



Looking Up...

The **MISSION TO CHILDREN**

Reaching Out

www.MissionToChildren.org

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"In which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure..."

(Hebrews 6:18-19)

Why Have All the Parents Gone?

In Romanian orphanages, as in many of the childcare homes we serve in the world, many children are not actually orphaned, they are abandoned. Can you imagine the emotional trauma of knowing your parents are alive but do not want you?

You may ask, "Why have all the parents gone?" Sometimes parents really do not want to, or cannot, take care of their children because of poor health or mental incapacity. More often they simply cannot afford to feed another mouth, so they take their children to an orphanage or abandon them on the streets.

Since 2003 we have come alongside Romanian ministry partners who rescue street children. They manage a cluster of Christian children's homes near the city of Arad. MTC donors helped provide a new house in that location so that more abandoned children could be cared for and nurtured in God's love. The children range in age between 3 and 18.

When we were there in October the outside of the Shalom House still wasn't finished, but the inside reflected its name, House of Peace. In 2003 the staff told us heartbreaking stories about several of the children. One girl hid under the bed whenever a man entered the home because of traumatic experiences with her father in the past. Some caring workers

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This little boy proudly shows us his room. He is one of over 30 children who need transportation

From My Heart

The Kaunas Chronicles

Dr. John Garmo – President



Kaunas is an ancient town in Lithuania. Prior to World War II industrious Jewish families comprised about one-fourth of the city's total population. Suddenly, in June 1940 the lives of Kaunas Jews were upended when the Soviet Union invaded Lithuania. The Soviets confiscated their property, arrested many, and exiled more to Siberia.

Anti-Communist and anti-Semitic propaganda coming from Lithuanian nationalists in Berlin blamed Jews for the Soviet occupation. (Go figure...) This propaganda became kindling wood for the demonic fire of mass genocide that Nazis ignited when they invaded Kaunas on 25 June 1941. With little effort they incited local Lithuanian citizens to do the unthinkable: murder their own Jewish neighbors.

An estimated 1,200 Jewish men, women, and children were executed that day in the Kaunas suburb of Slobodka. In a Kaunas stronghold, called the Ninth Fort, Nazis "and their assistants" later massacred more than 30,000 Jews—including 5,000 from Kaunas. It became known as the "Fort of Death." Picturesque pastures across the country became killing fields. By the end of 1941 approximately 180,000 Jews—residents and refugees—had been slaughtered on Lithuanian soil.

In November I was again in Lithuania to provide training for educators who use curriculum developed by MTC's character ministry, Character Solutions International. My colleague, Tom Hulst, and I served 120 educators who influence an estimated 9,000 children in Lithuania, Latvia, and Russia.

During one seminar a school principal asked if we could meet afterward. Following the seminar, he and two staff members sat down in the front row. Our conversation went something like this:

"This is a very significant day in my life," he began. "I have a question. The students at my school separate their behavior at church from their behavior at school. They do not see the connection. I believe all life is integrated. Is there a way to connect what is taught at church and school through the character training you are providing?"

"Where is your school located?"

"Kaunas."

The privilege and responsibility of the moment hit me instantly. A community leader in Kaunas—birthplace of the Baltic Holocaust—was inviting us to help his students understand that life and the Bible are integrated! I thank God for answering the prayers of our MTC Prayer Team and others worldwide who faithfully ask God to open doors of effective MTC ministry.

"Yes, there is a connection. I'll show you how they are linked."

Since one of our featured character qualities is wisdom, I explained from the Bible that the first step toward true wisdom is respecting God for

"Christlike character... that's it."

Who He is. Then we read Scriptures telling that the path to God the Father is through God the Son. We concluded our Gospel summary noting that we show our love for God by cultivating Christlike character.

"Christlike character...that's it." He sighed and nodded his head.

Lord willing, we'll be back there this year to teach and encourage his staff and students.

People of Kaunas, lift up your heads! Psalm 30:5 says, "...Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."



60 teachers from Lithuania and Russia attend CSI seminar

Why Have All the Parents Gone?

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discovered a 7-year-old girl and her 6-year-old brother scavenging food in a garbage dump. These same children now greet us with smiles and hugs. They proudly showed us their rooms. We see the children soaking up God's love like sponges. They are happy, rambunctious, and bright. They are obviously growing in their understanding of God's love for them and experiencing His peace.

Right now our partners need a second-hand mini bus to take all the children to church, school, doctor appointments, and other outings. Would you help provide that van for these children?



Twelve children live in the House of Peace with their house parents

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Global Christmas Dinner Outreach 2007

Thank you, Mission To Children family, for your generous donations. We sent over \$27,000 to our partners worldwide to provide evangelistic Christmas outreaches for at-risk children. These events took place in Bethlehem, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, India, Kenya, the Philippines, Romania, Sri Lanka, and Uganda. We will update you with further reports from our international partners.

Looking Up in 2008

As you consider how to maximize 2008 for God's glory, here are four suggestions:

- Memorize the Biblical Psalm associated with your age. Pray through it often. Make it your personal psalm for the year and dedicate it to God as a love gift.
- Compose your own psalm of worship to God—one that expresses your heart's prayer and praise. (We invite you to share your psalm with us!)
- Pray for a region or need of the world that God puts on your heart. Tell Him you will share His burden for children living in a specific country or experiencing a particular need (such as orphans or post-Communist-regime children). Ask Him to give you His passion and urgency. Search His Word to discover what to pray for. Depend on His Holy Spirit to lead you. Pray earnestly, persistently, and expectantly as Elijah did (James 5:17-18).
- Keep looking up.

"Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).



Celebration of MTC Christmas dinner outreach in the Philippines

Chiune Sugihara: Conviction Counts

World War II officially began in September 1939 when German troops invaded Poland. The invasion sent Polish Jews running to escape death. Many fled to Lithuania, which provided temporary protection.

However, the Polish refugees needed to get even farther away from those who wanted to kill them. They learned about two Dutch islands in the Caribbean where they would be safe, but they needed transit visas to enter Japan before they could enter the Dutch islands. The desperate refugees approached the Japanese consulate in Lithuania for help.

Just a couple of months earlier Chiune Sugihara and his family arrived in *Kaunas* to direct the Japanese consulate in Lithuania. As a young boy in Japan, Chiune had dreamed of living in a foreign country. Convinced that he could achieve this goal, he studied diligently and was hired by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. His diligence earned him the privilege of working in China and Finland.

While living in these countries he developed a deep conviction that all people have value, regardless of their ethnic background. When the refugees in Lithuania requested Japanese visas, he wanted to help.

Chiune requested permission from Japan to grant these visas. Officials told him that only people with a visa to another destination would be granted a visa to Japan. The refugees did not have such visas.

Chiune and his wife, Yukiko, considered their options. Refusing visas meant that these people might be killed.

Granting visas against orders meant that Chiune might lose his career. He realized that he had to choose to obey his government or obey his conscience. He wrote these words, "I cannot allow these people to die, people who have come to me for help with death staring them in the eyes. Whatever punishment may be imposed on me, I know I should follow my conscience." Acting on his conviction, he chose to save lives.

From that moment until they were forced to leave Lithuania, Chiune and Yukiko spent up to 18 hours a day writing visas. Each day they completed the number of visas that would have normally taken one month to issue. When the war ended, he was told to resign in disgrace.

Almost 30 years after the rescue, a former refugee searched for Chiune to thank him. He found his hero, and soon hundreds of other "Sugihara Survivors" told their stories of how Chiune and Yukiko Sugihara saved their lives. Because of one couple's conviction to do what was right, they accomplished one of the largest rescues

of World War II. Over 6,000 lives were saved.

A footnote regarding Dr. Garmo's From My Heart article: We chose Chiune Sugihara to demonstrate the character quality of conviction in one of our ten CSI Teacher's Guides (see above). He worked in Kaunas, Lithuania, during 1940, just before and at the beginning of the Soviet occupation. The killing began in 1941 when the Nazis occupied the city of Kaunas.



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