



A Voluntary Charity working in Ukraine and Moldova

with roots going back to 1990



Voices from Ukraine – Why stay?

One church in Kharkiv and life in the city

Despite the relentless attacks, many people in Kharkiv choose to stay. It's not because they feel safe—far from it, it's because this is their home. The terrifying sound of missiles has become part of daily life. Nights filled with explosions have become the norm. And on the rare occasion when the city is quiet, people notice. Silence has become the exception.

This morning, I watched thick smoke curling into the sky over one part of the city—another missile strike. Another scar. And yet... life carries on. Somehow, incredibly, the shops opened. Cafés served warm food. People went to work. Children played on the swings, giggling, as though they didn't hear the echoes of war all around them. Somehow, in the middle of devastation, there is still life. Still laughter. Still moments of fragile, everyday beauty.

But there's another fear hanging over the city now—forced mobilization. It's real, and it's deeply unsettling. Police and military personnel roam the streets, checking documents. If a man is between 25 and 55 years old and can't prove an exemption or official employment, he may be taken then and there, no time for goodbyes. Ukraine desperately needs soldiers—but this has left many young men terrified. Some are in hiding. Others are desperately trying to leave the country before they come of age.

The impact has rippled through communities in heartbreaking ways. Over the last six months, five young men from Sasha's church have left Ukraine to avoid being drafted. These weren't just attendees—they were part of the ministry team. Their departure has left a painful void, not just in the church's work, but in the hearts of those who served alongside them.

Churches are not exempt from this. Even ordained pastors and deacons are not protected from the draft. Just this past week, their deacon Oleg—one of Sasha's most trusted assistants—was mobilized. His absence is felt deeply. He wasn't just a leader; he was a brother, a shepherd, a friend.

There is heartbreak everywhere. And yet... people stay. They love. They serve. They open their doors and tend their flocks, even as the world around them crumbles.

And I keep thinking—what does it take to hold onto hope in a place like this? Whatever it is, they have it. Somehow, they still believe that light will return, even after so many nights filled with fire.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE IS A VOLUNTARY CHARITY AND RELIES ON DONATIONS

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cr2ee, Braidia Garth, Staplake Lane, Starcross, Devon. EX6 8QT
Tel 01626 891945 or 07970 204506 E Mail: mail@cr2ee.org.uk
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