

# ADVOCATE



Bi-monthly advocate newsletter

Join the movement for *Justice. Compassion. Love.*



June 2022 Edition  
Refugees in Crisis

## Loving Our Neighbors in Ukraine and Beyond

I feel as though I have seen humanity at its best and worst in Ukraine over the last few months. The stories and footage have been so hard to hear and watch. The desperation of millions of people fleeing for their lives, houses and cities turned to rubble, families separated, lives lost. People like Elena and Victoria who were forced to leave everything behind to protect themselves and their children. The depth of human suffering and the sheer brutality of war have been so confronting.

As I write this, the UN has just announced that they are expecting 8.3 million people to have fled the country this year. This is on top of an already unprecedented global refugee crisis.

There is so much about the war in Ukraine that confounds me, that grieves me, and—if I'm honest—causes me to despair about the state of our world.

But amid all of that, there have also been moments of deep hope, moments where I am reminded of the power of love, where we catch a glimpse of what our world would look like if we truly loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We've seen mothers in Poland leaving prams at train stations for Ukrainian refugees crossing the borders with

their babies; ordinary citizens in countries across Europe and even the US and Australia, opening their homes to refugees; mobile kitchens at the border serving hot meals to those who have made the sometimes-treacherous journeys from their besieged towns.

I believe God is at work bringing light to some of the darkest places. And that as a church, we are embracing the call to join Him in that work.

I am so inspired by the dedication of ADRA colleagues across the world as they provide direct assistance to refugees fleeing the war. Each day, my colleagues from ADRA Poland drive buses to cities across Ukraine to deliver food, hygiene items, medicine, clothing, and blankets—and will even collect refugees and bring them to safety across the border. ADRA staff in Hungary run four refugee settlements and manage a food distribution activity for refugees at Budapest's main railway station.



**Deuteronomy 10:18-19:** "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt."



Elena fled the horrors of Mariupol to Slovakia, where she was served by volunteers from ADRA.

ADRA Romania has helped coordinate the hosting of 2,500 refugees in homes across the Romanian church community.

In makeshift tents, centers, and camps, my friends and colleagues – many facing their own fears and uncertainty, some even displaced themselves—are loving their Ukrainian neighbors with listening ears, warm food, warm beds, and warm embraces.

I feel so blessed to be part of a movement that is helping some of the most desperate people in our world right now.

And I've been thinking about how each of us can be helpers too.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 reminds us that as followers of Jesus, we are called to respond to those who are vulnerable or in need of help. We are to love our neighbors—not only those near us or like us, but anyone who is in need.

And if I believe that every human being, no matter who they are, is my neighbor

then that must include the refugee fleeing conflict in Ukraine and the refugee fleeing conflict in Syria, in Afghanistan and in Myanmar. Just as the Samaritan man was willing to cross political, cultural, and social barriers to meet his neighbor's needs, so too are we called to show mercy on others who may be different to us. Jesus says to "go and do likewise."

My proximity and circumstances may mean that I am not able to provide hands-on care for others, but I can still act lovingly toward them. I can still be a good neighbor.



**Dr Herma Percy**  
ADRA International's  
Director of  
Advocacy.



### This Refugee Sabbath, here are three ways that we can love our neighbors fleeing Ukraine and beyond:



#### Support

Financially support the work of ADRA. ADRA staff are working to support refugees in Ukraine and in crises all over the world. You can donate to the Ukraine Crisis Appeal. [adra.org/donate](https://adra.org/donate)



#### Advocate

Join us as we advocate to decision makers around the world to see change for refugees. Join our letter writing campaign. Email: [advocacy@adra.org](mailto:advocacy@adra.org) to find out more.



#### Pray

Join us in praying for refugees around the world – see our prayer at the end of this newsletter or go to [adra.org/worldrefugesabbath](https://adra.org/worldrefugesabbath)

# Country News

Adventists are working together to support refugees around the world. Here are just a handful of our stories!



## Thailand



ADRA Thailand has been responding to the needs of refugees since it was established in 1979. At first, support focused on refugees from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam – but in 1984, with tens of thousands fleeing war in Myanmar, the emphasis shifted. More than 100,000 refugees from Myanmar are now in Thailand. ADRA has been standing with these refugees and providing much needed assistance. This has taken the form of humanitarian relief, vocational and entrepreneurship training, business grants, and educational support. Training has been provided to more than 18,000 refugees since 2011, and the education support that has been provided has benefitted more than 19,000 students and 1,000 teachers. ADRA Thailand also stood with refugees during the height of COVID-19, providing hygiene kits and vital information about the disease to more than 92,000 people. It's an amazing legacy of serving refugees, spanning more than four decades!



# Colombia



ADRA Columbia, through the SAVE project, is providing food security to Venezuelan migrants and refugees who would otherwise be left without. More than 500 households have received food vouchers, each assisting with 4 months of food security. Amazingly, the save program also delivers via "Tuk-Tuk" more than 110 pre-prepared meals a day to migrants that are walking between Venezuela and Columbia, providing them crucial nutrition on their journey.



# Afghani Refugees

*Washington Spencer Korean Church in the United States.*

The Washington Spencer Korean Adventist Church was founded by Korean immigrants in the early 1970s. They know how hard it is to settle and flourish in a new country. When they found out that there were more than 1000 Afghani families fleeing the Taliban to settle in their region, they had a heart to serve. They had already been scaling up their community services, and as Afghani families moved into temporary accommodation in the area, the Church and its team of volunteers responded. At first, they provided food, clothing, toys and others needs to the refugees in their area. But they went beyond this too, they built relationship and connection. Now many have joined their community!



# Motivational Minute

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Any human being who needs our sympathy and our kind offices is our neighbor.

The suffering and destitute of all classes are our neighbors; and when their wants are brought to our knowledge, it is our duty to relieve them as far as possible

Ellen G White - *Testimonies of the Church* 4:226-227

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*Motivational Minute is kindly provided by the Ellen G White Estate.*

## Refugees in Crisis: Where is the Church?

Join our esteemed panel for the virtual townhall discussion on the varied levels of the refugee crisis and the practical ways church members can become involved. The panel is livestreamed on Youtube and Facebook. You can view it at: [adra.org/worldrefugeesabbath](https://adra.org/worldrefugeesabbath)

**ADRA AND ADVENTIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP PRESENT**

# REFUGEES <sup>in</sup> CRISIS

## WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

**JUNE 4, 2022 | 5 PM EST** YouTube **f** **LIVE**

**PANELISTS**

<p><b>ISABELA CUNHA</b> CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY SPECIALIST AT UNICEF</p>	<p><b>JENNIFER WOODS</b> DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST WORLD CHURCH</p>	<p><b>GABRIELA PHILLIPS</b> COORDINATOR FOR ADVENTIST MUSLIM RELATIONS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION</p>	<p><b>PASTOR DOUG HARDT</b> UKRAINIAN RELIEF COORDINATOR, MARKHAM WOODS CHURCH</p>	<p><b>MOE STILES</b> MASTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS STUDENT &amp; CHAPLAIN</p>
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**MODERATOR**  
**DR. HERMA PERCY**  
Director of Advocacy,  
ADRA International

**VISIT [adventistpeace.org](https://adventistpeace.org) OR [adra.org/worldrefugeesabbath](https://adra.org/worldrefugeesabbath) FOR MORE DETAILS!**  
**JOIN US <https://youtu.be/bxaVFCQ4uD8>**

# Where is the Church?

The tsunami of world refugees who are fleeing conflict, disease, hunger, and natural disasters is here. At our sanctuary doors. Now.

How can our church help refugees who are seeking asylum? Often when that question arrives, rather than reprioritizing and problem solving, excuses erupt.

"It's all politics, anyway."

"Let's stick to the gospel message."

"There are way too many refugees to help them all."

"I have my own problems—and I'm busy."

"Suffering is simply part of life."

Naturally, flavors of truth can be found in all five excuses. But Jesus never paid much notice to flavorful excuses.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus commands those who love Him, "Follow me." Follow me wherever risky compassion calls you. Follow me in the loving manner I lived my earthly life. Follow me by doing your balanced best to help humankind.

In Matthew, chapter 24, His disciples ask a chronology question about the end of time: "When will it be?" Jesus provides an ethics answer: "Because wickedness is multiplied, most people's love will grow cold. But whoever endures to the end will be saved" (12,13). Jesus is urging, Never let your love grow cold. Keep your love supple and warm, no matter the climate or circumstances. You'll be tempted to become callous, distant, suspicious, and addicted to comfort. Do not give in.

True followers of Jesus may fashion their warm responses to cold excuses through these questions.

Why should we care? When we care for the most vulnerable, we care for Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Who is our neighbor? As seen in the parable of the good Samaritan—"Which of these proved to be a neighbor?"<sup>3</sup> — we are neighbors to everyone who is in need.

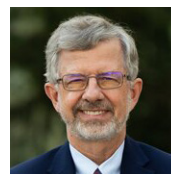
What can we do? We cannot change the entire world, but we can change our world by giving our time, money, prayers, and creative action toward selected refugees. Then witness the ripples widen. Whatever our task, do it earnestly, as if serving Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

Where is the church? Wherever two or more are gathered in Jesus' name, He is there with them.<sup>5</sup> The church is wherever Jesus is.

And Jesus is here. At our sanctuary doors. Now.

<sup>1</sup> See Luke 9:57-62. <sup>2</sup> See Matthew 25:40. <sup>3</sup> See Luke 10:25-37.

<sup>4</sup> See Colossians 3:23. <sup>5</sup> See Matthew 18:20.



**Chris Blake**

Guest Columnist

*Pastor of San Luis Obispo  
and Morro Bay Seventh-  
day Adventist Churches*

**Matthew 25:37-40.** <sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

<sup>40</sup> "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

# Our unique (political) voice



Delegates at the 2012 Voices for Justice Conference

Whenever we look at the world around us, we are bombarded with another slew of overwhelming headlines. We are tempted to turn away, to choose silence as a shortcut to apparent peace. But that is not an option that the most vulnerable can afford—or that our faith allows. Instead we are called to respond and engage, with compassion, intentionality and hope. We are called to speak.

Ten years ago, an ADRA leader invited me and a couple of others to join him—and 200 other Christians from around Australia brought together under the banner of Micah Australia—for a four-day trip to Canberra (Australia's capital). This "Voices for Justice" event included two days of advocacy training, policy briefings, prayer and worship, then two days in Parliament House meeting with elected representatives and members of their staff. It was an educational experience, learning more about important justice issues, government policies and the systems of power.

But I was surprised to discover how unique our advocacy work appeared to those we met with. This was highlighted by comments from members of parliament and staffers reflecting that they have so many meetings with lobbyists of all kinds and on so many issues, but that our Micah lobby groups are different because we are some of the only groups who are not there for themselves or their own interests. Talking about levels of Australian aid and our other responsibilities to neighboring nations, we are speaking on issues that most affect people who are unlikely to be heard in Canberra, whether by presence, voice or vote. Having returned to Canberra a number of times since, "Voices for Justice" has become a highlight of my engagement with the faithful work for justice. It has been a practical way to live out the instruction of Proverbs 31:8, 9: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice."

But not only has my "Voices for Justice" experience been an opportunity to do this, it has offered training and empowerment in how to do this in other ways. I have been emboldened to use my voice, influence and opportunities in greater advocacy on these and other issues that matter. And I have encouraged others to consider how a "mission trip" to Canberra—or Washington or wherever political leaders gather or even in addressing leaders in our local communities on issues of justice—might be at least as important as the more conventional mission trips to work on projects in developing nations.

Effective advocacy is an art—or maybe it's a science—and there is much to learn for doing it well. This is one of the benefits of joining with an established group and working with experienced activists, as has been my experience in working with Micah Australia and ADRA in this way. But our first qualification is our voice, sparked by the compassion found in our faith and prepared to speak with and on behalf of those whose voices might not be heard in places of power and policy-making. When we speak up for the good of others, our voice is unique—and our witness faithful.



Former Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd addresses Christian Delegates at Voices for Justice Conference.



*Nathan Brown is a guest columnist. He is a writer and book editor at Signs Publishing, near Melbourne, Australia, as well as a supporter of ADRA Australia. His book For The Least of These explores more of this topic from a biblical perspective:*



Scan to find out more about Nathan's book

# Call to Action

We need your voice to join the global call to advocate! We know that we cannot look away from the global refugee crisis. With more than 84 million people forcibly displaced, we can be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. May we remember that refugees are not statistics, but mothers, fathers and children whose lives have been turned upside down by persecution, conflict and violence. Support our letter writing campaign to decision makers around the world to help refugees and let your voice be heard.

Bishop Desmond Tutu said: "there comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in." This is advocacy. This is our call!

Email [advocacy@adra.org](mailto:advocacy@adra.org) to find out more.  
And beyond advocating, please join us in prayer.

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*Loving God, we pray for the world's refugees.  
We give you thanks for their courage and resilience.*

*We know that many have experienced trauma and loss.  
Loving God, bring them healing.*

*As they endure and persist,  
Loving God, bring them strength.*

*In the face of uncertainty and doubt,  
Loving God, bring them hope.*

*For those rebuilding new lives in foreign lands,  
Loving God, bring them joy.*

*We think of the countries from which they come.  
Loving God, bring them peace.*

*Lord God, may we love as you love.*

*May we not be wearied by the sorrow, tragedy and loss around us, but rather, may we become vehicles of your peace. May we work with you to sow healing, hope, joy and strength so that we may be a light to our refugee brothers and sisters.*

**Amen.**



## Our Purpose

**To serve humanity so all may live as God intended.**

## Our Motto

**Justice. Compassion. Love**

## What we do

We are the global humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—part of the 20-million strong Adventist community, with hundreds of thousands of churches globally and the world's largest integrated healthcare and education network. We deliver relief and development assistance to individuals in more than 118 countries—regardless of their ethnicity, political affiliation, gender, or religious association. By partnering with local communities, organizations, and governments, we are able to deliver culturally relevant programs and build local capability for sustainable change.

**Read more about us here:**  
[adra.org](http://adra.org)



**Our work touches millions of lives in more than 118 countries around the world. Our on-the-ground approach allows immediate assistance in times of crisis and true partnership with the communities we serve.**

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