

Southern Baptists gear up for major Ukraine relief effort

By Hubert Yates

Correspondent

Editor's note: Compiled from SEND Relief Briefings



Yates

Mississippi Baptists have longstanding ties to the Eastern European people of Ukraine since they gained their independence from the former USSR in 1991. Volunteers from Mississippi Baptist churches and pastors from our state have made many trips to the cities and communities of Ukraine, sharing the Gospel and assisting the growing indigenous church with discipleship and training over the past two decades.

With this strong tie and the many friendships that exist, Mississippi Baptists are joining together to express concern, pray, and respond with our Southern Baptist partners in meeting the needs of the Ukraine people.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia that has been simmering since 2014 has erupted this week with Russian forces staging a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. After weeks of heightened tensions and escalating conflict in eastern Ukraine, on February 24 Russian troops entered the country.

Major attacks are occurring across Ukraine including in the capital, Kyiv, which continues to spread widespread fear and

panic. This is forcing people who are unable to flee into shelters and subways as air raid sirens ring out in the streets of the capital.

Russian troops have quickly expanded their presence across Ukraine, with military clashes ongoing in other major cities like Chernihiv (north), Kharkiv (northeast), Kherson (south), Mariupol (southeast), Mykolaiv (south), Odessa (southwest), Sumy (north), among other major cities in northern, eastern, and southern parts of the country, while the pre-existing hostilities in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts (states) have significantly intensified.

Reports indicate over 350 casualties and 1,500 injured as conflict continues to escalate. As the conflict intensified, people began to flee the capital – home to nearly three million people – and other conflict-affected areas of Ukraine, internally displacing more than 160,000 people and pushing more than 250,000 to move across borders to neighboring European countries, including Poland where border authorities say some 200,000 people have arrived in recent days.

Most fleeing currently are women and children with men staying to fight. Reports continue to indicate that as many as five million Ukrainians will be displaced in neighboring countries and large numbers of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) have formed in Western Ukraine. Believers unable to flee the country continue to gather in churches across the nation for prayer and fasting.

Southern Baptists through our joint International Mission Board (IMB)/North American Mission Board (NAMB) crisis response ministry program, SEND Relief, are responding with our partners on the ground (existing national ministry and other trusted partners) and are ramping up response to this major crisis.

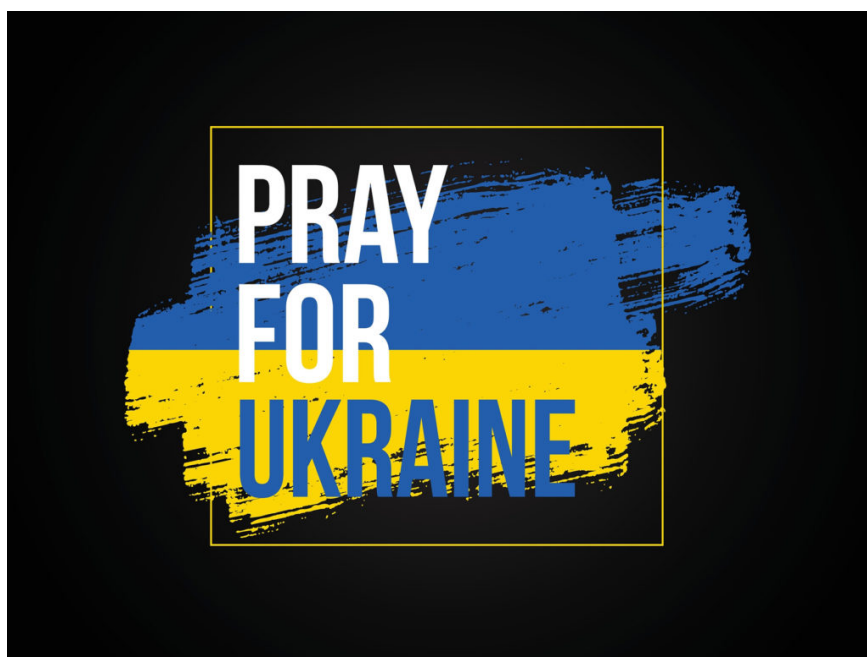
SEND Relief began responding with food relief before the

invasion and continues to collaborate with national partners to provide food, shelter, transportation, clothing, and ministry to those displaced and impacted by the crisis in Ukraine. SEND Relief has expanded response to displaced people in countries that border Ukraine.

Total resources committed, planned, and in progress currently amount to \$408,600. Send Relief is deploying a Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) team to the crisis area, made up of volunteers from Southern Baptist Disaster Relief state partners.

Send Relief anticipates that opportunities for volunteer response will increase after the SBDR DART team completes the initial assessment. Responding teams will need to meet international travel requirements, complete IMB requirements for international response prior to deployment, and be prepared to operate in hardship conditions.

The best current ways for Southern Baptists to respond is by praying and giving.



Prayer Requests:

- Pray for peace in Ukraine.

- Pray for God's protection for believers serving and ministering on the front lines of this crisis.
- Pray for those suffering in the areas of active conflict and for those who have lost loved ones.
- Pray that God will open people to the Hope of Christ through this difficult season in their lives.
- Pray that the displaced can find a place to live as they flee the area where the fighting continues.
- Pray for women and children displaced from home, without husbands and fathers who are often the primary providers in these families.
- Pray that partners and the local church will have wisdom during this time, and that as we serve together and offer compassionate ministry in these difficult circumstances that all we do would glorify the Lord.

To Give:

Church gifts in support of the SEND Relief response may be given through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board utilizing the Church Mission Giving Designation Form Pink Sheet, designating International Disaster Relief/Ukraine Conflict Response. Submit to MBCB, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205.

Individual gifts may be given directly to SEND Relief online by clicking [here](#).