

My name is Caleigh Furlong, and I am a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Benicia. I have been living and teaching in Warsaw Poland for the past 8 years.

At the start of the war, Poland opened its borders to Ukrainians who are fleeing the war. At last report almost 3 million Ukrainians have come to Poland. Many are going to the larger cities in the country for better accommodations and job prospects. Warsaw alone, has now received over 400,000 displaced people.

The people of St. Paul's have been donating generously to help those here in Warsaw who need support. The money that has been donated has been used to buy grocery store and drugstore gift cards for the families that are staying with my friends, students from my school and those that work with Smile Warsaw (Smile Warsaw is a non-profit organization run by ex-pats in Warsaw that offers a Sunday meal, haircuts, and clothing). This will allow their guests to be able to get what they themselves need and want and give some financial relief to their hosts. For the time being I am focusing efforts on helping people that I know personally who are hosting refugee families or in some cases are going to the border to get families to bring to Warsaw. These families are also receiving gift cards to make their transition a bit easier. Most families are young women with younger children and elderly people. Ukrainian martial law dictates that men ages 18 to 60 must stay and fight in the war and so pretty much all the refugees are women and children. There are at least 10 households that you will be supporting at this moment, but I know that the number will increase over the next several weeks. Financial help will be needed and appreciated in the coming weeks by households as they will be faced with increased utility bills and general expenses. I am also using the funds to donate to a few organizations that are helping specific groups like transportation efforts, getting medical supplies to Ukraine, and helping with military equipment that is desperately needed like bullet proof vests, radios, night vision goggles, etc.

I am also volunteering at our central train station which is one of the various arrival points in this city. At the station, those arriving can get a hot meal, toiletries, and baby needs. They can also receive help finding accommodations and travel options. The trains are also offering free tickets to any place in Poland. A friend of mine, who is originally from the Netherlands, has worked with mayors of a few cities there to organize passage, accommodations, social services, and job placement for any refugees that would like to move there. So far, they have transported over 300 refugees from Warsaw through this connection.

Though the number of people arriving is decreasing slowly each day, we know that this will not be over soon and that many of the people arriving sadly have no home to return to when this is over. Friends will be hosting families for weeks and maybe months, so money donated will go to them to help with the incurring and unexpected expenses that will be due. Along with gift cards, it is a way to help not only the refugees, but also those that are opening up their hearts and homes to these people. The money will also go to organizations that will be helping with long term needs of refugees as well.

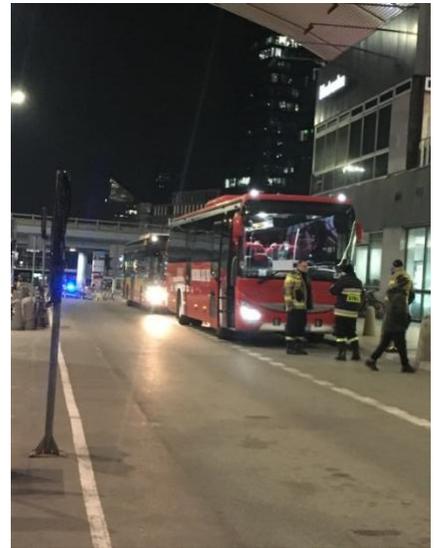
I thank everyone from our Diocese for their continued help, support, and prayers. My prayer is that we will not need it much longer.



Tent with food for arriving refugees



One tent that is a staging area for goods to be distributed



Bus with new arrivals



Gift cards



Volunteers greeting new arrivals with coffee, tea and goodies