



# HELPING UKRAINE

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

2nd June 2022

**T**hank 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!

## ■ Visit of US team

Last weekend, a group of six people who work for global agencies within our church arrived in Prague: the United Methodist Communications (photographer, videographer and editor) and the General Board of Global Ministries (more specifically, Üllas Tankler, regional representative for Europe, and two people from UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief). UMCOR intervenes all over the world wherever there is some kind of horror: earthquakes, tsunamis (they helped us after the big floods in Moravia and then in Prague about twenty years ago), but also famines and waves of refugees from war-affected areas. UMCOR people have experience and work with local organizations. They help quickly and professionally. They have gained recognition beyond the Methodist Church.

People from our church (United Methodist Church) in the USA send funds to help Ukrainians, both those who remain in the country and those who have left. Of course, the journalists came to report on what is happening in the Czech Republic. People from UMCOR came to see how we spend the money that comes through them.

We prepared a rich program for them. They had said: We would like to meet refugees and those who care for them, in Prague and the surrounding area. I figured that for the people from the USA the whole Czech Republic was the area, so: on Friday they were to visit Horní Počernice, on Saturday they were to go to camp sites Poušť and Veselka, and on Sunday morning they were to attend a worship service in Prague 2. Everything has been arranged and I am very grateful to everyone who was ready to welcome the team.

But on the first day it was different. Their morning flight was cancelled, so they did not arrive in Prague until the afternoon and were so tired that they just moved to the hotel and did not visit Horní Počernice at all. They rented a minibus at the airport and wished someone local had driven it. Eduard from our congregation Praha - Agapé offered to drive them wherever they needed to go.

Saturday's trip to the south went as planned. I accompanied them. Eduard turned out to be very useful not only as a great driver, but also as an interpreter; he comes from Transcarpathian Ukraine. In Poušť' and in Veselka, thanks to him, the people from the USA were able to communicate with the locals quite well, although through Czech - I translated into English. Üllas Tankler is Estonian, so he spoke to the Ukrainian residents of Poušť' and Veselka in Russian and translated into



English for his colleagues. Our people who are working with the refugees there already understand them and also helped with communication. The multitude of languages has not been an obstacle. When the initial embarrassment passed, we laughed about it.

Karel Nyerges, the director of Diakonia, was waiting for us in Poušť' and presented the care of refugees in our facilities as a long-term and complex project. However, all the mothers we spoke to expressed a desire to return home. Even if they have no house to go back to, they want return to Ukraine. Of course not yet, it is not safe yet, we shall see when. They fled mainly for the children, and their husbands stayed at home; to fight.



The US team members have experience with refugees in different parts of the world. They treated the people from Ukraine with respect and gained their trust, so then they were able to film some interviews and take pictures. Kathie from UMCOR said towards the end of the day, "It is not often that we get to see first-hand what happens with the support we send. I am so grateful now to meet the people we help in person."

The lunch prepared by locals also contributed to the friendly atmosphere.

Like Saturday, Sunday went as planned. The Russian-Ukrainian-speaking Agapé UMC participated in a joint service on Sunday morning, although they normally meet in the afternoon. That is because the US group went on to Hungary in the afternoon.



I explained to them that the members of the Agapé UMC have taken in many refugees from Ukraine, mostly relatives, but they also help others. In addition, they use their connections with people in Ukraine to send material aid in a trustworthy and reliable way. We in the Prague 2 UMC support them in this. We all enjoyed the joint service. Our superintendent gave a short greeting during the service. This was

followed by refreshments prepared by the Agapé UMC; there was an opportunity to chat.

I am glad that we in the Czech Republic have gained the trust of UMCOR representatives, when they saw how we use the money they had send us. They offer us further support for our projects, both financially and personally if needed.

I am glad that there are structures within our church that help to connect Christians, congregations, areas so that we can join forces and help effectively.

*Jana Křížová*

## ■ Tachov

Mrs. Olena, who was looking for a Protestant congregation, began to come to the church occasionally, and we were able to help her with her current problems. Also, distribution of clothing in our church, which had been uninterested for several weeks, is beginning to pick up again as the Red Cross is running low on supplies.

Pictured here are Ukrainian women from Kharkiv who came to choose something for the summer.

*Jana Daněčková*



## ■ Třeboň

In cooperation with the town of Třeboň, an integration group for Ukrainian families with children up to 6 years old opened in our premises in May. The aim is to support community life and offer mothers with young children the opportunity to get to know each other and help each other with childcare, as the kindergartens in Třeboň do not have free capacity. In the first weeks we did not see much interest from Ukrainian families, but eventually Czech mothers started to come to the playroom as well as Ukrainian ones and the group can rightly be called "integration". We are open every weekday and we pray that we will be able to respond well to the real needs of families - Ukrainian, Czech or any other - in our city.

*Mária Kunstová*



## ■ Jablonné

A group of 12 refugees has settled in Jablonné. They are grateful for a safe place without fear of eviction. To celebrate the children's birthdays, we paid for the mothers with children to visit the water park in Liberec twice. The children also use the city's sports facilities extensively. A member of Jablonné UMC Jan Wagner is helping to start a vegetable garden around the church house. In return, we may taste some Ukrainian specialties.

The shelling of Mykolayiv, the home of the residents, causes a planned arrival of more relatives, for whom we are looking for accommodation somewhere near Jablonné.

*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 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.