

We exist to serve the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of women and children, orphans, and children with special needs and their families in Ukraine with the love of Christ.

MTU Camps From an Outsider's Perspective

by Barry Rodriguez

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Barry sharing the embrace with Sasha, young man with disabilities

I used to participate in my high school's musical theater program. Singing, dancing, acting... It was a blast. I loved watching our tech team "wow" audiences with interesting lighting effects, cool set pieces and dramatic sound effects.

One of the most versatile tools they used was called a scrim, a semi-transparent curtain that could be lit from different sides to make it anywhere from see-through to completely opaque. Often, there came an especially dramatic point in each musical where the scrim would be lifted and everything behind it would be instantly revealed in all its color, brightness and vibrancy.

I thought about scrim while volunteering with two of Mission to Ukraine's summer camps for disabled children this summer. Back home in suburban Indianapolis, things like injustice, joy, evil and the kingdom of God are sort of hard to

see... They are like shadows, fighting and dancing behind a scrim.

But coming to Zhytomyr and joining in with MTU's work was like having the scrim raised. Brokenness, evil and injustice came into sharp focus in ways I never would have expected. But so did justice, life and joy.

There in front of me was a **concrete realization of the kingdom of God breaking into this world.**

Disabled children were being loved on in ways they have never experienced before. Beautiful kids in MTU's Life-Savers program (here only because their mothers chose not to abort them) ran and danced and played. Elderly babushkas smiled as they heard about Jesus for the first time.

It was the kingdom. And it was beautiful.

Images from both camps have been seared into my mind forever.

Little Bogdan, struggling with muscular dystrophy, running as best as he could to give me a hug. Sweet Anton, unable to communicate with words, smiling from ear to ear. Lovable Oleg, out of his village for the first time in his life, singing quietly along to his favorite camp tune...

In the "real world," these kids struggle to be accepted, loved and understood. But at camp, they are all just part of the family.

In the States, we tend to think of the kingdom of God as a vague and blurry future thing. Nothing more than shadows dancing behind a scrim.

But here in Zhytomyr with Mission to Ukraine, the scrim has been raised. In sharp clarity and color, the true message of the gospel is shouted out:

"The kingdom of God is at hand!"