

# Ukrainians remain hopeful in face of Russian invasion

February 24, 2022

A week before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Leonid Regheta, pastor of River of Life Church in Plano, called Christians to [pray](#) "for the King above every earthly king to protect and bless this beautiful country." Despite the early morning invasion Feb. 24, he remains hopeful.

Russian forces were [reported](#) crossing the Ukraine border from Belarus in the north, Russian-annexed Crimea in the south, and almost the full length of Ukraine's border with Russia. Explosions occurred in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital city.

"I was really, really hoping it won't come to this," Regheta wrote shortly after the invasion. "I was hoping, along with millions of others, there will be no invasion, no explosions, no taking over of Ukrainian territories by the Russian army."

Repeating a point he made a week earlier, Regheta continues to "believe Ukraine is a bargaining chip between Russia and the West," stating, "I believe Western and Russian politicians are trying to score points using Ukraine."

## Reports from Ukraine

Regheta spent the night corresponding with people in Ukraine, as well as members of his congregation in North Texas.

He reported a recently married couple with plans to have children and start a business in Ukraine saw those plans halted when the husband was

recalled to the Ukrainian army to defend against the Russian invasion.

Just before midnight, he spoke with a woman in his congregation whose only son and parents were in Kyiv. “She was crying over the phone, wanting to know if it is even possible to fly [her son and parents] out of the country.”

Scanning social media, he said his “friends, relatives and ministry colleagues ... [were] waking up to explosions, sirens and sounds of war.”

When asked how churches in Ukraine are faring, Regheta said the churches there “will be ready to help ... just as they did eight years ago,” referring to Russia’s 2014 incursion into Crimea and two eastern regions of Ukraine.

## **Continuing hope**

Expressing his continuing hope, Regheta noted “the iconic Ukrainian poem, ‘Contra Spem Spero’” and “its theme of resilience in the face of enduring hardships.”

“The poem was composed more than a hundred years ago,” he stated. “But is as relevant for the Ukrainian people today as when it was composed by Lesya Ukrainka.

“The poem’s Latin title can be roughly translated as ‘Being Hopeful in the face of Hopelessness.’ And that’s what we are today. And will always be. With God’s help.”

## **How churches can help**

In 2014, Ukrainian churches housed refugees fleeing Crimea and eastern regions of Ukraine.

“There were thousands of families displaced [in 2014], and there are and will be many more as the result of” Russia’s current invasion, Regheta stated.

“Specifically, thousands of families are escaping the large cities now and are moving to villages and smaller cities, hoping to hide from artillery, explosions and bombs going off,” he continued.

“Churches are there to help in every possible way: clothes, food, lodging, transportation [and more]. That happened eight years ago, and I am already seeing reports of churches helping today in the similar way,” Regheta said.

Churches outside Ukraine can provide the greatest help now through “financial assistance to the local churches [in Ukraine] and credible ministries on the ground,” Regheta said. One such ministry he suggested is [Hope International Ministries](#), “where [he has] been serving as a chairman of the board of directors for more than 10 years.”

Hope International Ministries is “trying to raise at least \$20,000 and will soon start helping dislocated families in Ukraine.”

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