

Classis Huron Report – spring, 2022

Submitted by Peter Bulthuis, Canadian CORE Team Leader

A. General Updates:

A key update right now, is the staffing one. With the departure of Canadian director Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, the Board of World Renew has given the Interim Canadian Directorship to Ken Kim, whose most recent position in World Renew has been the Director of International Disaster Response (IDR). That position has been assumed by Jackie Koster on an interim basis. The Canadian Board of World Renew has begun the process of recruitment for the Director position; the Board hopes to have someone in place by early summer. That said: if you know of someone who feels called to this position, contact Peter Bulthuis, and the appropriate contact information will be sent to you or them.

B. Upcoming Synodically-Designated Church Offerings:

Some of the ways that churches can partner with and support the work of World Renew, are through the offerings that Synod suggests CRCs use as opportunities for engagement:

Sunday, July 17: Clean Water Sunday. The need for access to clean water is imperative for health and life. Donations on this day support World Renew's partnership with global communities in achieving that access.

Thanksgiving, Oct. 10: The focus for this offering is the *Free a Family* program, wherein donations go to raising a community out of poverty

Sunday, Nov. 6: World Hunger Sunday: This day marks the end of the World Hunger Awareness campaign.

Christmas, Dec. 25: This offering is for World Renew's work in transformational community development.

C. Community Development:

World Renew is involved in disaster response and development, within the overarching framework of justice. There is a plethora of examples of what we do; here's one of them....from Honduras.

World Renew and our local partner, *Association for a More Just Society (ASJ)*, are working together to bring the *Strong Communities* program to communities in Honduras. This program focuses on creating safe spaces where 402 vulnerable young people can grow through service-learning, leadership-building activities, and learning important values like responsibility, community, and peacemaking. In the community of Los Pinos,

Orquídea Maradiaga was one of the committee members chosen to conduct social audits for the program, including monitoring the quality of service provided by the local health centre, as well as the quality of education provided to the children of the community. A single mother, Orquídea is very grateful to the *Strong Communities* program because it has been of great help to her, both economically and in the knowledge acquired throughout the training process.

As Orquídea says, "Thanks to the *Strong Communities* program, I have become a leader in my family and my community, all the learning and training I have received has helped me to continue doing social audits in other areas outside the community...the program motivated me to continue studying at the university and I chose to major in Social Work...and everything I learned is serving me a lot now in my studies; it really changed my life and that of my family."



D. International Disaster Response (IDR)

(NOTE: The following is up-to-date as of April 14): The conflict in Ukraine continues to be the focus of global attention and World Renew is supporting various efforts, both in Ukraine and in surrounding countries. This includes the provision of non-food items to refugees escaping the conflict with few possessions, to medical care to those wounded or unable to meet their health needs. We are also providing food through our **Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB)** peers. In total, more than \$600,000US in funding has been committed. However, even as we focus on meeting many urgent needs, we are also seeing the ripple effects.

First, there is a staggering increase in food prices. Last year 26% of the world's wheat exports came from Russia and Ukraine; forty percent of the wheat in the Middle East comes from Russia or Ukraine. World Renew has already

increased our project budgets by 15%, as we continue to support Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The ripples have only just begun and will continue into East Africa, Asia and beyond. The conflict in Ukraine could trigger a Global Food Crisis.

A second ripple we see is the growing refugee crisis (see below).

E. Disaster Response Services (DRS)

Gateway CRC, Abbotsford, has worked diligently to respond to the November flooding in that lower mainland area. Having developed a coalition of churches called the Abbotsford disaster response coalition, this church and others have been seeking to address many flood victims' need for supports.

As of March, DRS has this information about current "[managed construction sites](#)"; this document, the [March Activity Report](#) and this [interactive map](#) illustrating locations of current activity.

F. Refugee Settlement Activities:

We entered 2022 with 84 million people forcibly displaced worldwide, 27M as refugees. The number of people displaced has risen by 10M since February 24th. We are approaching a horrible milestone – 100M displaced globally. We have 100M neighbours in need of shelter, in need of safety. And not just for a day or a month. Our work with Rohingya context is in its fifth year, South Sudanese refugees in its 8th year and Syrian refugees entering its 11th year.

There is a need for a more robust global resettlement program. Sadly, refugee resettlement continues to be a limited option for millions of refugees with just over 2% of the total number eligible for resettlement being resettled. More countries need to offer more resettlement spaces to these millions of refugees in need.

Canada needs to take action to ensure equity within our immigration system. Canada has issued temporary visas to Ukrainian Refugees. Canada has never offered temporary visas to other refugee populations in times of emergency. To ensure equity and to dismantle the perception that some lives are more deserving of protection than others, it is important that these measures be accessible to all without discrimination. It is important that Canada responds equitably to all emergencies.

The continued impacts of COVID-19, growing effects of climate change as well as persistence of conflict are increasing refugee numbers globally and making the lives of refugees even more precarious. This needs to inform our thoughts, actions and prayers.

World Renew, churches and other sponsorship groups are currently waiting for 365 refugees to arrive. Currently 132 refugees are being resettled by churches and other sponsoring groups. We are working on applications for 168 refugees that we will submit in 2022. These refugees are from a diversity of countries such as Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

G. What else can the people and the churches of Classis Huron do?

- Donate for the ongoing disaster response work in the Abbotsford area.
- (If your church isn't already) Connect with Rebecca Walker to sponsor a refugee (family): rwalker@worldrenew.ca
- Be open to the Spirit's leading, and connect with us to learn about a possible partnership with a program of project in an area outside of North America.
- Consider an offering or donation toward global food security and/or refugee sponsorship.

Please continue to pray for the world. May the God of peace grant wisdom and healing to the nations.

Blessings,



Peter Bulthuis, Canadian CORE Team Leader
pbulthuis@worldrenew.ca; c. 289-983-9293