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THE BAPTIST TIMES

The online newspaper of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

International News

Baptists helping to serve new Ukraine

A Baptist has been appointed as the interim President of Ukraine

In a fast moving situation at the weekend, Dr Oleksandr Turchynov was selected by the country's Parliament to succeed the ousted President Viktor Yanukovich. He had already been appointed Speaker and deputy prime minister, and will remain as interim President until new elections are held later this year.

Dr Turchynov is a Baptist elder at the Word of Life Centre in Kiev, a member of the Baptist Union of Ukraine (the All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists). Over the years he has met a number of Baptist leaders from organisations such as the European Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance during their visits to the region.

A BBC profile (inset) said he was considered the right-hand man of Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister imprisoned by President Yanukovich but then dramatically released at the weekend.

In his first address he explained that elections would take place in May, whereupon he will immediately resign.



The first task, he said, was to 'stop the confrontation, to regain control.... to ensure peace and tranquility, to prevent new victims, local rivalries and lynchings'.

At least 88 people have been killed in clashes between protesters and government forces over the last three months, the worst violence the country has witnessed since independence in 1991.

Pavel Unguryan, the International Missions Department Director with the Baptist Union of Ukraine and a member of Parliament said that 'joy and sadness overfills our hearts as we celebrate the news of birth of a New Ukraine and grieve for the young men, students and husbands who died for this to happen.'

'Hundreds of thousands of people burst out in ovation and cheers as they were listening to the reports about the progress from the Maydan's stage', he continued, thought unfortunately many people now have 'much anger and hatred for opponents'.

'Many are determined just to revenge, burn and bring about injuries.'

The country needs to turn to Christ, he said.

'What Ukraine needs is not just a change of people in authority but a change of the system and the relationship of the authorities to ordinary citizens. Ukraine needs love, mercy and forgiveness. Ukraine needs Christ!'

Mr Unguryan also praised the Christian community, which had been the light and the salt for both parties during the days of protests and confrontations.

'The doctors, nurses, cooks, students and other Christian group have been helping whenever there was a need,' Mr Unguryan said. 'This situation caused the churches and even denominations get united in prayers and fasting for the peace and God's intervention. People started crying out to God and even the TV media spoke about the role of the church and quoted Scriptures.'

A group from Hungarian Baptist Aid has also arrived in Ukraine to help the recovery.

[Regional News](#) »

[National News](#)

[International News](#)

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Five Core Values



Ukrainian Christians give thanks for peace

[Home page \(\)](#)
[News \(news\)](#)

Ukrainian Christians give thanks for peace

Pavel Unguryan, International Missions Department Director with Ukrainian Baptists - February 23, 2014

Joy and sadness overfills our hearts as we celebrate the news of birth of a New Ukraine and grieve for the young men, students and husbands who died for this to happen.

For the past three months Ukraine was absorbed by the cloud of anti-government protests and demonstrations that resulted in the worst violence since it gained Independence in 1991. The events of the last several days have been crucial as we the witnessed the creation of a new Ukraine's history.

The Parliament has taken a responsibility to end the crisis in the country and adopted a number of vital laws. Our brother in Christ and minister of one of the Kiev Baptist Churches Dr. Oleksandr Turchynov, a leading opposition lawmaker, was elected Speaker of parliament. Among other rapid development Ukraine's ex-minister Yulia Tymoshenko also was released from prison after which she was taken in a wheelchair to Kiev to make a speech at the Independence Square in Kiev. The Parliament also voted to remove President Viktor Yanukovych and set new presidential elections for May 25.

The hundreds of thousands of people burst out in ovation and cheers as they were listening to the reports about the progress from the Maydan's stage. Exhausted but happy people stood with pride and feeling of awe. Strong enough to survive the bullets but unable to cope the emotions some people actually fainted.

During all these days of protests and confrontations the Christian community in Ukraine has been the light and the salt for both parties. The doctors, nurses, cooks, students and other Christian groups have been helping whenever there was a need. This situation caused the churches and even denominations get united in prayers and fasting for the peace and God's intervention. People started crying out to God and even the TV media spoke about the role of the church and quoted Scriptures.

Several days ago the volunteers of the Hungarian Rescue Team arrived in Ukraine to serve our people and help us recover. God is using different people to provide assistance and if you want to help the wounded, sick, the families of the killed or with other social projects to restore the country please let us know and we'll organize channels to make your donation arrive at the destination.

Unfortunately, many people have much anger and hatred for opponents. People are disappointed in all politicians and do not want to forgive anyone. Many are determined just to revenge, burn and bring about injuries. But we need to face this challenge with Christ. What Ukraine needs is not just a change of people in authority but a change of the system and the relationship of the authorities to ordinary citizens. Ukraine needs love, mercy and forgiveness. Ukraine needs Christ!

After all the previous prayer requests we ask you today to join us in the prayer of thanksgiving to God for the peace that He has granted on Ukrainian land.

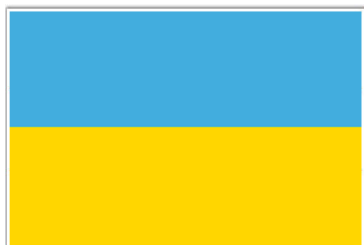
"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" Psalm 33:12

[Back \(news\)](#)

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The nation of Ukraine has recently been in the earnest prayers of many Christians around the world for the reason of current political situation. This large country populated by about 46 million has a good number of evangelical Baptists who are actively involved in a thriving mission work. There are numerous exciting social and evangelistic projects being realized all over the country.

Baptist beginnings in Ukraine

The Baptists in the Ukraine trace their origins to about 170 years ago. The first pioneers of the Baptist faith suffered much oppression from the government and the dominant Orthodox Church, however the movement grew. By 1926 there were about 1000 local congregations but later harsh persecutions from the Soviet regime followed. New opportunities arrived with the independence from Soviet Union (1990) which resulted in an impressive growth of Baptist movement.



There are currently about 2400 Baptist local congregations that comprise about 125 thousand members. The EBF has been facilitating the ministry of several Baptist church planters.

Grace Baptist Church in Kiev

Pastor Vladimir Omelchuk launched his church planting work in May 2003 in Kiev, the capital city of Ukraine. In the beginning there were just a handful of people.



Pastor Omelchuk with his Family and congregation in 2011

They had the goal to start a new congregation which they called the 'Grace'. The work was based on home groups and targeted at the youth and young couples. As

the time has passed they have developed numerous and effective programs, ranging from a contemporary church services to social projects influencing local society, like for example the excellent work with young drug addicts and lectures for prevention in schools. Now this congregation draws over 300 regular attendees and they also started a couple of daughter congregations.

New church plants

The daughter congregation of 'Grace' was started by the missionary Ihor who had earlier studied theology at the seminary in Odessa. During his studies he read a book about the cell church which inspired him for mission work. Later he was able to realize his dream by moving to Kiev about 5 years ago and soon new church called 'Resurrection' got established.

The basic method of work is small groups. All groups meet together every Sunday in a rented hall. During services they sing joyfully, hear sermons and share testimonies from their personal walk with God. They also organize



street evangelism and summer camps. Baptisms are always practiced outdoor which provides natural opportunity for evangelism. Ihor believes that another congregation may be started soon on the grounds of mission work they have done so far.



Another indigenous leader, Andriy moved to Kiev about 4 years ago and began mission work. The result has been a new congregation that is called the 'Spirit of

Life'. They do meetings for families, sport activities and social work. The congregation meets in a district of Kiev where about 600 thousand people live. There are many people who are open for the gospel and the mission work is advancing.

One other church planter, Volodymir works in the town of Burshtyn, western Ukraine.

He recently wrote in his report: *"We organize services on Sundays in our chapel and every time new people come, even without specific invitation. Local population knows us from the gospel broadcasts through the regional television. Thanks to the broadcasts and personal contacts we meet people who are eager to know about God. Recently, a man from Burshtyn started attending our church. He was at first very timid and experienced a great change in his life. Our*



greatest desire is to continue working in the district of Galych. Therefore we continue helping a few groups in the area towards the formation of new congregations”.

Prayer requests

1. Pray for the church planters that they continue to be faithful and enthusiastic in their pioneering ministry.
2. Pray for wisdom to leaders of all evangelical churches that they may know clear direction to lead many others to God.
3. Pray for the people of Ukraine that they may be continually open to the gospel message.

Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

To help planting reproducing churches!

To help growing healthy churches!

For the glory of God!

PS. Offerings for IMP may be sent to:

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