



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeking support for humanitarian response to **UKRAINE**



The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) launched an appeal Tuesday for funds to help support the Church's humanitarian response to the war started last week when Russia attacked Ukraine. **According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR)**, the situation is on pace to become Europe's largest refugee crisis this century with more than 660,000 having already fled Ukraine to neighboring countries. All neighboring countries are keeping their borders open to Ukrainian refugees, the UNHCR says.

On Tuesday, March 1, 2022, leaders in **Presbyterian World Mission** and **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)** met to discuss the situation and how the church can respond to the growing refugee crisis, as well as the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The conversation focused on the unfolding situation within Ukraine and in bordering countries who are receiving refugees and carrying emergency supplies over the border into Ukraine as the situation there deteriorates. Mission co-workers shared information received from partners in the Central European region. PDA's Office for Refugees and Asylum is coordinating internally and with these partners in the area and ACT Alliance to determine where funds can be directed for the greatest impact.

"The present crisis in Ukraine demonstrates how important it is that our Church maintains strong relationships across the ecumenical, interfaith and humanitarian landscape *before* an emergency erupts," PDA Director the **Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus** says. "Through trusted partners in and beyond the Reformed Church family we share across the region, we are able to demonstrate solidarity with refugees and displaced persons through immediate gifts to the communities leading relief work and receiving refugees." "As the impact of this invasion continues, our advocacy work in the **Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations** and in the **Office of Public Witness** will strengthen humanitarian relief efforts," Kraus said. "If, as some fear, the ripple effects of this invasion expand to a broader geo-political platform, our Church's broader response will draw on the full range of our relationships, policies and practice, including work of the **Presbyterian Peacemaking Program**, which has co-led travel study seminars in Ukraine to study the very trends and impacts of cultures of militarism and violence which have led to the current crisis."

Ellen Smith, World Mission's regional liaison for eastern Europe, said she is hearing desperate situations with refugees who have few places to go. Some are living in metro stations amid the growing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Smith added that the situation is "unifying Ukraine in ways we have never seen. . . . I fear for their safety but am in awe of their courage."

Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees & Asylum, says churches in Ukraine and Central Europe are part of the response to the humanitarian crisis and she believes PDA will provide both financial and technical help. "We are grateful for the outpouring of prayers and calls from congregations asking how they can help," she says. "In the midst of the chaos, there are sibling churches and ecumenical partners who are already providing assistance with basic items for survival," While some refugees may find their way to the United States, Krehbiel and others say they expect most refugees will settle in neighboring countries with hopes of returning home. Krehbiel said, "As we pray for an end to this violence, we ask the U.S. government and our European allies to make a commitment to the Ukrainian people for a peaceful solution. We don't know how long it will take, but we know that they will need help with the rebuilding of their country so that those who are fleeing now may one day return home safely."



To support the response by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, make your check out to First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota, with "Ukraine" in the memo. You can also give online via our church website or by texting giving. Please select "Psby.Dis.Asst." fund and "Ukraine" in the optional memo.