„And the angel said to them: Fear not! Behold, I proclaim great joy to you!" Lk. 2, 10

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
INTERNATIONAL

Ukraine Up date.

No. 7 Christmas I 2022

Neues aus der Ukraine

DEAR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES,

It is the darkest night of the year and this year it is especially dark for our friends in the Ukraine. In Kyiv, but also in the other cities of the country, people often have only 1-2 hours of electricity a day and even less during a bombing spree. A few days ago Kyiv was hit hard again and the Metro could not run for two days. People in a city as big as Berlin walked to work. It is also cold. Most flats are not heated or only for a few hours a day. Without electricity, it's hard to cook something, get to the 20th floor or charge the important devices to stay in touch with friends and family.
But it is close to Christmas and the children are waiting for the Christmas Play and a miracle. This year, the Waldorf School Players are playing in the bunker so as not to expose the children to danger. They all have hope that the glad tidings to the shepherds will come true. For them too.
So we wish peace on earth and light in the darkness for our friends far and near!
Yours sincerely, Yaroslava Black and Ben Black.

Thank you for your donations!
I would like to tell you a little about what we all have supported together with the donations received by the Christian Community.
First of all, a big and heartfelt thank you! You can be sure that your donations are alleviating needy and helping people. As a special thank you, you will receive a new Christmas story in this issue.
I will not mention every detail, but through the examples you will be able to get an idea, or even support some initiatives yourself through the contacts given:

With the donations we have:

- Bought and sent electricity generators for our two communities and also for small initiatives.
- Supported individual Waldorf families and the communities in Ukraine to buy wood for heating.
- Bought lamps, headlamps, powerbanks, gas cookers etc. for individuals or our initiatives so that they can get a little relief and continue working in case of severe power outage.
- Supported many concrete families who need help in Germany, especially with many children. Many are housed in our communities and also find the help

they need locally.

- Waldorf schools and kindergartens in Ukraine have been supported because they are in financial need due to a lack of pupils; including two very young schools in Luzk, Horodenka, also in Kyiv as well as the curative education school in Kharkiv.
- Art therapies for refugee children with their mothers in Luzk as well as accommodation for 200 orphans in Luzk were supported.
- Helped a group of theatre artists, actors and singers from Lviv who have turned their theatre into a refugee camp and are helping the refugees day and night, including orphanages evacuated from eastern areas.
- A Demeter farm in Ternopil also needed urgent support. The wages for the employees could not be paid. We made a big order of Teas and herbs and can sell it here to support the local people. You can also do it directly if you chose. https://www.chaipotutory.com.ua/ua/
- Ukrainian PEN organisation collected money for the destroyed libraries in Kharkiv and Chernihiv. We participated in the purchase of children's and young people's books.
- And a very big joy for all Ukrainian children here in Central Europe are books! We have ordered many books from Ukrainian publishers for young and old and have distributed them here among the people hungry for something to read. We also have sent them on to children's homes and orphanages for Ukrainian children. In this way we also support the publishers and writers in Ukraine who have to live without financial security.
- Help for medical care in Germany or also in Ukraine, because we already have the first wounded in our congregations, also people who have lost their homes, former Waldorf students who were killed in the war.

There are thousands of people whom the Christian Community, that means you dear friends, are helping! Until today, many are trying to find accommodation for Ukrainians, a job or a place in school or kindergarten. Many thanks for that too!

In difficult times, every bit of help is valuable. It is human warmth. Warmth creates transformations. Something passes away. The new seeds will sprout in the warmed soil. In these difficult days, I still have hope that Central Europe, by continuing to support the suffering East, is doing an important job for the future.
Thank you for making it possible!

With warm heartfelt greetings

YAROSLAVA BLACK

GREETINGS FROM ODESSA

What does one experience directly in Odessa? The sight of the civilian ships that have been delivering Ukrainian grain all over the world for months has been raising hopes here that peace might be possible after all.

Again and again, the work of the air defences, which sometimes means the roar of missiles directly overhead and the clouds of smoke appearing in visible proximity. Many have learned to recognise what exactly is flying "up there" depending on the sound. Air raid alerts have become a part of everyday life.

Our hospitals are reserved for the wounded soldiers. For the civilian population, hospitals in the city are available on a limited basis for emergencies. The schools and public institutions set up air raid shelters. Without such bunkers, which are to be built according to strict regulations, no live classes may be held in the school.

Passport checks are carried out when going out of Odessa by car.

There is no shortage of essential foodstuffs, which is made possible by the tireless work of the farmers and the many aid deliveries from abroad.

In Odessa, daily Services continue at the altar alternating between Russian and Ukrainian. When I cautiously asked if it was not too much of a challenge for our Servers, the answer came: "This is our spiritual war". There have even been some new Severs.

At the end of October, Hans-Bernd Neumann (Priest from Kassel, Germany) attended the Proseminar in Odessa with a course and held the golden wedding ceremony for my parents on the last Sunday of the month. (Andrej's mother recently crossed the threshold. Note by Y. Black)

In hardship, in anxiety and alongside the destruction, there is a New Christ nearness and a New Birth awaiting. For again and again increasingly, this future-oriented mood is being felt here from various sides of life: what will "the afterlife" look like? We do not know (yet), but to think about it and to feel its reality gives us an important source of strength already today!

ANDREJ ZHILTSOV

GREETINGS FROM PRAG

More than 10 % of Prague's inhabitants are war refugees from Ukraine - a proportion that is hardly exceeded by any other large city west of the Ukrainian borders. For many years, Prague has been a frequent destination for Ukrainian guest workers, there are many jobs here and the Czech language is relatively understandable for a Ukrainian. Moreover, the Czechs, but especially the people of Prague, know much better than the peoples further west what the greedy empire of darkness in the east is all about: all this may have contributed to the fact that after the new, massive Russian attack in the spring of 2022, so many fleeing Ukrainian families chose Prague as their destination.

In the first months, the main concern was quick, not infrequently improvised accommodation, food and help with registration in the refugee centres, on which health insurance and social welfare depend. Thousands of volunteers were on the move in Prague to cope - including some from the Prague community. The parish hall was transformed into a refugee camp, and at the altar - for the first time in Prague - the Act of Consecration of Man rang out in Ukrainian.
After ten months of war, the situation is now much calmer. The refugees no longer live in improvised camps, but in flats provided by the city or simply as lodgers with Prague families - including our parishioners - the children go to schools - including the Prague Waldorf schools. Now and then someone from the refugees also appears at the Service, but rather rarely, because the people from the Ukrainian congregations of the Christian Community have usually migrated further west, especially to Germany, where they already had contacts, and the Orthodox and Catholic Ukrainians have usually already found their way into a Ukrainian church.

But help is always needed. The refugees now live and work with us and no longer need it directly. But their country is being shelled more and more by the aggressor: People are killed, in the east and south the inhuman occupying power still terrorises those who did not flee in time, tortures the men, rapes the women, kidnaps the children. Those who helped the fleeing families at the railway stations in spring and summer are now mostly helping virtually - with their donations. Even though everything is more expensive now, especially heating, and winter is coming, most Prague residents prefer to put on two jumpers and transfer their donations to those who are fighting the merciless invaders in the east. Because they know - if the hordes are not stopped now, our freedom, indeed our lives, are also at stake."

MILAN HORAK FROM PRAG

WORD OF THANKS

There are many words of thanks for the help you have given to people, initiatives or congregations through the Christian Community. Here are just a few of them:

Good day, dear friends! I greet you warmly from Ivano-Frankivsk. We are a Waldorf community of parents and educators gathered around the kindergarten "Astra". We would like to thank you very much for supporting us in this difficult time. Waldorf initiatives have lived only through the tireless efforts of a few people, even in times of peace. Now it is a matter of survival in the literal sense of the word. Nevertheless, we try every day as best we can. Your financial support helped us to share what little we have with the refugee families from Kharkiv, Kherson, Volnovacha.

Gratefully and with kind regards,

VITALINA MASLOWA

Waldorfkindergarten in Iwano-Frankivsk

Kindergarten in Ivano-Frankivsk with refugee families from Eastern Ukraine

GREETINGS FROM KYIV

Tetyana Nechytailo reported on life in the Kyiv community in the December issue of the Christian Community. Here are just a few lines. She cannot often write emails or is reachable, as Kyiv suffers very badly from power outages. Some parts of the city have had no electricity for 2-3 days. Therefore here only briefly:
"It is very dark, but we shine. Sometimes with the last of our strength. Today there was a Service in the community, but without light. Kyiv is very much under fire. Now we have a Trinitarian shortage: light, water, heat. To communicate without internet and phone is difficult. We are going back to the old methods: make appointments and hope that nothing will come up. At the moment there are a lot of children in the community. They come in spite of everything and look forward for a week to the next Sunday when something nourishing will happen. There are new families who have found a place of refuge in the church. I am very grateful that we can work. Yesterday in Odessa was the funeral of Andrei Zhiltsov's mother. Yes, gratitude is what I feel most strongly these days. It helps."

NEW BOOKS BY UKRAINIAN AUTHORS FROM AND ABOUT THE UKRAINE.

Many of you have asked, what can one read to get insight into the Ukraine, to learn something about it, to understand it more deeply. After the last Ukraine Up to date Newsletter, where I mentioned many books, here is a small addition:
The magazine "Gelb-Blau" in German is published in Stuttgart: www.gelbblau.net
Andrey Kurkov: „Threasures of Ukraine", Thames&Hudson
"Diary of an Invasion"
Tanja Maljartschuk: "Of hares and other Europeans. Stories from Kyiv";
"In a moment the story continues"
"A Biography of a Chance Miracle".
Timothy Snyder: "Black Earth" (available in German, English and French);
"Blood Lands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin"
(also available in English)
Serhii Plokhy: " The Gate of Europe. The History of Ukraine" (also available in English)
" The Front Line: Why Ukraine Became the Scene of a New East-West Conflict" (also available in English)
Karl Schlögel: "Decision in Kiev" (also available in English)
Serhij Zhadan: "Sky over Kharkiv" (also in English)

In the Kyiv community, people shine light on each other. The big ones are light bearers for the little ones. Joy in the darkness

A Christmas Story

CHRISTMAS TREE FOR THE QUEEN

Once upon a time, deep in the Queen's forest, there was a great clearing. In the middle of it there stood a mighty fir tree. Because it had plenty of room to grow, and its roots had enough rain, it had grown to a great size. It was the most beautiful tree in the whole forest. Many a forester had looked longingly at its trunk, but no-one dared to cut this great fir tree down.

The top branches tickled the rain clouds in summer till they spattered with rain. In winter, the tree was a hiding place for blackbirds, robins and squirrels. Very often foxes, hares and hedgehogs went to sleep under its great branches. It was warm and peaceful there and the fir tree sang its ancient song in the wind for all the animals.

One winter's day, some people came into the forest. They were the Queen's gardeners, looking for a Christmas tree for the palace.

"There it is!', one of them called from afar. "Look, look! This one is fit for our Queen!", responded another. "Oh yes!" called another, as he stood admiring the tree, "This tree is wasted, standing in the forest here, but our Queen will rejoice, if she has it in the palace, and all her guests will love it too."

The gardeners had been looking for the Queen's tree for a very long time. It was already getting darker and the first stars were shining in the sky. Snowflakes were falling on the branches and the paths. The Queen's gardeners hurried as they set off back home. They had decided to come back in the first light of dawn to fell the great fir tree.

As soon as the men had left, the animals started crawling out of their holes and the birds were flew out of their nests. As they all nestled round the stem of the fir tree, they could feel it shivering and trembling. No! They couldn't let it happen – they had to stop it being cut down and taken to the palace. But what could they do against human beings with their sharp axes?

The animals were very sad, but they wanted at least thank the fir tree for all the years that it had beautified the forest. The hedgehog was the first one: he fetched a red apple from his den. The snowy owl understood immediately what the hedgehog was up to. She took the apple from him, flew all the way to the top of the tree place it on the topmost branch to decorate it. That was the beginning. Then with a great bustling and fluttering, birds were adorning the branches of the fir tree with mistletoe, whose berries reflected the light of the moon; spiders were weaving fine wreaths; squirrels brought nuts; field mice brought straw stars; the hedgehogs brought more apples; the foxes brought colourful feathers and blue eggshells. The poor bats couldn't find anything beautiful enough in their rocky homes, so they decided to use themselves to decorate the tree, and hung upside-down on its

branches. Blackbirds brought red berries from the holly tree and placed them carefully in the spiders' wreaths. They put some of the holly branches in the bat's beaks, just in time before they fall asleep. One hare got Christmas roses and placed them beneath the tree's lowest branches. Even the magpie came with a golden watch on a chain, which it had plundered in a far-off town, and hung it on the treetop.

When all the animals and birds had finished decorating the tree, they looked up. A white cloud stood above the forest clearing. The stars were shining on the fir tree, its branches, wreaths and the silver snow. The bats' fur was glistening, as well as mistletoe berries. The fir tree was shining with heavenly beauty. Oh, it was a jewel indeed!

Picture from Maryna Yandolenko

Now they heard from afar the was crunching under heavy steps. The animals hid themselves away in dens and holes as best they could, so that the fir tree would not be alone in this sad hour. As the royal party approached the fir tree, they all grew very still. They rubbed their eyes, hardly believing what they saw, and some of them cried out: "Oh!" and "Ah!" The Queen herself stood up in her sledge to admire the tree. Smiling, she stood silent and utterly still. No-one dared to say anything to her. The noses of the ladies in waiting grew red with the cold and the knees of gentleman at arms were knocking. After a while, the gardeners couldn't hold their axes in their hands anymore, and they thudded onto the snowy ground. Soon after that, the Queen ordered everyone to go home. Quietly, all the people left the forest clearing, turning around as they left to take one last look at the most beautiful Christmas tree that they had ever seen.

Soon, everyone had heard about the Christmas tree in the forest, which had been transformed overnight by a miracle. Everyone wanted to see the tree, children and their parents alike. When they came to the clearing, they stood in front of it with open mouths and sparkling eyes. The Queen came back with her children to see the tree.

"I wish we had this tree at home," said the youngest child. "Then we wouldn't need to go to the forest in this cold and dark weather."

The oldest boy said: "Mother, you are the Queen! You can ask for anything you want."

"That I am", answered the Queen smiling. "But there is another Queen, greater than I. I think that she wanted it to be just as it is."

The children looked at each other, wondering who that other Queen could be. Was it the Christmas tree? The Queen pointed up to the skies where the stars were shining in between the branches of the fir tree. "The heavenly Queen", she said very quietly.

"Mary, the Heavenly Mother?", asked the children. The Queen nodded. They couldn't see it, but the blackbirds, robins, hares, hedgehogs, foxes and squirrels – all the creatures of the forest – nodded in their hiding places. They all knew what the Queen meant. Above the stars, above the moon and the sun, the heavenly Queen is walking towards the earth. The creatures were quite sure that she was on her way once more to visit the forest clearing with its beautifully adorned Christmas tree. And so it came to pass.
The Queen's children took a small Christmas tree home, one with roots on that they could plant in their garden when Christmas was over. But they kept on visiting that beautiful Christmas tree in the forest and admired it all day long till the dusk. Sometimes it seemed to them that the decorations on the tree were moving and fluttering about. And then they wrapped themselves up warmer and thought: Why not? Who would be surprised if there was a miracle at Christmas?

WRITTEN BY YAROSLAVA BLACK & TRANSLATED BY NATALIIA SHATNA

In pictures

Kyiv in the dark. No electricity, only the Apostle Andrii watches over the city.
Photo: Stanislav Krupal

The curative education school in Kharkiv thanks you very much for your support and sends warm winter greetings!

In Kyiv, the group of teachers, parents and community members performed the Christmas play. Only, this year they did not play on the stage of the Waldorf School, but in a bomb-shelter. But the joy of the children was all the greater.

Many Waldorf families from the East have found a home in the young Waldorf school in Horodenka, in the Foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Below: Odessa and the Golden Wedding of Andrej Zhiltsov's parents

Donations to support refugees and humanitarian aid in connection with the war can please be transferred to the account of the West German Region of the Christian Community with a corresponding reference in the purpose of use:
Bank account holder: Die Christengemeinschaft
IBAN: DE96 3702 0500 0008 2597 00; BIC: BFSWDE33XXX; BLZ: 37020500
Oder:
Bank account holder: Die Christengemeinschaft in Deutschland (Foundation)
IBAN: DE16 8502 0500 0003 6204 00; BIC: BFSWDE33DER; BLZ: 85020500

Thank you for all your support, good thoughts and prayers!

Black & Black Production