

April + May 2022 Mission Challenge || Focus: The Abrman Family in Slovakia

Update from The Abrman Family on April 2, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am sorry that this update is so long.

Here are some of our experiences and observations over the last seven days:

By God's grace, and with your support, we have provided hundreds of meals and other assistance to the Ukrainian families over the last five weeks. We also work hard to give every one of these dear people a Gospel tract or a New Testament. Last week, we ran out of our Gospel tracts, so we drove to the Czech Republic to pick up 3000 copies of the Gospel of John and some tracts bearing a title "Why God Allows Wars." We picked up these printed materials at a church in the city of Kromeriz. This church is housing 40 Ukrainian refugees in their Sunday School rooms. Many churches in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia continue to help the displaced Ukrainian families by opening their buildings and letting them stay there. On Wednesday, we expect to receive two families who are on the run from Ukraine at this moment. They will be accommodated in our church building in Trenčín. Some of our church members have also opened their private homes to receive Ukrainian families.

Abrupt change of situation in refugee accommodations

The nearby center that we have worked with was closed this week. Everyone expected that a new center which was being set up for refugees with a capacity of up to 100 persons would open and serve like the first one. Well, the new center was, in fact, opened with 80 beds and completely ready for the refugees to use. The arriving new refugees filled the place immediately and we hoped that we would be able to continue ministering to these refugees in greater measure than before. No need to say that this place was not very comfortable. No place can be comfortable when there are 80 adults and children sleeping in one room. Well, all of a sudden, the new center was closed three days later. The abrupt change had to do with the governmental response to the complaints from the Slovak people who actually did more than 90% of all the humanitarian relief work in this country. It was private citizens and business people, churches and volunteer organizations that did almost all the charitable work of feeding and accommodating the needy, while the government was trying to make an impression that all this work was organized or done by politicians. Unexpectedly, the government issued a promise that they would reimburse all the owners of motels (and other accommodation businesses) for opening their facilities to the Ukrainian refugees. This has led to an immediate transfer of thousands of refugee families from different centers to various motels and other places.

On Monday, the Lord willing, I will have a meeting with the senior manager of a volunteering organization that has been involved in setting up refugee centers in several cities of Slovakia. As I write these words, one of our church members is doing his refugee relief work under the umbrella of this organization. He is in Bratislava City right now where he is helping to set up a Transition and Administration Center for refugees. Families will stay there only for a day or two before they are transferred elsewhere. I pray that my meeting with the manager will open some doors for us to minister to Ukrainian people who are now getting more and more scattered all over Slovakia. Officially, there are 300 000 Ukrainian refugees who have been registered at the Immigration Office. However, no one knows how many thousands are staying in this country while waiting and hoping to find another destination in another EU country.

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Speaking to a train dispatcher

One of our church members is a professional train dispatcher. He tells me that some trains are so full of Ukrainian refugees that there is no empty seat in any of the train's sections. Many of these people are just passing through Slovakia hoping that someone somewhere in Europe will have mercy on them and provide some refuge and safety for them. Many are in a hopeless situation, humanly speaking. Some of them are afraid to settle down in Slovakia as this little country used to be one of the satellite countries of the Soviet Union. This country was declared by the Russian government as having no right to exist.

Special military exercises are happening in Trencin

This week, we have seen a lot of military planes doing their training and exercises in the skies in this region. We have never seen such an activity in the air involving so many military planes in Slovakia. We did not even recognize these types of planes. Just sharing my observations.

Natural gas pipeline will be closed

The Slovak government is warning us that the Russian natural gas pipeline will be abruptly closed soon. Slovakia has been dependent on this Russian gas to heat our homes, help cook our foods, provide hot water and in some cases serve as a fuel for our buses and cars.

Our teachers are overwhelmed

We have several teachers in our church who teach in primary and secondary schools. In every one of their classes they have Ukrainian children from refugee families. These students speak no Slovak language. The teachers do not speak Ukrainian. There is a serious language barrier. These teachers are doing their best to be loving and creative in helping these kids to get used to the Slovak culture and language. The mothers of these children have no money to buy books, pencils or any materials that students normally need. I am told that the parents of the Slovak students are buying and generously supplying all the student materials of these refugee children. However, the situation is overwhelming for many teachers because of this crisis, and no assistance from the government.

An American Ukrainian Brother coming to help

We are so grateful to God for Bro. Slava from California. He and his wife, Tatiana, are coming to Slovakia in two weeks to help with various practical tasks and needs that the Ukrainian crisis has brought to our neighborhood. More than anything, we are excited that they are equipped with the perfect ability to speak Ukrainian and a heart of desire to witness about our Lord Jesus Christ to these suffering Ukrainian people. Please pray for Slava and Tatiana that they will be greatly used of God in reaching the precious people of their native land so they will find Christ while in exile.

Thank you, dear Brothers and Sisters, for all your generous support as well as your prayers!

In Christ Jesus,

**Bro. Jozef Abrman and Family
Your Missionaries in Slovakia**