



HELPING UKRAINE

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

21st April 2022

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
For I am the LORD your God.*

(Isaiah 43:1.3)

The LORD speaks these words of encouragement and comfort to His people. But I think we can apply them to ourselves, to each of us. God created humankind, and it is manifested in the history of nations. At the same time, we know that he cares for each individual person.

When we care for one family, one mother and child, it seems like a drop in the ocean of what needs to be done. We feel helpless in the face of the immense suffering of so many people. However, every drop matters. One person matters.

There are those for whom thousands of lives are worthless. I believe that every single life is worth something to the LORD; and that it pleases God when we, like Him, care for every single person. It makes sense.

Jana Křížová, pastor of Prague 2 UMC

Thank you all very much for your support of our efforts to help those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Your funds help those in need here in the Czech Republic and in Ukraine.

Thank you for making this possible with your support!

On the following pages, you will find a summary of current information *from parishes and churches, from Christian Aid Centres, from the facilities we operate for refugees*, as well as *the status of the fundraiser*.

■ What is happening in parishes and congregations

ECM parishes and congregations helping Ukraine — week 11 - 17 April 2022

Mikulov

In the attic of the Valtice parsonage, where we usually accommodate tourists, two women (sisters-in-law) stay; they have two children each. Besides the accommodation, we support them financially and in their involvement in the community.

In mid-March, the Mikulov congregation welcomed twelve family members of a Ukrainian family that has been part of our parish for over twenty years. They have become involved in the life of the church not only through participation, but also through singing, youth ministry, and ministry to children from Ukraine. However, most of them are returning to Ukraine this week. We therefore pray for safe travels. We will support one of their home congregations, which provides a great ministry to refugees from the eastern part of Ukraine. A hastily organized collection brought in over 40,000 Czech crowns in twelve hours, which they will use to buy the food they will take with them.

In Mikulov we have a children's club every Sunday afternoon, which is led by a young woman from Ukraine. In addition to Ukrainian children from Valtice, Ukrainian children who live in Mikulov are gradually joining in. Several Czech children from our parish also participate.

Practical help and social contacts take place among many people from our parish.

Ctirad Hrubý, pastor

Jihlava

We spend most of our time with two families (Halina and Tania's family) who regularly attend our services. Together with other members of our congregation, on Maundy Thursday we took a prayer walk on the "Stations of the Cross" in nearby Třešť. For Tanya, who is a member of the Ukrainian Baptist church, this was a new experience for which she was grateful.





Twice now, the parish has held a prayer meeting in Russian, attended by several Ukrainian citizens. While distributing our new leaflets in Ukrainian and Russian offering the activities of our congregation, we had the opportunity to share the Gospel with the Ukrainian citizens. We are also involved in helping to house people (outside of Jihlava) who are fleeing the war, and we are greatly assisted by coordinators from the Diakonia of the Apostolic Church.

Alexandra Grace, coordinator

Brno

Since the beginning of April, a mother with two children and her mother from Ukraine has been living in the pastor's apartment - thanks to the great commitment of the members of the Brno UMC and the former pastor Jana Daněčková (and her great helpfulness).

As part of the Brno ecumenical project, we financially supported the employment of a Ukrainian missionary worker for the ministry to the compatriots.

Ctirad Hrubý, pastor

■ 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 (diakonie@umc.cz).

Diakonia UMC

Another personal testimony

My name is O., I am 32 years old. I have a son, I., who is 5 years old. My mother, who is 52 years old, is here with us. I worked in a construction company as a civil engineer and my second job was as a senior technologist in building renovation, where I dealt with construction projects and project documentation. We came from Zaporozhye. The Zaporozhye area is currently one of the most affected areas. In and around Zaporozhye, the heaviest fighting took place, three airfields were destroyed, the train station and even the botanical garden was bombed. Unfortunately, there were no bunkers or basements in our houses or any places where one could take shelter in the event of bombings, and the nearest shelter was 1 km away from our home. The shelter was very small, so only women and small children were allowed into it. There was a lack of oxygen in the shelter and we could still hear the sounds of the attacks - all with the constant sound of sirens calling people into the shelters - so we decided to move to our hut near the town of Dnipro. Here, too, however, we could see the glow of distant explosions; moreover, the number of rocket passes was increasing every day, after which whole houses in the vicinity shook. So the other women and I finally decided, after the last passage of a particularly large rocket, to move with the children to some safer place while our men stayed in the Home Guard.

Evacuation trains started running in the first days of the war, on February 24, but getting on them was completely unrealistic at first. There were 20 or more people in each compartment, the corridors were crowded, children were pushed over people's heads so that they would not get hurt, and there was no chance of squeezing anywhere on the train. So we didn't get on the train until March 6, when we squeezed ourselves and the kids on at almost the last minute. Men were not allowed on or near the trains, so it was mostly women and children on the platforms, most of whom were crying. Nobody knew where the trains were going, but at that moment we were just happy to be sitting on the train.

We arrived in Kovel, where we were given food, and then by some stroke of luck we were directed to the Jahodin border crossing on the Ukrainian-Polish border. We boarded a bus that took us to the border, and stood in an unimaginably long line.

Then we just waited our turn to cross the border. The kids are crying, it is cold, everyone is frozen, it is night, we are only crossing on foot. They even let children cross the border alone without their parents, with any valid ID. After crossing the border we were accommodated in some camp in Poland. Big thanks to the Poles for the great organization and accommodation arrangements. They asked us who was going where next and tried to get us adequate transportation so we wouldn't stay there long and could move on to our destination. After spending the night, one of the volunteers, Filip, drove us directly to Warsaw, where he helped us a lot and brought us train tickets from Warsaw to Prague. Poland, along with the Czech Republic, has agreed to all rail travel for free for Ukrainian citizens. We travelled from Warsaw to Prague for 9 hours standing up, because the train was completely full. In the first class there was still

a possibility to sit down, so at the beginning those who could make it sat down, otherwise most people stood. In the second class there were only Ukrainians and they were so crowded that they were sick and fainted. They tried to leave the doors open a little bit during the ride to get some fresh air, but still the second half of the trip was very, very difficult. Eventually, however, we arrived at the main train station in Prague at 11 pm. Here we spent the night and in the morning we took the train to Pilsen. We had completed the train journey sitting down, a nice man gave my son a drink. In Pilsen other nice people got us transport to the centre. Thank God we are here now, everyone is helpful, friendly and kind, everyone is trying to help us.

The article was written as an authentic statement. Due to the sensitive data in the text, I have decided not to mention the real names of the participants, due to possible identification and misuse of authenticity. Many thanks to one of the ECM employees for writing this story, whom I also do not want and cannot name for the above reasons.

Karel Nyerges, director of Diakonia UMC

■ Current collection status

Status as of April 21, 2022:

Czech and foreign donors have sent a total of CZK 1 763 680. CZK 463 150 has been spent.

40% of this amount went to humanitarian aid directly to Ukraine,

60% to help refugees before the war here in the Czech Republic - whether in our facilities or in parishes and Christian aid centers. Additional payments for the necessary assistance are negotiated and currently in progress.

Thank you very much to all donors!

How we handle funds in the transparent account and donations from abroad:

- Priorities for the use of resources respond to a changing and evolving situation. Given the difficulty of forecasting, the strategy is refined at regular intervals with particular regard to the effectiveness and sustainability of our aid - also in view of the commitment we have made to the specific people in our facilities and the trust they have placed in us.

- The main priority for us now is to secure and maintain the assistance to those who have already entrusted themselves to our Diakonia, parishes and centers, and to extend and continue this assistance. We do not forget about the direct humanitarian aid going to Ukraine, where we consider it important to effectively use the synergies with our Russian-speaking UMC and our direct contacts in Ukraine as well as our knowledge of the local terrain.
- On the basis of the actual operations to date, we are in the process of quantifying the costs of operating the refugee facilities established by Diakonia. For the time being, we expect to operate these facilities for at least the next six months. Even if the war ends immediately, the reconstruction of Ukraine and the need for refugees to stay abroad will take longer.
- With this in mind, we are also transferring a portion of the funds directly to Diakonia UMC - to an operationally earmarked account dedicated to the operation of our refugee facilities, and to enable longer-term planning and organization of this assistance.
- Diakonia UMC also tries to take advantage of all current opportunities for financial support to refugees from the state. Despite the government's media image, not everything is working as declared so far. Diakonia also tries to link our facilities with the respective municipalities and obtain their material and non-material support.
- Our churches and Christian Aid Centers respond selflessly and promptly to the need for help in their places of operation. These are also churches that find it difficult to manage a balanced budget on their own. It will therefore also be necessary to support them in their assistance to those fleeing the war in the medium and long term.
- The specific financial flows and the use of funds are currently approved by the Diakonia UMC Director together with the superintendent and the Head of the District Office. Daniela Hajčiarova (pomahame.ukrajine@umc.cz) is the contact person for collecting any requests from congregations and Christian Aid Centers for financial support within the framework of the transparent collection.
- All funds raised are earmarked for aid to Ukraine. Should an unexpected favorable situation arise and there is no further need to fund aid here in the Czech Republic or humanitarian shipments, any remaining funds would go directly to the rebuilding of Ukraine in cooperation with the Ukrainian Methodist Church.

Thank you for your trust in us to help those in need. We are trying to help as efficiently and thoughtfully as possible with a good and quick result.

For donations from abroad for our aid to Ukrainian refugees there are four ways:

- You may send your gifts through the Advance of Global Ministries, CZECH REPUBLIC IN MISSION TOGETHER (#00399A).
Go to <https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/00399a/> and click on the red DONATE NOW button.
In the box that reads "Designate Your Gift" enter that it is for Ukraine Refugees. The funds are sent through the bishop's office, and we receive the full amount because banking fees are covered by other sources. (Preferable.)
- You may use the payment gateway at our web site <http://umc.cz/>. Please select EN in the upper right corner for English, this will allow you to pay in US\$. The funds will be converted into CZK and go directly to the transparent account. (We would receive the funds quickly, but pay fees 2% of the amount to the bank.)
- You may still transfer your gifts to Czech crowns transparent account
IBAN: CZ10 2010 0000 0026 0212 9572 BIC/SWIFT: FIOBCZPPXXX
- You may still transfer your gifts to US\$ bank account dedicated to aid to Ukraine
IBAN: CZ04 2700 0000 0013 8741 5749 BIC/SWIFT: BACXCZPP

Please do not send checks to Czechia, it is extremely costly and slow to cash them here.

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.

Edited by Daniela Hajčiarová