

SATURDAY, MARCH 19TH, 2022



Romanian border police and citizens have turned the pedestrian bridge linking Ukraine and Romania at Sighetu Marmatiei into a Toy Bridge. Each child who comes from Ukraine is welcome to take a toy.



Polish parents left strollers at the train station for Ukrainian parents who may need them when they arrive in Poland with their children.

#STANDWITHUKRAINE

Dearly beloved,

Happy (a-l-m-o-s-t) Spring!

This Sunday, Cheng Cheng (piano) and Hannah Shanefield (soprano) bring us Philip Glass, Chopin, George Harrison (“Here comes the Sun”), Schubert’s “Frühlingsglaube,” and “Hold On” (from *The Secret Garden*). We’ll sing Pat Humphries’ “Swimming to the Other Side” and Carrie Newcomer’s “You Can Do This Hard Thing.”

It’s Covenant Renewal season, during which we renew our great covenant of love and service and pledge our financial support to Arlington Street. This Sunday, what a joy to welcome to the high pulpit, out from behind the Zoom Deck, Tech Team member Sandy Dixon. Sandy will be sharing with us why she supports the good work of Arlington Street — #NoMatterWhat!

James Foleno, now a high school sophomore, is our worship coordinator. Honoring the two-year anniversary of the pandemic, my sermon is called “Finding the Blessing.”

Each Sunday, we share our collection plate with a partner in our mission of love, service, justice, and peace. Throughout the month of March, our gifts to Share the Plate will go to World Central Kitchen, whose volunteers are on the ground on the borders

of Ukraine and also inside the besieged country itself. On Tuesday, Steve Givot, a friend of a friend, sent this update from Poland.

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Today was my first day actually contributing to end the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Europe.

It has been impossible to sign up for work at World Central Kitchen. When I emailed, they said to just show up; there's plenty to do.

This morning I showed up. The nearest lodging I could book is about 90 minutes south of Przemsyl, in Sanok. It's only about 45 miles, but the drive is across the Carpathian Mountains (two passes) and through a countryside where most of the farmhouses have chimneys pouring out smoke from burning firewood. The road is about 20-30 miles from the Ukraine border.

When I arrived, there were about 50 people working in 25,000 square feet that just three weeks ago was a dirty warehouse. In one week, World Central Kitchen painted everything from the floor up. The only plumbing had been a toilet. Now there is state-of-the-art mass-quantity cooking equipment, stainless steel sinks, and 6-foot diameter "paella pans" that hold about 950 gallons of food each (up to the brim) on enormous propane burners. I think there are ten of these.

There's a walk-in refrigeration room that is about 2,000 square feet, which a Polish company put together in 24 hours, with a garage door through which to enter and leave with enormous quantities of food on fork lifts.

Today, my little group from Ohio, Idaho, Portugal, Canada, and the UK peeled an huge quantity of potatoes and cored and sliced a vast number of apples for baby food.

We were told that we fed 7,000 people in Przemsyl and at the border, and we prepped food to be cooked in Lviv (Ukraine) for another 30,000 people. Not a typo: 30,000.

The volunteers are from everywhere in Europe, the US/Canada, and one from Japan. They show up and they work — some for a few days, some for longer.

After the 90-minute commute and 10 hours working, I'm tired but also wired. Sometime in the next few days, I'll join trips to three places:

One trip will be to the train station in Przemsyl. There are 70 Polish volunteers greeting people as they leave the train and helping them sort out their next destination. Some know people in Europe and have a place to go. Far too many do not. They are being spread throughout Poland and beyond. I have been told that most homes and apartments in Warsaw and Krakow have a host family and one or two refugee families. The generosity of the Polish people is beyond comprehension.

A second trip will be to a local shopping mall that has just been built but is not yet occupied. There are thousands of women and children sleeping on the floors, as well as an enormous space used to store donations of clothing, baby goods, things to occupy kids, etc.

The third trip will be to the border. I will be serving people the first meal many have had in days. With the bombing near Lviv (not far across the border), many are coming to Poland — many on foot, many with children. They are tired, hungry, and cold. The temperature at night is around freezing. When they reach the border, hot food is an immediate need.

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Presbyterian minister and children’s television icon Fred Rogers changed my life when he told us to “look for the helpers.” “When I was a boy and would see scary things in the news,” Mr. Rogers said, “my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”

Thank you for joining me in looking for the helpers — and doing what we can to help!

*Faithfully yours, with love,
Kim*

