

2019-2020 GIFT OF HOPE REPORT

SHARING THE
Hope of Christmas
WITH GOD'S PRECIOUS CHILDREN



*Thank you for helping us share Jesus,
the ultimate Gift of Hope, with 128,980 hurting boys and girls
all across Eurasia this Christmas!*


MISSION
EURASIA



“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” —Philippians 4:19, ESV

Thank you for bringing the hope of Christmas to children in Eurasia!



For hurting children in Eurasia, each day is filled with suffering, but this past Christmas, your generous partnership and faithful prayers made it possible for our School Without Walls (SWW) leaders, in partnership with national churches and volunteers, to bring Gifts of Hope and the priceless treasure of God’s Word to **128,980 boys and girls** living in Eurasia’s darkest and most remote regions. Thanks to you, the most vulnerable children in eastern Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan experienced Jesus’ love, the true blessing of Christmas, during the holiday season.

Each year, during the cold winter months, our SWW leaders put their ministry training into practice and shine the warm light of Christ by bringing Gifts of Hope—colorful boxes filled to bursting with sweets, toys, school and hygiene supplies, warm mittens or socks, and most importantly, Scripture—to children living in poverty, orphanages, Muslim-dominated regions, war zones, and other heartbreaking circumstances. By partnering with local churches in their communities, as well as international churches from around the world, young leaders are bringing the Good News of Jesus to hurting children and families in desperate need of hope and healing.

This past Christmas, your heartfelt generosity provided **133,205 children’s Bibles and other specially designed Scripture pieces** for these children and families. As they read God’s Word and cling to the gospel message of salvation, boys and girls facing unimaginable hardship are finding true hope and joy in their Heavenly Father’s eternal love, which will sustain them in the dark days to come.



Many of the children that SWW leaders reached through Gift of Hope this past Christmas are living in regions that are hostile to the gospel, such as Central Asia and Russia’s North Caucasus. Others live in Arctic Siberia, an area so remote that most people have never even heard the name of Jesus, and many more boys and girls are facing indescribable suffering in war-torn eastern Ukraine and other impoverished regions throughout Eurasia.

When these hurting children opened their Gifts of Hope and scanned the pages of their very own Scripture pieces, their faces lit up with joy as God’s transformational love filled their weary hearts with the promise of eternal life in Christ.

In this report, you will read moving stories of boys and girls whose lives have been forever changed by the Gifts of Hope that you provided. **Because of your heartfelt generosity, thousands of children are finding new life in Jesus**, and no manner of hardship or suffering will ever snatch them from His hands.

Thank you for so faithfully supporting Gift of Hope at Christmas and helping us share the immeasurable blessing of our Savior with hurting children throughout Eurasia!

Your Generous Faith in Action

Number of children reached through Gift of Hope:	128,980
Number of Scripture pieces distributed:	133,205
Number of volunteers, helpers, and participants (including SWW leaders and coordinators):	10,524
Number of churches that participated in Gift of Hope events:	941
Number of orphanages, shelters, and other institutions reached through Gift of Hope events:	773
Estimated number of people reached besides children (parents, family members, caregivers, orphanage workers, etc.):	115,025
Total number of people reached:	244,005

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” —Acts 1:8

Life-changing Gifts of Hope for Children and Their Families in Regions Dominated by Islam

In regions where Islam is rapidly spreading and Christians are experiencing persecution—such as Russia’s North Caucasus and Central Asia—Gift of Hope is one of the only opportunities for children and their families to hear the Good News of the Savior, Who longs to free them from spiritual darkness.

During the Christmas season, SWW leaders and pastors brought Christmas blessings to boys and girls in these turbulent regions. Because of your support, many of these children, along with their entire families, heard the gospel for the very first time, and now they are discovering the joy of the one true God. Not only did the Gifts of Hope that you provided share the joy of Christmas in regions where Christians are suffering persecution, but they also are continuing to bring encouragement to the children and families who received them. As they trust in the Lord to provide for their great needs, these hurting souls are being transformed by the hope found only in Jesus.

Ugur’s Story: Peace in the Midst of Suffering

Ugur is 11 years old and lives with his mother, brother, and sister in Azerbaijan, where most people practice Islam. Ugur’s father is in prison, so his mother is raising her children on her own. For many years, Ugur wondered whether or not God existed, but when SWW leaders brought him a Gift of Hope for Christmas, he realized that his Heavenly Father loves him more than he could possibly imagine. Now, even though Ugur’s family is still struggling to make ends meet, their newfound faith in Christ is giving them unquenchable hope and peace.



Caring for the Least of These in Russia’s North Caucasus

Ever since her husband died of a heart attack, Zarema has been raising her son, Ahmed, on her own in a very small house with no running water. Even before her husband’s death, Zarema’s family was struggling, but now things are even more difficult. To make matters worse, both Zarema and Ahmed have cancer, as well as diabetes. In the midst of their great suffering, SWW leaders and the local church have been caring for the needs of this hurting family, which has opened the door for them to share the Good News of Jesus.

This past Christmas, Zarema and Ahmed attended a local Gift of Hope outreach event, where they heard the gospel for the very first time. They were both moved to tears by the story of Jesus, and now they want to keep learning about Him! Today, Zarema and Ahmed are reading the Scripture pieces that the SWW leaders gave them, and God is transforming their hearts with His healing and redeeming love.



Thank you for making it possible for SWW leaders to share the promise of salvation in Jesus, the greatest gift of all, with Muslim families in Central Asia and Russia’s North Caucasus!

“The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” —Matthew 4:16

Bringing the Gift of Hope to the Unreached at the Ends of the Earth

During the Christmas season, SWW leaders take advantage of every opportunity to bring Gifts of Hope and the everlasting love of Jesus to unreached children and families in the most remote regions of Eurasia. This year, young leaders gave of their time, energy, and resources to share the Good News with many boys and girls living in Arctic Siberia, as well as Mongolia.

In these regions, which are largely untouched by Christianity, the Gifts of Hope you provided are introducing children and entire families to the Messiah. As the love-filled Good News touches their hearts, these boys, girls, and parents are discovering joy beyond their wildest dreams. Thanks to your support and the caring witness of our SWW leaders, unreached people are coming to faith in Jesus, and as His love penetrates their hearts, they are sharing the gospel with their neighbors and communities, transforming their remote villages into mission fields that are ripe for harvest.

A Gift of Hope and Inspiration for a Future Ministry Leader in Arctic Siberia

Valentina is the daughter of a reindeer herder in Russia's remote Yamal Peninsula, where many people still practice pagan religions. Ever since her mother died, Valentina and her siblings have helped their father as much as possible, while also attending boarding school. Despite their struggles, Valentina's father wants his children to have the best education possible, so Valentina is taking several science classes and she dreams of becoming a doctor.

One day during the Christmas season, a team of SWW leaders visited Valentina's remote village, and she was delighted when she discovered that two of these young leaders grew up not far from her own village and are now working in the medical field. She was even more excited when the SWW leaders hosted a free medical clinic and Christmas event for the people of her village. After hearing the story of Jesus' birth and opening her Gift of Hope, Valentina was so moved by God's love and the kindness of the SWW leaders that she immediately asked them to pray for her.

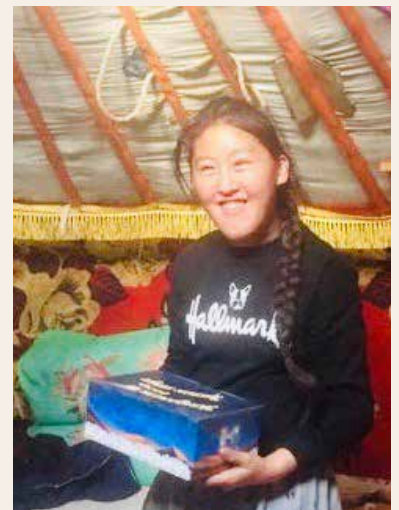
Now, Valentina dreams of providing free medical care and sharing the love of Christ with unreached people in remote villages all across Arctic Siberia, just like the SWW leaders who brought such joy and hope to her family.



Handa's Story: Christmas Blessings in Rural Mongolia

"I am 15 years old, and my family lives in a yurt on the outskirts of the village of Uliastai. I have two younger siblings, and during the winter months, it is my job to watch them while my parents are away taking care of our livestock. Even though I'm often responsible for my siblings, I am still able to attend school.

"Right before the New Year, a group of Christians came to our yurt with gifts and sweets. It was completely unexpected, and my younger siblings were so excited. We don't often have sweets, so this was such a special treat for our family. Along with the gifts, the Christians also told us about Jesus and the story of His birth at Christmas. We all enjoyed listening to what they had to say, and we were thankful when they gave us books about Jesus. We will definitely keep reading them together!"



Christmas Joy in the Most Remote Village in Russia's Abkhazia Region

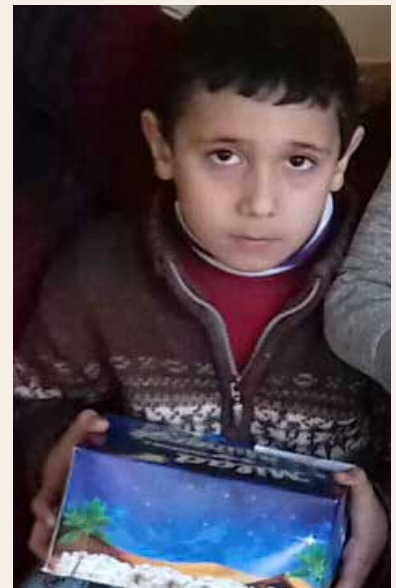
Thanks to your support, on Christmas Day, we were able to share the gospel message with children in Pskhu, the most remote village in Russia's Abkhazia region. Only about 200 people live in this village, which is located in a forested area in the Caucasus Mountains. Of these 200 people, 18 are preschool-aged children, and 30 are children and youth in grades 1-11. The only way to reach Pskhu is a broken and dangerous forest road, which is only usable in the summer months. During the rest of the year, this road is so muddy that the village is only accessible by helicopter or plane.

In order to bring Christmas joy to the children of Pskhu, a team of pastors, along with the local Bishop, Ivan Chekhunov, and Rezo Katsia, the Advisor to the President of the Republic of Abkhazia, rented an airplane to fly to the village. After a short flight, the group landed in a beautiful field, where the villagers from Pskhu were eagerly waiting for them. After they landed, the crowd escorted the visitors to the village high school, where the principal welcomed them with joy. He also shared that there aren't enough school supplies to go around, and many of the children are so poor that they have to share their pencils, paper, and books with their peers.

In response, Bishop Chekhunov shared that his team had Gifts of Hope, children's Bibles, and brand-new school supplies for all of the children. The principal was so grateful for this act of kindness. "This is an unprecedented historical event. You are more than welcome to tell us the story of Jesus! We would love to listen to what you have to share," he said with joy.

Along with Bishop Chekhunov, Rezo Katsia wished everyone a Merry Christmas on behalf of the President of the Republic of Abkhazia, and he emphasized the importance of focusing on Christ during the holidays. After that, the visiting pastors read the story of Jesus' birth and performed a skit depicting the gospel story. Finally, Bishop Chekhunov gave the school principals and teachers their very own New Testaments, porcelain Christmas mugs, and special stationary sets, while the children got to choose their own children's Bibles, Gift of Hopes, and school supplies, which included pencils, pens, erasers, and colored pencils.

After seeing the joy on the children's faces, the principal said, "This experience has been an unexpected gift from the King of Kings, Jesus Christ! I want to sincerely thank you for your sermon on the Savior's birth. It was such a special treat for our lost village in the mountains. Our children don't even have their own textbooks, so the Bibles you gave them are the very first books they have ever owned."



Thank you for helping us shine the light of Christ in the most remote corners of Eurasia, where children and families impacted by Gift of Hope are boldly proclaiming the Good News in regions that were once entrenched in spiritual darkness!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in affliction...” —2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Gifts of Hope and Healing for Suffering Children and Families in War-torn Eastern Ukraine

As the war in eastern Ukraine continues to devastate the lives of thousands of refugees and families displaced by the conflict, our SWW leaders are faithfully providing for the great physical and spiritual needs of hurting children and families in this region. In the midst of financial hardship, scarce resources, and ongoing violence, these young leaders are bringing live-saving humanitarian aid to those in need, and during the Christmas season, they also brought Gifts of Hope and Scripture to children in villages on the front lines of the conflict.

Even in the midst of profound suffering, the faces of children and parents alike lit up with joy when SWW leaders knocked on their doors, arms filled with clothing, rice meals, Scripture, and the Gifts of Hope provided by friends like you. Throughout eastern Ukraine, where God’s healing love is so desperately needed, Gifts of Hope are bringing the Good News of Jesus, the true joy and blessing of Christmas, to some of the most vulnerable boys and girls in all of Eurasia.

This year, two teams of volunteers—one from the US, which was led by our president, Sergey Rakhuba, and one from ShareWord Global, our ministry partner in Canada—participated in a short-term mission trip to Zaporozhye, Ukraine, where they helped SWW leaders distribute Gifts of Hope to hurting children and families living just minutes from the ongoing violence. In the nearby town of Novomoskovsk, the mayor of that town came to a local church to see one of the Christmas outreach events organized by our teams. The event had a profound impact on him and he made this startling remark: “This is a true Christmas blessing for the many poor families and children in our town. I am so glad to be here in the church that has brought so much joy to the suffering people of eastern Ukraine.”

Sharing God’s Life-Changing Love with a Mother and Daughter in Need

For five-year-old Daniela and her mother Maryana, Christmas is so much more than a decorated tree, fun gifts, and tasty food; it is a time to celebrate Jesus. After the war broke out in eastern Ukraine, Daniela’s family fled to Berdyansk to escape the violence. “The last few years have been very difficult, because my husband committed suicide, so now I am taking care of our family on my own,” Maryana shared.

In the midst of their struggles, God transformed the hearts of Daniela, Maryana, and their entire family through the SWW leaders at Heart of Christ Mennonite Church, one of Mission Eurasia’s ministry partners. These young leaders invited Daniela’s family to their church, and there they encountered the love of Jesus for the very first time. Along with sharing the gospel, the SWW leaders also provided humanitarian aid for Daniela’s family, and their compassion and kindness were a powerful witness for Christ.

“When we spend time with the SWW leaders, we forget about our problems, because God works through these young people,” Maryana continued. “The Gift of Hope they brought for my daughter gave us both hope for the future, and we know that God is walking with us every day.”



Bringing Hope and Healing to the Occupied Territories of Eastern Ukraine

The occupied territories of eastern Ukraine, including the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, have been occupied by Russian-backed separatist forces since 2014. Before this time, the issue of persecution was already a global issue, affecting many places in the world, but it did not specifically affect this part of Ukraine. However, when Russian-backed separatists invaded eastern Ukraine in 2014, they came with a plan to eradicate Protestant Christianity from this area altogether by establishing a new self-proclaimed government in the region. As a result, they used their volunteer Russian Orthodox Army to conduct severe and systematic persecution of Christians by murdering pastors, confiscating and burning church buildings, and prohibiting Christian literature. Evangelical churches in this area, including Baptist and Pentecostal churches, automatically went into survival mode, however, they were still determined to carry out their biblical mandate of caring for the needy in their midst.

In order to help our brothers and sisters in Christ, who are experiencing persecution in the occupied territories of eastern Ukraine, Mission Eurasia has established contact with churches in this area and provides support for the families of pastors and Christian leaders so they can continue to bring the gospel and encouragement to traumatized and needy people in their communities. In addition, this past Christmas, in partnership with The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, we were able to reach 15,000 families in this region through the Christmas Blessing program by delivering specially designed Christmas blessing packs with grocery items, Scripture, and Christmas gifts for the children. In the midst of the devastation, oppression, and hopelessness in this region, this program was a true blessing for thousands of Christian families and the community overall that is so grateful for the help they received.

Two Churches Bringing Help and Hope in the Occupied Region of Donetsk

Pastor Yuri, who became pastor of a church in the Donetsk region after the previous pastor was shot and killed by Russian separatists, and who himself was captured and almost shot, wept when his church received the Gifts of Hope from Mission Eurasia and said that they were an unexpected blessing from God. He also shared that, because of the generosity of Mission Eurasia and its partners, his church decided to deliver some relief aid under the Gift of Hope banner to elderly people living in the war zone who have little access to food and other provisions.

Also in Donetsk, a church was burned by separatists on Christmas Eve, but church members were determined to still distribute the Gifts of Hope to local children. So instead of inviting the children to the Gift of Hope program at their church on Christmas, as they had planned, they went from home to home in the village, distributing Gifts of Hope and sharing the message of the gospel with children in need.



Thank you for so faithfully and generously caring for the great needs of hurting children and families in eastern Ukraine, including the persecuted occupied territories, by sharing God's merciful love and blessings this Christmas!



“The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.” —Psalm 145:8-9

Words of Gratitude for Your Kingdom Work:

“I really enjoyed the Christmas event, and thank you for giving me such a beautiful gift! I have never received such a wonderful gift, so I am grateful to God for taking care of me this Christmas. Now I will tell my friends at school about Jesus, and I will invite them to come to church with me.”

— Bogdan, 12 years old, from Temirtau, Kazakhstan

“I would like to express my gratitude for the SWW leaders, who are not indifferent to the great needs of our children. We greatly appreciate their involvement in the lives of these children, who always look forward to seeing them, especially at Christmas.”

— Administrator of a boarding school in Baranovichi, Belarus

“This year, Christians held a Christmas celebration in our city, and one of my friends invited me to go with her. I had a great time at this event, and I made a lot of new friends. Many of them asked interesting questions about God, and I’d like to go to more Christian events so I can learn even more about Him. Thank you for my wonderful gift!”

— Zhargal, 13 years old, from Altai, Mongolia

“The children were very happy to receive their gifts, and they also listened attentively to the story of Jesus, the real reason for Christmas. I really enjoyed seeing the children listen so well, and I believe that the Lord touched their hearts. Thank you for giving my church the opportunity to participate in Gift of Hope!”

— Ibrahim Hadzhiev, pastor of a church in Ganja, Azerbaijan



Thank you for touching the lives of God’s beloved children and their families this Christmas!

Thank you for partnering with Mission Eurasia to help transform the lives of more than **244,000 people** all across Eurasia this past Christmas, including **128,980 hurting children!** Your compassion and generosity made it possible for these suffering boys and girls, including those in **773 orphanages**, shelters, and other institutions, to experience the blessing of Christmas by hearing the Good News of Jesus. In addition, a total of **133,205 pieces of Scripture** were placed into the hands of hurting children, enabling them to read God’s Word in their own languages. The Gift of Hope program opened the door to help lead these precious children and their families to saving faith in Christ. Now Mission Eurasia and national church leaders will follow-up with them, connecting them to local churches where they can grow in their faith. **Thank you** again for making this past Christmas a time of life-giving hope, healing, joy, and blessing for the suffering children and families of Eurasia!



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