

Rescuing Abandoned Children

Psalm 27:10 When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.

From Jeff: Our UK director and journalist, Pete Wooding, shares a remarkable story this month about a young lady named Maryna, who is new to our sponsorship program. She took a huge step of faith and now, young lives are being changed for eternity.

It Seemed Like God Had Other Plans

Maryna graduated from university in 2019 with strong job prospects as a teacher in her hometown of Chernihiv. "At that time," Maryna said, "I never dreamed that I would leave my hometown. But God had other plans. I prayed about what God was calling me to do, and I quickly learned of a missionary couple in the south of Ukraine, in the town of Avdiivka in the Donbas, who needed a translator. It was a great way for me to serve God, and I could earn a small income. So I left home to serve the Lord and move to the Donbas."

This was a big move for her. She was only 22, single, and moving 600 miles away. She stepped out in faith, however, and loved translating and meeting other people doing ministry.

One woman she met at church, Lyudmilla (associated with Mercy Projects), was ministering to homeless children. Lyudmilla would visit the train station where the kids slept, bring them food, and invite them home. She tried to help bring a little stability into their lives.

Soon thereafter, Maryna joined in. "I became friends with Lyudmilla, who was helping homeless children. She and her church worked with these kids. The kids came from broken homes where their parents were not taking care of them. They usually got sent to the orphanage."



Pete and Maryna met up in the UK.



Maryna led worship for the kids



Maryna—changing one life at a time

"They visited Lyudmilla's home and then started visiting my apartment as well. One of these kids was a little 6-year-old girl named Sonya."

Sonya's Story

"Sonya's mom would occasionally come to the church to get food parcels. That is how I met her. I learned that she was just six years old, and would walk across town by herself because she wanted to be in Sunday school.

"She came to me one day and said, 'I am hungry and I am scared to go home because my mother is drunk. Can I spend the night with you?'"

"Of course!" I said. "After that she came to my apartment every night."

Her Town Became the Frontline

The full-scale war started in 2022, and Avdiivka began to be bombed. Today it is largely destroyed and occupied by the Russian army. Like millions of others, Maryna left the Donbas and evacuated to Germany. Sonya's mother, however, refused to leave. Maryna was not at peace. She was safe in Germany, but she knew that Sonya's mother was not taking care of her. Maryna returned to Avdiivka and, in great danger, was able to get Sonya out of the country.

In 2024, Maryna officially became Sonya's guardian. Now 14, she is enrolled in school, loves her Sunday school, and is doing great.

"This Is What God Wants"

While safe in Germany with Sonya, Maryna felt the Lord tugging at her heart. "I felt like I could take in one more child," Maryna said. "My American friend asked me and I told her I wanted to do it."



Maryna with Sonya and Sasha.



Sasha lived in the orphanage.

This was more of a dream than reality. Maryna was a refugee, raising Sonya, and didn't have any money. The next day, however, her friend gave her an envelope with 3,000 Euros in it. In a note to Maryna, her friend wrote, "This is what God wants!"

Sasha's Teachers said, "No, don't do it."

Determined and full of faith, she started the adoption process for a young boy from an orphanage named Sasha. He had no known family. Nobody ever visited him. He had spent his life in that orphanage.

"When I first met Sasha," Maryna said, "he was a wild boy in a dark way. His teachers could not cope with him. He was angry and aggressive. He didn't speak clearly. You couldn't understand him. They discouraged me. They said I was too young to waste my life trying to raise a boy like Sasha. We prayed for him a lot in our church."

Maryna Is Now A Sponsored Family

Sasha is 9-years-old now. His improvement over the last 18 months is amazing. They live two hours south of Kyiv in a village and Maryna told Peter, "Now people see Sasha, who knew him before, and they can't believe he is the same boy!"

"The Mercy Projects camp experience was great for Sasha," Maryna stated. "He received a lot of love and good feelings. He definitely wants to go back to these camps. He especially enjoyed making friends. At school, he was bullied by other kids because he was different. At the camp, they loved him and accepted him. He told me that now his dream is to sell tractors and to be a preacher!"



Maryna lives her faith out everyday raising the kids. She believes in a God of miracles.

Sponsorship Is A Gift of Hope

Sonya is now in the seventh grade and likes to play volleyball. Sasha wants to be a preacher. During a war, God is working, transforming lives. And a young lady named Maryna is changing the world one young life at a time.