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RUSSIAN CHURCH LAUNCHES 14TH MERCY BUS TO HELP THE HOMELESS



Thanks to the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church, the homeless in Ufa will have the opportunity to receive free health care, hot food, and clothing.

There, at the foot of the Ural Mountains, the St. Elizabeth Sisters of Charity, together with the Synodal Department for Charity, have organized the Church's 14th Mercy Bus, which goes through the central city streets once a week, though the project organizers plan to double the number of trips by the end of the year, reports the Synodal Charity Department.

There are many homeless people in Ufa, so the Sisters of Charity were in a hurry to get the bus up and running before the cold weather sets in.

"We bake our own bread and buy our own food. Our team even has a surgeon so that we can quickly respond to any emergency situation," says Elena Murko, senior sister of the St. Elizabeth Sisterhood.



Food is also provided by a number of local cafes. The bus provides soup, side dishes, meat, bread, and hot tea. They also expect to add desserts for the holidays. Clothing for the homeless is collected at local churches, and funds for personal health kits was provided from the Synodal Charity Department.

The St. Elizabeth Sisterhood was inspired to launch a Mercy Bus in Ufa after hearing about the other buses the Church operates. Last December, a new bus began operation in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and one in St. Petersburg a month before that.

In Ufa, the bus serves as a complement to the homeless shelter that has been operating at Holy Cross Church since 2000, which currently houses 44 people. There are also plans to expand the project and build a center for bedridden patients near Ufa.

In addition to the 14 Mercy Buses, the Russian Church also operates 90 homeless shelters, more than 400 social canteens, and a number of other charitable institutions where the homeless can receive comprehensive help and assistance.

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