



International hybrid summercamp go4peace 2022

"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."

go4peace – hybrid summercamp 2022

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.”

(Gen 28,16)

"It's a pity that this week is now coming to an end! It was by far the best I've had since I arrived here in Germany! Sometimes I catch myself thinking that I don't want to go back to Ukraine, because I found something new in this camp that totally fulfils me," is what I read in the WhatsApp message of a Ukrainian woman who has been living with her son in Kamen for half a year.



The go4peace-group from Kamen in Dortmund-Wickede

A young German woman who led a dance workshop during the camp writes: "I felt a very deep joy in everyone.

When I watched the video now in retrospect, I had a smile on my face the whole time and I think this smile will appear again and again when I remember the camp!"

A couple who had offered a chess workshop at the camp wrote in an email: "We were ONE human family, ONE heart and ONE soul, without borders, without walls. A piece of the Kingdom of God and its presence was already absolute reality.

It was magical, a piece of eternity." And looking back when we met in the Gaukirche in Paderborn, where the go4peace group from Kamen created the peace prayer at Patrick Kelly's Peace-bell on Monday of the Libori week, they wrote further: "Even people who had nothing to do with the camp told us that they were totally touched!"

In the beginning, chaos

And yet everything had started so chaotically. It remained uncertain until the last moment, who would participate in this year's hybrid camp "go4peace 2022 - It's gonna be my summer!" in the Kamen group. German youths had firmly agreed to participate and one by one dropped out again because their plans had changed. Others could only be there for one or two days. And then suddenly there were over 400 Ukrainian refugees in our town of Kamen. We had met many of them during different aid campaigns. We had discovered their talents. Some were excellent at painting, designing and sewing. They had agreed to offer a workshop at the camp, but none of them could imagine what the camp would be like. When we arranged to meet via zoom a few days before the camp, one of the 9 invited participants was present.



*Young people in
Shkodra / Albania*

6 other places with camps

And then there were the six other places with camps. Tomáš from the Czech Republic wanted to go to Stara Zagora in Bulgaria with young people from his parish in Bořitov near Brno. But for a long time there were hardly any young people who were able and willing to come along. Finding a suitable van was not easy either.

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Mihaela from Slovenia shared the same concern with us, until finally a small group was found who wanted to set up colourful activities for children and needy people in Vipavski Križ near Ajdovščina.

It was also not clear for a long time whether a small group from Kosovo would set off for Shkodra in northern Albania. But it succeeded and so young people from Bosnia and

Herzegovina - organized by the John Paul II Youth Centre, Kosovo and Italy - met in northern Albania and, under the leadership of Sr Rita and Rikardo, organized a great programme for about 100 children from the Fermentim slum.

Whether groups would be found among our go4-peace friends in Ukraine under the difficult circumstances of constant threat from the war also remained in the dark for a long time. And then -



- 7 camps in 5 countries
- with more than 300 participants from 11 countries
- connected in Europe

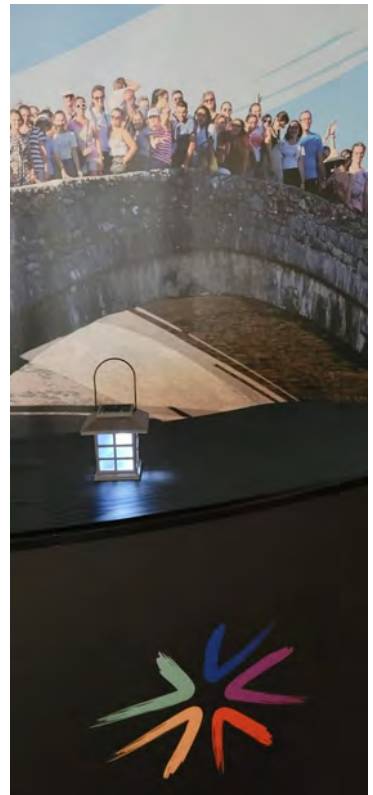
organized by the Ukrainian Social Academy - three groups finally formed: in Vyzhnytsia (near the Moldovan border), in Kryvyi Rih (in the Donetsk region) and in Dubno (in western Ukraine).

Mottos and symbols for the Gospel of the day

So we were well more than 300 people who organised concrete actions for peace in seven different places in Europe with young people from 11 different nations. Every morning there was a short impulse video in English that offered a short motto for everyday life, based on the Gospel of the day. We had sent small symbols to all the groups.

For the Monday motto "Don't stop giving", everyone had received a small windmill, which only rotates permanently when the wind follows the motto "Don't stop blowing!". Tuesday's motto "Bring light!" gave courage to rely on the long-term effect of love. A small LED lamp that collected sun rays during the day and turned them into light in the evening symbolized the motto. On Wednesday, the motto was: "This moment - your chance!" Colourful pearls were distributed to the children and young people, and everyone who had taken a chance could put a pearl in a small basket. On Thursday, the invitation was issued to catch the next person doing good things - "Catch your next, doing good!" Mobile phones were used to collect photos of many good deeds done by others. The fact that God is at work was to be discovered in many small moments on Friday - "God is at work, discover it!" The symbol of a magnifying glass had been sent to everyone. And on the last day of the camp - Saturday - the task was to find a way to keep the fire of love of these days burning. A small box of matches made everyone

Unten: Zum Motto „Bring light! / Bring Licht!“ gab es eine kleine Solar-Leuchte. Tagesevangelium Mt 13,43: Die Gerechten werde leuchten...



understand that it was now a matter of lighting new lights moment by moment. "Keep the fire burning!" (Keep the fire burning!) was the motto of this last day.



Diverse social activities

And so - inspired by these mottos - all over Europe young people were active in colourful workshops to give their hands to peace. In Ukraine, many delicious meals were prepared for internally displaced persons, in Albania, children went to Roma and Sinti families in a workshop to bring them food and share time with them. In the evening, everyone was invited to an open-air cinema. In Slovenia, there was a variety of programmes for children who could not go on holiday, while in Bulgaria, the Czech young people helped to build a Salesian school for Roma and Sinti.



In Kamen there were colourful workshops with frequently changing participants, T-shirts were designed with peace symbols, children and young people painted their peace symbols in the "painting workshop", in the kindergarten small Ukrainian children played peacefully supervised by two mothers, in another workshop an insect hotel was created,

in the crochet workshop shopping nets were made to be able to do without plastic. Chess was played, flowers were planted, peace doves were made with young people from the Fazenda in Hellefeld, Ukrainian songs were rehearsed, a peace dance was developed, and a new peace reminder was erected in Dortmund-Wickede and Kamen.

Above: Programme for children in Shkodra / Albania
Below: Ihor from Ukraine with delicious food for internally displaced persons (IDP).

International networking

From Wednesday to Friday, we met with the international groups via zoom in the evenings to share all the bright life experiences and to share our own discoveries. Former go4peace camp participants also joined in and were happy to share this life.

Late in the evening I read a WhatsApp message from Halyna from Ukraine: "I am so impressed



by all that happened last week. It was a testimony of real love and generosity. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of it. Thank you for believing that love will surely prevail. That means a lot to me."

*Connected across
Europe via the Internet*

Challenges

And what did this camp "cost" us in the leadership team?! The reality of young people's lives has become highly fluid. Again and again we had to throw old patterns of thinking and understand-



ding overboard and react in a new way. We were always faced with the challenge of saying yes to the many cancellations. The plan was to hold a well-prepared final evening on Saturday evening - as in previous years - via zoom with all the participating groups.

On Friday, however, we learned that the Albanian group had already celebrated their farewell evening on Friday and the Czech group from Bulgaria had already started their journey home. Also in Ukraine, one group had already finished their programme. We understood that the previously planned closing evening no longer made sense under these conditions.

A special atmosphere

But how could we succeed in having a good ending? We decided to create a video with many colourful impressions from the 5 countries and at the end to ask for the most meaningful moment of the camp for each one. Ludmilla from Ukraine responded: "Mothers are happy when their children can be happy and are in peace. And I can tell you. My boy - 13 years old with Down syndrome - is very happy. He has felt very loved here!" Viktoria, also from Ukraine, let us know, "During the holidays I struggled to get my children out of bed many mornings. They didn't know what to do. In the last days, if I dropped the word "camp" in the morning, they jumped out of bed! They felt very comfortable and welcomed!" Tanja from Ukraine writes: "In this camp I and many others have been inspired to love, to give, to always do something new for others."



When we met for the final meeting on Saturday of the camp week at the Holy Family Church in Kamen, there was a small Ape barbecue truck in

front of the church. There were delicious sausages (Bratwurst) for lunch. Viktoriia had collected blackberries with her children the night before and brought a big bowl for everyone. 75 sausages were eaten in the end, so we knew how many camp participants, mainly from Ukraine, were back. We met in the church. Ukrainian peace songs were sung. I looked into many happy and beaming faces. Someone called this atmosphere "magical". I clearly felt: HE - the hidden God - is present, as at every moment of the past week. I began to talk. Tetiana translated. "I feel a joy among us that has been there all week. Some have told me that they appreciate this special atmosphere among all of us."

With much love

Where does this spirit among us come from? It is the love that we all lived with each other, based



on the daily mottoes - mutual love. Ludmilla worked in the kitchen all week, Natalia took care of the little children, Christian offered chess, Anastasiya painted with the children and young people,

Heinrich carefully edited the videos, Bernhard took care of the daily food, Sasha was involved in the T-shirt decorating workshop and Antonia in the crochet workshop. Lara was constantly involved in practising the dance steps, Reinhard and Nina were musically highly committed... Everyone gave his and her part. We gave love.

And what is love? Maybe better: Who is love? - The Bible gives an answer: "God is love!" So we have met God in this honest love. He has given us this peace, this joy and light-heartedness, this warmth and many smiles!" I saw tears in many eyes. God was at work, even when we invited all camp participants to put a candle in the globe in the church for their loved ones and to write the names of their loved ones on small pieces of paper and put them in a wooden box. Night after night I hold adoration for all these people. Suddenly there was a deep peace in our church. I picked up a guitar and sang the song of the Emmaus disciples which says: " If YOU are among us, there will be no night!"



The experience of His proximity

As I stand before God that evening, HE makes me understand: We have had anew the experience of the ancient forefather Jacob. "The Lord is in this place and I did not know it!" (Gen 28:16) Many have encountered the living God among us, perhaps for the first time. Angels - according to Jacob's dream - had ascended and descended a ladder between heaven and earth. Vividly, Jacob had experienced the presence of God in the foreign land. This was also the case during the days of the camp. The partici-

pants had felt HIM and could not yet give HIM a name. Now they can and they go on, touched and filled by HIM.

go4peace - we come from different directions, convictions, mentalities and language families. In our colourfulness we meet each other for a short time, have living experiences with the hidden God among us and then dive back into this world that bleeds and is entrusted to us.

A church worker wrote to me after watching the camp video: "Fantastic what you have put together. You can feel that the Spirit is at work. Maybe a new form of church is taking shape! The



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Left:
At the final meeting in front of the church

Backpage:
The young people passed on the message of building bridges in song and dance.

one we have known so far in Germany will probably die. But it will not be the end. The Gospel lives! How hopeful that this can be felt among you. So much vitality! Even in the midst of the war in Ukraine...

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