



HELPING UKRAINE

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

16th June 2022

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!

■ What has happened in Jihlava

Time passes, activities continue. Ukrainian mothers like to come to our church for the Friendly Conversation in Czech and like it on social media. Their children are taken care of during the time of conversation. A stable circle of supporters has also formed around the prayer meeting in Russian on Sunday evenings. Tanya joined our program during Church Night, patiently painting beautiful pictures on children's faces and adults' hands until the evening. Halyna was briefly in the hospital with little Ulyanka, who had breathing difficulties, but thank the Lord she is fine now.

A new Humanitarian Aid Centre has started to operate in Jihlava, it will be open all year round and will help not only those affected by the war, but also people from the Jihlava region in need. There are now many people from Ukraine in the city, the problem is apartments, which are almost impossible to find even in the vicinity. Even jobs and doctors are difficult to find. Just confirming the application for high school for a Ukrainian boy took a lot of phone calls; finally a doctor in a nearby town helped. (We are grateful for this doctor, she also takes Ulyanka for vaccinations.)



Last week the families were sorting out documents, this week they will need help in some places with school and kindergarten registration. One boy was able to get psychological help. We are constantly gathering various humanitarian supplies and looking for transportation.



New people are arriving all the time. Often we think that the Ukrainians are just returning home. But we are hearing from other families who have contacted us, and we are looking for asylum for them. Help is still needed. Some people have nowhere to go back to, others do not have the strength, others are returning to Ukraine but cannot bear the situation there (nearly explosions).

Libuše Hajčiarová wrote down the story of the coordinator Alexandra Grace

■ What is happening at Veselka

This month we found a job for S. in the field he worked in in Ukraine. It is about 7 km to work, but he always gets there somehow in his old Mercedes, which was probably loaned to him indefinitely by a nice gentleman from the area. S. is very happy at work.

For a student just finishing her 11th year of online studies at a Ukrainian school, we were looking for information about the possibility of continuing her studies at a secondary or higher vocational school. V. would like to become a dentist in the future. We visited several schools and got information to think about and then evaluate properly. In all schools the staff was very friendly and helpful.

The Secondary Medical School in České Budějovice offered V. the possibility of entering the first year - in the field of nursing. The higher vocational school would have accepted V. to study without an admission procedure, however, due to her lack of knowledge of the Czech language and the large number of vocational subjects, V. eventually rejected this option.

Another secondary school offered V. slightly more options. By mutual agreement with the vice-principal and in view of her future occupation, V. will enter the third year of the science lycée in September.

During the next two years she will learn Czech language and take her high school diploma. If a student in Ukraine completes the 11th year, he or she can start the 3rd year in our high school. V. will thus be in the same age category as the other students, will learn the Czech language and will be able to continue her studies.

S. decided to go back to Ukraine with her two children. Her older son misses her and says that the area where they live is now quiet. Another reason to return is probably the upcoming mobilisation. It may happen that all the men will be drafted into the war. S. and her husband are agro-tourists in the Ukraine and have a large farm, which must be taken care of if her husband is called to war. We had become very good friends, so her passing was very sad for us. The journey back to Ukraine took a long 36 hours. Now S. is home and hopes that the war will end soon. According to her information, there is peace in their area.

Our regular activities include visits to the doctor or the employment office. It is great that we have our own district doctor who attends to us whenever needed. However, it is very difficult to get a dentist. The children already go to school and are very happy there.

They have all been attending the local church regularly since they arrived and are very active, grateful, humble and kind.

There is only one thing that they are still wondering about, and that is our very changeable weather. They still remember Ukraine where it was always warm.

Karel Nyerges

■ Jablonné

The worsened situation in Mikolajiv, the home town of the residents, forced the arrival of four more relatives, parents who had been reluctant to leave their homes. We helped with the transport to the place of accommodation, which was found very close by in Petrovice. We are currently looking for the possibility of a children's camp for the three children staying there.

Zdeněk Brož

■ Jenkovce, Slovensko

Pastor Jiří Bassano and his wife Zdena use their long-standing friendships with people from Methodist congregations in Uzhorod and Kamenica to help get food and other useful items to where they are needed. People in western Ukraine are caring for a large number of refugees from the eastern regions of the country. The Bassanos will arrange shopping as requested, store items in the prayer room, and help load them as drivers from Ukraine come to get them. Last weekend, they visited friends directly in Ukraine. They write - see below.



Jana Křížová

Connection of Slovak and Transcarpathian Methodist churches

So we returned in good health, there were no complications at customs, just that it was slow - as always.

I preached in Kamenica and then we made a trip to visit friends in other places (about 150 km). They are perfectly organized there, migrants live in decent conditions, we also went to a few centers for children, but they are not under UMC. In Kamenica UMC there were new refugees from the frontline area in the east. This may create problems. Non-Christians, people savaged by the war, from dubious backgrounds, completely different mentality and customs. Fortunately Alla (the wife of the pastor Vuksta) knows how to command respect. I also met the superintendent, but it was formal. I have the feeling that he regards us more as competition.

We saw perfectly organized purpose-built facilities of Pentecostal-type churches, some congregations claiming to be Baptist, some fellowships completely independent. It is impossible to define who is who, theology is in its infancy, so the only way to know is

by the fruit. We have been doing that from the beginning, and it works.

And others work under the direction of the "Norway Funds", which hold the personnel and economic agenda. In Transcarpathia this is essential work. Huge investments, professional staffing, extraordinary engagement, order, etc. We work with those too, on request. It is not often, but they know about us. We actually help everyone in need, not only Methodists. We want to organize help to Transcarpathia as long as it is needed, and in all possible reliable ways.

The situation is serious, we have seen it with our own eyes. On the main roads, bus stops lined with sandbags, guarded by soldiers in full regiment. On the road in the mountains (Huta) we were checked by an armed patrol. There are helicopters flying over our heads, this morning from 6 to 9 o'clock there was an air bridge again, every 5-10 minutes a plane from or to Uzhorod. And it is horrible at a worship service, when you see selfies of the congregation members from the front, greetings, testimonies and prayer requests.



Jiří and Zdena Bassano

■ Other countries helping

Since the beginning of the war, representatives of the countries neighbouring Ukraine have been meeting (four times and now twice a month) for consultations - online, of course, we have already practiced this in the covid era. Information from all meetings can be found at <https://www.umc-cse.org/en/downloads-links/documents-studies-and-lectures/refugees-from-ukraine.html>

The Czech Republic is not adjacent to Ukraine, but we have such close relations and have developed such close cooperation that we have become part of this helping community within our Episcopal area. For our brothers and sisters in neighboring countries, it is similar to ours. We all gratefully accept the money that comes from Methodists in Western Europe and the USA, in addition to that sent by our own people. We provide temporary accommodation for those who want to move on to other countries. We support those who want to settle with us; many have already found employment and their own homes. We patiently accompany those who want to return home and are waiting for that to be possible; this is somewhat stressful for both sides.

Meanwhile: there is fighting in the east and it is still terrible there, although we have become used to the drastic news. It is not entirely certain that the threat will not spread again to the capital and other targets in the western part of Ukraine. Those who had enough money have long since left for the west, i.e. for foreign countries. Those who were scared and wanted to stay 'at home' are temporary guests in the western part of the country. The poorest suffer the most. I suspect we cannot imagine.

There is currently a shortage of everything in Ukraine, says the Ukrainian representative. Much that we did not consider possible in our world is happening.

Briefly: in Romania, a Ukrainian orphanage has been saved and the children have been taken care of. Now they are continuing humanitarian shipments. In Poland, they are trying to set up a 'House of Hope' where they would take in refugees and send them further inland when they recover. In Hungary, they care for refugees in several congregations and send food to Ukraine through their friends.

In general, the situation has stabilised somewhat, nothing surprising is happening, our ways of helping have worked well and now we need to persevere. This is reflected here and in all the countries involved.

Jana Křížová

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 Hajčiarová (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.