

Global Baptist leaders honored in Ukraine

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At [Ukraine's National Independence Day celebration](#) in Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelensky conferred Order of Honor medals on two global Baptist leaders to recognize Baptist contributions toward providing hope and aid to the people of Ukraine.



Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Elijah Brown and European Baptist Federation General Secretary Alan Donaldson display the medals presented by President Volodymyr Zelensky. (Photo Courtesy of BWA)

During a ceremony marking the 34th anniversary of when Ukraine regained its independence, Zelensky awarded Elijah Brown, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise medal. He presented an Order of Merit medal to Alan Donaldson, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

“It was a humbling experience to attend the ceremony and receive this honor on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance. This recognition is a reflection of the tireless dedication and courageous service of Ukrainian Baptists on the front lines, as well as the unwavering support of the entire global Baptist family,” Brown said.

“To receive such an honor in the midst of war is also a poignant reminder that much remains to be done. May we all continue to work together for lasting and just peace in Ukraine and around the world.”

Brown was the first leader of a worldwide Christian fellowship to visit Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the full-scale Russian invasion of the nation on Feb. 24, 2022.

He met with leaders of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches—the country’s largest Protestant group, with more than 2,000 congregations.

Baptists instrumental in humanitarian aid

As soon as the escalated invasion began, [Baptists in Ukraine mobilized churches](#) along evacuation routes to provide food, rest and respite care for internally displaced people journeying from east to west.

Ukrainian Baptists also established “centers of hope” at churches in the nation’s western regions to shelter displaced individuals and families.

With BWA support, the European Baptist Federation coordinated humanitarian relief. The first truckload of humanitarian supplies left Hungary on the day the full-scale invasion began.

BWA reported “the global Baptist family has collectively helped more than

2 million people,” including with temporary shelter, food, medical care, psychosocial support, summer camps for children and mobile serving people near the front lines. Direct BWAid investment totaled more than \$4.8 million.

In addition, BWA provided 10,000 Bibles and pastoral support, as well as advocating for strengthened religious freedom protection and support for persecuted people of faith.

Emphasis on prayer for a just peace

The ceremony in Sophia Square took place on the day Ukrainian Baptists and other religious groups urged people of faith internationally to pray for their nation.

“In this time of trials, we need not only political and humanitarian support, but also spiritual solidarity—through prayers, compassion and fraternal participation.” Valerii Antoniuk, president of the Baptist Union of Ukraine and chair of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, wrote in an [online letter](#).



Elijah Brown, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, addresses the Ukrainian National

Prayer Breakfast.

Independence Day ceremonies continued at the [Ukrainian National Prayer Breakfast](#) at the Mystetski Arsenal in Kyiv. Brown and Donaldson were among 350 foreign guests from 50 nations who attended.

Donaldson described Ukraine as “a nation of beauty and brokenness—a nation that is fighting for many freedoms.”

“Among its diminishing population are many people of Christian faith who are seeking understanding of their circumstances and direction for how to live, speak and share hope,” Donaldson said.

“Many are grieving the loss of loved ones through displacement, abduction or the loss of life. We meet victims of torture who testify to the destruction of places of worship and the systemic violence experienced by believers in the occupied territories.”

He described the Ukrainian National Prayer Breakfast as “a moment in history where these stories were acknowledged, recorded and grieved—where prayer was offered by people of all ages and a variety of nations who seek to stand in solidarity with Ukraine’s desire to live in freedom.”

With information provided by Merritt Johnston of BWA.