



LOVE

WITHOUT
BORDERS

"You can only reflect what you have in your hearts. When God gives you that love, you share it with others."



When Roman and Tatiana Verbytskyy decided to expand their house, they wanted to use it for a health retreat centre. As a massage therapist, Roman would find the new three-bedroom space perfect for him to practise his profession in Canada. His home-based clinic would allow him to take care of the health and well-being of those around him.

But when they opened the new space, they didn't know God had other plans for their family. Instead of a health centre, their house would become a shelter and a home for 13 Ukrainian refugees, including Roman's sister, brother-in-law, and 11 more children, ranging from three to 17 years old.

Born and raised in Ukraine and now members of Madoc Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario, Roman and his family know very well the atrocities of the war and the reality of many refugees around the world. So for the Verbytskyy family, helping people was just the natural thing to do.

Joining Roman's family was his sister, Liudmila, and her husband, Dmytro Trebushkov, who were already helping refugees in Poland when Roman decided to begin the paperwork to bring them to Canada. When they moved, they brought 11 children with them. "I knew the great work she was doing, raising the children to be faithful to God. Now they are loving Him and studying the Bible daily. They pray together and raise them as believers," said Roman. As fostering parents, they are entitled to funding from the federal government, but they have also received great support from the local church, to settle the families in their new home.

All the children are currently in school and learning English. One of the boys, five-year-old Solomon, was born without one leg, and with his limited mobility, he needed to be taken to school every day. "They love him so much. He is such a loving boy who hugs and kisses everyone who holds him in their hands," said Roman.

Roman and Tatiana want to do more, but their physical space is limited. "I would like to take more

children, maybe 20 or 30 children if I had the space. This is a great opportunity because Ukrainians are refugees all over the world now, and it's a very good opportunity to raise them in the faith," he said.

Hosting the refugees was a chance of interacting with neighbours as well. When someone from the church announced the arrival of the families on social media, support came quickly. Members of the church and neighbours cooked soup for them and brought it to their home. They received more food than expected, and the assistance was overwhelming. That exchange was a moment to talk and connect with people of the community. "It's like an open door to talk about God's love and develop a friendship," Roman said. "It's hard to talk about God in a secular community in Canada, but through the children, it is much easier."

Roman's family has reached out to Seventh-day Adventist schools in the United States and other churches in Canada to find people willing to take care of more children from Ukraine. It's an opportunity we can't miss, he said. "You can only reflect what you have in your hearts. When God gives you that love, you share it with others." ■

Henrique Pieper Silva, a journalism graduate, lives in P.E.I., and serves his local church as communication secretary.

Roman Verbytskyy (far right) and his wife, Tatiana (second from left) at their home in Madoc, Ont. Their family grew when they opened their doors to 13 Ukrainian refugees.
Photo credit: Roman Verbytskyy

