gift just for me!”
— Viridiana, Mexico
Shoebox gifts bring the call of the Gospel from the Louisiana bayou to one of South Asia’s largest cities.

Si Robertson, America’s favorite uncle and reed-maker for Duck Commander duck calls, teamed up with Operation Christmas Child in 2013 to get the word out about sharing God’s love through the joy of a shoebox gift.

“Look, I’m 65 years old, but I’m really 10 years old. I refuse to grow up. I’m always gonna be a child, okay? So that’s why children have a special place in my heart,” said Si.

On a muggy September day, Si joined his nephew, Alan Robertson, in the Duck Commander warehouse. Alan is a pastor who wanted Si to help him pack gift-filled shoeboxes.

“There’s no bigger kid in the world,” Alan said. “He loves kids and has a real love for people and for the Gospel going out, so he was the perfect selection.”

Si’s childlike side was on full display as he carted a large box brimming with paraphernalia to the table. Fireworks poked out of the top and various other items spilled over the sides.

He quickly learned that he couldn’t send the fireworks, his nephew Willie’s old doll, squirrel jerky, or a chia seed planter that would grow a green beard. Just as quickly, he began to include important items like stuffed animals, toys, hygiene items, and most importantly, a children’s picture Bible.

As Uncle Si prayed for the children who would receive his gifts, he said, “It’s not important what the gift is. What’s important is the thought behind it, that someone cares. When I think about that, I think about the greatest gift that’s ever been given is you giving your Son for the whole world.”

A few weeks later, those shoeboxes were handed out in South Asia to two little boys: James, 7, and Ashish, 8, couldn’t wipe the grins off of their faces as they opened their gifts.

In the crowded city where they live, less than one percent of the people believe in Jesus Christ. But when James and Ashish received their shoeboxes, they heard about His love for them, and a seed was planted in their hearts.

“May every one of these little ones know that you’re not waiting up there for ’em to make a mistake,” Si prayed. “You’re up there and you love ’em, and you give them forgiveness and love. And you’re waiting there with open arms to welcome us throughout eternity to live with you. And Father we ask that each and every one of these kids that receive these shoeboxes will come to know your Son as their Savior.”

Opposite: TV personality Uncle Si Robertson and his nephew Pastor Al Robertson work on their shoebox gifts.

Above: Seven-year-old James received one of Uncle Si’s boxes.

Left: Ashish comes from a poor family and might not have gotten any Christmas gifts, if not for Operation Christmas Child.
Volunteers ‘Let God Shine’ Through Them

Over 7,000 volunteers serve year-round to pray for, promote, and organize Operation Christmas Child in their communities. Through their dedicated efforts and prayers, we collected almost a million more U.S. boxes than ever before.

Operation Christmas Child opened a new processing center in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Even though Texas suffered its worst ice storm in 25 years, volunteers there braved the weather to ship gifts to 420,000 children in Latin America and Africa.

Over 110,000 volunteers worked at nearly 4,000 locations across the United States to collect and process 7.5 million shoebox gifts.

Sarah Palin, the former governor of Alaska, visited the Charlotte Processing Center to thank the volunteers for their selfless service. “You let God shine right through you when you volunteer for this wonderful program,” Gov. Palin said. “You are appreciated.”

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Wrapping Shoebox Gifts with the Gospel

Samaritan’s Purse has always been dedicated to sharing the Gospel with children who receive shoebox gifts through Operation Christmas Child. So it makes sense to do the same thing when you’re packing these examples of God’s love.

This past November, many churches and families held shoebox packing parties in conjunction with the national telecast of “The Cross,” an evangelistic message from Billy Graham that aired on Fox TV and other channels.

“The excitement for sharing the Gospel was contagious, and I got the bug to make it part of our efforts for Operation Christmas Child,” said Dr. Corbit Magby, pastor of Central Church on the Hill in University Place, Washington.

“Showing ‘The Cross’ and hearing the Gospel was such a beautiful way of reminding us why we were packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child,” said one guest.

“My brother and his family walked through the doors halfway through the packing party, just in time for him to hear the message of ‘The Cross,’” said Dr. Magby. “I have been praying for my brother to know the Lord for so many years, and it brought me to tears to see him there packing shoeboxes with his daughter.”

TOP: Sarah Palin, who has been to Haiti to hand out shoebox gifts, expresses thanks to volunteers in Charlotte.

Above: As they prepare gift boxes for shipment overseas, many volunteers pray for the recipients.

GOOD NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Almost one-quarter of the shoebox gifts for Operation Christmas Child come from outside the United States. Listed here are the nations that pack and ship shoeboxes, followed by the countries where their gifts are handed out.

A total of 112 countries received gifts collected in 2013. Several of these are not listed for security reasons.

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

& New Zealand

Cameroon

Congo, Dem. Rep. of

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Dominican Republic

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Dominic
Precious Cargo

Typhoon survivors in the Philippines and Syrian refugees in Iraq might not have received Christmas gifts if not for airlifts arranged by Samaritan’s Purse. We chartered two Boeing 747 cargo planes to deliver shoebox gifts packed by people like you for Operation Christmas Child. A nose-loading jumbo jet like this can carry up to 65,000 shoeboxes—enough to fill nine tractor-trailers.

Samaritan’s Purse President Franklin Graham spoke to volunteers at a hangar at JFK International Airport in New York City, where many of the boxes headed for the Philippines were packed by families who are still recovering from Hurricane Sandy.