



HELPING UKRAINE

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

19th May 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 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*.

■ Russian speaking parish Praha 2 - Agapé

Thank you for the prayer support and aid (food, hygiene, medicine) in the areas of Ukraine on the border with Russia. Sumy region is located on the border with Russia, in the zone of fighting. The people of this area are in great need of help.

Pastor and chaplain Anatoly serves in prisons in Sumy region. The supply of prisoners is very poor, there is a great shortage of food, medicine and hygiene supplies.

Thank you for your support in the ministry of Pastor Anatoly, for your help and prayers.

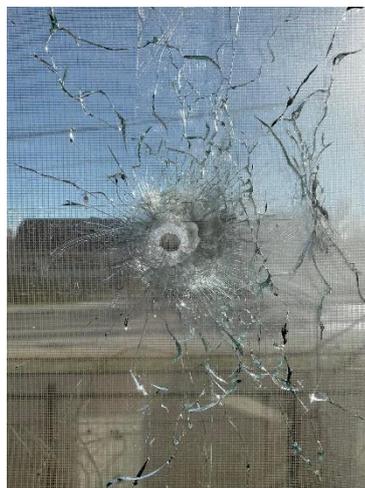
Pastor Lev Shults



The funeral of 26-year-old relative of Pastor Anatoly from the town of Suma, who died in the war with Russia.



The place where relatives of Pastor Lev Shults lived - after the explosions (Kiev region, near Chernobyl)



■ Diakonia UMC

Dear regular newsletter readers,

I'm going to start today's post a little unconventionally. I feel the need to go back in time, specifically to the date 24 February 2022, which is already inevitably linked to the invasion of the autonomous state of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. The time since the beginning of the invasion has already advanced and, unfortunately, the predictions of social discontent are slowly but surely beginning to come true. Yes, it is sad, but unfortunately this is the case. There are many among us people throughout the Czech Republic who are beginning to seek out disinformation which they then believe. I will pick out some examples at random:

"The state does not care about our people, but only about people from Ukraine."

"How is it possible that some refugees from Ukraine are richer than us - what kind of refugees are they?"

And the "best" at the end: "The war in Ukraine was provoked by the West!"

Social discontent is also growing based on myths that are slowly but surely starting to spread, especially on social media. They usually start with these words: "A friend of mine has a friend and she saw how the refugees behaved..."

I do not want to pass any judgement on people who believe misinformation and half-truths. My understanding is that these people have their own problems, and if they were to admit the reality, it might be a very unpleasant experience for them. Because sometimes seeing the truth is a painful process. I ask myself the question, what to do about it? Is it even possible to fight it and is it worth it? Yes, it does! One must hold on to the truth and remind oneself of the truth. I am guided by three main facts that have resounded in me since the beginning of the war and help me to stay with my original decision and attitude.

- 1) There is a war in Ukraine that was created by the invasion of the Russian Federation into the territory of a free state.
- 2) It is a cruel war where abuse, mistreatment and murder of ordinary citizens, including children, is taking place.
- 3) The people of Ukraine are naturally fleeing the war to save the life they have a right to. They are not fleeing to our or other territories to improve their social or economic status.

I am very glad that our centres are functioning. The people here are safe and have all the basics for a pretty good life. But otherwise they are still the ones who are in a mess. Even though they have a place to live, they are constantly dealing with internal insecurity, anxiety and fear. Maybe they don't show it so much yet, because it's their only defense.

I see this war crisis as an opportunity. An opportunity to realise the value of human life and an opportunity to help those who need it most at this moment.

I promised at the District Conference that after May 9, 2022, I will comment on whether our Veselka and Poušť recreation centers will be open for recreation over the summer after all. However, due to the ongoing war and the fact that we are registered in the Regional Office system in which we undertake the offer of asylum, this is unfortunately not possible this year.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Karel Nyerges, director of Diakonia UMC

Jihlava

A new Humanitarian Aid Centre is being prepared in Jihlava, and it is definitely a step in the right direction that it will not only be for people from Ukraine but also for single-parent families from the Jihlava region. Hopefully, this will alleviate the unnecessary tensions that sometimes arise. We are trying to support the centre with appeals for volunteers and donations of goods, clothes and food.

Volunteers from our church are now helping there with the cleaning.

Sasha, our coordinator, has been working on accommodation for a family from Kharkiv, who had



nothing left at home in Ukraine; they survived in the basement, but their whole house burned down. We are still looking for accommodation and work for other Ukrainian mothers, both of which are very hard to find now. We continue to welcome bicycles and various vehicles for the children; they enjoy them, and sometimes there are touching stories attached to the passing on. For example, one elderly couple, in addition to a bicycle, also donated an envelope with money to buy a helmet.

Two Ukrainian boys took part in the Ringoturnaj with our Royal Rangers group. The younger one took away a great experience: he won the competition in the accompanying programme and his result was the best in the whole 23 years of the tournament.

Libuše Hajčiarová, according to the coordinator Alexandra Grace

■ Jablonné

The number of residents has been reduced by one woman who is employed in Liberec and has found accommodation there.

Now we have 12 people accommodated. Of these, one teenager works full time and two women work occasionally at a hotel in Jablonné. With childcare, full-time work is unrealistic for them. The other three women still cannot find jobs. All the children attend school or kindergarten.

The whole group is in some tension at the moment because they are from Mykolaiv, where there is now fighting and sometimes they have no thought of making a life in the Czech Republic. They are worried about their loved ones; they are brave, but they also cry sometimes.

Pastor Zdeněk Brož

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 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 Světlana Mašková