

A Good Cause: Pastors Brings Aid to Hungry, Refugees

By [Robert Lee](#)

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American expatriate Matthew Laferty, 26, is the pastor of the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy at St. Andrew's Church on Voznesensky Pereulok. He is also the executive director of the charity MPC Social Services, the charitable wing of the chaplaincy, which runs a diverse range of projects in Moscow.

Q: How did the chaplaincy become involved in charitable causes?

A: In 1991 at the end of the Soviet Union, the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy decided to begin doing charitable work in Moscow. We started with a soup kitchen for pensioners in the Vorobyovy Gory district of the city. Today, our programs focus on three key areas: issues of hunger, poverty and displacement. As such, we work mainly with pensioners, children and displaced peoples like refugees and migrants.

Q: What programs do you operate today?

A: We still operate two soup kitchens in Moscow and a food bank specifically targeting United Nations-registered refugees. We run a racial task force that monitors race-motivated violence and does advocacy related to racism. There are also education programs specifically aimed at immigrants and people who have very little or no Russian-language skills or don't know how to use a computer.

Q: Where does the funding come from?

A: The chaplaincy created MPC Social Services to be the charitable entity of the church. More than half of its funding comes from direct contributions from people who live in Moscow and who are members of the MPC congregation. Some of our funding comes from local, grant-making organizations like the International Women's Club, United Way and several other entities. We also receive significant in-kind contributions from companies. That is to say contributions of actual goods or services we could use. Metro Cash & Carry, Coco-Cola, and The Ritz-Carlton, for example, have donated food for several food-sharing programs.

Q: How can someone get involved?

A: It partly depends on how much time someone wants to give. Working at our soup kitchen near the Universitet metro station is certainly very easy. People come and serve to the pensioners there for an hour or so Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. If someone is specifically interested in issues of racial justice, then they can come and join our racism task force, which is a more long-term and on-going commitment. Or if you work for a company, then think about the in-kind goods or services you could provide as well, and I include - lawyers, who could give legal advice to people we work with the charity itself.

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