

2022-10-25-26 Freiburg

Where are the children now?



Beginning this Friday, The Father's House children will be located in 3 areas. One is located to the north of Freiburg in the town of Emmendingen. This facility is on a beautiful park-like campus. Originally a large 4 story residential dorm, our children are on the 3rd floor of this spacious campus...





The second location (below) is within Freiburg city limits to the north. When the owners became aware of the Father's House need they agreed to allow their building to be converted into a children's home for the duration of their stay in Freiburg.





The third location is to the south in Bad Krozingen. I have no pictures because the children have not moved yet! This location is a hotel that is being completely retrofitted to accommodate the children. It is owned by "Evangelical City Mission Freiburg" the parent organization that has been God's "angels of mercy" with the evacuation of the children. They are also the owners of the neighboring Bonhoeffer Haus (a retirement community) pictured below. This is Dietrich Bonhoeffer country — he was born and raised in this area. Here in Bad Krozingen, Bonhoeffer joined with other pastors and theologians to draft a document that attempted to address how a post-Nazi Germany might find her ethical way home and become a just and penitent nation.



The children have stopped asking...

While I was visiting with the leader of the new Freiburg location he happened to observe, "The children have stopped asking about returning to Ukraine." I asked whether that was a sign they were settling into life in Germany or simply an emotional resignation that they will not be returning home anytime soon. "A lot of both", he answered, "The children at this new location certainly have a different countenance than they did in the refugee camps— if for no other reason then they are together in their family groupings, no longer surrounded by others that make them feel unsafe, and each location has access to parks and beauty lacking in the refugee camps." However, it remains clear by the flags, artwork, and songs the children choose to sing that they are keenly aware they have fled their nation and are not on a protracted holiday no matter how many special outings are planned and sponsored for them.

And again, for those who love numbers...

- 10-30: the number of emails City Mission normally receives offering items for donation
- 8000: the number of emails City Mission received in 2 days once the news of Ukrainian refugees coming to Freiburg was announced.
- 10-20: the number of phone calls City Mission normally receives offering items for donation
- 1200: number of phone calls City Mission received in 2 days once the news of Ukrainian refugees coming to Freiburg was announced.
- 43: the number of truckloads sent by City Mission to Ukraine with humanitarian aid
- 800: the number of tons sent in humanitarian aid. (BTW if you have given to Father's House since the invasion you have partnered to send this humanitarian assistance.)

Meanwhile back in Ukraine...

Alena, Roma and Natasha's daughter (recently married 20 Oct in Kyiv), told her father that errands that use to take 10 minutes now can take hours due to scarcity, rolling blackouts that take down the cell networks and the internet, and air raid sirens which require all offices to shut down and evacuate to nearby shelters if available. For example, just securing Alena and Sergei's wedding license took 2 days because each time they were in line the air raid sirens went off and it required the government offices to close and then reopen once it was clear.

Alarm remains high that the Russians will target key dams around Kherson and/or Kyiv. Both would kill more people and destroy more property than a tactical nuke and would be just as psychologically devastating. The fear is that bombing these dams would require a massive withdrawal of Ukrainian forces to rescue those city's populations overwhelmed by the flooding.

For our part, we must complete projects and repairs currently under way so we are ready to care for refugees, additional orphans, and the eventual return of the children from Germany. All this must be carried out and completed against the backdrop of war. This means an additional generator and a tank capable of storing enough fuel to supply energy when power is out and clean air and water to the bomb shelter currently under construction. Needless to say, costs are compounded by their context.

Some summary reflections...

- 8 months in we see that operations for the Father's House in Freiburg are on the verge of "stabilizing". This means that residence, education, and schedule will all be in place within the next few weeks.
- The Ukrainian staff remain overworked under the current setup but it is difficult to imagine how this can be overcome unless there can be a "third rotation" of staff who exist to serve standby when other shifts are meant to be off.
- We are hopeful the cultural conflict between German caregivers and Ukrainian caregivers shows promise of resolving as they gain mutual understanding and trust.
- Roma's workload continues to be overwhelming. The challenges of caring for refugee orphans is 24/7 and emotionally, spiritually, and physically demanding and potentially debilitating. I am at a loss to understand how he can manage self-care and respond to the endless needs around him.
- Children are resilient. Yet, I think the challenge of being a child-refugee requires a pace for resiliency that even children cannot keep up with. On the one hand there is the pull to assimilate and on the other there is their longing for Ukraine. They do not want to forget but the remembering creates a constantly conflicted heart. Circumstances require a level of commitment to engage their German context whether they know it or not.

A person plans his course, but the LORD directs his steps. (Proverbs 16.9)



The pictures above are from a welcome celebration in the town of Bad Krozingen in anticipation of the last group of children moving from the refugee camp to the converted hotel. The children, in the pictures above, sang about Ukraine to the mayor (top row center) and local leadership.

As the children sang, I found myself reflecting on God's love and care for these children. Little could we know over the past years, as we were attending to the mission of The Father's House, God had been assembling a team and preparing the way to safely evacuate these children to this beautiful city within 48 hours of the Russian invasion.

We may fancy ourselves as visionary leaders but we pale in comparison to God— if indeed one could even dare to compare— to this (pro)visionary love of God. No person or nation is a co-worker with God in His sovereign capacity and will. But we are privileged to be co-workers with Christ in His redemptive purposes. Watching this gathering exhorted me to leave the directing to God and be grateful He invites all of us to be the expression of His redemptive love, care, and compassion with “skin on it”. Ukraine and the world needs us now more than ever — whether they recognize it or not.

Let me close with these words spoken to refugees in exile 2 ½ millennium ago. Let us ask God that this promise will be as true for these children and all Ukrainian refugees as it was for Israel:

“For I know what I have planned for you,” says the LORD. “I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.” — Jeremiah 29:11

If you would like to support the work of Father’s House in Germany and Ukraine, you can make gifts through either Faith Community Church or Light Church. Please use one of the following links and be assured 100% of your gift will go to assist the children in Germany, provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and funding for the repairs and generator in Ukraine.

[Faith Community Church](#)

[Light Church](#) (Under FUND select Ukrainian Orphan-Refugee Care)