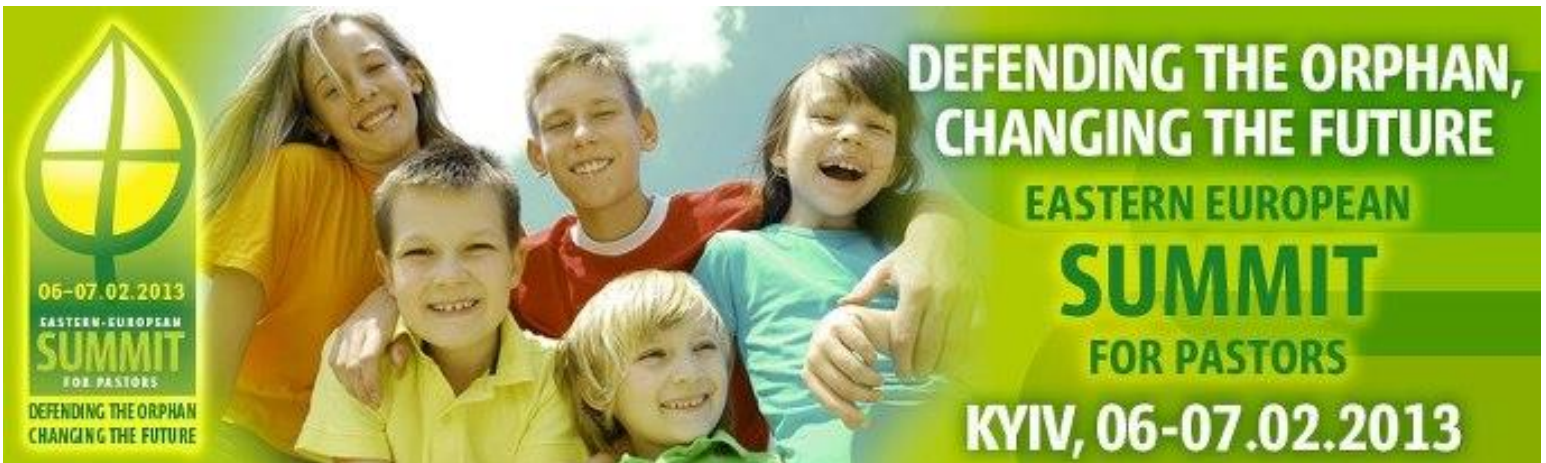




Highlight Report



The Summit

556 delegates from across Eastern Europe gathered in Kyiv, Ukraine on February 6th and 7th for the **Eastern European Pastors Summit: *Defending the Orphan, Changing the Future***. With an interdenominational reach, the Summit brought together clergy and key leaders in the orphan care movement from across Eastern Europe.

The Summit sought to inform and mobilize leaders and unify the strengths of the Church as a whole, so that together effective solutions for working with orphans and children at risk in Eastern Europe can be found.

The 2-day Summit was organized at the initiative of the Alliance for *Ukraine Without Orphans* and the *All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations*, with support from *Christian Vision*, *Compassion International*, and other Christian organizations. Many of the 556 delegates who attended the Summit are already actively caring for orphans, and together they represented a total of 816 children that have been taken into families. In addition to Ukraine, representatives came from Russia, Belarus, Romania, Moldova, Czech Republic, USA, England, Italy, India, as well as other nations.

Unity in the Church

A region that can so often be divided by denominational differences and feuds witnessed first-hand as Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox, Catholics and multiple denominations of Protestant Christians came together on one stage and in one conference hall on behalf of orphans and vulnerable children. There was no doubt that this was a historical moment.



In a welcoming greeting to the participants one denominational leader shared his convictions on unity from his heart when he said, “There should be no denominational arguments in our work with orphans because we are brothers and sisters. We have the same Heavenly Father and children must be the main focus of our work.”

Yuriy Pavlenko, the Child Welfare Representative of the President of Ukraine, also attended the Summit. He publicly thanked those representing churches and religious organizations from Ukraine for their faithfulness and successful cooperation in protecting children. He also noted that one of the President’s focuses is to see that every orphan has an opportunity to live in a family environment, as well as to support families who are in crisis, “and the State considers the Church and NGOs as its main partners in this work” – he assured.

This acknowledgement by the State of the role the Church can play in finding effective solutions to



social issues in Ukraine was great encouragement for the Alliance in regards to the positive outcomes that came from the Summit. The hope is that this will not remain only a verbal declaration, but pave the way for practical cooperation in the future.

Sharing Resources & Knowledge

In preparation for the Summit, several key resources were printed in order to equip those who would be attending. With a lack of quality resources in the sphere of orphan care in the Russian language, the Alliance sought to make materials available that would be both motivational and educational. In total, 7 books or manuals were printed and made available to all who attended the Summit. Books included Rick Morton's *Orphanology*, Dan Brewster's *Child, Church, and Mission*, and Hope for Orphans' manual *Launching an Orphan Ministry in Your Church*.



Conference speakers brought encouraging and challenging messages. Delegates heard from noteworthy speakers in the orphan care community, including Rick Morton who spoke on the topic of God's heart of adoption, and Gennady Mokhnenko who shared personal life experiences from his years of working with at risk youth, many of whom he took under his own guardianship. Peter Billingham, from *Christian Vision* also shared a touching message on mentoring as he talked about not only reaching orphans through our care, but the 'fatherless' in our own churches who are growing up without godly role models.

Two plenary sessions featured Wess Stafford, President of *Compassion International*, who is widely known throughout the world as a child advocate. Dr. Stafford challenged listeners in making a difference in the life of one child. He had the audience close their eyes and asked the question, "Who believed in you before you believed in yourself?" His message served as a powerful reminder to the importance of speaking positively into the lives of children.

In addition to plenary sessions, delegates had the opportunity to attend workshops as well. During the workshops they were able to learn more about specific areas of ministry or challenges in working with children at risk. Workshop tracks offered options in learning about steps for how to begin an orphan ministry in your church, practical information for working with children with difficult behaviors, ministry to children in orphanages, understanding the affects of trauma in the life of a child, as well as several other topics.



World Without Orphans



Since the inception of the Alliance for *Ukraine Without Orphans*, the vision for national orphan care movements has taken off and grown. Modeled after the Alliance that began in Ukraine in 2010, countries including Russia, Belarus, and Romania have launched similar movements, all with the same focus in mind: to see their nations rise up and to see the church become the solution for orphans and children at risk.

At the Summit the vision for *World Without Orphans* was shared. The focus of this initiative is to see this “without orphans” movement continue to spread around the world as individual nations rise up and take responsibility for orphans and at risk children living in their midst. Ruslan Maliuta, founding President of *Ukraine Without Orphans*, announced his new role in facilitating this movement and was commissioned by the board of UWO to go forward in this sphere of work. Roman Korniyko, Founder of the Kyiv-based charity *Father’s House*, was chosen to take over the leadership of *Ukraine Without Orphans* and was commissioned into this position during the Summit.

In sharing about the *World Without Orphans* concept Maliuta said, "This idea, that every orphan should end up in a loving family, is spreading like a virus—and what is amazing is that it is God’s

idea. Though Ukraine is not the only place spreading this vision, the concept for a ‘country without orphans’ began here. *World Without Orphans* is not an organization, it is a vision and a joint effort of a team of people from different countries and spheres that I have an honor to coordinate. When it comes to orphans, it isn’t right to talk about them in numbers of thousands or millions. No, every child’s life is valuable and that means each child needs a family.”

Next Steps...

There is no doubt that the Summit held in Kyiv was a success on many fronts. Pastors, priests, and other leaders returned to their cities and nations inspired, equipped, and determined to do all they can to reach children in need. Strategic partnerships were formed or advanced. Hundreds, if not thousands, of decisions were made by Summit participants that will eventually result in the transformation of many children's lives in Ukraine and around the world.

