

## “We Hope for a Free Ukraine”

**But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:25**

From Jeff – I have just returned from Ukraine and the images of destroyed homes and hopeful people fill my heart and mind. I was inspired and saddened at the same time. I am inspired by the resiliency of the Ukrainian people and saddened by their suffering. Please know that our focus is on helping people survive and to share the hope of Christ in the midst of this tragedy.

We travelled several thousand kilometers to the south and the eastern war zones. A rocket strike in a nearby city lit up the night sky as we drove toward Kherson. Our first night in Donbas, a drone flew over the town at midnight. We could hear it from the living room. The next morning we learned what happened. At 8:00 am we drove slowly by, in silence, as fire and police directed traffic by the destroyed apartment building. Two women were injured.



We drove by this rocket on our way into a village.

### Local Partners Lead the Support Effort

Our goal is to always work with local partners. This can be a church, a friend, or local families who are helping their neighbors. We spent the night with a local pastor, Andriy and his six kids. The next day, he led us through demolished villages to deliver aid, pray with people, and encourage them in their situation. Andriy has a small church and is a foster family. He is committed to serving people. In each village we would stop at houses, find out if someone was home, and then ask what they needed. ([see mercyprojects.org](https://mercyprojects.org) for video updates)



Pastor Andriy, left, with a local farmer and missionary partner Andriy at right.

Pastor Andriy knew many of the people. They live in basements or one tiny room with a wood-burning stove for heat. A box of food with potatoes, cabbage, first aid kits, aspirin, seeds for planting their garden, felt like a life saver for many people. Everyone was so thankful.

Right - A woman looks through her medical supplies box.



Far Right - A man used Russian rocket crates to build a fence around his house.



## The Mikolaiv Region By Kherson

We returned to Kyiv from Donbas, reloaded our van, and left the next day on a six hour drive to the south. Yuri and Nina with their two kids waited for us. They are our partners in these villages and have a new faith in Christ.

### Campus Crusade Teams Help Rebuild

“My friend Dima from Campus Crusade asked me to deliver some aid here, so that is how I met them,” Andriy said. “As I understand, they were open and honest, but not really Christians until Dima met them.”

We sat down to tea and fresh bread. Yuri waited for us to pray for the food.

After prayer, Andriy continued, “They told me, ‘We just believe in God now. We see that God is helping us. It is a miracle. We prayed with the campus team, so, now it's a part of our family tradition to pray and praise God.’”

“They were the first family to return and start to repair their house. Their house turned into a base for Campus Crusade, and a miracle of hope started in this village,” Andriy said.

It seems like families and agriculture are returning to this region. Is it safe to be here? I asked.

“No, It's not safe. Today we have heard a lot of explosions and shelling. Every night there are drones. They don't have another place to live. There are no other options. So no, it is not safe here, but we hope for a free Ukraine.”

Despite the danger, Yuri, Nina and their neighbors keep their hope alive. They not only receive aid from us, but multiply their support and share with others. Last year MP provided 100 chickens and for the next nine months they fed the Campus Crusade work teams with eggs and chicken meat!



Yuri, Nina and the kids stand in front of their greenhouse provided by MP. It is fully planted and they are ready to share with their neighbors.



Now Yuri and Nina have us pray with their neighbors too. Everyone is thankful and they all want to pray.



Nina walks among the chickens that feed the work teams. Despite hardship, they remain hopeful.



A pile of rockets cleared from the fields sits near the village. Many landmines still hide in the soil.