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RESOURCES, STORIES, AND PICTURES

Dear Partners in the NAB Russia-Ukraine Ministry:

The most often heard questions I am asked these days are:

- What is happening on the border between Russia and Ukraine, and further, what does it mean for the ministries in both countries?
- Will war come to these regions?
- How are our brothers and sisters in these countries doing?
- Will we continue to have people going through our part of the work in both countries?

I will post some really good resources to help our understanding of these matters as they are happening today. Feel free to click the links to helpful articles. Read, consider, and then pray, especially for the believers on both sides of the conflict.



Meet Tarus, a Christian educator from Ukraine. I met Tarus in Moscow at a meeting where he had led the devotions. We sat down at lunch and talked. Since the Crimea event happened, I asked how he was

personally affected. He said in words I will never forget: his church was destroyed by a bomb, his home as well. Then he said, “My nephew was in the house.” Tears came to his eyes. I was immediately and forever reminded that these news

events affect real people and their lives. Our brothers and sisters in Christ need our prayers.

A quick video explaining the historical aspects of the conflict I saw this week can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/0y6BAHjikqc>.

PBS video gives more information: <https://youtu.be/w-vxW7rKLec>.

This article is a wise call to pray: <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/russia-ukraine-tension-sparks-call-to-prayer/>!

I wanted to share a note I received from Oleksandr Geychenko, the president of Odesa Theological Seminary.

Dear friends and partners:

As you know, Ukraine is on many people’s radar these days and in the news again due to the threat of the highly probable invasion of our country by Russian military forces. Because of this, many people have been asking me how we are doing here, and what our perspective on the situation is.

On the one hand, what you are hearing about now on the news is basically what we have been living with for the last eight years. The war goes on. Casualties are regular. Negotiations are futile. The rumours of an invasion intensify from time to time. Speaking about life in general, we do not observe any panic around us or serious preparations being made. Life goes on as usual. Almost. We are used to it. On the other hand, the situation is also very much different from what we have



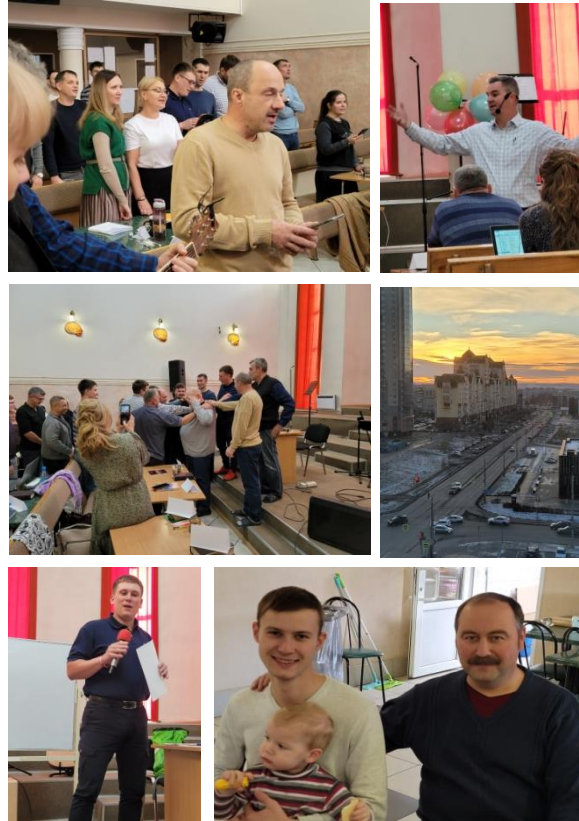
been living with. Possibly, Ukraine has never seen such an intensive exchange of diplomatic visits and talks, such a heavy influx of military aid from international partners, and such a flow of sensational publications in world news regarding the dates and plans of a Russian invasion. All this makes us realise that the situation is complex and very serious.

But above all these things, there is the reality of God's Kingdom. God rules over history and directs its movement towards its final goal. He does this in an implicit, hidden, yet irresistible way. The kingdom of this world will one day become the Kingdom of God. We do not doubt it! So, we just keep doing what we are called to do, even though we know that something is going on. We keep praying to the Lord, trusting him, and following his way. We ask you to join our prayers at this crucial period for our country. Please, pray:

- *For the resolution of the situation, for stable peace between Russia and Ukraine, for the deoccupation and reintegration of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea.*
- *For Ukrainian churches to be able to witness and preach the gospel during these times, and to bring a message of peace and of God's rule to all those who need it.*
- *For Odesa Theological Seminary to keep serving churches by educating students and providing educational resources to those who are called by God to ministry.*

I also wanted to share an update on our ministry in Russia and Ukraine. I recently returned from both areas and assure you that right now the ministry remains active and open. I, along with a longtime ministry friend, Kirk Mackie, spend a little over three weeks and can report the ministries are appreciative and awaiting our continued partnerships. We both were in the vaccinated group and knew that COVID was listed as being in the red category, so we took as many precautions as we could and, trusting God's direction, went first to Novokuznetsk. Victor Federoski met us at the airport and took us to our hotel in the downtown. After a couple of days of rest we "consulted" with a large group of pastors and also to a large class—

39 folks now studying in this area. We consulted in the area of spiritual disciplines and in the area of Christian education. The weekend included work with pastors in the area. Here are some pictures of our time there, I am attaching a video off my Google drive of the closing thank you time from the students.



Pictures include the students starting with singing and prayer, Kirk leading a session, students praying for a Russian History professor as he concluded his time, the view from our hotel, a student teaching a sample lesson, and finally Mark with his son and Victor the grandpa and leader of the center.

This center in the center of coal country is going forward and has requested additional consultants this new year. The region was shocked by a coal mine explosion near the city where we served a few years ago. I believe over 30 were killed in the explosion. This is the constant threat to those working in the mines. Some from Victor's church were in the mine but not in the immediate region of the explosion. One of the church member's lost a grandson in the tragedy. The door remains open. Pray that continues. In the video linked below, you



will see and hear the students sing and share a skit appreciating our coming: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UmMVLi36hK76pmeMPIIVeh_O8F9k-P-I/view?usp=sharing.

We then went to Ukraine and Odessa Seminary. The course was on spiritual formation. For health safety, we used the chapel so everyone had room. These were students in the master's level.

We not only taught about spiritual maturity but also practiced some of the disciplines together.

Dangers come in many forms in this section of the world. Right now, COVID is running high; however, the direction is downward. The possible Russian invasion is a matter of concern. However, the staff and students know it is possible, but they don't feel it is likely. Pray for them and the leaders of both nations. Pray for PEACE ON EARTH.

We purchased a meal of Domino's pizza for the last evening meal. What a fun time with the faculty, students, and spouses. A fun thing surprised us. As dinner was concluding, they broke out in song. Singing is in the culture and is great.

One day we were invited to join the missions training program that was having a Thanksgiving dinner . . . USA style. We rejoiced to learn three of the students this year are from Tajikistan next to Afghanistan, who are headed back to serve the refugees from the region. About 300–500 Christians forced out of the country needing leadership. **OUR MINISTRY IS HELPING THOSE IN PLACES THAT WE CANNOT GO!**

I'm open to travel and share with your church. Call me, and let's get together.

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