

ST BRIDES CHURCH UKRAINE AID APPEAL 2022

4 MONTHS
5 LORRIES
50+ ORGANISATIONS
100+ VOLUNTEERS
£10,000+ DONATIONS
£1,000,000 HUMANITARIAN AID



SITUATION

In February 2022 we witnessed the beginning of another cruel and brutal war in Ukraine, which for many of us seemed unreal. The Russian army invaded Ukraine and every day we followed the terrifying and often inhumane scenes of this conflict. This was the beginning of Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War 2 with estimates of up to 2 million people fleeing Ukraine to seek safety in Poland.

Many of us were moved by our sense of injustice, or conscience and people across the world including those in our community felt motivated to offer support to the Ukrainian people. Christian values require that in such situations of extreme need and suffering we are compelled to act.

BACKGROUND

I was encouraged by Fr Dominic Quinn of *St Leonard's Church* and Rev Anne Paton of *The Old Parish Church* to organize an appeal for Ukrainian war refugees. As I come from Eastern Poland I was best placed to lead this and to link in with initiatives supporting refugees in the area. This had the benefit of creating a direct pathway for humanitarian aid donations and an international collaboration between Scottish, Polish and Ukrainian Catholic communities.

Along with Rev Paton and Fr Quinn we were unsure about the potential community response since there were so many other charities supporting Ukraine. However, we were certain that we wanted to do something for these people in desperate need of help. We decided that we would ask for donations for the refugees. Our network of contacts in the area allowed us to identify specific items for donation and send aid that met the most immediate needs of the refugees.

All the Catholic priests in East Kilbride supported the idea and other local church and community leaders joined our appeal. I was asked by East Kilbride lawyers to produce an official letter describing the appeal. I signed this letter on 1st March 2022 and the appeal officially began. A charity I know of called *Caritas Siedlce* which works with refugees and sends humanitarian aid to Ukraine had been appealing for donations. As I knew the leaders, we were able to liaise directly around the organization and distribution of our humanitarian aid.

APPEAL

Our first task was to raise awareness of our appeal which we did online and through social media networks. This brought it to the attention of the local community and many people of good will. On reflection I really did not know what I had done when I signed this appeal, simply because the response of our local community was so quick and generous. This proved that I/we underestimated the power of social media and the communities' compassion and generosity.

Fr Dominic Quinn kindly agreed to the use of St Leonard's Church Hall for storing the donations for Ukrainian war refugees and within several days the hall was filled. Many people called in response to our appeal from across Scotland including other areas in Lanarkshire, Glasgow and the community on Arran. The phone was ringing all day, because so many people wanted to help us with and make donations – whatever they could manage. In the first few days of the appeal Fr Quinn had a crucial role in organizing the group of around 40 volunteers from his church who collected donations then sorted and boxed items for transportation. Many local businesses contacted us and some very helpfully donated cardboard boxes for the transportation.



WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE APPEAL:

ARRAN SENSE OF SCOTLAND
 BLANTYRE SOCCER ACADEMY
 CARITAS SIEDLCE
 COCA COLA EAST KILBRIDE
 CO-OP STORE, BRODICK
 CO-OP DEPOT, NEWHOUSE
 DOLLAN AQUA CENTRE
 EAST KILBRIDE CREDIT UNION
 EAST KILBRIDE NEWS
 ENVIROCLEAN
 FAILTE MO CHARA
 FERRARI PACKAGING
 FUSIONS UTILITIES
 GUALA CLOSURES
 JARVIE PLANT
 KEEDWELL TRANSPORT
 MARKS AND SPENCER'S, ARGYLE STREET
 MELDRUM GARDENS CARE HOME
 MCKILLOP GARDENS CARE HOME
 MO'S, BLANTYRE-SUBWAY
 PRISTINE DOMESTIC CLEANING
 PURE CLEAN COMPANY
 QUICK PREP & FAILTE MO CHARA
 S & G PLANT HIRE
 VPK
 TESCO EAST KILBRIDE



Over the next few days, I asked for volunteers from my church and again we had another 40 people come forward. More people phoned us from different companies and organizations willing to come and help with donations.

The church of *St Leonard's* was constantly busy and after several days Fr Quinn became a little worried but happy and laughing in a tragic-comic way saying that we were 'snowed under' and that he wanted his church and hall back. At this point we had unfortunately to turn down donations, as we had no more storage available which meant we had to ask people to return another time. Once again, I want to apologize for this. We were overwhelmed and under prepared for the sheer scale of the generosity which was the greatest community response I have seen in my life.



Two businesses came to our aid with storage facilities – *Coca Cola* East Kilbride and *Keedwell* Uddingston. The use of both warehouses to store the donations was gratefully accepted and the appeal was re located and continued from *St Bride's* Church Hall.

At the same time parishioners of *St Vincent's* in East Kilbride became involved in the appeal. They used their own hall to accept donations and prepare them for transportation.

In March we managed to send the first two lorries of humanitarian aid to *Caritas Siedlce* in Poland. Two Scottish hauliers - Kevin Quinn & Colin Lawson did the transportation voluntarily. I was very happy that I could help unloading the lorries in Siedlce. This allowed us to witness the benefit of the aid, better understand the needs of the refugees and document the process on behalf of all who had so generously donated.

As my parishioners and volunteers had been working very hard and this couldn't be expected to continue, it was decided to have a pause around the Easter break. Local people had also been generous, and it was agreed that it was unrealistic to expect this



level of donations and work rate required by the volunteers to continue. In April we had a break in receiving donations and spent time preparing and sending our third humanitarian lorry to Siedlce.

Following this we resumed receiving donations on a weekly basis in *St Bride's Church Hall* and the volunteers – mainly my parishioners from *St Bride's church* - did all the work. Donations kept coming from different organizations, channels and ways.

At the beginning of May my cousin Monika, contacted me. It was great to hear from her and she explained she was volunteering in *Nadarzyn/Warsaw Refugee Centre* supporting around 3,500 displaced individuals. She had heard about our appeal and enquired about any help and support we could provide them. Knowing that *Caritas Siedlce* did not have as many refugees to support and were now sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine, the decision was made with parishioners and volunteers to target aid to the organizations with the greatest need - the *Nadarzyn refugee Centre*, which is one of the very first and biggest ones.



In May we sent the fourth lorry filled to the brim to the refugee Centre in Nadarzyn. In June again we managed to do the same with the fifth lorry. In May and June we were in touch with *Rashelea Primary School* which collected dozens of bikes and scooters for the refugee children. The school members prepared the bikes for transportation, and we delivered them to East Kilbride and then on to Warsaw.



RASHELEA PRIMARY



EAST KILBRIDE

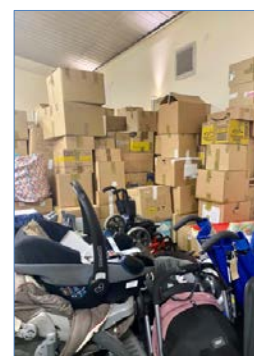


WARSAW

In addition to aid sent to Ukraine, refugees being hosted in emergency accommodation in our own community of East Kilbride were signposted to access support through the appeal. One family with young children attended the church hall to request immediate help which they were given in the form of baby food, nappies and other essential items. They were comfortable enough to return on subsequent occasions to receive more supplies and following placement in the community they received practical help and support through outreach work by parishioners involved in the appeal. As more people arrive in the diocese this work may become a larger focus and may be a good way of helping support all those in need in our community.

HUMANITARIAN AID SENT THROUGH THE APPEAL UNTIL 30 JUNE 2022 WAS 42,5 TONS AND ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS WORTH AROUND £1,000,000.

DESCRIPTION	BOXES/ITEMS	WEIGHT (KG)
Antibacterial wipes	1	10.5
Baby clothes	303	2,258.9
Baby food	48	518.8
Baby formula	1	5.7
Baby milk	17	175.5
Baby wipes	75	738.2
Baking goods	5	37.9
Bandages	11	60.3
Batteries	6	50.2
Bedding	15	152
Bike	58	480.4
Biscuits	25	236.1
Blankets	118	733.3
Body wash	15	131.2
Canned food	282	3,845.7



Capri juice pallet	1	900
Car seat	1	6.6
Cereal	11	82.3
Children calpol	21	115
Children essentials	142	1,133.6
Chocolate	2	9.9
Clothes	956	7,345.9
Coca cola pallet	2	1,864
Crutches	3	5.6
Crisps	4	13.6
Dressings	14	85.4
Dry fruits	1	4.3
Dry food	342	4,050.7
Duvets	276	1,639.8
Face masks	3	9.2
First aid kit	26	167.1
Hand sanitizer	5	45.8
Hand sanitizer pallet	4	1,068
Hand soap	43	436.6
Instant food	3	37
Juice	22	284.8
Medical equipment	30	189.6
Medical supplies	34	213.1
Medicine	26	187.0
Mineral water	23	505.1
Mineral water pallet	5	5,555
Multivitamins	1	7
Nappies	269	2,221.3
Noodles	2	22
Paracetamol	3	14
Pasta	89	971.8
Pasta sauce	3	42.9
Plastic bags	46	145.5
Pram	35	601.4
Rice	22	284.7
Sanitary products	124	816.7
Shampoo	27	235.6
Scooter	14	40.8
Sleeping bags	80	499.2
Sleeping mats	27	85.6
Soap	1	14.5
Socks	106	774.1
Soup	7	99.8
Sweets	24	232.8
Thermal clothes	193	1,201.1
Thermal flasks	4	21.7
Toilet paper	10	53.9
Toiletries	475	4,642.4
Tomato puree	2	22.0
Toothbrushes	11	57.9
Toothpaste	24	210.2
Torches & batteries	1	8.7
Towels	26	188.7
Travel cot	5	87.1
Wheelchair	5	125.5



At the beginning of our appeal it was certain that we would have to send at least two lorries of humanitarian aid, because the generosity of our community was amazing. I decided that we would need to fundraise for the cost of transportation to Poland, which was approximately £5,000 for a Scottish haulier. I thank Lucy and Kate Gingell for setting up this fundraising on *GoFundMe* platform. Many good people came to help us and very quickly we reached our target of £5k after which we decided to fundraise another £5,000. The money from *GoFundMe* was sent to a parish account of St Xavier in Carfin by mistake and finally £10,930.40 was sent to our parish bank account on Friday 26 August 2022. I do thank especially the Diocesan Finance Department for solving this problem.

Along with our volunteers it was decided that it would be beneficial to have a second-hand van for the purpose of the appeal. The appeal cannot continue without a van. I am very grateful to Mr Jim McLuskey for providing our parish with a van, which

must be returned to him as I leave St Bride's parish. The aim is to use the money transferred to our parish account for this purpose.

I also want to thank many parishioners and other people who supported our appeal with small cash donations. These donations helped to cover every day operational costs our volunteers and I had. I was not worried about travelling to Poland just for two days for each lorry of humanitarian aid to be unloaded as our kind and generous parishioners donated some money towards this.

The support has also extended to refugees who have escaped the war and came to settle in East Kilbirde. The reality of their situation was brought home to the volunteers as they sorted and packed donations. A Ukrainian family appeared at the hall late one afternoon. A father, mother and two small children – one in a pram. They had little English and asked only for two things – water and nappies. They were supported with a variety of essentials and non-essentials and the look of joy on the faces of the children when they were given some toys gave the volunteers so much pleasure, but also a harsh reality check of the situation the refugees face. Other refugees are spending time with local families until they are settled.

Our volunteers gave their time willingly whether it was one hour or six hours, one day or every day as the appeal continued.

I must admit it was a challenge for me especially in March 2022 when in our Catholic Church we had the holy time of Lent not to neglect my priestly ministry. Lent is a busy time for each priest and for me as a priest this is always my priority as this can be done in my parish only by myself – a Catholic priest. However, with the help of my parishioners and volunteers, with less time for resting I did fulfil all my responsibilities very well.

Following conversations with our appeal team we decided to have a summer break in July and August. Despite this scheduled break I found I still received donations and many enquiries on the phone and the need for aid remained undiminished.

The parish is on Facebook. Here you can find photographs and videos of the sorting and boxing of the donations, the loading and departure of the lorries and then arrival at the destinations. It is good to see the joy on the faces of the recipients, when the boxes were unloaded and how the goods are distributed. There are also four videos thanking the parish and Scotland for their help. Many of the volunteers on viewing felt emotional and happy to have given the little that they could, to help the Ukrainian people. The information is also on Twitter. The parish website is www.sbek.org.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

In addition to the humanitarian aid donated to Ukrainian war refugees the appeal had benefits closer to home within the parish itself and through modelling Christian values which were visible to the wider community locally and internationally. These benefits may not be as immediately evident as the aid but are nonetheless significant and paralleled aspirations for the church as identified by parishioners in the recent diocese synod report. Themes in common included inclusivity, collaboration, participation, visibility and accessibility of clergy.

COMMENTS

Throughout the appeal we have received a lot of positive feedback from refugees, volunteers, parishioners and our own community.

Facebook:

"God's love in action"

"Such a fabulous achievement and Ukraine needs all our help"

"Been a privilege to be a small part of this all"

"Thank you Fr Rafal for asking us to be involved"

"Great work Father and all your great helpers"

"Fantastic – what a team!"

"God bless you all and keep you safe in your journey"

"Thank you very much for all that you've been doing and know that this has made a true difference in the lives of these people." Volunteer, Nadarzyn

Refugee Centre

"We have no words to thank you for all of the things you gave us". Volunteer,



Nadarzyn Refugee Centre

In July we received a certificate from the councillor Anatolij from a place called Baikivtsi in Ukraine as follows, "Thank you for reacting, mercy and humanitarian aid given to support The Armed Forces of Ukraine and people who were found in difficult life conditions. Sincere greetings!"

For more information or enquiries please contact us through social media:

WEBSITE <http://www.sbek.org/>

FACEBOOK @StBrideEK

INSTAGRAM stbrideek

TWITTER @stbrideseek

THANK YOU

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY

CHARITIES

EAST KILBRIDE FOOD BANK

KILBRYDE HOSPICE

NHS

QUEEN ELIZABETH UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

HAIRMYRES HOSPITAL

LYNEBANK HOSPITAL

SCHOOLS

BARGEDDIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CALDERGLEN HIGH SCHOOL,

CATHKIN AND RUTHERGLEN HIGH SCHOOL

DARGAVEL PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE GLASGOW ACADEMY,

GREENBURN SEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

RASHIELEA PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST ANDREWS AND ST BRIDES HIGH SCHOOL

ST ANTHONY'S PRIMARY

ST CUTHBERT'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST HILARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST KENNETH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

OLOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST VINCENT'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST LEONARD'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST LOUISE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHURCHES

CORPUS CHRISTI CHURCH, AIRDRIE

ST AIDANS, WISHAW

ST JOSEPHS, BLANTYRE

ST LEONARDS CHURCH

ST VINCENT'S CHURCH

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CHURCH

MONCRIEF PARISH

THE OLD PARISH CHURCH

GROUPS

AFGHAN COMMUNITY IN GLASGOW

ARRAN COMMUNITY

CARITAS STUDENTS

MURDOSTOUN STANDS WITH UKRAINE

POLISH COMMUNITY IN WISHAW

INDIVIDUALS

LOUISE AND KIERAN FROM ST LEONARDS

ANNE MCHUGH

MARGARET HENDRY



CHRIS JAPP
KEVIN DUDDY
SEBASTIAN AND ROBERT
GED GAFFNEY
SEAMUS KERRIGAN
CHARLIE QUINN
KEVIN QUINN
COLIN LAWSON
JIM MCCLUSKY
MR MCLAREN
COUNCILLOR MO RAZZAQ
KATE AND LUCY GINGEL

CLERGY

FR FRANK DOUGAN
FR ROMANUS ENYINNIA
REV ANNE PATON
FR VINCENT LOCKHART
FR DOMINIC QUINN
REV. SARAH ROSS



THE VOLUNTEERS AND PARISHIONERS OF ST BRIDES CHURCH

FUTURE PLANS

Unfortunately, in my priestly ministry I will have to leave the church of St Bride's and probably go somewhere else. The new priest of St Bride's, Fr Francis McGachey has kindly agreed to continue the appeal which is a great cause of joy for me. I wish the best to everyone on the next stage of this appeal!

The appeal has been one of the greatest experiences of my life and I had the pleasure to lead, co-ordinate and work alongside parishioners and many people to achieve this.

Fr Rafal Sobieszuk
31 August 2022

