

Pray for Ukraine as if Your Family Lived There

Early in the morning on Feb. 24, President Vladimir Putin of Russia began what he called a “peacekeeping mission” in Ukraine. It was, in fact, a hostile and unlawful act of war that has been condemned by the world community. As soon as Russian bombs began falling on the Ukrainian cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa and the Donbas region, a Ukrainian pastor in South River, New Jersey, gathered his church to pray.

“We mobilized 24-hour prayer for five days,” says Viktor Marach, pastor of Grace Church in South River, home to a large Ukrainian population. Last Sunday, many Ukrainian Christians gathered in the city with the mayor and local police officers to pray for peace.

Like many Ukrainian-American Christians, Pastor Marach came to the United States after the Soviet Union dissolved in the early 1990s. He left Ukraine to seek religious freedom, but he cares about his family and friends back home—many of whom have fled to Poland or Romania, or to small Ukrainian villages where they can avoid bomb attacks.

Another American pastor of Ukrainian heritage, Peter Kucher, said his brother-in-law, a leader in the Assemblies of God in Ukraine, gives him frequent updates on the crisis. “So many people in Ukraine are praying,” says Kucher, who pastors Christian Life Worship Center in the Chicago suburb of Downer’s Grove. “They feel the conflict will be over in a few weeks. They are not in denial, but they expect to see a miracle.”

I talked with several Slavic church leaders, including one in Russia, to ask them how we should pray during this crisis. Here are their main directives:

Pray for peace and a supernatural end to the attacks: Meesh Fomenko, a Slavic-American evangelist based in California, said God told him to speak peace to this storm. "When Jesus was sleeping in the boat during the storm, He woke up and said, 'Peace, be still' to the storm, and then He rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith. So I have been praying for peace in the political conflict, and for faith to arise in the hearts of God's people." Pray especially for protection for the many women, children and elderly people who have been forced to seek shelter in refugee camps, basements or bomb shelters.

Pray for families torn apart by the conflict: Boris Shuga, a Ukrainian-American who is pastor of Vision Church in Jacksonville, Florida, said one young woman in his church has a brother and a father who have joined the army in Ukraine, and a mother who is hiding in a basement. Pray for comfort for those who have been separated by the horrors of this war. As of today, more than 1.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced by the conflict.

Pray for provision for those who have had to leave their homes: Since the Russian invasion, fuel prices in Ukraine have skyrocketed, store shelves are bare and banks are limiting the withdrawal of funds. Many churches and missionary organizations are sending money to provide housing assistance for Ukrainians who have had to find temporary shelter in Poland or elsewhere. Boris Shulga's church is helping in this effort (you can donate at), and Peter Kucher's church is wiring money to help relocate people (donate at).

Pray that souls will be saved in the midst of the turmoil. "Often, we want revival without the shaking that comes," Pastor Shulga said. "But we are praying for souls to be saved during this difficult time. We are praying, 'God, establish Your kingdom.' " Fomenko agrees that this is the time for many people to find Christ. "The Ukrainian flag is blue for the sky and yellow for harvest. The enemy is after the harvest, but I

believe God will get His harvest!" he says. Pray that in the midst of rocket attacks, scarcity and fear, Satan's plan will backfire and many people will find salvation in Jesus.

Pray for angelic intervention: The Bible is full of accounts of God sending angels to turn a battle around. Pray that heaven's armies will engage. God's angels can shield innocent people, cause weapons to malfunction, direct missiles away from their intended targets and cause aggressors to quit fighting. We can claim Psalm 44:6-7 (NASB): "For I will not trust in my bow, nor will my sword save me. But You have saved us from our adversaries, and You have put to shame those who hate us."

Pray that Ukraine will continue to spread the gospel: Ukraine has been a strategic hub of Christianity for decades. It also has the most religious freedom of any nation that was once part of the former Soviet Union. Says Pastor Kucher: "Ukraine is the most evangelical Christian country in Europe. And Ukrainians planted many churches in Russia as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Serbia, Italy, Spain and other countries. They are a missionary-sending country." It's no wonder the devil has stirred up this war. In the regions of Ukraine where Russian separatists are active—such as the Luhansk and Donetsk areas—churches have been persecuted and pastors have even been killed, Kucher said.

It's important to note that Russian Christians are grieved by the actions of President Putin and the Russian military. "Russian believers are hurting because of this war. We are shocked," one Russian leader based in Moscow told me. (This leader had to remain anonymous because the Russian government is cracking down on all dissent.) This leader added: "Our prayers are to stop this war. I believe the devil is trying hard to stop what is inevitable—the greatest revival coming from this part of the world before Jesus returns."

Please gather in small groups and large groups this week to

pray for Ukraine.

We can pray in unity: *“Father, You have used the nation of Ukraine to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to many nations. It has been a beacon of light and freedom to the world. Rise up and defend Your people from hostile forces. Shield them from attacks. Release Your invisible angel armies to push back their enemies. Send confusion into the enemy’s camp. Cause Russian soldiers to put down their weapons and go home. And prevent President Putin from using nuclear bombs. Deliver us from evil and establish Your peace and Your government in Ukraine and all of Eastern Europe, in Jesus’ name. Amen.”*
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