



One Year of War...

Some time since I sent you the last short update about Ukraine. A year later, I still remember the feelings of desperation and uncertainty. On the morning of Feb. 24, 2022, I awoke to the news Ukraine was being invaded by its neighbor. Immediately, I connected with some of our Ukrainian pastors and leaders asking what happened. Understandably, some were angry or scared. We spent some time working with the churches and leaders to keep peace in the face of tension. Praise the Lord, despite a lot of strain, we did not experience any personal conflict among our Ukrainian and Russian leaders and kept the integrity of the church without division.

All of this hit us in the face, and left us wondering how to react and what to do. The videos of helicopters flying around the city and bombing it. The video my friend shared with me, trying to explain all the dangers he had to go through getting from his apartment on the 20th floor to a bomb shelter in a nearby building. I remember hearing how long it took people to get from our churches in Kyiv to the train station... from minutes to hours, and then how long it took waiting at the overcrowded stations to get on a train. I remember our initial responses, and our efforts to provide funds for our pastors. I remember trying to transfer those funds to their personal cards to buy food and medicines for people in need. How do you react? What do you do? I remember the feelings of powerlessness and anger, because we could not do anything immediately to help. The missile strike near our Kyiv First Church that destroyed an entire shopping mall, remembering having coffee there several times, the destruction of Lukianovs'ka (the place I use to live in Kyiv), the killing of civilians in Bucha, and the bombing of the theater in Mariupol seeing the word Дети (children) written in the roof still breaks my heart, knowing even then the place was still bombed... killing hundreds of innocent people... these images will stay in my mind for the rest of my life.

War is a terrifying experience. The fear and anxiety it produces disorients people's lives. In Armenia, we have been going through a similar experience over the last two years at war with Azerbaijan. We have seen thousands of young soldiers dying or wounded. Throughout this year of war on our field, our constant prayer is a cry to God for the people who are suffering because of this evil. I still remember the question from one of our Russian leaders: "Brother, how does the world look to us?...Maybe they see us as monsters, killers, and they are probably full of hatred against us." I could only answer him with these words: "We are the church of Jesus Christ and we should be keeping love and compassion as our primary reason for existing." This very hard, stressful, and heartbreaking year is an experience not limited to what is happening to Ukraine, but also on the other side with our Russian brothers and sisters. We are a church family that transcends any political and ideological barriers. In spite of what the media and

press say, we have been comforting our leaders. Our task is to keep praying for our church family on both sides of the war. We need to pray for peace, reconciliation, and justice.

The churches in our field are doing their best to help people fleeing the occupied regions; opening their homes for them to come and stay, especially now in winter. The churches have been helping to find refuge for many displaced families, helping families to migrate to neighboring countries, helping needy families with food packages; helping with medicines, trauma counseling, cleaning, and helping to repair their shattered windows for winter.

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries:

As we keep on navigating these hard and difficult times the church, through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM), continues sending humanitarian aid to our churches and communities throughout Ukraine. Our church through NCM also continues its partnership development with many other organizations.

Mobilizing resources at this moment is critical for the support not only for our Nazarene families, but hundreds of other families in several communities which are in need. We have seen hundreds of food packages, Crisis Care Kits, and other important items being distributed every week. We have seen the vehicles purchased and donated by generous Nazarenes supporting partner organizations, visiting war areas with food, medicines and Crisis Care Kits. See below for a collage of pictures showing the work of our church family in action.

The pictures below are piles of empty shells of rockets and missiles thrown over Ukraine





Trauma Care and Counseling Training:

A team of volunteers from Ukraine and Poland gathered in Poland a few weeks ago, for an intensive training in trauma care and counseling. 17 people gathered; many were Ukrainian Nazarene leaders that are taking these skills back to support people in need in their home country. During the last months, we have seen lots of stress and anxiety. People are exhausted because of the war, and the daily mental health struggles it causes. We need lots of prayer in this area for our pastors and leaders, as well as our church people. Please pray to the Lord of peace, to give His peace which passes all

understanding to our Nazarene family, and also to all in our field enduring stress and trauma. We are also trying to provide this trauma care and counseling training to our church leaders in other districts in the Eurasia North Field. For the last two and half years, our field has been facing wars in many places like Armenia and Central Asia. We are also experiencing lots of anxiety and fear in our Russian leaders. We need to prepare a strong team of trauma care counselors to respond to the needs in our field. Please keep this in prayer.



Videos:

We would like to invite you to watch the videos featuring some of our Ukrainian Nazarene pastors and leaders reflecting on their experiences living through this last year of war. Please see the links for the videos below:

Ukrainian stories to share:

Pastor Svitlana, a pastor in Ukrainian, tells how she has been caring for the older generation who were unable to leave Ukraine when the conflict started. Svitlana shares the importance of the ministry of 'holding hands' and of sharing communion together showing we are not alone—God is present with us. “When I bring some food or clothing or something else, I always mention that it’s not from me - it’s from God and the church that supports them, that cares about them.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa7JnWoCB78>

This video explains a bit of Svetlana’s story of trust, and how the church mobilized and supported people fleeing from the war. “The coolest takeaway from all of this...to watch God how He’s used everyone's unique gifts...” Svetlana is a faithful church leader in Kiev.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TG6vRWx1tE>

Pastor Tolik is a young Ukrainian man, pastoring the Church of the Nazarene in Vaphnyarka. He is also coordinating the Humanitarian aid arriving from Poland. Tolik has done an outstanding job providing not only humanitarian aid to families in need in the church and community, but also through encouraging and providing comfort to people in distress. His church is small but has a huge impact in the community.

<https://www.eurasiaregion.org/ukraine-one-year-on-toliks-story/>

Zee Gimon is a young Nazarene woman who was living in Kyiv with her husband, two children, and cat. Throughout this last year she went from being a happy wife and mother to fleeing Kyiv, going to Germany as a refugee with just her kids and cat. She is back in Kyiv now, serving in the Kyiv First Church of the Nazarene. In the video, she shares her experience of the last year.

<https://www.eurasiaregion.org/ukraine-one-year-on-zees-story/>

Also, we want to share Zee's prayer requests. We embrace them and ask you to join in prayer:

- Pray for people living under the war. Please pray for thousands and thousands of women; refugees, mothers, soldier wives...
- Pray for moms and their kids. Pray for relationships between them, because it's one thing when you're a true single mom and another when you are technically not... but you are.
- Pray for those who made the decision to stay home. While it means they are home, some areas aren't as safe as Kyiv and therefore it's not an easy choice. But often there are valid reasons for that.
- Pray for the refugees, both internal ones and those who fled to other countries. It's incredibly hard. In many cases, I'd say it's harder than staying home.
- Pray for those who would like to come back home. Pray for wisdom on when to do it and pray for the process of traveling back because, usually, refugees have a large amount of stuff to travel with. The majority left with bare necessities and therefore had to buy almost everything elsewhere. (And if you're coming back home, all that stuff needs to be transported back... somehow.)
- Pray for military wives and husbands and fathers and mothers. Pray for supernatural peace that surpasses all understanding. Pray for them to be able to get messages from their loved ones.
- And, of course, pray for our military people. They are incredible. Everyone thought that Ukraine would fall down in three days. A year later, we're still standing. Pray for

strength, pray for warmth, pray for God's divine protection, pray for mental health, pray for military chaplains to be available in their time of need.

And THANK YOU.

Thank you for being with us throughout it all.

Thank you for your numerous prayers.

Thank you for the financial support.

Thank you for not giving up or forgetting about us.

We'll rise up like a phoenix.



We want to send again our words of gratitude to all the people praying and donating through the NCN link; <https://give.nazarene.org/donate/f/137043> May God bless you abundantly.