

Baptists respond to escalating Ukrainian crisis

March 1, 2022

[More than 377,000 refugees](#) from Ukraine crossed the border into Poland in six days, and Polish Baptists are turning their churches into temporary shelters as refugees continue to arrive at a rate of 50,000 a day.

“Mostly women and children are crossing the border, as men over 18 are required to stay in Ukraine due to the martial law,” according to a March 1 situation report from the [European Baptist Federation](#). “One border guard has even begun to refer those without family members to go directly to the nearest Baptist church.”

EBF reported one church with capacity for 50 people housed 140 individuals over the weekend, with some guests sleeping on pews in the sanctuary.

“Volunteers are working around the clock to clean bed sheets, provide food and check in new people who are coming in,” the EBF update stated. “The coordinating team is beginning to connect people with churches all over Poland where they can stay.”

Refugee crisis accelerates

The United Nations refugee agency reported March 1 [more than 660,000 refugees](#) have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries in six days, and some people are waiting in line up to 60 hours to enter Poland. The UN estimates at least [160,000 Ukrainians are displaced](#) within their own country.

In Latvia and Lithuania, Baptists have mobilized and stand ready to receive

refugees and assist those who are expected to arrive through Poland.

Baptist churches in Romania reported their congregations along the border with Ukraine are attempting to serve twice as many refugees as they have the capacity to house.

While fewer refugees are entering Slovakia, the Baptist Union there is working with 26 of its churches close to the border. Those churches have contacted church leaders in Ukraine to let them know they are capable of caring for up to 300 people at a time.

“Belarus is struggling as many young people try to flee the country to avoid conscription into the war efforts,” the EBF report stated. “Russian Baptists are mobilizing to help refugees that have fled across the Russian border.

“The international sanctions are beginning to have an impact on our Russian and Belarussian brothers and sister.”

Humanitarian aid from Hungarian Baptists

EBF also reported Hungarian Baptist Aid is working both within Hungary to assist refugees and in Ukraine to deliver humanitarian supplies for Ukrainian Baptists to distribute. Like other congregations in neighboring countries, churches in Hungary are providing shelter to refugees.

[Texas Baptist Men](#) is among the groups supporting the ministry to refugees and internally displaced people through its partnership with the [Baptist World Alliance](#) and EBF.

EBF also reported the Baptist Union in Ukraine safely moved its offices from Kyiv to Lviv, and churches around the country are serving displaced people.

“Churches in the east are connected with churches in the west that can receive families that are fleeing,” the EBF update stated. “For now, it is still possible to purchase some goods in many parts of the country, but shortages will come. EBF is in frequent contact with Baptist leaders as they share their needs.

“Though the Ukrainian brothers and sisters are shaken, they are resolute that God will reveal his glory in all things. They have peace despite the situation and are faithfully sharing the light of Christ in the darkness.”

BWA hosts global online prayer event

Baptists in more than 50 countries [gathered online](#) Feb. 28 to pray for Ukraine and Eastern Europe. The Zoom call included participants from Cuba, Lebanon, Myanmar and Nigeria—places where Christians know firsthand about oppression and violence. BWA coordinated the event, and leaders from all six BWA regions voiced prayers.



BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown invited Igor Bandura, vice president of the [All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists](#), to update participants in an online prayer event about the situation in his country and among its 1,110 Baptist churches. (Screen capture)

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its 1,110 Baptist churches.

“We are trying to build international relations and organize and unite all the people who are working to provide humanitarian aid,” he said.

Cars lined up at the country’s borders extend up to 20 to 30 kilometers—from 12 to 19 miles—as people seek to reach safety in neighboring countries, he said. “It takes sometimes two or three days,” he added.

Bandura commended his countrymen for their courage and resolve in the face of danger.

Russian leaders expected Ukraine to fall within 48 hours, but “Ukraine is still alive,” he said.

Even in the midst of attacks, Ukrainian Baptists met to worship—publicly in church sanctuaries in the west, while fellow believers in the east gathered online, outdoors or huddled in cellars, Bandura said.

The Holy Spirit gave worshippers “confidence that Ukraine will be saved—that Ukraine will overcome this evil sin,” he said.

To contribute to TBM relief to Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people, [click here](#). To donate directly to BWA, [click here](#).