

Ukraine's Intercessors Standing in the Gap for Peace

Ukraine's acting president Oleksandr Turchynov, a man of deep faith and prayer, is in the center of the storm in Ukraine, but he's not alone.

Turchynov is seeking an increase in the country's armed services as he has called on parliament to turn Ukraine's interior ministry troops into a national guard to defend the nation against aggression.

He's also called for the mobilization of military reservists and volunteers into the armed forces.

Pastor Wolodymyr Kunets, with Word of Life, couldn't be prouder of his country's new leader.

"He is a born again Christian and loves God!" Kunets told CBN News.

For several years, Turchynov has attended Kunets's church in Kiev and serves as deacon.

"It is very rare, not just for Ukraine, but the entire region, for a Baptist Christian to run the country," Kunets said.

Turchynov recently told a Christian magazine that God is working in his country despite the political chaos. He's asking believers worldwide to pray.

"I'm so glad he's been given such a position, but from another perspective it is very scary because we are experiencing very difficult times," Kunets said. "We are bankrupt as a nation and there are many enemies who don't want to see Ukraine do well."

When protests started last November, Ukrainian Christians

found themselves playing the role of peacemaker. Ostap Kryvdyk is a leader of the anti-government demonstrators.

"During the gun fights there was a priest who was standing there and who gave his last words and last service to dying people," Kryvdyk, with Maidan Self Defense unit, said. "And he personally told me that 20 people died in his arms."

Men like Father Theodosiy Ivashko, with the Greek Catholic Church, literally risked their lives to stand in the gap.

"It happened just a few feet from here: Hundreds of Ukrainian police stood on one side and anti-government demonstrators on the other, and we took our place in the middle calling for calm," Ivashko said.

Victoria Semenikhina traveled to Maidan, ground zero of the mass demonstrations, to pray for families that lost loved ones. She also gives thanks for men like Father Ivashko.

"I saw Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and other Christians who were helping those for and against the government," Semenikhina, who is from Kharkav, said. "These men and women are also heroes, as much as those who gave their lives for freedom."

For months here on Maidan, the Ukrainian church, across denominations, played the role of peacemaker. Today it is preaching a message of reconciliation.

"We are preaching this message in almost every service and encouraging people to demonstrate in practical ways how we can help heal our nation," Kunets said.

Parliament member and well-known Christian Alexandr Dubovoy said his country has a small window of opportunity to get things right or else.

"People are clearly not happy, but we cannot overcome evil with evil. We have to be more forgiving," Dubovoy said.

Days after the massacre that killed more than a hundred and injured some 600 others, Larissa Litvin's church erected a tent for counseling.

"So many people have come for prayer. Entire families with children are coming and asking how they can help move our country forward after all the violence and bloodshed," she said. "This is a critical moment for us."

One that Litvin and believers here say must be covered in prayer and forgiveness.