

Disciple / UCC Ministries in Ukrainian Crisis

Primary Sources of Information:

Rev. Josh Baird, team leader: Global H.O.P.E., part of the UCC Wider Church Ministries (refugee and migration ministries, volunteer engagement, disaster response and recovery, and sustainable development work).

Rev Vy T. Nguyen, the Director of the Week of Compassion. (Alan Dicken is the Associate Director of WOC for Refugee & Immigration Response)

One in four Ukrainians- more than 11 million people – have left their homes as a result of the attack on their country. Nearly 4 million have left Ukraine and are now refugees. Another Six & one half million are still in Ukraine, internally displaced and increasingly desperate.

Our Mission Partners:

The Christian Church (DOC) and the United Church of Christ (UCC) are both members of the ACT Alliance a global humanitarian network (Action by Churches Together). The current ACT appeal which the DOC and UCC are helping to fund is the largest in its history, currently \$21.5 million. Funds are being used to support the procurement and when necessary shipment within European host countries and into Ukraine of all manner of goods, from food to medicine, household items and more. Counseling support is being provided, as well as transportation

assistance, and other needs. All of this is taking place in Ukraine itself, as well as Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Through our membership in the ACT Alliance and our partnership with the Reformed Church of Hungary, we are serving IDPs in 100 small shelters and activity centers located in the five counties in western Ukraine (Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsy, and Transcarpatia).

Disciples support ministry at 100 centers in western Ukraine providing food, medicine, and resources to meet immediate needs.

Refugees

In the opening weeks of the invasion the first wave of refugees typically had resources and a place to go. Those who are crossing the borders now are coming with fewer resources and nowhere to go. While their needs are being met, there is great concern for the next wave of refugees. As violence escalates, the largest wave of refugees may be those who are the most vulnerable and have the fewest resources.

The DOC & UCC through the ACT Alliance are supporting the provision of food, hygiene and other essentials in the neighboring countries to which refugees are fleeing, including Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

Most refugees from the war in Ukraine are women with children whose husbands and fathers were required to stay behind to fight.

They arrive in Poland, Hungary and other neighboring countries exhausted and craving a safe place to rest. Tragically, it's at this moment that they are at high risk of falling into the hands of people who want to exploit, not help them.

We are also working to strengthen measures protecting women and children who are vulnerable to trafficking, abuse, and fraud – for example, abusers masquerading as aid workers.

Reception centers in Poland and other countries direct refugees to safe shelters and provide cash cards to lessen their vulnerability to sexual exploitation or forced labor to get money. And in Hungary, the government and non-governmental organizations have moved the reception of refugees away from the main train stations to more secure areas.

Refugee Resettlement

Multiple phases of care and response will take place in the coming months and years. The immediate response is critical of course. We hold it in balance with the equally critical work to come.

We've all seen the merciless devastation of Ukrainian agriculture, industry, housing, health care, and human services. And we know that hundreds of thousands will be forced to build new lives in new lands.

Disciples have a long history of walking alongside communities in times of turmoil and uncertainty. Now, as before, Disciples are called to provide the ministry of hospitality to those seeking refuge and a new beginning.

Week of Compassion's Executive Director Rev. Vy Nguyen says, "My dad was one of the translators for the U.S. during the Vietnam War in the 1960s, and he had to flee after the fall of Saigon. As I have shared before, the church welcomed us back then, along with thousands of other refugees. At this moment, just as the church welcomed refugees then, we need to work with partners to make sure that those fleeing Afghanistan and other countries have a safe place to call home." [I know that he would add Ukraine]

It is exciting to me, and I hope to you, to know that we are present in the name of Christ in this crisis. 100% of your gifts to the Week of Compassion, when designated "International Emergency Response" or more specifically "Ukraine" will go to Ukraine relief efforts. You may give on line at the Week of Compassion web-site: (<https://www.weekofcompassion.org/donate.html>) or through your congregation.