



challenges and looking to the future

(part 3)



Dear Praying Friends,

As I write, Kyiv has just had the all-clear for the sixth air raid alert for today, which made Thursday's commemoration of Ukraine's Independence Day all the more meaningful. Mark has frequently said when explaining this summer that Ukraine is, practically speaking, still trying to leave the Soviet Union 32 years after separating from it, and Russia's intense continuation of this war shows how far they are willing to go to keep Ukraine under their thumb. Thank you so much for praying – so many of you have said 'daily' – for Ukraine. It means so much.

This month I'll finish looking back on the 25 years the Lord has given us serving in Ukraine. So often, it's tempting to pass along reports of ministry opportunities and how the Lord has worked, but the living and ministry also have times of challenge, whether

August 2023

26



Mark teaching in Lviv

personally or more broadly. You may have noticed that we often connect the current war to 2014, when Russia first invaded eastern Ukraine and illegally taking over Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Those days and months in 2014 were tense, and we saw WorldVenture colleagues evacuate and eventually lose their homes in eastern Ukraine. Hosting them as they regrouped made us feel like so many Ukrainians who were doing the same things for friends and family, and heightened the sense of uncertainty and danger in our once-safe home. Personally, in the years after 2014 we faced deaths in our family, caring for my father, and then more family members passing into eternity, including Mark's dad in late 2020. Our local Kyiv church's pastor's resignation in late 2021 suddenly took being on our church's leadership team to a whole new level. Being asked to leave for our own safety in the weeks prior to the invasion last year tore at our hearts because we did not want to leave our church in so tenuous a position. And to go months on end not knowing if the seminary would ever be able to function again was especially difficult.

But God.

In all of it – the living and ministry and difficulty – the Lord was present. His active, loving presence kept us when, in some of those things, we didn't know if we could even get up off the ground. And we look to his active, personal care for us as we look ahead. We find ourselves with adult children, very engaged in local church ministry, continuing to teach at both Kyiv Theological Seminary, but at other schools as well. And we are doing what we can to contribute to what the Lord is doing in this time of war, whether financially, bringing in supplies, or sitting with and just processing it, bringing the light of the gospel at every turn.

We are so thankful you have stood with us, some of you for all of those 25 years! We are set to head back to Kyiv on September 18th, Lord willing, and we look forward to what he has for us in the future.

Here are some things we would appreciate prayer for in the coming days:

- For the Lord to bring a swift, just end to the war. Today marks Day #549. We count the days because each one means a day of death and destruction, and we are anxious for it to end.
- For the Lord to intervene in the hearts of every Russian taking part in the killing and destruction of their war on Ukraine. Pray for the Lord to cause them to refuse to



Donna's English
Bible study buddy



dinner in Lviv with
Sasha and Natalie
Savich
earlier this year



Mark's class at
another seminary
this past year



with my neighbor
and friend, Lena



Mark with his
Genesis students

fight, at every level (some have, and have been tortured and killed). Pray for entire units and on up the chain of command to choose life. UPDATE: We recently read news of a Russian helicopter and its entire crew surrendering to Ukraine. Many Russian POWs are asking not to be sent back to Russia until after their military contracts have ended; our prayers are making a difference.

- For continued wisdom for Ukraine's civilian and military leaders.
- Please pray now for the time of repair and recovery when the fighting has ended. It's going to be a challenging time and the enemy of our souls would love to exploit it.
- For the seminary and students as we gear up for another semester. Ukraine's leaders are considering a mobilization this fall which would impact many, many families.
- For a solid option for our daughter Abigail for housing for the fall; we are thankful for more options having arisen since we last wrote.

Thank you, again, for standing with us in prayer. It means so much.

Until next month (Lord willing, from Kyiv!),

Donna



Our U.S. phone numbers:

Mark: 281-912-7251
Donna: 281-912-5783

Our U.S. mailing address:

1202 Park Royale
LANE
Katy, TX 77450

We would be grateful if you might consider giving a one-time gift. We understand times are challenging.

Here's how you can give financially, to support the Ukraine Relief Fund or our ministry:

1. Go to worldventure.com/donate
2. Read the explanations and choose either "[Quick Online Gift](#)" or "[Partner Community](#)".
3. Follow the steps to decide how much you want to give, to whom you want to give (search UKRAINE RELIEF or MCDONNEL), how you will pay, and whether you want this gift to be recurring or not.
4. We would be glad if you dropped us an email to let us know so we can thank you!