

## Forging Partnerships

By David Breidenbach

History of Mission, January 2024

---

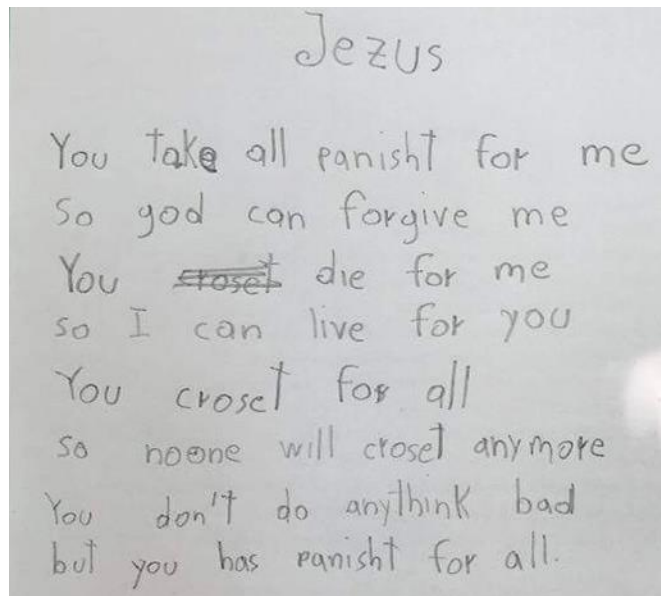
### Who We Are

---

Spiritual Orphans Network (SON) is a confessional, evangelical, Christian mission organization with a deep commitment to connecting partners with indigenous Christians in former communist and Soviet bloc nations. While we are rooted in the confessional Lutheran tradition at our core, we believe in being Kingdom Builders on mission with Christ. This conviction empowers us to partner with other conservative, evangelical Christians who share our core values.

Simply put, a Spiritual Orphan is anyone who does not know they have a Father in Heaven who loves them, who does not know that they have brothers and sisters in Christ willing to become lifelong participants in their journey of Faith. Most importantly, a Spiritual Orphan does not know their identity as a Child of God.

Our vision at SON is to engage spiritual orphans in the Word of God. The support of North American believers, whether as short-term team members or as donors to our missionaries or programs, is instrumental in this engagement – the first step toward a life reclaimed and adopted by God. We then join hands with our ministry partners to provide additional resources and education, leading to transformed lives in Christ.



---

## Beginnings

---

Our journey began in September 1992 when Pastor Don Richman founded East European Missions Network (now known as Spiritual Orphans Network). The initial goal was to help rebuild the Lutheran Church in Russia and former Soviet countries. This vision evolved into educating American Christians to minister alongside the remnant of the Lutheran Church, developing Christian materials, hosting seminars for pastors, and contributing to the establishment of Bible schools and seminaries.

Under the leadership of Pastor Bill Moberly from 2004 to 2014, the concept of mutual fellowship and sharing of resources between North American congregations and East and Central Europe flourished. English Bible Camps, initiated as early as 1996, played a crucial role in bringing Believers and Christian leaders to these communities.

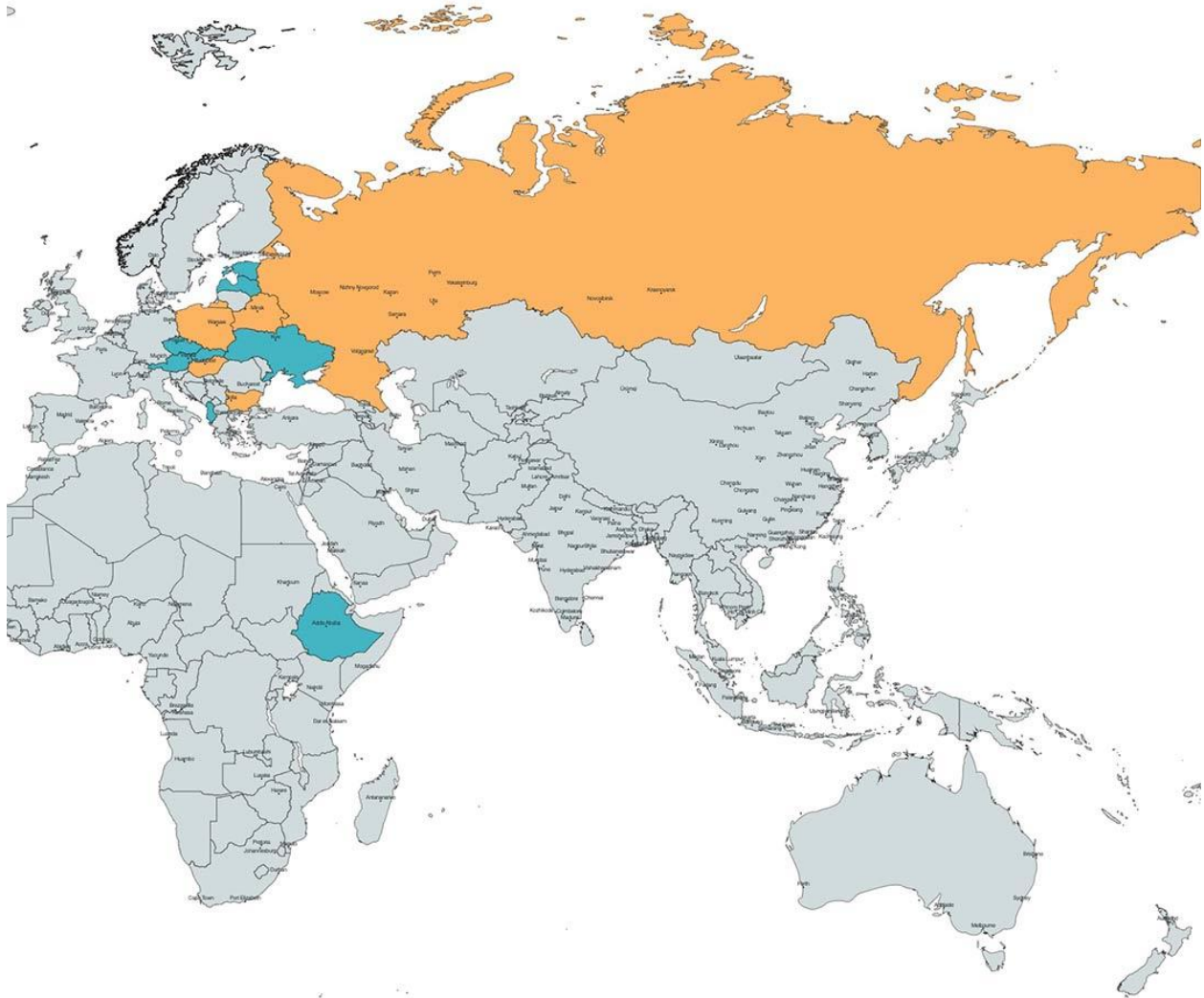
In March 2015, after years of service with his family to EEMN, Pastor David Breidenbach was elected as Executive Director. Under his guidance, our ministry expanded beyond former Soviet Bloc nations, reflecting a broader scope of service. This realization led to the desire to tell the story of the people we serve, rather than a geographical location, and culminated in the rebranding of our organization in April 2020 as Spiritual Orphans Network.

Today, SON continues to forge and nurture international partnerships that weave a strong network of people, ministries, and resources across European, African, and North American believers. It's through these connections that relationships strengthen, disciples are made, and the Body of Christ is equipped for Kingdom building.

---

## Where We Serve

---



### SON Areas of Influence

SON's work is primarily focused on regions where Christianity was once prohibited under communist or repressive regimes, often carrying severe consequences such as imprisonment, exile, or even death. In many instances, this persecution persisted for generations. The ideologies of communism, firmly rooted, eroded not only family values but also any belief in a higher power beyond the government. Consequently, Christianity was systematically suppressed, resulting in the absence of an older generation (including grandparents, parents, and elders) to pass down their faith to subsequent generations.

SON Network currently serves in Albania, Estonia, Ethiopia (and Dubai), Latvia, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. We are committed to rekindling the light of faith in these regions and reintroducing individuals to the transformative power of Christ's love. It is a journey of restoration, revival, and the building of new foundations of faith.

---

## Our Mission

---

Spiritual Orphans Network's mission is **Connecting Spiritual Orphans to the Global Family of Christ**. Our primary means to fulfill this mission is to connect Christians from North America with individuals in former communist or repressive countries who are unaware of the loving Father in Heaven eager to adopt them into His family. Additionally, we strive to introduce them to a Christ-centered community that will nurture and support them on their journey to becoming Children of God.

Our mission is anchored in the words of Ephesians 1:5 (ESV), which states, "*In love he predestined us for adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.*"

At the core of our mission lies the belief that forging international partnerships strengthens relationships, nurtures disciples, and equips the Body of Christ for Kingdom Building. This is a journey of profound impact and transformation, grounded in faith and driven by purpose. It has been our privilege to be able to serve in this way for the last 31+ years, and we are committed to stewarding this ministry into the next generation and beyond.



English Bible Camp in Slovakia



Christmas food packages for Ukrainian families

Here's how we fulfill our mission:

- Short-term missionaries bring the Word to people who have never encountered the love, grace and mercy of Jesus Christ through an English Bible Camp experience.
- Full-time residential missionaries work alongside indigenous missionaries to rebuild the Church and reclaim Christian heritage and culture.
- SON ministry partners continue and nurture the relationships formed when individuals from North America reach beyond their border with the Love of Christ.
- K-12 Christian Education partnerships and other programs help to grow a new generation of faith.
- SON mission teams host cross-cultural English Bible Camps and schools for children, organize Life & Adventure Retreats tailored to teenagers, and conduct Bible studies for adults.
- Overseas teaching opportunities for pastors and ministry leaders across various settings and service durations are offered through SON Regional Learning Centers.



Babushka receiving food from SON Ukraine Relief Fund



English Bible Camp in Ukraine



2023 Life & Adventure Camp in Slovakia



Life & Adventure Camp hike

---

## Partner With Us!

---

Spiritual Orphans Network extends an invitation to engage in an international mission experience that will transform the lives of those you serve and will change the way you view missions in your own communities. These opportunities are available to anyone who speaks English, enjoys working with young people, and loves Jesus!

For those who feel a calling to devote themselves to long-term service, SON provides the necessary preparation and support. Our long-term and career missionaries collaborate closely with indigenous co-workers overseas. Together, they empower, equip, and materialize the visions for ministry, contributing to a robust network of faith.

**To learn more about SON ministries, including how you can serve in 2023, please visit [SONetwork.org](http://SONetwork.org) or join our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SpiritualOrphansNetwork) page at [www.facebook.com/SpiritualOrphansNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/SpiritualOrphansNetwork)**

**Links** (underlined in text):

SON: <https://sonetwork.org/>

Albania: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/Albania/>

Estonia: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/Estonia/>

Ethiopia & Dubai: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/Ethiopia/>

Latvia: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/Latvia/>

Russia: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/Russia/>

Slovakia: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/Slovakia/>

Ukraine: <https://sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/ukraine/>

Opportunities: <https://sonetwork.org/serve/opportunities/>

SON Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SpiritualOrphansNetwork>



#### **About the Author**

The story of Spiritual Orphans speaks deeply to Pastor David Breidenbach. Raised in an agnostic household, David heard the Gospel for the first time during a Good Friday service in 1992. This experience so touched him, that he quit his broadcasting career to become a Lutheran pastor. He has been Executive Director of SON since 2015.

[pastordavid@sonetwork.org](mailto:pastordavid@sonetwork.org)