



HELPING UKRAINE

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

11th April 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! On the following pages, you will find *a personal story* from one of the residents of our facilities for refugees, as well as the *summary of the status of the fundraiser*.

■ Personal testimony of fleeing the war

My name is K. My friend S. and I lived in the town of Buca, which is located 12 km from Kiev and 1 km from Hostomel Airport, exactly in the places where the toughest fights began. I worked on my own as a hairdresser and also sold medical supplies. My friend had a job in Hostomel, he had his own car workshop.

At five o'clock in the morning, acquaintances and relatives called us to say that the war had begun, so we packed the essentials and drove away to a safer place. Even at this place, however, they started bombing us at ten o'clock in the morning, bombs fell everywhere, helicopters flew. We understood that this place was also not safe, so we moved on to friends. There were 9 adults and 11 children in total. We heard explosions all night, we were under fire all night, rockets were flying everywhere. At eight o'clock in the morning, one of the rockets finally hit the house where we were hiding in the basement.

The whole house was razed to the ground. My friend S. was on the 2nd floor in the bathroom and survived this attack by a miracle. The children were scared and we adults decided to leave. At our own risk, as a larger group, we went among the tanks, corpses and under direct fire we tried to move to safer places.

At noon we arrived in the Vinecky region, where we slept with local nice people, who also provided us with clothes and food.

As soon as we crossed the Zhytomyr bridge, it was soon blown up, so it was a miracle that we managed to cross it like this at the last minute. We spent the night in Vinence and then decided to move to Transcarpathia, which is closest to the EU border.

Our parents stayed in Hostomel and Kiev, so we decided to wait in Transcarpathia until they were evacuated and safe, which took two whole weeks. For two weeks, our parents were in the basement, hiding, had nothing to eat, were found by the Russians, who threatened them, took their phones, beat them and slammed their gates. There was a Russian tank parked in every yard of the house. Since we were in Transcarpathia, we could not help them. Neither food nor anything, so we just listened to stories. Stories of children dying there. Tiny children who were starving because there was nothing to feed them. Babies who died first.

In Jeremce, we joined the volunteers under the Hostomel Municipal Authority and tried to help at least remotely. We tried to raise money, we called all the acquaintances and relatives around the world. We raised 10,000 euros to buy an armored vehicle with which we could save ourselves and get people out of the most dangerous and worst places. We filled the cars with baby food, medicine, clothes, food for adults and sent everything to Zhytomyr to the main warehouse. However, transport to the warehouse was a big problem, because the Russians fired at all the drivers and did not allow any humanitarian aid to central Ukraine at all.

Eventually, a car arrived from Germany, which finally evacuated our loved ones and parents to relatives in various places around Ukraine, and we decided to travel abroad. We ran out of money for food and basic necessities.

I lost my apartment, according to available information, a Russian sniper shot from my apartment, who was later hit by a bullet from the Ukrainian army. According to the latest information I have, the apartment has burned down. The car stayed there, I had a Mercedes, but we were so stressed that we couldn't imagine getting behind the wheel. I later found out that the car was shot and destroyed, so there was nothing left of the car either. My friend also lost his house, it was hit by 4 missiles, so he had nothing left but a bare life.

As for the Belarusian and Russian soldiers, there was still some humanity left in them, but when the Kadyrovs arrived, they were like animals. These were special divisions of the Kadyrovs - even the Chechnya gave its hands away from them. They say of themselves that they are stateless people. They raped young girls and women. And we know that this really happened, because it is the testimony of our relatives and acquaintances.

The Kadyrovs were surprised that people had food processors at home or that they had paved roads in the villages. They all took everything they liked, kitchen equipment, microwaves, etc. We left everything at home, including money, because we expected to return soon. When someone was hidden somewhere in the basement, he couldn't even go upstairs for the food he had there because he could be shot. It was terrible.

My friend is a widower and is raising a child himself, so he was released across the border. I have a daughter and a niece, and thus in 5 people we crossed the border.

On a very complicated route, confused and exhausted, we drove through the whole Transcarpathia to the Lviv region and only there we crossed the Polish border. There was no room to sleep anywhere, so we slept in the car. In the end, we knew that with God's help we would get somewhere and we made it all the way to Prague and then to our destination (note - K. is smiling here). The children are excited, feel safe and they are in the presence of nice people. I cried for a long time, but it is better now. The children are full of positive energy, the local caretaker is an endless source of positive energy and an amazing person (here K. is crying).

We decided to stay here. We did not expect the people to be so friendly, nice and helpful. We are happy that we have come this far and we thank God that we are in such good hands. And my friend (S.) adds that the Lord God himself has guided us until he finally led us to you.

In the past, the people were not so cohesive and mutual general assistance was not so common, but the current situation has completely united our nation. Everyone tried their best to help. Every time someone helped us with something or gave us food, no one ever asked for anything. Everyone now presents themselves as one big family. Left hand, right hand no matter who needs help, whoever can, is happy to help, humility is always at the forefront of everything else.

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 11, 2022:

Czech and foreign donors have sent a total of CZK 1,518,816. CZK 443,150 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 Hajciarova (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. In this situation, which is new for us, we are trying to help as efficiently and thoughtfully as possible with a good and quick result. We also thank you for your forbearance in gradually refining and fine-tuning the processes we have set up and seeking the most effective form of assistance.**
Your trust is greatly appreciated.

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 Martin Kukla