

## NOVEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> - DAY OF PRAYER FOR UKRAINE



There is war in Europe - again! The last two World Wars began in Europe and engulfed nations around the world. Both resulted in profound consequences in terms of lost and displaced lives and a change in the world order which we have lived with over the last 77 years. With the aim of ending the frequent and bloody conflicts that culminated in the Second World War, European politicians begin the process of building what we know today as the European Union with one purpose and one

purpose alone: to create lasting peace. Although Russia or Ukraine are not a part of the European Union, there is a distinct possibility for the present Russian/Ukrainian war to spill over and engage other nations and become a wider conflict. Nations, including individuals, are not immune from such possible engagement.

Over this stark reality, Jesus comes to us and says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27) Most of us interpret this in an individualistic way, but violence and war also were never a part of Jesus' plan when it comes to international affairs or engagement. Nations are made up of individuals and individuals determine paths of reconciliation and solutions in order to establish a lasting peace.

Since February 24, 2022, thousands of individuals have thrust themselves into a different kind of warfare, wrestling and constantly praying for God's intervention in the Russian/Ukrainian war. Grandparents, mothers, fathers, and children have been asking God to intervene in this conflict through prayer. Prayer is the great conversational mystery which interplays because human involvement and God and no one really knows how it works, but it does!

When asked if Ukrainian United Methodists have felt the prayers of God's people, the resounding answer is "Yes!" How do they know? Perhaps the answer lies in "*The Ministry of Presence*." Although this is often expressed by being physically present in ministry with another, it can also refer to others knowing they have not been forgotten, abandoned or being alone even when separated by great distances because of prayer. Knowing that you will stand with people in the midst of anxiety and fear provides encouragement and inner strength for those who might be going through the valley of death, so that they might not fear no evil for it is God's rod and staff comforts them.

So, what can you do to help be part of the *Ministry of Presence* to help Ukrainian refugees as well as United Methodists in the country and also those who are scattered all over Europe? Here are some suggestions:

- + Mourn with those who mourn; identify yourself with refugees who are not only displaced but may have lost everything except their lives.
- + Pray for both justice and peace. Pray for those who are suffering. Pray for those who need to make crucial decisions about basic life choices after losing everything. Pray without ceasing.
- + Continue to be informed about current events or developments so you can pray for specific things, asking for our Lord's intervention.
- + Look for practical ways to advocate for refugees with government representatives.
- + Think about possibly extending hospitality to refugees in your home if an opportunity comes up or perhaps assisting people to get settled through a re-settlement agency.
- + Donate to refugee relief, if possible. Monetary gifts provide flexibility for what is needed rather than sending in-kind gifts which might not be needed at all! The Ukrainian Advance number is 14053A; the link is <https://umcmission.org/advance-project/14053a/>

Our Annual Conference is targeting November 6<sup>th</sup> as a Day of Prayer for Ukraine. You are welcome to select another date if that works better. Most important, continue to pray for this will bring you closer to those who need it the most!

“Our gracious Lord, bring an end to violence, hatred and discord in our communities and also in Ukraine.

Restrain the feet of those who rush into war and the finger poised to pull a trigger.

Guide all those in positions of power to do good rather than create evil violence.

Bring to leaders' minds and hearts the reality that their decisions greatly impact the personal lives of many who they do not know.

Help leaders, and also us, to see your face in the faces of innocent people who have homes, families, jobs and joys which this war has taken away from them but peace can restore.

We pray for an end to the deep insecurity and mistrust on all sides, and call on leaders to build trust, based not on military might or alliances, but on the basis of our shared future and common humanity.

Now is a time in which past harm should be acknowledged and addressed so that new partnerships can be envisioned.

We pray for and call on our leaders of Russian and Ukraine to have the courage to take small, verifiable, and independent steps toward peace.

Now is time to invest in conflict resolution, diplomacy, and international cooperation — not more weapons which only escalate tension in the region.

Lord, we ask for your comfort with those who are suffering in ways that we cannot even start to contemplate.

Protect them from devastation in ways those positioned in authority will not.

Shield and comfort them as they confront the terror of violence that surrounds them.

Hold them close to your heart and stay the hand of the enemies against them.

Give us the courage and the strength to cry aloud against wickedness in high places that dare to harm others made in your image.

Comfort the children and heed their cries to be saved from harm in this world.

Make us a people who love not only our children but those in Russia and Ukraine who are confused by all this violence.

We ask that You will disrupt the intentions of evil and give us power to stand against demonic forces of greed and control.

Lord, we plead, we cry out loud - for peace!

May "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Amen.