

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief completes Ukraine Refugee Ministry in Gdansk, Poland

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Correspondent*

May 30th, 2022 brought to completion the joint SEND Relief/Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Refugee Ministry project at First Baptist Church, Gdansk, Poland. In partnership with SEND Relief, the crisis and compassion ministry organization of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board and North American Mission Board, and the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Ministries of the State Baptist Conventions of Ohio, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Mississippi had been supporting First Baptist Church, Gdansk in their ministry to those escaping the effects of the ongoing Russia/Ukraine war. Although initially anticipated to last for a period of six months, the ministry project was halted early due to changing ministry needs in Gdansk. With the active areas of conflict being redirected to the areas of Eastern Ukraine, many of the refugees are now electing to stay in Ukraine near its western border with Poland reducing the services and needs associated with the FBC, Gdansk site.

For just over two months, Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers have joined their counterparts from Ohio, Louisiana, and Kentucky in providing support to the members of the FBC, Gdansk in their ministry to those seeking refugees from the ongoing war. Most of these refugees were women and children who left husbands and sons at home in Ukraine to fight in the conflict. The volunteer teams provided temporary/emergency childcare, repair/remodeling of housing

units, spiritual and emotional care, and assistance with supply distribution and shelter management.

MBDR volunteers Tom and Vicki Kilpatrick (members, FBC/Jackson), have served as On-Site Coordinators for the four state partnership working with the state leadership of each state convention, the deploying teams, SEND Relief International Disaster Response, International Mission Board area missionaries and coordinators, and FBC, Gdansk representatives. Each week not only brought new teams but an ever changing ministry environment. Early in the ministry, the work focused on childcare and supporting FBC, Gdansk in assisting the women to gain access to the Polish registration system. As the work progressed, the focus shifted to helping to remodel/repair housing units that the church obtained that could be used to transition refugees being housed in the church facilities into longer term housing situations. As the ministry project entered its final weeks, Tom and Vicki engaged in sharing the principles and methods used in providing Spiritual and Emotional Care with ladies of the Polish and Ukraine congregations of FBC, Gdansk who were and are involved in the continuing ministry to the refugee population.

Although deployment of SBC DR Team volunteers has ended at this time for the FBC, Gdansk site, the ministry of FBC, Gdansk is ongoing to the refugees remaining in the Gdansk, Poland area and supplies continue to be sent into Ukraine by Polish Baptist congregations. MBDR is maintaining contact with our FBC, Gdansk, SEND Relief, and IMB partners in the area and is continuing to evaluating opportunities to re-engage or accept additional ministry responsibilities.

Through SEND Relief, Southern Baptist continue to be a significant part of the humanitarian response to the refugees and those affected by the conflict. In the neighboring countries of Hungary, Romania, and Moldova, SBC Disaster Relief teams from partnering State Baptist Conventions in

North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Texas are providing medical support and transportation of supplies. SEND Relief continues to support the ministries of the Ukraine Baptist Union with food, supplies, and repair materials that are being distributed where feasible across Western and Central Ukraine. It is anticipated that in the weeks ahead, as the situation stabilizes, that SEND Relief will call for additional volunteers to respond into Ukraine to provide repair/rebuild assistance and spiritual/emotional care to those affected by the conflict.

Please continue to pray for the people of Ukraine and Russia. Pray for the war to cease that homes, families, communities, and nations may be restored to peace. Pray for those who are demonstrating the love of God by serving the hurting and needy created by the conflict might be effective and strengthened in their labor.

If you feel lead to give, financial gifts in support of the SEND Relief Response may be given through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board designating International Disaster Relief/Ukraine Conflict Response. Submit to MBCB, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205. Gifts may be given directly to SEND Relief online at:
https://www.sendrelief.org/projects/ukraine/?utm_content=sendrelief&utm_medium=web&utm_source=web&utm_campaign=ukraine

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