

November 2024 Ukraine

UKRAINE

We're really grateful for your prayers during our very intensive trip in Ukraine. Hard to describe it all but we felt your prayers and were preserved from personal harm and as we send this out, Mark and Duncan are in western Ukraine away from much of the action. There's a video summarizing some of the tight moments and also with one of the baptisms- see https://youtu.be/Paj2HwKN_7M

The air strikes were constant in most areas and very little electricity and water, and also, therefore, heating. With temperatures around freezing already, with the deep Winter still to come. It's no good being without warmth and power in the Winter, especially for the elderly and those caring for children:



Here are some prayer points for those we visited:

PAVEL

We had intended to baptize Pavel, he had prepared a barrel for the baptism. He had received his call up papers but hadn't reported for service. But as the time approached he said that he was very likely to be arrested and forcibly taken to the barracks. Already this had happened to around 10 people he knew. Three of whom were sent to the most active conflict zones and are already dead. Pavel resigned himself to God's will on all this and wrote his will, sending us a copy for interest, where he leaves what little he has to his ex-wife [he's in his 50s]. He's been arrested, is now under training, and still messaging us. He says the punishment for people like him avoiding call up is to be sent to the active conflict zone near Pokrovsk. So that baptism didn't happen and we ask for your prayers for him in so many ways.

DMITRY

Dmitry is a very intelligent man with cerebral palsy. He has no family and is living in a care facility in a village. But the facility is increasingly being filled with handicapped soldiers. Space is so limited now and food and care so little. Our brother uses the *Bible Companion* app much of every day and shares his findings with the other unfortunate ones there in that miserable place. He even got the security guard to request a Bible from us, as he sees the huge difference made to Dmitry. With joy we baptized our brother, and he sends many messages all the time to us, full of joy, counting his blessings, that he is alive, that he knows Jesus, that he has the hope of the Kingdom. Let's pray for our brothers and sisters in care facilities who are being pressured to get out onto the streets, to make way for more wounded soldiers to take their spaces.



NANA and ALEXEI

In their 70s, having been baptized many years, Nana and Alexei left their flat in the Russian

occupied area and crossed the front line to become refugees. They've made an amazing job of transforming the abandoned wooden house they got to live in. And appreciate all the help you've given to enable this. They have adapted well from urban dwellers to largely self sufficient, growing and preserving vegetables, and keeping animals. They killed a rabbit for us and gave us a lovely meal, after which we broke bread with them. Nina is worried crazy about her 52 year old son who was wounded at the front, and then after rehab, was sent back there. She doesn't want to listen to any news about the war, just keeps looking at the last photo of her son on her phone and praying for him. Please pray for her and so many others whose lives are consumed with worry about their loved ones at the front.



ALLA

We visited sister Alla, and found her as ever full of faith and the scriptures. She is in Odessa, which has been heavily targetted. Due to the power plants being hit, her tower block has no power, and therefore no lift. She's in her 70s and lives on the 12th floor. She has to walk up 24 flights of stairs. And down again. Not easy at her age. But she made the effort to come to our meeting. Pray for her with all those stairs.

Whilst in Odessa we baptized ANNA and were kept safe through the bombardment, where one missile alone claimed 10 lives and injured at least 50 others whilst we were there, as well as the furious firefights between incoming missiles and drones, and Ukrainian missiles and fire trying to explode them in mid air before they hot target. See the video... screenshot below:



NATASHA

We baptized Natasha last time we were in Odessa. Her faith is so strong, and she continues work as a school teacher. But she says there is so much pressure due to the declining number of children, as so many women have grabbed their children and left Ukraine. Air raids are a daily occurrence and whilst many adults remain working or travelling when the sirens sound, teachers are obliged to suspend lessons and take the children into the shelters. Natasha says that she makes the children be quiet whilst she leads them in prayer for safety, "for God to keep us all safe". But she says it's so hard to answer questions and comments like "When my dad went to the front, my mum told us we should pray three times a day for him to be kept safe. I prayed at least 10 times a day for him to be kept safe. But he was killed. And you say we are to pray for God to keep us safe in this shelter. But does God really hear these prayers? I'm not sure there is a God even". Natasha says she finds it to hard to answer, much as she believes in God and the coming of the Kingdom. So... pray for Natasha.



SERGEJ

Baptized many years ago, Sergej has received medical exemption from army service but has been in hospital with cancer. It's so hard to get medical attention in Ukraine as the state medical system only really operates for emergency medicine. It is flooded with military casualties and so many health sector workers were women, and have left Ukraine with their children. So we were able to help our brother get private chemotherapy, and he's now in remission. Electricity generating plants and water sites [reservoirs, piping and filtration plants] have been heavily hit. For a long time now, Sergej's area has been without heating and water and they get electricity between 3 and 5 AM only. This is the time when he sends his messages and uses the *Bible Companion* app on his phone. Please pray for all those living without heating, water and hardly any electricity. It's so hard and so miserable to always be in the dark and in the cold in the Winter months.



OKSANA

In the late 1990s as a teenager emerging from Soviet style atheism, OKSANA came across a copy of Russian *Bible Basics*. She read it and lost it. She went through marriage, divorce, raising two children now in their 20s. And passed through various churches. She always remembered *Bible Basics* and now with the internet, set out to locate us- inspired by a need for God in spirit and truth, thanks to the drama of the war, especially living near the front line in the Dnipro direction. And so, she contacted us, and what a joy it was to meet her, firstly outside a bomb shelter, and then bringing her back to our hotel where there was a bath tub and hot water for the baptism. She gave a really wonderful confession of faith. It's in Russian but it'd be worth switching on auto translate to understand it... she describes how she rejected the trinity, how it never made sense, and how understanding the Lord's nature and the meaning of His death dovetails so nicely without understanding of Satan. In Oksana you see the power of true doctrine in practice, and how getting it right on issues like the trinity [or lack thereof] and satan really does affect and transform life in practice. But of course her pressing need was for baptism, and we were so blessed to get a hotel which had its own generator and hot water system so we could do this. The video and her lengthy testimony about doctrine is at https://youtu.be/9EF1vz_jTug

Again, she needs our prayers. Her daughters have left home and left a grandson with her to bring up, and he has significant health issues. And the public health service only offers emergency medicine. The health service was largely staffed by women, and so many of them have grabbed their kids and grandkids and left Ukraine. And what's left of it is totally taken up dealing with the huge number of Ukrainian military wounded. So with little income and no social support... life is a daily struggle. And of course it was Dnipro, where our sister lives, that was hit by the ICBM [Intercontinental Ballistic Missile] whilst we were there. The sheer sound of such a missile passing over is very scary- that one travelled at 10 times the speed of sound. Quite apart from the impact.



LUDMILA

We baptized sister Ludmila in 1999, and she has continued faithful ever since, always attending Bible schools and Bible weekends until Covid and then the war put an end to them. Like so many, she is faithfully using the Bible app and breaking bread alone. It was a joy to be able to break bread with her at her home. She is worried sick about her son who is a sapper, working directly on the front lines. Many of his colleagues have lost limbs to mines, and when he returns home on leave he is a mess. It's so distressing for our sister. Do pray for her and for her son.



NINA and IGOR, VERA

Our invalid sister Nina and her husband and mum continue strong in their faith. They were given an abandoned wooden house to live in, far from anywhere. Igor has had a heart attack, and sister Vera has been thrown out of her old folks home to make space for wounded or now handicapped soldiers. So she has come to live with them too. Getting there is quite a challenge- our car very nearly got stuck on the muddy roads, as you can see in the video. The Lord Jesus means everything to them. They really love Mark, and as they have no way of printing photos, have torn out the map of Australia from a very old atlas and put it on the wall in his memory. Provision of firewood is one of the ways we help our brothers and sisters in these rural areas. We bought them firewood and they now have a great stock with which to face the Winter. And it's dry wood... the cheaper wood is freshly cut and wet, and doesn't give much heat when burnt. You can see us surveying the difference between wet and dry firewood. So do pray for them in their rural poverty, their isolation and health issues.



OKSANA

Sister Oksana lives in France with her children and regularly attends our online Russian breaking of bread meetings. Every week. And also the Bible classes. She returned to Ukraine to see her mother and we were able to briefly meet up with her. Again, such an impossible heart tear, when your loved ones are in danger, again a prayer need.



OLENA

We had been thinking of helping our sister get out from one of the front-line hotspots, she lives with her mum, also baptized many years, and her two children, in a flat that has the windows shattered by the blasts. The children are traumatized. But her mum is so ill she can't leave and our sister has decided for now to bravely stay rather than literally abandon the old lady. Despite the damage to the children- there's no school and life is just so incredibly hard and stressful.

She faces impossible choices, please do pray for her in them.

And so we give thanks for our safekeeping, but of course we feel so bad for those we leave behind. Please do pray for them all, and especially for those mentioned here- Pavel, Dmitry, Olena, Nana & Alexei, Nina & Igor and Vera, Natasha, Alla, Sergej, Ludmila, Oksana and Oksana.

We're so grateful for the donations which enable the work to happen. Please do keep them up as the needs are ongoing and are going to be long term, regardless of when and if the war ends.

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks