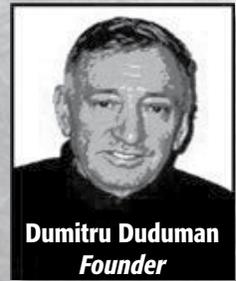


Hand of **HELP**



February–March 2018

ANSWERED CRIES OF THE DESPERATE



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The Answered Cries of the Desperate

Having dedicated an entire newsletter to the plight of the Ukrainian people, it is no secret that the Lord has laid them heavily on our hearts. It is a burden that has not relented, nor eased, even though we have been diligent in doing our utmost to bring some relief to as many as we are able. After numerous letters and generous, self-sacrificial donations, we were able to meet with some of the refugees that now have a temporary shelter as a result of God's provision through you and the outreach of Hand of Help. Only someone who understands how brutal Ukrainian winters can be can truly appreciate how indispensable something as mundane as shelter is.

Listening to the stories of their survival confirmed that the unktion the brethren had to start the refugee housing was in fact part of His master plan, a plan that would not only give the hopeless a place to call home, but the lost an opportunity to see Abba Father's heavenly Hand of provision and come into a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

On a brisk fall morning that felt more like the threshold of winter than one would like, we gathered in the largest room in the refugee center, a room that will be a place of worship once the construction work is completed. Elina was the first to muster a few words together, the others silently nodded, unable to look up,

as if the images of those they had lost, those left behind, and the memories of their personal suffering, were uncontrollably replaying in their mind as if on a loop. The military calls it posttraumatic stress disorder, civilians call it shell shock, but whatever name or acronym you attribute to it, one could plainly see the evidence thereof etched on the faces of those who had gathered.

Elina spoke of how the army had opened fire on ci-



vilians, how the train station could no longer hold the hundreds wanting to flee and how some of the people she knew were executed for no reason.

Many of the known Protestants in the area were on a kill list and had to hide in cargo trains just to get out of the area of conflict, as all vehicles leaving were searched and passenger trains had a heavy military presence.

Tears rolled down Elina's face as she expressed how grateful she was to have a safe dwelling to call a home for her and her three children, after being forced to leave a nursing home where they had sought out shelter for a short while. "Others are not so fortunate. Many back home have frozen to death."



The Answered Cries of the Desperate

David, Nadia and their three children left their home in Crimea in 2014. They had started driving but after hearing of the horror stories of people being murdered while they attempted to flee, they abandoned their vehicle and left the area on the train, with only the clothing on their backs and the money they had saved, the equivalent of a week's rent. "Without the help of the brothers, we would have no one and nothing."

Violeta, Ira and their three children from Lugansk, Troita, left as soon as they heard of a family they knew who made it out safely. They shared of the heavy military presence on the streets of the village they lived in and having to constantly listen to bombs going off. "Unmanned explosive devices destroyed buildings all around us. Shootings were going on in hospitals, kindergartens and schools. The foreign troops would take pictures and say that the Ukrainians are killing their own." "The most important blessing of all is the peace we have found here. Thank you and God bless you!"

Orlia from Donetsk lived very close to the area of conflict. "Courageous believers came through to



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The Answered Cries of the Desperate

assess what was going on in the area, they had asked if we had eaten anything. I broke down and told them that my children had not eaten in days. They helped us flee and got us safely to Cernauti.”

These are just a handful of otherwise seemingly endless stories of atrocity both witnessed and experienced, and if not for the hope and relief that the servants of God can extend to such individuals, I dare say few if any would still be around today to share their testimonies, and speak of the hardships they've had to endure.

What stayed with me long after we parted ways was the undeniable pain of the parents, especially the fathers, at their inability to do any-



thing more to protect their families than flee, and hope. My heart overflows with joy at the thought that God is using this ministry as a vehicle to demonstrate to many that if their hope is in God, their hope is not in vain.

I hope that the words above confirm to you that you have been an intricate part of God's Master plan in the darkest hours of these lives. I pray that your family and mine would experience the gift of peace in our homes, that we would learn to rejoice over all the things we sometimes take for granted, and that above all else we would learn to trust in the Almighty, knowing that however grim the circumstances may be in our lives, HE IS IN CONTROL.

Daniel Boldea

Living Water Project-*Noua Sulita, Ukraine*

We are often asked how it is we come upon the projects we undertake as a ministry, and although we believe wholeheartedly that it is God who brings these projects to our attention, and allows for their discovery, most of the time word of mouth is the catalyst that allows us to be made aware of new needs. It is no chance encounter that Noua Sulita has been brought to our attention. The refugee emergency housing project in the Ukraine that we have helped is located there. While the location

of the town is ideal for outreach, as it is far from the hustle and bustle of a big city, it is lacking one essential component: drinking water.

It is no strange thing that the first thing the pioneers of old were concerned with whenever considering a new homestead or a place to settle down was a water source. Whether a creek, a river, a lake, or a water table low enough to allow for a well, the foremost priority to anyone settling a new piece of land was water.

Living Water Project-*Noua Sulita, Ukraine*

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water.”

The town of Noua Sulita knows the worth of water but alas their predicament is such wherein even though they have access to water itself, it is not potable. This particular town has a population of 5,000 and over 2,000 men, women and children, do not have access to drinking water. The town’s water supply is contaminated with rust from the aged pipes and the local well water cannot be consumed without extensive filtration.

As the local pastor shared of the need of a filtration system for the refugee complex, the Lord strongly laid this project on our hearts. This project has the potential to not only be a blessing for the refugees living there, but for the community as a whole. A blessing that the Lord would use to reach the community for Him. As the vision of the ministry tending to the refugees is to have a church on the ground floor where the refugees can congregate along with the members of the community, what better way to reach out to them than to provide free drinking water

to their families? Hand of Help has already purchased 60 stackable chairs that they will be using in the prayer room.

The total cost of the Living Water project is \$4,826, which would not only provide the reverse osmosis filtering system that is ideal, but three 265 gallon water vats that would hold enough drinking water for the refugees and the community’s local families.

Please keep this project and the completion of the refugee center and worship hall in your prayers. May God use this filtration system to bridge relationships within the community and draw many unto Him and unto Living Water!

In His Grace,

Hand of Help Staff



The Unexpected Fruits of a Child's Smile

When I first caught a glimpse of Lacramioara's brooding eyes, shadowed by dark circles around them, I knew she had a unique story to tell. Almost all the people we encounter during our visits to Romania impact our lives in a certain manner – we try our best to comfort them in their suffering, to bring a little help to their numerous needs, we pray and we cry with them and we leave believing that despite our limitations and shortcomings, God is Sovereign. We learn a lot in the process and we are humbled by the unmistakable joy and gratitude that rises out of their desperation.



However, Lacramioara's soft voice as she was sharing the life circumstances that completely changed the course of her existence, in the stillness of her room, broken up only by her husband's moans, makes my heart clench with more intensity every time I hear it in my mind.

That day in December when I met Lacramioara, the bitter wind was nipping at every extremity, making us rub our hands together as though it could do anything to stave off the chill. Even in a heated car, our



feet were ice cold and carrying the bags of goods and toys around the villages proved to be an exercise in balance and strength. I knew we were stopping at a tiny school to deliver some goodies to 14 children that were coming from different areas to this



particular village school. Lacramioara, their teacher, was waiting for us outside.

We took the individual gifts and the bags of toys and sweets inside and were welcomed by 14 little ones, neatly standing in the back of the room and greeting us in a choir of innocent voices. Such a lovely sight! Even though we have this feeling every holiday season at the orphanage, seeing new faces hugging the plush toys and trying to peek in the bags, while also listening to their teacher and fighting their impatience, was truly rewarding.

While my father-in-law was still giving away some sweets, I asked Lacramioara more about her class of students. Aged from 6 to 11 years, they are like family to

The Unexpected Fruits of a Child's Smile

her. They make considerable efforts to get to school every day, fighting the dirt roads and the bitter cold wearing little more than a shirt. She was happy to discover that we also brought some winter clothes along. Her children would be provided with much needed warmth.

I could almost feel her heart growing inside her chest with gratitude. We didn't leave anything for her at that time, but the fact that her children were happy meant everything to her. We listened to a song, smiling at the notes the children were reaching along with their teacher and my father-in-law took the opportunity to remind them of the true message of their song and asked them to be little stars for our Lord, guiding others to Him just as the star guided the shepherds.

We told Lacramioara we would visit her at the end of our day, leaving her enough time to get back home. I knew her husband was ill, but nothing else about his actual condition.

After driving around the village and meeting three other families, we went to Lacramioara's house. As I entered



the main room, my heart sank. On a large bed, next to a wood-burning fireplace, laid Gheorghita, her husband. I couldn't see his eyes (due to an extreme reaction to an infection, the upper part of his face was swollen), nor do I think I could have actually looked him in the eyes. He slowly raised a shaking hand from the sheets and tried



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The Unexpected Fruits of a Child's Smile

moaning a "Hello" to the brothers we were with. He cannot properly talk, he cannot move all his body and he cannot get out of bed. For the past five years, he has been helplessly lying in a bed, unable to do anything.

Sister Lacramioara told us that a few bloods clots went up to his brainstem one day and suddenly burst while standing outside his house. And then she continued saying something that maybe most of us cannot even begin to comprehend. "I am thanking our God for protecting us that day. We were supposed to drive to Botosani. He made us stay home. If this had happened during our trip to Botosani or on our way back home, we would have most likely been killed. It happened home."

I remember hearing the other people talk among themselves and asking sister Lacramioara other questions but I couldn't follow the conversation anymore. I was looking at her quietly standing on the bed next to her husband and keeping her hands on her knees, ready to jump if her husband needed something.

We prayed together and we left everything we had in the car with us, along with a small amount of money. As the others were getting back in the car, I turned to sister Lacramioara who wanted to hug me and say goodbye and I barely managed to mumble a word of encouragement when she told me: "I have these kids that you met. I know God gave them to me so that I could sometimes keep my head up. I am truly grateful for this. This is how I can continue."

I have seen the joy that children bring to people around them. That day I discovered the unexpected strength that their smile can offer and the extent to which 14 little ones can dramatically change a life. Sister Lacramioara continues to fight and those children



may not know it, but they are already little stars in her life, guiding her to the everlasting embrace of the Father.

In Him, Alexandra Boldea



Worth The Wait!



We are excited to share an encouraging update we received from Romania recently. This bit of news is all the more compelling because although the immediate relief we offer the families we visit by way of food, clothing, firewood, or finances is evident, the long term effects of our endeavors remain unknown to us.

We labor diligently knowing that He who has begun this good work will be faithful to complete it, but as far as the specifics of when and how, as far as seeing the tangible spiritual fruit of our labors as we sow into people's lives, we can only know of them if they are imparted and shared.

We have been visiting the Apostol family and helping them consistently for some years now. For those of you who have been with this ministry for some time, you may remember the story of Nelu Apostol, the head of the household, who suffers from bent spine syndrome, looking all of fifty when in reality he was only thirty-six years old.

Although his wife and younger child have been attending church and were baptized some years ago, Nelu and his oldest daughter were the holdouts of the family, always somewhat resistant to the message of the gospel. Regardless of their resistance, we continued to love them, and share Christ with them, and patiently waited for the seeds we planted to take root and bring forth a harvest.



Worth The Wait!

It would have been far more expedient for us to talk them through a halfhearted recital of the sinner's prayer, never certain whether or not they'd meant it, or if their lives were coming into harmony with the will of the Father, but when it comes to such things, the fast and loose mindset just doesn't cut it. I truly believe that when it comes to such matters you can either have it fast or good, but never fast and good.

This is a particular sticking point for me personally, since throughout my travels I have met countless individuals who self-identify as having been saved, yet who do not know Jesus as Lord, or have a personal relationship with Him, but are somehow in full assurance of their eternal rest because they raised a hand at a Christian concert when they were teenagers.

Jesus never instructed us to say the sinner's prayer, he instructed us to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow after Him. For some individuals coming to this point is a longer process than for others, and Nelu Apostol was just such an individual.

It wasn't that he rejected the message so much as he was skeptical of the messengers. For the longest time he surmised that there must be some vested interest as to why individuals who were neither kin nor relation would care enough to make sure his family had their needs met, until recently when the fallow ground of his heart was finally broken, and the seeds that had been planted over time began to take root.

It was with great joy that we received the news that both Nelu and his eldest daughter were recently baptized by my father, having made a public and vocal proclamation that not only is Jesus Lord, but that He is Lord of their lives.

It is testimonies like these that keep us motivated to be diligent, to take our time, to make sure that we exhibit the love and grace of Christ Jesus both in our actions and words, rather than attempt to move individuals speedily along the conveyor belt of half-mumbled prayers and raised hands, just so we can say we won another one for the Kingdom.

If the decades of experience in ministry have taught us anything, it is that a true and undeniable encounter with Jesus, and a discipling of the individual over the long term makes for more mature and stable servants than the flash in the pan get it done just to get it over with conversions that have become so popular in western culture.

I would rather someone took their time and made their commitment true and heartfelt, having counted the cost in its entirety, than make a snap decision because they feel pressured, or because someone close to them did it as well.

We rejoice together with the Apostol family this day because as a whole they can stand before God, having surrendered their all to Him. We continue to plant, we continue to water, and we patiently wait for God to give the increase, joyful to the depths of our beings each time we hear of such an event having taken place.

With love in Christ,

Michael Boldea Jr.



Child of the Month

Mihai M.H. was born in August, 2014. Mihaita (as we call him) is the youngest child to recently become a part of our family. Together with his siblings, Cristian and Maria, they entered into our care in the fall of 2017. The children used to live with their parents; however, after their divorce, the court granted their mother sole custody and they were separated from their father who went abroad in search for work.

Soon afterwards, financial difficulties changed the course of their lives. An orphan herself, adopted at the age of two, the mother lost both her adoptive parents and was soon faced with complete loss of her housing, finances and work. Desperate and alone, she took her children and moved to a local housing center for single mothers in need. This proved to be a temporary solution and fearing she would have to live on the street, the mother decided to ask the local authorities to find a place for her children while she would leave the country to find work.

Her desire is to be able to come back and offer her children the home that they desire. However, until then, having no other relatives that could take the children into their care, we were asked to step in and welcome Cristian, Maria and Mihai into our family. In the light of so many changes, the children have missed school numerous times and they are in need of

special care and attention – not only pertaining to their education, but also emotional support and personal time dedicated to help them adjust to their new home.

Mihai stole everyone's heart the moment he stepped into our center. With his deep glance, he soon became the light of our family. Being the youngest, too, Mihai was received with open arms by all his new brothers and sisters. He might be too young to understand all the changes in his life, but nonetheless, one can see he longs for a time of respite where he would not have to move from house to house or center to center.

He immediately fell for our staff members and never taries in smiling whenever he sees them smile. One can tell the sadness in his eyes, but each day he steps a little further in his relationships with the others. He loves having his brother and sister in the same building. Even though he has to cope with his mother's departure, he has at least the security of seeing his siblings every day.

Please keep Mihai in your prayers. We have been given the responsibility to nurture him from such a young age!

It is during these very years of early childhood that we have an opportunity to form a child and to help him prepare for independent life, teaching him the principles and rules that will guide him forever. May every single good thing that he learns here stay with him for the rest of his life and may God help us teach him His ways and follow in His steps.

FOR MORE INFORMATION regarding sponsoring the Hand of Help Orphange, please check out our website at www.handofhelp.com or email us at info@handofhelp.com

Dear Brethren,

Ecclesiastes 9:11, “I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

I have been pondering this verse of late. I tend to do this sometimes. A passage leaps out at me during my morning devotional, and I begin to ponder it to the point of obsession, contemplating not so much what is there, but what is missing. Given that rabbinic tradition insists that the book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon during his old age, what is missing from his entire exchange is all the more perplexing to me.

Looking back on all the experiences he'd lived, Solomon concluded that superiority of speed does not necessarily mean you will win your race, nor does superiority in strength necessarily mean you will win your battle. Wise as one might be, they are as likely to go without as any other, and though one might exceed in cognizance and understanding, riches are not guaranteed them.

It is the conclusion of Solomon's introspection that troubles me so, because he lays it all at the feet of time and chance. I'm sure by now you too have surmised the crucial component that is missing in this exchange, the one element that makes all the difference in the world, and that is God.

Yes, from the perspective of the godless, life seems bleak and given to nothing more than mere chance. We are born, we live, we die, and if we get lucky along the way we make something of ourselves. If not, we go out the same way we came in, because regardless of how much men have tried throughout history, you can't take it with you.

It is the presence of God in the heart of the individual or at the helm of a nation that upends Solomon's conclusion, because when God is present there is no chance, there is no happenstance, there are no happy accidents, or serendipitous turns of events.

When God is present, His Hand guides all, and all things bend to His will. When God is present, though you may be the weaker of two in battle, you will vanquish your enemy, because the battle does not belong to you, but the battle belongs to the Lord.

The presence of God in our lives upends natural law, and what would have been a given, what would have been obvious to human reason and understanding, what would have been impossible by any metric, becomes undeniable reality.

There are many things in my life to which I can attribute the presence of God, and know with certitude and absence of doubt that save for Him and His guiding Hand, save for Him and His intervention, things would have turned out very differently.

Even this ministry, this labor of love that was started in a two-bedroom apartment by a family of immigrants who spoke not an ounce of English is proof positive that Solomon failed to include the most crucial of all elements when it comes to human existence, and our time here on earth.

By all accounts and every metric we should no longer be an active work. We had neither the wherewithal to understand the way ministry works nor the willingness to become beggars for Jesus, we had not the funding necessary to take on the projects we took on, nor the shrewdness to defend ourselves when we were attacked by those we thought friends.

Yet, here we still are, doing the work to which we were called to do, sowing into the lives of those who have long been forgotten, not because we were strong, not because we were swift, not because we were wise, not because we had skill or understanding, but because we trusted in the Arm of the Lord, and give Him all glory and honor for what He has done.

Fret not if you are not the swiftest, fret not if you are not the strongest, fret not if you are not the wisest. Trust in the Lord you servant of the Lord and see Him make a way before you.

Psalm 34:22, “The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.”

Psalm 37:25, “I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging for bread.”

With love in Christ,
Michael Boldea Jr.