

Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) Summary of PCUSA Response to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

June 22, 2022

The Presbyterian Mission Agency has a long history of accompanying faith communities and engaging peace building relationships in Russia and Ukraine dating back to the early 1990's, and since the onset of the war in February, is providing substantive humanitarian support for emergency and long term needs for affected and displaced persons in Ukraine and refugees who have fled the violence and taken refuge in countries throughout Europe.

1. Humanitarian Engagement.

PCUSA- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) initiated a church wide appeal soon after the war in Ukraine began, raising eight (8) million dollars. PDA convened a Ukraine war working table including PDA, World Mission's staff relating to and in Europe, the Office of Public Witness, the Presbyterian Ministry at the UN, and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. Emergency needs for refugees and displaced persons within Ukraine are being addressed through ongoing emergency grants supporting food, shelter, hygiene, transportation, and the like. This humanitarian aid is being delivered through partners in Ukraine (Saint Egidio and the International Orthodox Christian Charities) and in bordering countries receiving refugees, primarily through partnerships with Reformed Churches in Romania, Hungary, Poland and Czechia. Additionally, PCUSA is supporting a coordinated global humanitarian response with ACT Alliance, which includes multiple members from Europe and North America implementing long term multi-million dollar humanitarian emergency and mid-range responses throughout the affected region. As the refugee population fleeing Ukraine continues to move across Europe, PCUSA's response and resources are being extended to partners in Italy, Greece and other hosting countries. Partners are already planning for continued efforts for at least 5 years.

2. Partnership and Accompaniment

Since the late 90's, PCUSA congregations have been involved in the Congregational Twinning Program, a sister church program with goals of breaking down Cold War stereotypes and walking with churches recovering from 70 years of isolation from the global Christian community as well as persecution and repression and in the midst of the chaos from the breakup of the Soviet Union. Ongoing accompaniment in the region includes ecumenical dialogue, training seminars, and support of the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy. This includes the International Peacemaking Seminar in 2019 to Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.

Partnership with the Ukrainian Reformed Church in Transcarpathia has focused on the needs of the Roma community in that region, expanding to ministry with other marginalized groups. Following the Maidan Revolution in 2013-14, WM made a number of exploratory trips seeking to listen to partners, to understand the war in Donbas from their perspective.

3. Advocacy

The Office of Public Witness has urged Congress to mobilize resources for humanitarian and displacement assistance and to hold the Biden administration accountable to respond to the protection needs of displaced and at-risk populations.

The Stated Clerk, J. Herbert Nelson, signed an ecumenical letter to the Russia Orthodox Patriarch which states:

“In this moment, as the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, you have the holy opportunity to play an historic role in helping to bring a cessation of senseless violence and a restoration of peace. We pray you will do so, and our prayers will accompany you.”

The PCUSA Militarism Working Group recently organized a “Connecting the Dots” webinar on the intersection of militarism and climate change. Panelists included Dr. Svitlana Romanko co-founder and coordinator for the Stand With Ukraine Campaign and a green movement strategist and climate activist.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/connecting-the-dots-webinar-series/>

4. Ecumenical Strategic Response.

PCUSA/PMA is a member of the WCC whose leadership, along with leadership from ACT Alliance, visited with regional faith leaders in Ukraine, along Ukraine’s borders, and in Cyprus, consulting with Russian Orthodox Church leadership, visiting humanitarian projects and attempting to establish a reconciling dialogue between members of the Orthodox families engaged in and affected by the conflict. This effort continues. One of the members of ACT Alliance is the Russian Orthodox Church, Department of External Relations. (ROC-DECR)

PMA is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global humanitarian response, development and advocacy alliance, with elected representation on its governing board and executive committee through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Meeting in March and May 2022, the board addressed complaints filed against member organization the Russian Orthodox Church Department of External Relations (ROC’s “PDA”), voting without exception to censure the ROC-DECR for breach of the ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice, including international Humanitarian Principles.