

# STRIVE TOGETHER WITH US

## How the Church Can Pray for Pastors and Congregations in Lviv

“I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.”

—Romans 15:30

In the opening hours of Russia’s full-scale invasion, President Joe Biden warned Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that his life was in danger and offered American assistance in leaving the country. Zelenskyy refused. “I need ammunition, not a ride,” he replied. He did not intend to escape the struggle; he intended to remain with his people and lead them through it.

That same determination was evident among the pastors and their wives whom we met in Lviv. They were not looking for a way to escape their calling. They were seeking the strength and support necessary to remain faithful within it. Zelenskyy asked his allies for the resources to continue the physical fight. These pastors asked their brothers and sisters in Christ for the spiritual reinforcement necessary to continue the gospel mission.

The pastors and their wives in Lviv did not ask us for pity. They asked us for prayer.

Their requests reminded me of the apostle Paul. Although Paul was called, gifted, and courageous, he understood that gospel ministry could not be sustained by human strength alone. He repeatedly asked the churches to pray for him.

From prison, he asked believers to pray “that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19–20). He asked the Thessalonians to pray “that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored” and that gospel workers might be delivered from wicked and evil men (2 Thessalonians 3:1–2). He urged the Roman church to “strive together” with him in prayer so that he might be delivered from danger, serve the saints faithfully, and come to them with joy and refreshment (Romans 15:30–32).

Paul did not view prayer as sympathy offered from a distance. Prayer was participation in the struggle. Those who prayed for him joined him in the work.

That is how we must pray for the churches in Ukraine.

## Pray That the Mission Will Remain Central

One of the pastors' foremost concerns was maintaining balance in the church. The war touches every conversation, family, ministry, and decision. It demands attention, consumes resources, and creates urgent needs. Yet the church must not allow the war to become its mission.

The mission still belongs to Jesus.

The pastors asked us to pray that they would continue focusing on the proclamation of the gospel. They understand that while the church must respond compassionately to the consequences of war, it must never surrender its primary calling. Soldiers need more than rehabilitation. Widows need more than financial assistance. Displaced families need more than temporary shelter. They need the hope of Jesus Christ.

Pray, as Paul requested, that God will give these pastors the right words and the boldness to “proclaim the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). Pray “that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored” throughout Ukraine and beyond its borders (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

The war is urgent, but the gospel is ultimate.

### **Pray for Those Who Will Minister to the Wounded**

Ukrainian churches are preparing to receive soldiers returning from the front. Some will return with visible injuries. Others will carry wounds hidden within their minds, emotions, marriages, and families.

Pastors are asking how they can help these veterans. How should they minister to men who have witnessed violence, lost friends, sustained life-altering injuries, or lived for months under the threat of death? How can churches help families readjust when a husband, father, or son returns as a person deeply changed by war?

The churches will need wisdom, patience, trained counselors, faithful disciples, and compassionate congregations. They must learn how to listen without condemnation, love without fear, and speak biblical truth without offering shallow answers to deep wounds.

Pray that returning veterans will find churches prepared to receive them—not merely as military heroes or damaged men, but as people made in the image of God who need truth, grace, community, and the healing hope of Christ.

### **Pray for Laborers and Leaders**

The churches are experiencing a shortage of committed workers and qualified leaders. Some pastors and church members have left the country. Others have entered military service. Some have been displaced, while others are carrying responsibilities previously shared by several people.

Yet the needs continue to multiply.

Pray that God will raise up committed believers who will accept responsibility for ministry. Pray for younger Christians to be discipled, trained, and entrusted with meaningful service. Pray for elders, pastors, teachers, counselors, and ministry workers who possess both biblical conviction and Christlike character.

Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37). That truth is painfully visible in Ukraine. The churches do not merely need more people occupying positions. They need faithful laborers who will remain when ministry becomes costly.

### **Pray for Unity in a Polarized Society**

War intensifies differences. Fear, grief, politics, military service, displacement, language, and competing opinions can divide people who already live under extraordinary pressure.

The pastors in Lviv asked for prayer concerning the polarization among the people. Churches must shepherd congregations containing different experiences, convictions, wounds, and expectations. Some members have served in the military. Some have left the country. Some have lost family members. Others are waiting for loved ones to return. Every person enters the congregation carrying a different relationship to the war.

Pray that the gospel will hold together those whom suffering threatens to divide. Pray that believers will be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). Pray that political and cultural differences will not become greater than their shared identity in Christ.

### **Pray for Weary Pastors and Their Wives**

The pastors are tired.

They moved from the disruptions and demands of COVID-19 directly into the devastation of war. They have carried their congregations through sickness, isolation, displacement,

conscription, death, grief, trauma, and uncertainty—often without any meaningful season of rest.

Their wives have carried these burdens with them. They have supported exhausted husbands, cared for anxious families, comforted grieving church members, and lived with concerns about their own children and futures.

Paul prayed that he might come to the Roman believers with joy and “be refreshed” in their company (Romans 15:32). Ukrainian pastors and their wives need that same refreshment.

Pray for physical rest, emotional renewal, spiritual strength, and safe places where they can speak honestly. Pray that they will remember that they are Christ’s sheep before they are His under-shepherds. Pray that they will receive the care they so faithfully provide for others.

### **Pray for Ukraine’s Next Generation**

Many pastors fear that the younger generation will leave Ukraine and never return. They are asking a sobering question: If the young people all leave, who will lead Ukraine in the future?

The concern reaches beyond political or economic leadership. Who will pastor the churches? Who will disciple the children? Who will rebuild communities? Who will carry the gospel into the next generation?

Pray that God will preserve, call, equip, and return young Ukrainian believers. Pray that those who remain will be strengthened and that those who leave will continue walking faithfully with Christ. Pray that whether they serve inside Ukraine or elsewhere, they will understand themselves as stewards of the gospel and servants of God’s kingdom.

### **Pray for the Winter**

The pastors believe that one of their greatest immediate challenges will be the coming winter.

Churches are preparing to become points of refuge where people can find practical help, Christian love, and pastoral care. They want to provide blankets, warm meals, and safe places for people enduring cold, power interruptions, displacement, and economic hardship.

These are more than distribution points. They are opportunities for the church to make Christ's compassion visible.

Pray that God will provide the necessary blankets, food, heat, facilities, volunteers, transportation, and financial resources. Pray that every warm meal will be served with genuine love and every physical need will open a door for spiritual care. Pray that people will enter these churches seeking warmth and encounter Christ's welcome.

### **Join Them in the Struggle**

Paul asked believers to “strive together” with him in prayer. The expression pictures intense exertion—a shared struggle rather than a casual mention. The churches in Ukraine do not need occasional thoughts offered from a safe distance. They need brothers and sisters who will carry their names and needs persistently before the throne of grace.

Pray for the Word to advance.

Pray for soldiers and veterans to receive faithful care.

Pray for committed workers and qualified leaders.

Pray for unity in a polarized nation.

Pray for weary pastors and their wives.

Pray for the next generation of Ukrainian believers.

Pray for churches preparing to provide blankets, warm meals, love, and refuge during the winter.

We may not stand beside these pastors in Lviv, but we can kneel beside them in prayer. And when we pray, we do more than observe their struggle from a distance.

We strive together with them.