



HEARD AND SEEN: HOPE IN A NEW HOMETOWN

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Week of Compassion has continued to accompany individuals and families affected by the war. Three years into this conflict with no clear end in sight, accompanying Ukrainian refugees is less focused on temporary arrangements while waiting to return home, and has redirected to helping them more fully integrate into neighboring regions, in addition to supporting the communities that are actively welcoming them.

Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable when adjusting to new environments. To enable integration into the wider community, programs are established as survivor- and community-led responses (SCLR). Week of Compassion's partner, Hungarian Reformed Church Aid,

has distributed micro-grants to refugee communities and in their host communities in both Hungary and Ukraine. This SCLR program's goal is to embrace community-led initiatives that foster lasting integration, empowerment, social cohesion, and resilience building. What does this look like in real, everyday life?

In Budapest, the Ukrainian Space offers after-school programs for primary and secondary students, from arts and crafts to Hungarian language courses, from mathematics to cookie-decorating! As their young lives have been disrupted by war, these programs provide an important place for children to simply be together, for them to paint and

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play and talk about their home, their family, life in the place they left and in the place they live now. In fact, when some observant students noticed plants and trees in their new home that resembled those that grow around the homes they left behind, an art project was born. Creating a book with students' drawings of plants, trees, and flowers, with captions in Hungarian and Ukrainian, the students have both an art project and a bridge across cultural divides. These hours at the Ukrainian Space are something children can look forward to every week – a place to escape adult worries, where kids can be kids.

Knowing the importance of resilient and integrated communities at every age, elders can gather weekly with the Ukrainian Elder's Club, for learning activities at the Ministry Center or cultural programs in Budapest and surrounding towns. This gathering serves as a healing space where members share meals and support one another, especially as they deal with separation from their families. It allows them to preserve their memories and converse in their native language in a new environment. This community not only acknowledges their struggles but also celebrates moments of joy,

providing a place to be seen and heard amidst the brokenness and laughter.

Week of Compassion continues to pursue the things that make for hope and peace – things that are true, honorable, and just. We eagerly share stories of hope, telling of what we have HEARD AND SEEN: that gifts of compassion matter, to people in crisis, and as people of faith. Week of Compassion makes an impact around the world, ensuring that the stories, needs, and celebrations of vulnerable communities are heard and seen – and that we respond.

With long-standing partnerships around ecumenical tables, especially in times of conflict and division, Week of Compassion is committed to the long-term, long-lasting, steady and deliberate work of peace, justice, and hope. We invite people of faith to be part of hopeful outcomes, where giving is a heartfelt response as we follow a compassionate Christ.

