



HELPING UKRAINE

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

19th March 2022

Do not be afraid, I am your shield, your very great reward. (Gen 15:1)

Dear friends,

Abram hears the above-mentioned promise of God after he has returned from the war, the first "holy war" that we read about in the pages of the Bible. Just to clarify, it was not a war of plunder, it was not a war for power. It was a rescue mission, a fight to save a brother in need. Yet Abram was probably gripped with anxiety, perhaps fear of retaliation from the powerful kings of the East.

We have encountered many fears in the last few days. Fear for the lives of those we love, fear for our own lives, fear for the lives of innocent and defenseless old people, children, fear for the lives of soldiers drawn into war, we have experienced fear of the Zaporozhye nuclear plant explosion, Chernobyl, fear of the spread of war from Ukraine further west. We feared for the future of Europe, of our civilization, we feared what price for peace the Ukrainians would pay, what price we ourselves would pay.

The life journey of Abram, the father of the faithful, and therefore the life journey of us, the faithful, is a journey in which we necessarily encounter fear, but our fear need not either paralyze us or turn us into reckless predators. The courage of faith springs from the fact that our life is hidden with Christ in God. The "fixed point" in Christ is inalienable. We cannot lose it, and therefore we need not fear, at least not definitively. The boldness of faith in Christ, His coming kingdom through all the events of our world, transcends the limits that fear wants to impose on us. Our life's journey leads through this world, but it doesn't end there, if worst comes to worst.

Meanwhile, it is also in our fears and darkness that we learn to trust God in the world and God in us. God is in you, in your actions. There is much good in the actions of many people around us. Let us hold on to it and rejoice in it. Let us bless the world and God's people with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We need them. A gift - the ability to discern the truly good from the bad, or from the useless. Let us ask for the gifts of the Holy Spirit - discernment, compassion, fortitude, perseverance and love.

And let us begin and end with prayer, because prayer touches the goal of our life's journey, God Himself. The shield and the reward. Christ defeated evil on the cross, God fights and will fight for his kingdom for his creation.

Ivana Procházková, UMC Superintendent

■ What is happening in parishes and congregations

ECM parishes and congregations helping Ukraine — week 14 - 20 March 2022

Prague UMCs

The Russian-speaking UMC Prague 2 - Agape, in cooperation with other Prague UMCs, has already delivered several shipments of food and hygiene items to Ukraine.

The last shipment went on its way on Friday, January 11. A larger van was rented, so to make the shipment more efficient. Food was purchased from the funds of the Helping Ukraine transparent account (about 45 thousand CZK).

Protivín

We have moved from preparation to actual assistance. More and more families in Protivín accommodate mothers with children from Ukraine, who are transported to Protivín from the border by volunteers in their cars. We have opened a parsonage and adapted a classroom for meetings of mothers with children during the week. There are now 14 children, the mothers accompany them, and a helpful retired teacher has taken over the teaching. The pastor provides technical facilities, food etc. We are now deciding how to proceed as the number of children and mothers is increasing and the church has limited capacity. We may ask for financial support from the city government.

Třeboň

On Friday, a family from Ukraine - a mother and 3 children - will move into our parsonage for an extended stay, six months and possibly longer. For this purpose we are remodeling our premises and we would need a bigger water heater and a small stove that can be attached to the counter. Other things - washing machine, furniture etc. we have already got.

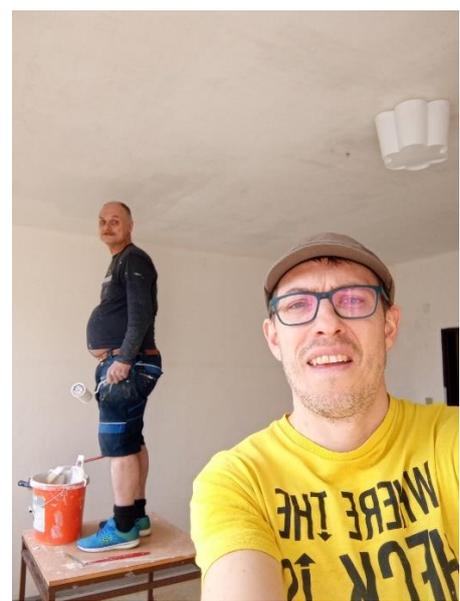
Plzeň 3 – Maranatha

- Thanks to a friendly Ukrainian family that has been living in Plzeň for several years, families from the Evangelical Fellowship in Ukraine have asked us for help. These are mainly women with children who left their husbands in Ukraine. Thanks to the great willingness of the people from the church, we were able to help in short time intervals to get the necessary things such as beds, mattresses, bedding, basic hygiene, basic equipment for the kitchen, etc.
- A great help for us is the cooperation with the Roman Catholic diocese of Plzeň, thanks to which we were able to find housing for five families.

- The Masaryk High School in Plzeň approached us with an offer of Czech language courses for both the Ukrainian children and their parents, for which all these families are very grateful. These days we are adjusting the dates and days when these lessons would take place in our church.
- Due to the current problems that are gradually becoming apparent, we have also begun to work with the non-profit organization Ledovec, which has helped us to find a Ukrainian-speaking psychologist.
- The willingness of the Russian-speaking brothers and sisters of the Baptist Russian-speaking congregation, which meets in our church, has also been a help to us in this ministry. They help us with translation and communication. Thanks to them, we are now also improving contact with an 18-year-old boy from Ukraine who lives in our Halfway House.
- We are negotiating with the Plzeň 3 Municipal District Office about cooperation in the creation of a children's group for Ukrainian children, which would be under the auspices of our center for children.
- As a community we are also involved in material and financial collections. Whether it is money that we use to buy basic items for specific families, or financial donations sent to the transparent account.

Litoměřice

- We are active among the volunteers in our city, helping with the collection and distribution of clothes, food, and getting to know the newcomers. The "Adopt Your Ukrainian Family" initiative is at the beginning, but we hope to make it a success.
- We have been clearing out and painting a room for a family from Ukraine in a former military hostel, which is used along with two other buildings for mass accommodation of newcomers.
- We prepared a "church signpost" in Ukrainian with the addresses of all the churches in Litoměřice.



■ What is happening in Christian Aid Centers

The Christian Aid Center helping Ukraine — week 14 - 20 March 2022

Christian Aid Center Duha - Plzeň

The Municipality of Plzeň is looking for suitable premises to open a children's group for children from Ukraine. When they find them, they will invite Linda Čechová, the director of the center Duha, to help prepare the premises, equip them, design the daily program, etc. Then they will decide if the new children's group will be under Duha and the city will pay for the operation, or someone else will take over the care of the children.

Christian Aid Center Praha – Horní Počernice

What is happening just a few hundred kilometers beyond our borders is beyond all imagination. The Ukrainian people are facing an incredible, barbaric aggression that we have not seen in civilized Europe for a long time. Our minds try to understand, our hearts are bleeding. None of us know what the coming days or weeks will bring, we only know that a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented magnitude is unfolding right on our doorstep.



This is a picture of Alexei together with his wife Natalia and their daughter Jaroslava who arrived to our shelter last week. This family comes from Zaporozhye, which lies in southeastern Ukraine. A nuclear power plant was recently shelled in Zaporozhye, which was later seized by the Russians. Their home was destroyed by bombs and rockets, so

the family had no choice but to leave. It took them several days to get to Prague. Alexei is a programmer and lost his leg in the 2015 conflicts in the east of the country. His wife Natalia is a nurse and their daughter Jaroslava has an artistic talent. Alexei is the author of a website that helps Ukrainians find out which shops in Ukraine are still open. These families need shelter, warmth, safety and the care of social workers and therapists. In addition to Alexei and Natalia, several other families are staying in the shelter at the moment. We have 16 of the 20 beds we have made available for the Ukrainian refugees currently occupied. Thank you for your support which enables us to provide food and material assistance and a safe home to at least some of the huge numbers of refugees that are reaching our country.

■ What is happening in our refugee facilities

The Diakonia of the Czech UMC arranges and organizes accommodation for refugees in three facilities: two church facilities - the Veselka recreation house near Vimperk and the Poušť recreation area near Bechyně, and one borrowed - the Dekonta recreational house in Vojnův Městec (staffed by the Christian Aid Center Ječmínek, Žďár nad Sázavou). Coordination is provided by the director Karel Nyerges. The final intended total capacity of all three buildings is approximately 100 beds. All of these facilities require staffing and cooperation with the local government; a doctor, interpreter, and crisis intervention are always available. The preparation of the facilities is only possible through the dedicated work of local church members and professionals who are willing to give up their free time for this cause. The cooperation with the food bank in České Budějovice is also a great help.

*The situation and availability changes every day in all places.
Some of the needy stay longer, others continue on.*

A total of 42 people - half of them are children - have benefited from this assistance so far. The youngest is eight months old.



Children and their mothers at the camp site Poušť

■ Current collection status

The transparent bank account

In order to provide the above-mentioned aid, we are collecting funds on the transparent account "We help Ukraine" - 2602129572/2010.

Status as of 19 March 2022: As of the opening date of 24 February 2022 for the account total of CZK **406 414** has been received, CZK **120 000** has been spent so far (repeated food aid directly to Ukraine in cooperation with the Russian-speaking congregation Prague – Agape; plus necessary equipment of facilities), the current balance is CZK **286 414**.

Donations from abroad

We thank our international donors!

Through the Bishop's Office of our Central Conference, our USD account has received **\$5,440** and more funds are on the way.

We are preparing a convenient payment option via online payment gateway, it should be available the next week.

By the time, you may send your gifts through the Advance of Global Ministries, CZECH REPUBLIC IN MISSION TOGETHER (#00399A), designation: For Ukrainian refugees.

Thank you to everyone who is involved in helping those in need financially, by prayers, as well as with practical help and their time and energy.

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Mat 25:37-40)