

Church of God Issues Urgent Intercession Call for Ukraine

Church of God General Overseer Dr. Mark Williams has called for prayer on behalf of the people of Ukraine amid continued unrest in the European country. He joins Tim Hill, director of Church of God World Missions, who has also issued a call for prayer through Church of God World Missions.

Hill gives this brief overview of Ukraine and its current situation: "Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union until its independence in 1991. It is sharply divided linguistically and politically. At the moment, about half the country wants to identify strongly with the European Union for trade and economic reasons, while the other half prefers to associate with Russia.

"The pro-Russian president elected in 2010 was recently deposed by the parliament and has fled the country, and the interim president, who identifies with Europe, is presently ruling. Russian soldiers are said to have entered the Crimean region, ostensibly to 'protect' the Russians who live there."

Hill continues in his explanation of Ukraine's situation by saying, "Historically, Ukraine has been referred to as the 'Bible Belt' of the former Soviet bloc. It has had a strong Christian presence, primarily Orthodox but with a growing evangelical population, many of them Pentecostal. The president of Ukraine, now serving on an interim basis, is Oleksandr Turchynov. He is an evangelical Baptist preacher."

"Ukraine is also known as the 'Antioch' of the Slavic world because it is one of the strongest Missions Sending Nations," says Grant McClung, president of Missions Resource Group. "Because it stands as a bridge between East to West, it has sent many missionaries to former Soviet nations."

As for the Church of God in Ukraine, a group of Pentecostal churches joined the denomination in 1992, and since that time, the churches have multiplied. They also maintain several orphanages that are supported through the Church of God. Alexei Demidovich is the overseer of the Church of God in Ukraine.

The situation changes day by day in Ukraine as Russian influences and military presence overshadows life in the country. The Church of God around the world is asked to keep the citizens of Ukraine in their prayers as this delicate yet potentially volatile situation progresses.