
APRIL 2022

Ukraine Trip Update

	CHATTANOOGA TO ODESA	
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Thank you for your prayers and support for our trip to Ukraine! Our team could write a book of all the things we saw, the incredible ways God provided, and the amazing testimonies of the Ukrainian Christians. Here's a summary of our trip:

Monday, March 28 - Bucharest, Romania

Fellow police officer, Juan Cuba and I met with Iulian Avramescu, the founder of Life Romania, and planned our next few days. (Iulian, Life Romania, <https://liferomania.org/> and CRU Romania are actively involved in helping Ukrainian refugees and transporting supplies to those suffering inside Ukraine. Iulian connected us with Pastor "S. A." in Odesa, Ukraine. Pastor S. A. and his congregation have turned their sanctuary into a collection and distribution center, helping other ministries and evacuee shelters in the surrounding region.)

By sunset on March 28th, we were at the Romania/Ukraine border. This border crossing has a steady flow of women and children exiting Ukraine.



Tuesday, March 29

We spent the day serving food at the border with Sorina (a Christian volunteer from Moldova), talking with other volunteers, and planning our trip into Ukraine to meet Pastor S. A. We were surprised by the number of volunteers that advised us not to travel to Odesa. We tried explaining to them that our group is comprised of SWAT team members and military veterans, that people inside Ukraine need help and we simply feel compelled to help them. Some people we talked to understood, some did not.

Wednesday, March 30

Cuba and I crossed the Danube River and entered Ukraine before sunrise. By 2pm we were able to meet Pastor S. A. at his church in Odesa. We gave them over 150 IFAKs (individual first aid kits) and Ukrainian New Testaments.



(Pastor S. A. became a pastor just prior to the start of the war. After helping his wife and daughter seek safety in Western Europe, he chose to remain in Ukraine to help. Ukrainian males 18-60 years old are not allowed to leave the country; however, Pastor S. A. has dual citizenship which gives him permission to leave the country and join his wife and daughter; but, he chooses not to. Instead, he has decided to stay with his congregation. Together, they work tirelessly, risking their own safety to help their fellow countrymen suffering from this pointless war. To put things in perspective, our team was only away from our families for about two weeks. Pastor S. A. hasn't seen his family for two months and there's no end in sight.)

Thursday, March 31

The rest of our team, Danny Jones, Clay Tolson, Hunter Morgan, Harris Looney, and Brad Cobb arrived in Bucharest. Cuba and I picked them up at the airport and we had a team briefing at our hotel about the days ahead. (Brad Cobb joined our team last minute and, to say the least, he was like attaching a rocket engine to our mission. His energy and generosity are amazing. He chose to pay for many expenses out of his own pocket and also started his own Gofundme for the trip, which gave us the ability to source supplies on a whole new level and continue to provide support to the Ukrainian people even after our trip ended.)

Friday, April 1

We picked up three vans, purchased as much food and medicine as possible, and drove to the Ukraine border. Because of all the donations, we were able to purchase over \$15,000 in food and medicine before we left Bucharest.



Saturday, April 2

We delivered three vans of food and medical supplies to Odesa and Mykolaiv, Ukraine. We also had six suitcases full of medical supplies provided free of charge by Mission Regan. <https://www.missionregan.org/>

Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalm 82:4

April 2, cont.

We made two delivery stops in Mykolaiv- a church converted into a distribution center and a boarding school converted into an evacuee shelter housing over 130 evacuees. These evacuees were from harder-hit areas of Ukraine and many were children. We were asked to take a group photo with some of the children and after spending just a few minutes with them and realizing they are facing horrible danger and uncertainty, our team was visibly changed.



We were scheduled to be in Moldova the next day to help a church in the capital city of Chisinau, but after learning the shelter in Mykolaiv was in need of more supplies, our team agreed to divide into two teams. One team would remain in Odesa for at least one more day to take a large delivery of food to the shelter in Mykolaiv and another team would travel to the church in Moldova.

During the night, several Russian airstrikes damaged a fuel facility in Odesa. We woke up to the air raid sirens and missile strikes, but most of the explosions were relatively far away from our hotel.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/03/russian-missiles-thought-to-have-hit-odesa-fuel-depot>



Sunday morning the air raid sirens went off again, but we heard no explosions. After the sirens stopped, we held a planning session with Pastor S. A. and a few other church members. That evening, Danny Jones and I drove 5 hours back to our border town hotel to gather the team's luggage while the rest of the team purchased more supplies and attended church with Pastor S. A. in Odesa.

Monday, April 4

By midafternoon, our team in Odesa had purchased thousands of dollars of food and other supplies and delivered them to the shelter in Mykolaiv. This time the team was able to hang out with the kids for more than just a quick photo.

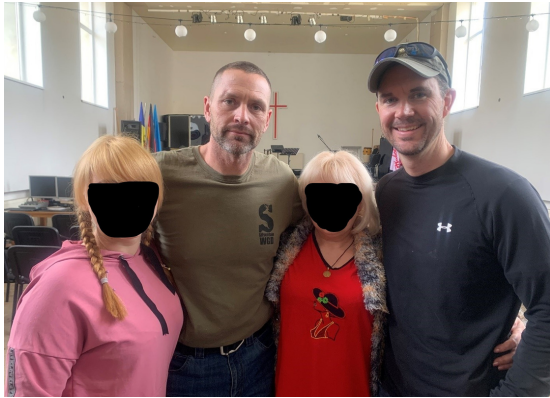


Less than an hour after our team left Mykolaiv, several civilians were killed by Russian bombs. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/09/mykolaiv-nervous-russia-military-moves-south/>

Danny and I arrived in Moldova to help Kishinev Bible Church (KBC) distribute food and supplies to Ukrainian refugees living in Moldova. We found KBC pastor Evghenii Sologubenco leading a fast-paced operation supporting numerous facilities in Moldova and Ukraine. <http://www.kbc-ministries.org/>

Tuesday, April 5

Danny and I helped KBC deliver supplies to two different refugee centers in Northern Moldova. At the 1st stop, we met a young woman who had fled Ukraine along with her mother. Our hearts were broken when we learned her baby had been deliberately killed by Russian soldiers.



The rest of the team attempted to join us in Moldova, but a customs issue with one of our vehicles meant 2 of our teammates had to return to Odesa for at least one more night. This problem turned out to work just fine with our next assignment: delivering three vans of supplies to a church outside Kyiv. Other logistical issues meant we actually had to travel back through Odesa to get to the church outside of Kyiv. (Not the most direct route on a map, to say the least, but necessary given the situation.)

Wednesday, April 6

We departed Moldova at 3 am and after a delay at the border, picked up Cuba and Hunter outside Odesa. By the afternoon we had delivered three vans of food and supplies to the church outside Kyiv. This turned out to be our easiest delivery yet since we had an interpreter (Tania) from Pastor S. A.'s church and a Ukrainian pastor driving the lead vehicle. Both of them made a big difference as we navigated the military checkpoints. The most eventful part of this trip was the lone fighter jet that flew over the church. We even made it back to Odesa before the 9 pm curfew.



Thursday, April 7

Due to the reoccurring customs issue with one of our rented vehicles, our plan to drive all 3 of our vehicles from Odessa into Moldova was thwarted again, so three of us made a 13-hour trip back into Romania, left “the problem vehicle” at a church in Romania and joined back up with the rest of the team in Moldova before midnight.

Friday, April 8

Our team divided into three groups. We were able to help deliver food to several places and spend a few hours at a refugee center in Chisinau helping KBC put on a field day for the kids with games and activities.



Saturday, April 9

We traveled back to Odesa to meet with Pastor S. A. and his leadership team, pray together and tell them goodbye. Their faith was so strong and contagious. We were blessed by just being around them.



After leaving Odesa, we were able to transport two ladies and four children from the Ukraine border to Chisinau, Moldova. One of the ladies literally kissed the ground when she arrived in Chisinau.



Sunday, April 10

We attended church at KBC, helped distribute food bags on a bus full of refugees, picked up our “problem vehicle” and drove back to Bucharest, Romania.

Monday, April 11

We met with Iulian and spent the day wrapping up logistical issues before our flight home.

Again, thank you for supporting this mission.

One of my favorite quotes is by Jim Elliott. He was a missionary in South America. He once said, **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”** Thank you for giving.

We aren't done yet. Several things are in the works and we will have more opportunities to get involved to share with you soon! The situation in Ukraine is getting worse, so please continue to pray for the people of Ukraine and that this conflict will stop immediately. Thank you!

With sincere gratitude,

Jeremiah Cook

Psalm 82:4 Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.