

## Operation Christmas Child



Operation Christmas Child was started in 1993 by Franklin Graham, to reach children suffering the effects of war and poverty in Bosnia and Croatia. The first year 28,000 boxes were sent. Operation Christmas Child was such a blessing, both to the children and everyone involved, that it has expanded to reach kids in other impoverished and war-torn countries. But Operation Christmas Child is about much more than the stuffed animals and crayons in the boxes. It is a great opportunity for evangelism. Every child who gets a box will hear about Jesus Christ and why He was the greatest gift of all. The boxes provide a tool and mission opportunity for local churches and pastors to reach children and families by inviting them into the church, present the Christmas story, and after the program give every child a gift. Franklin Graham believes that God has truly blessed the program and gives Him the glory. It is a wonderful example of the body of Christ coming together to bless the children around the world and assist the church around the world in presenting the gospel.

### Scripture:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” Matt. 28:19

### Case Study:

For the first time last year, National WMU officially teamed up with Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan’s Purse. Many churches and WMU groups have been involved with Samaritan’s Purse for years, packing shoe boxes every Christmas to send to underprivileged children around the world. In designating a special WMU day, it was hoped that WMU groups or individuals would take



the next step, by volunteering a day at one of the processing centers where the boxes are readied for shipment overseas. Working in the processing center is an exciting way to see the volume and magnitude of this ministry which provides an opportunity to be involved in a mission project with far reaching results

WMU of Virginia provides opportunities for churches to “Live It” and this partnership is a great chance to be involved in a stateside mission trip with an international emphasis. The day designated for WMU was Nov. 28, 2007. Several WMU groups from the Richmond area traveled to the processing plant in Charlotte, NC. Upon arriving at the Center all were amazed at the size of the facility and the thousands of filled shoe boxes which were trucked in from all over the East Coast. In spite of the overwhelming task, the center runs like a well-oiled machine. The organization in the warehouse is incredible!

We listened to a 20 minute orientation about the beginnings and mission of Operation Christmas Child. We learned what happened to each shoe box from the time it was dropped off at a regional collection point until it was placed in the hands of a child. A map at the entrance to the warehouse was marked with the destination of the day’s boxes: South Africa. We then began to inspect boxes that would be sent to 2-4 year old children. While talking to the ladies around us we discovered they were members of the WMU at West Point Baptist Church in Virginia! Along with their husbands, they have been coming to Charlotte to work at the Processing Center for about five years. As the day progressed we moved to different areas to continue assisting with the various needs of the operation.



As we opened each box, we made sure it contained enough toys and candy and did not have any prohibited items such as glass or chocolate. It was strongly stressed that we respect the integrity of each box, so that it is received in the manner in which it was sent. People put a lot of time and prayer into what goes into their box and that is respected as much as possible. If the box does not have adequate toys, candy, or other items, they are added from supplies on the line. If it

contains chocolate, glass, liquids (like bubbles), used items, or food, these things are removed and placed in buckets on the floor to be donated to local ministries. If any box is damaged it is sent to the “shoe box hospital” where its contents are lovingly removed and placed in a new box.

Each box is then wrapped and sorted by the gender of the child. The boxes are packed into cartons, marked by age group.

We learned it is possible for a shoe box to be unloaded from a tractor trailer that has just arrived from Anytown, USA, be sorted by age, checked for content, sorted by gender, packed into cartons, loaded onto another truck for a trip to the airport, and be on it’s way to South Africa in one day’s time!

Most importantly, as each shift arrives to begin work and periodically throughout the day, the work is stopped and a prayer is offered for each box and the child who will receive it.

Most of the people who went to Charlotte to work in the processing plant had previously been involved in this ministry in some way, whether packing a single box, coordinating a church wide effort, or helping at a regional collection point. All agreed it was awesome to be a part of the final step before the boxes were sent overseas, and to see the size and scope of this ministry where anyone can be a part of taking the gospel message to the world.



### **Theological:**



WMUV seeks to equip adults, youth, children, and preschoolers with mission education to help them become radically involved in the mission of God. It is vital for churches to be involved in mission work in Virginia and around the world. The Operation Christmas Child project would not be possible without the participation of tens of thousands of churches, not only in the United States but also in the local churches in the countries where the boxes are delivered who follow-up after Operation Christmas Child distributions. These local churches reach kids through children's ministries, evangelize their communities, and serve as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

Partnering with Operation Christmas Child is an avenue toward mission involvement, providing a real hands-on opportunity to take the gospel to the hurting and forgotten children of the world. This is a mission project in which the entire family can take part, putting together a gift that will have real meaning. Nothing will have more impact on a child or teen than to see the needs and identify with people who are hurting. We share a passion and commitment to the Great Commission, and can work together to carrying out God's mission in the world.



### **Involvement:**

#### **Seniors:**

Recruit seniors to bring additional items for boxes.

Promote Operation Christmas Child in retirement communities, mission groups & Sunday School classes.

Make cookies for churchwide time of blessing.

#### **Children:**

Make it a family mission project:

Moms and dads can have a special shopping day with their children to pick out shoe box gift items.

GA/CIA groups can pack boxes as a group or individually.

\*Fill out ALL ABOUT ME sheet to include in your box.

Wrap boxes for a Senior Sunday School class, pick up and deliver them.

**Teens:**

Have youth purchase items and pack boxes specifically for the 12 to 14 age group.

Take your Acteen group to Charlotte to process boxes.

Wrap boxes and hand out to interested Sunday School members.

**Adults:**

Women on Mission groups can wrap boxes and do churchwide promotion by passing out boxes and collecting filled boxes.

Enlist men to help load trucks at area collection points.

Organize a churchwide time of blessing before boxes are sent.

**The Power of a Simple Gift**—pray that shoe boxes full of gifts that bring happiness for the moment will introduce young hearts to Jesus, the ultimate gift.

• **National Collection Day is November for more information go to [www.samaritanspurse.org/occ](http://www.samaritanspurse.org/occ)**

• **For other ideas for Mission Opportunities go to [WMU of Virginia's missions opportunities web page.](#)**