

Newsletter von Pavlo Lozynsky

One Mission Society - Lviv; Mai 2023

Hello Friends,

It's been a while since I wrote to you last time, so here is an update on what's been going on. There are many pictures to illustrate it. They will be in corresponding subfolders to the subtopics of this letter.

Here is the link to the main folder with pictures: <https://shorturl.at/hqsy1>

First, - here are bullet points on what I want to share with you, and they will be expanded below

1) Adapting to Life in Lviv and Ukraine

- Blessings of being home
- Some challenges for kids at school
- Is it safe?

2) Church

- Blessings and challenges
- Easter services
- Picnic and retreat
- Small groups
- Halya's ministry

3) Shelter and social work

- Shelter functioning more like a hub
- Providing food packages
- Sending food and supplies further to the East

4) Ministry in Poland

- teaching at a worship conference in Warsaw
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- bringing back to Ukraine Halya's sister Oksana and their parents

5) Ministry with refugees in Niagara region in Canada

1. How we are adapting to life in Lviv and Ukraine. Blessings and challenges

It's definitely good to be home! It didn't take long to settle in and dive right back into ministry.

We're happy to reconnect with our old friends in church and also connect with some new people (mainly from the refugees).

It has been a bit more difficult for the girls with school.

Khrystyna rejoined her class and on one hand she's happy to be there, but on the other - she feels like the time she was away in Canada has affected her relationships with girlfriends, and she still feels some distance... Also some kids have been hinting that they feel it's unfair that our family could have gone abroad for some time, but their dads are not allowed to leave the country. And I don't even know what to say about this... The war is disruptive on so many levels...

Sofiya instead, has been staying home and doing online school, because she needed to catch up a lot on a school program that's very different from Canadian school. So we decided together that this will give her a better opportunity to complete it in a shorter time, and she has been doing great, getting all the high marks. She should be able to finish it all by the end of this week. But obviously she has been really missing real world connections with her peers. She still sees some of her school friends once a week, and from time to time attends youth meetings in 2 other churches in Lviv. (Unfortunately we don't have age specific meetings yet in our church) Sofiya also joined our worship band on piano and it's really cool to worship Jesus together with my daughter!

Please keep our girls and our whole family in your prayers. We have a lot to thank for, but still experience quite a bit of stress and challenges (more details below).

Many of you have been asking in personal messages how safe it is here. Obviously - it's a country at war and anything can happen, but most of the last 2 months have been totally safe in Lviv. We didn't have any rocket attacks or anything like that. We are far away from the battlefields and I guess russians didn't have enough rockets for us... (they have been attacking a lot of central and southern parts of Ukraine, and obviously eastern too)

However it changed in the last 2 weeks and now we had multiple sirens warning about rocket and drone attacks. Thankfully our air defense forces were able to shut down all the threats around Lviv. It's much more intense in Kyiv lately - you've probably seen it in the news. For the most part - air defence also has been able to protect it, but it has been very intense lately :(Sady when they shoot russian missiles or drones, the debris still pose a serious danger, and there have been civilian casualties, even this morning :(

Our army is preparing for a major offensive in the east and south to liberate Ukrainian people and occupied territories from russian occupation. While it seems inevitably necessary (at least by our humane logic), but it can be very bloody and super dangerous for our soldiers.

So please pray for God's continuous protection on us and Ukraine in general, for strength, courage and skillfulness for our soldiers and for angels to protect them. And I'd much rather want to see a miracle that russians just get confused, afraid and run away instead of bloody battles... Please keep praying for victory and peace in Ukraine...

And please pray specifically for our 2 soldiers - Alex and Serhiy. They have been able to have short trips to see their wives and kids in Lviv in April and May, but have been quickly called back to duty...

2. Church. Blessings and challenges.

It's a blessing to be able to meet each week and do so in a very nice facility (local seminary). I've been preaching 3 out of 4 Sundays per month and sometimes I lead worship as well. Besides regular weekly church gatherings and small groups, we usually have a couple of personal meetings per week with individuals or families as well. People often need counseling and encouragement.

Overall, it reminds me of the early years when Halya and I had to do many different things in church... To some degree it feels like replanting the church...

One of the challenges is that - Sunday attendance is very uneven - we had up to 80 people on Easter and as low as 20 on some Sundays. Typically - it's around 30 adults. Also our ministry team is much smaller now. Many people simply moved somewhere else.... Some are in the army like I mentioned above... There are 10-12 people who are willing to serve on a regular basis, others just attend from time to time. Many people openly say that they experienced so much stress during the war that they are just "in survival mode" right now and don't have internal resources to steadily serve others.

We usually have another 10-15 people on Sunday from the refugees, but this is not a steady group either. Many of them are in Lviv just temporarily. But we do have maybe 5-7 that have been coming pretty regularly, and thankfully - we see God's work in their hearts and their openness to follow Jesus. More on that later.

But we choose to be thankful and try to focus on Jesus. We understand that it's a consequence of the war and it's just a stage we have to go through... I've been reminding myself and also preaching on passages about mustard seed, 5 bread and 2 fishes - where in Jesus' hands He can still use and multiply/grow something that looks really small. We cling to that and try to be faithful in small ways....

I'm openly sharing with you blessings and challenges, trusting that the Holy Spirit will lead you in praying for us. We really need and appreciate your prayers!

Here are a couple of more things that we are thankful for:

- Easter services

We had very good Easter services. I say it in plural because we had it twice. Just like with Christmas, for years we used to celebrate Easter in Ukraine based on a calendar used by Orthodox church of Russian patriarchy. Now with the Russian invasion many Ukrainian churches decided to switch to an international calendar, and celebrate it together with most of the world. However there are still people for whom it's a big deal to celebrate on the date that they are used to, especially among refugees from the East. So we decided not to make a big deal about the date, but to use this opportunity to talk about Jesus' death and resurrection twice.

So for 2 consecutive Sundays (April 9 & 16) we talked about the resurrection of Jesus and its impact on our lives. We decided to sit around the tables - this gave people an opportunity to share more about themselves, share what Easter means for them and also discuss the sermon right away. We had quite a lot of new guests (compared to our typical attendance of 30 or so) and a very good atmosphere. Some of the refugees invited their friends, and we also had a

group of students from India. (and our daughter Sofiya was translating to English for them).
Please join us in praying for them and for some kind of more regular meetings for them (maybe in the Fall).

- Picnic and retreat

Couple of weeks later when the weather got warmer we organized a picnic - it's a good opportunity for people to enjoy food and company with each other, meet new people and grow in their relationships. We invited friends and relatives and a number of refugees joined as well. It was a great time and atmosphere of fellowship, encouraging one another and singing and worshipping God together.

Just a couple of days earlier my friend Yuriy took our Sprinter van and drove several refugees to an evangelistic retreat organized by our partner church and missionaries from South Korea. It was 3 days in fellowship and studying God's Word focusing on the Gospel. Holy Spirit was at work and 2 women from our shelter prayed and declared their desire to follow Jesus! Also we have another young girl among the refugees who declared her faith in Jesus recently and this past Sunday asked me about baptism. **Praise God, and pray for Olha, Yuliya and Karina to grow and take next steps in faith and for us as a church in helping them in that!**

- Small groups (+ womens and mens group)

Besides Sundays we have a home group that meets on Tuesdays for fellowship and encouragement and hoping to get another one going (**please pray for that**).

There is another Bible study group happening weekly in our shelter - they are going through the Gospel of John. It's geared for the people who have no experience with the Bible and our goal is to introduce them to Jesus.

Also on Friday mornings - several dads are meeting to discuss, pray and help each other be a better father. Similar to that there is a womens only group - where they can share their challenges and pray for one another. Halya leads that one.

Please pray for all those small groups: for their leaders (Yvhen, Yuriy, another Yuriy, Halya), for the Holy Spirit to work through them and for people in them to have open hearts and experience growth and changed lives.

- Halya's ministry.

Besides leading that women's group she has been doing quite a bit of personal evangelism and discipleship with ladies from the shelter and church, also helping to address their personal and medical needs (buying clothes, food, medicine, etc). Also she has been filling in for Sunday school from time to time and is also initiating a team to start an additional Sunday school group for 11-13 year olds. Ideally we would want to start something for teenagers during the week as well, but right now there are not enough people willing to do it on a regular basis. **So please pray for the workers to be sent to the harvest.**

Halya's gift of hospitality has been shining as well. In addition to hosting over 30 people in our home (and multiple times) during the last 2 months, she has been baking/cooking special treats for many of our Sunday gatherings. **I'm an extremely blessed man to have a friend and wife like that :) Thank you Lord!**

3. Refugees and other social ministries

I mentioned in the previous newsletter that we had closed one of the shelters, simply because there are less people in need of them. Many of those who lived in Lviv for a while now have returned to their homes in the East, (even despite the danger) or at least moved closer to their regions hoping that soon their homeland will be freed... Others, while remaining in Lviv (there are still a lot of refugees here), have found more permanent and private places to stay.

So our shelter functions more like a hub for the refugees right now. We still have 8-12 people living in it but we also have 50-80 that come during the week to get lunches and food packages. Not just refugees actually, but even people who live in Lviv for a long time but are for various reasons in need of food and help.

Our team also stays in touch with a couple of hundred people that live around Lviv. We deliver those food packages to them or send them by post. With each of those connections we try to share about the love of God with them and invite them to that Bible study group and to Sunday gatherings.

We also send some supplies to our partner churches in the East who often are in bigger need than we are and have many refugees that they are serving as well. We can buy most of the supplies here in Lviv now, so we don't have to go to Poland as often as we did.

Thank you so much to all who provided and keep providing funds so we can serve those needy people in this way. May God bless you richly!

And please pray that through those connections many more can come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Pray also for our now fairly small team who works in the humanitarian field. (Yuriy and Natalia S., Yuriy T. and me and Halya)

4. Ministry in Poland

Even though we don't go there as often as we used to - we still have good connections in Poland and lately there have been a couple of opportunities to serve Ukrainian refugees in Poland as well. Because of the war millions of Ukrainians ended up in Poland and many churches have been started by refugees (God can use everything for His Glory!!!). In big cities, like Warsaw - there are many new churches like that. As they try to establish their structure and ministry - they often need help. So one of the new Ukrainian churches in Warsaw organized a Worship conference and invited people involved in worship ministry from other Ukrainian churches all around Poland (and even some came from Germany). I was invited as one of the speakers along with a good friend of mine - Volodymyr Khlysta who is a head of worship and music faculty in Lviv seminary. So we had the privilege to teach around 80-100 people on "The meaning, purpose and practical organization of worship and music in church". I was very encouraged to see their passion for the Lord and how they are strategically thinking to reach other Ukrainians around them.

When my family stayed in Poland for 2 months a year ago, we made a good connection with another Ukrainian refugee group in Southern Poland in the town of Zory. There is a growing Ukrainian church there, and whenever I'm in the area they invite me to preach and share a song there. It was good to visit this church again and serve them this previous weekend.

But another reason why we went there - was to bring back to Ukraine Halya's sister Oksana and their parents. This is actually their first trip back in over 14 months. If you remember -

Oksana went through a lot of stress and emotional trauma, giving birth to a baby on the second day of war very close to a place where severe battle and explosions were happening. So she was very afraid to return. On the other hand she didn't see her husband Ihor all that time (as he is not allowed to leave Ukraine) and little boy Mark was being raised without his father either... So finally she agreed to try to come for a couple of weeks to Lviv and see how things are. They lived in Kyiv and it's definitely not safe right now with pretty much daily attacks, but Lviv is ok so far. They are definitely happy to be together again (you can see the pictures) and Halya's parents who sacrificially chose to be with Oksana to help her with the baby are happy to be back home too in their little town Berezhany (80 km from Liviv)!

Oksana is still very afraid of potential bombing and every time there is an air alarm - she is very stressed. She is still doubting if she should stay in Lviv with Ihor (and she would want that), or choose a more "safe approach" and return to Poland.

Please pray for all of them, for inner peace and safety overall, that Oksana, Ihor and Mark can be together as a family; pray for us, that as we serve them - they can see Jesus in us and open their hearts to Him.

Pray also for all the refugee churches in Poland and in all Europe. That they can reach many Ukrainians and other nations and lead them to Christ. That this forced relocation can be used by God similar to the persecution of the early church in Jerusalem - to spread the Gospel further to the nations! Also **pray specifically for one of our key leaders, Roman**, who recently moved to be with his wife and 3 kids in Switzerland (they left at the beginning of the war) He is also a part of a Ukrainian church plant there and works specifically with the youth there.

5. Ministry with refugees in Canada

I'm always glad to hear that a ministry we helped to start continues and grows! Once a week a group of 30-50 Ukrainian refugees from the Niagara region meet at the NorthEnd church in St Catharines. **Please keep them in your prayers!** My friend Yaroslav who leads it - says that he starts to see the work of Grace and much more openness to the Gospel. **Pray that many will become followers of Jesus, and pray for Yaroslav as he leads this group.** (And thank you NorthEnd for hosting it and helping it in many ways!)

Ok, so as it is with me more often than not - it turned out to be a long letter :) So I'm just going to end with the answer to another common question that we have been receiving often - "Are you planning to come to Canada again anytime soon?"

The answer is - No, we don't have a plan like that, however anything can happen when your country is at war... We want to continue serving in Lviv, but trusting Jesus to lead us in His will! And we will be happy if some of you decide to do some "extreme tourism" and come visit us here :)

Thank you so much for all the personal messages we received from many of you, (that means a lot!) for the prayers, and financial support. God bless you all!

P.S.

Here is a link to the pictures again: <https://shorturl.at/hqsyl>

And here is our giving info if anyone wants to join our support team:

If you want to support Refugee Relief efforts through OMS, here is the donation page:

www.omscanada.org/disaster-relief-ukraine

(or for quickness - you can also e-transfer or PayPal money for that purpose directly to me at p.lozynsky@gmail.com (but no income tax receipt))

If you want to support our family as we serve others in Ukraine, go to one of these links:

From Canada <https://www.omscanada.org/pavlo-lozynsky>

From USA <https://onemissionsociety.org/missionaries/detail/Lozynsky>