

# BEACON of HOPE

## Report of the Work of the Mennonite Family Centre, Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine



by Louie Sawatzky  
Project Director

*Greetings from the Board of the Mennonite Benevolent Society of Winnipeg, and the Staff and the many clients of the Mennonite Family Centre in Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine, which is the Ukraine Ministry of the Society. We wish you the renewed joy of the birth of Jesus, celebrated as Christmas. May we not lose sight of this event of history - a manifestation of God's love to the world which has transformed and shaped the history of God's people.*

The ministry of the Mennonite Family Centre in Ukraine is entering its 20th year. From very humble beginnings, the programs have become a significant force and witness in the City of Zaporizhzhya and beyond. The ministry programs seek to address the everyday physical needs of those most vulnerable in Ukraine society. Seniors in the most vulnerable time of their lives struggle to survive on a small fixed income, often with underlying health conditions and usually with nowhere to turn. This includes the Home Care program which enables seniors with needs to live in their own apartments or homes. It includes the Day program where up to 8 senior clients a day come to the Centre to sing together, to have Bible study, to eat together, and generally to build a support group. It includes providing long-term, full-time care for up to six people in the Respite program. Many have told us how they see the help they receive from the Centre as

an answer to their prayers, and give thanks to God for this.

The work includes financial support for a widows program for up to 13 widows who live in the home created for them at the "House of Mercy" in Katusovka. It includes monthly financial support for two local programs in Zaporizhzhya: the "Florence Centre" and "Prometheus" where about 150 children with special needs attend every day, firstly, to develop social and communication skills and secondly, to prepare these children for acceptance in the public school, something not available to them without this preparation. These programs are run by professionals, and often with volunteers from the Faculty of Social Work at the University. We thank God for continued guidance and protection for staff and clients of these various programs.

### Conditions in Ukraine



by Boris Letkeman  
Director, the Mennonite Family Centre

Ukraine is going through hard times. As of October 18th most of Ukraine is again in the "red zone" with covid19 in the fourth wave. That means restrictions are again in place for travel, wearing face masks at all times when in public, and restrictions for any gatherings. Daily cases are again over 22,000 new infections per day in Ukraine with about 500 daily deaths. Hospitals are filled and unable to accept new cases. Vaccines are now readily available but there has been a reluctance to get vaccinated for various reasons, so less than 20% of the people have been vaccinated.

For the Centre it means the Day Program is again suspended, and the Home Care program restricted to only those clients who cannot survive without it. Until just a few weeks ago, we had no reported infections among staff or clients, but we now have five staff people recovering.

Ukraine is also going through severe inflation which affects not only food costs but also heating, water and electricity. For many, the utility costs take all or most of the pensions, leaving very little for food. Although the weather has been much better for crops and gardens this year, it will be a very hard winter for everyone but particularly for those with a fixed income.

Besides those hardships, the war in eastern Ukraine continues and is now escalating. The war has been ongoing for 5 years. People live in fear of getting through the winter, and what the future may hold. We expect more requests for help in the coming year, especially for food. With a limited budget, we are able to help only those without any other options.

We trust in God and know we are in his hands. He will not leave or forsake us.



**We are again sending clothing for clients as well as staff members. Most apartments are dependent on the city's central heating system which this year has not been turned on as of October 22nd. Temperatures go below freezing most nights, so it is cold in the apartments without some other forms of heating.**

Mennonite Family Centre in Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine

**Our Mission:**

To develop and initiate delivery of health and social services programs, based on Christian values from a Mennonite perspective, in the Zaporizhzhya community:

- for needy individuals with a primary focus on the elderly,
- that train service providers and caregivers, and
- that demonstrate and promote the principles of volunteerism, sustainability and a civil society.

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These are some clients (mostly widows) who, after a lifetime of experience find themselves in need of help. Many have had challenging careers, raised families and have seen many changes in their country. Many have a strong faith in God, developed since Ukraine moved from suppression in Communist Russia, to religious freedom when Ukraine gained independence in 1991.



These are some of the children in the programs supported by the Mennonite Family Centre. They have been designated as having special needs at a young age. Some are non-verbal when they come and learn their first words through interaction within the programs. The aim is to develop their skills and abilities, so they are accepted and can function fully in the public school system and within society.



## Support for the Mennonite Family Centre

If you have recently sent a donation in support of this ministry, we thank you and please consider this as our report of accountability to you. If you have not, we invite you to join us in this work.

Since the programs of the Centre are ongoing, clients depend on us to be there for them. The total monthly costs are about \$16,500.00. Due to Covid19 we have not been able to travel to visit the Centre for the past two years, but the leadership and staff at the Centre are strong, and have carried the programs very well. We communicate weekly and are grateful for passionate, local staff who carry out the programs.

As we move into the 20th anniversary year of the Centre, we give thanks, and plan on celebrating this milestone when conditions allow. Thank you for your interest and participation in this ministry.

**We wish you special blessings this Christmas holiday season. May the spirit of Christmas and all that it means, stay with us all year.**



(Cut and submit, or simply send your cheque in the envelope enclosed)

Yes, I want to help the needy in Ukraine! Use where most needed.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Please note: Donations from the US are administered in Winnipeg, Canada.  
Receipts are issued by the Mennonite Family Centre (USA) Inc.*

*In Canada, make cheques payable and send to:*  
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*In the USA, make checks payable and send to:*  
**The Mennonite Family Centre (USA) Inc.**  
 Ukraine Ministry  
 1045 Concordia Ave.  
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