



EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

VOL. 30, NO. 3, 2022

Special Issue: Christians in Poland Aiding Refugees from Ukraine

Russia's full-scale military assault on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 forced a westward exodus of civilians. Nearly seven million fled the country, while a similar number were displaced to areas of Ukraine not under regular bombardment—in total, at least a quarter of the population. The European country that has absorbed most Ukrainian refugees—at least 1.5 million—is Poland. Warsaw alone now has 180,000—a tenth of the capital's population [Vanessa Gera and Kirsten Grieshaber, "Time stopped": Ukrainians long to go home as war drags on," Associated Press, 22 August 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-poland-migration-00b1b341c356c26db266c64e4e2b5541>.]

The scale of the humanitarian response in Poland—Christian as well as secular—is similarly immense. Drawn from in-person interviews in Warsaw in late August 2022, this issue of the East-West Church Report provides a glimpse into the experience and motivations of some of the local Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants whose response to the needs of those fleeing Ukraine forms part of that vast effort.

Published almost simultaneously with this issue of the Report, Editor Emeritus Dr. Mark R. Elliott's introduction to the scope of the relief effort undertaken by Protestant Christians, "Best Practices in Protestant Aid for Ukrainian Refugees: 2022," may be found in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, Volume 42, Issue 7, Article 5, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol42/iss7/5>.



Drawing by a nine-year-old Ukrainian refugee from *Mamo, ja nie chcę wojny!* [Polish: *Mama, I don't want war!*], a summer 2022 street exhibition in Warsaw's Old Town.

“A guest in the house—God in the house”: An Interview with Kamila Dembińska and Magda Wroniszewska

The Club of the Catholic Intelligentsia [Polish: Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej]—colloquially known by its Polish acronym, KIK—is headquartered in a quiet alley in Warsaw's Old Town. KIK was founded in 1956, during a brief political thaw in then-Communist Poland, and is independent of both the state and the Catholic Church. The Club played an instrumental role in Poland's transition to democratic rule in the late 1980s, and one of its founders—Tadeusz Mazowiecki—became Poland's first post-Communist Prime Minister.

Today, KIK has local branches across Poland. The largest is in Warsaw, and comprises some 5,000 families. Its most active volunteers—approximately 700 members—organize numerous activities with a Christian

ethic, including children's camps, support for civil society in Belarus and Ukraine, student events, and production of a magazine, Kontakt.

In late August the editor of the East-West Church Report met two such volunteers at KIK's headquarters: Kamila Dembińska, a child care worker, and her friend Magda Wroniszewska, an architect, in order to learn about the Club's recent efforts assisting refugees from the war in Ukraine. The conversation took place in English.

How has KIK been involved in assisting refugees from the war in Ukraine?

Magda: We have a sector for refugees called *Gość w Dom*—in English,

(continued on page 2)

Dembińska and Wroniszewska Interview *(continued from page 1)*

“A Guest in the House.” The name comes from an old Polish proverb, *Gość w dom, Bóg w dom*, “A guest in the house—God in the house.” The meaning is that, by inviting someone into your home, you are welcoming God. The idea for this came prior to the war in Ukraine, with the crisis at the border with Belarus. We were so angry at our government’s response that we wanted to do something. So when people began to flee Ukraine a few months later, we were already prepared.

[Editor’s note: From mid-2021 onwards, Belarusian autocrat Aleksandr Lukashenko pushed thousands of migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere over his country’s border into Poland and other neighboring European Union states. The move came as retaliation for EU assistance to Belarusian pro-democracy initiatives during mass protests against Lukashenko’s rule the previous year.]

Kamila: That is something very special about KIK members. They are always ready in a crisis. All you need is an idea, then you create a group of people who think the same, who are ready to get involved, and the action starts. Sometimes it is small-scale, but sometimes it is huge, as with this action for refugees.

Magda: You can just make a call and the next day something happens. It does not take hours of planning or creating a special group for the task. There is no need to explain certain things—they are obvious.

Kamila: Yes, we have the same values, so it is easy to react and act altogether, quickly. We know what is important, when and where we have to be ready to do something. A lot of our ongoing activities started right after the Russian invasion on 24 February.

Magda: We decided on our hostel for refugees within a few hours, for example. When the first shelling happened around 4 a.m., we said we needed 20 people. A few hours later even more than that had responded, and they organized accommodations for refugees within two hours.

Kamila: Then, on the last day of February, we heard from the owner of a hostel that it would be empty for the next three months. So Magda and I went to take a look the very next day, and that same day we had people from Central Station sleeping there. During those three months we hosted 700 people.

This hostel sheltered people of different nationalities?

Kamila: Yes, there were many foreigners living or studying in Ukraine; people from North African countries, also the former USSR.

Magda: The problem was that our government decided to open up Poland only to those who held Ukrainian citizenship, and so a large group of people found themselves without any support. They could stay legally in Poland for 15 days, but with no social security—nothing. So our hostel was for these people. Those who came at the beginning stayed for only one or two nights as they knew very well what to do

next: They had friends or family somewhere in Europe, so they just needed a place for a few nights. But after that we had many families and young people who had no idea what to do. They did not want to go back to their countries of origin because it was not safe there, and some regarded Ukraine as their homeland and really wanted to return there.

Kamila: We provided clothes and shoes for those who came with only a few plastic bags. We had 120 volunteers, but of course not everyone came every day. We divided the day into four shifts and had three people on each one.

Magda: Interestingly, one of our volunteers was a guy from Afghanistan who had come across the Belarusian border.

Kamila: He was picked up by a Polish organization and was so grateful that he stayed on to volunteer.

Magda: He was very helpful to us, because during this period we had Polish Easter holidays, and as a non-Catholic he was able to fill in on shifts. Most of our volunteers were students, but we also had a very elegant couple in their 70s who said they wanted to help. At first we were not sure what they could do due to their age, but they turned out to be great.

Kamila: Those older generations—including me—learned Russian at school. The language of communication with the refugees was mostly Russian, so if you knew that language—like this couple—it was easier. Of course, not everyone spoke Russian—the third-country refugees spoke different languages.

Magda: We had a lot of students from North Africa. I speak French, so it was easy for me to communicate with them.



Kamila Dembińska and Magda Wroniszewska (G. FAGAN)

What were the refugees’ usual reactions to the invasion?

Magda: We did not try to talk to them about it.

Kamila: They were so afraid that they were just concentrating on what to do next.

And you only had use of the hostel for three months?

Kamila: Yes, until the end of May. We are still searching for another place to continue.

Magda: We did find some buildings, but there was

always a problem with capacity or the amount of renovation work needed. A big, open hostel was okay for a first response, but we will probably focus on smaller, separate apartments.

How else have you helped refugees from Ukraine?

Kamila: We have organized 12 [metric] tonnes of humanitarian and medical aid, and we continue to organize transportation of medical equipment to hospitals in Ukraine. Some of these products are very specific and not easy to find. In mid-April we also began *popołudniki*, or afternoon classes, for around 300 mothers and children at four Warsaw schools.

Magda: That was in the early weeks of the war, when we thought we had to do something to help mothers find friends among women in the same situation.

Kamila: We organized psychological support with Ukrainian translation, Polish language classes, museum visits, and so on. Later, in co-operation with *Ukraiński Dom* [Polish: Ukrainian House, a Polish NGO run by Ukrainians], we succeeded in opening a Ukrainian school in Warsaw, which enabled around 250 kids to finish the school year within the Ukrainian educational system and receive their certificates. That was also set up thanks to the activity of volunteers: We found the premises, but had to repaint the walls, and so on. Thanks to a grant from Save the Children, it will continue to operate this coming school year.

Magda: That also started with an idea: “Ah yes, I know a building that is vacant. It used to be a school—maybe we can recreate a school, but for Ukrainians?” It was similarly a decision made within two days and opened after two weeks—thanks to this grant for equipment.

Kamila: During the summer holidays we also organized seven or eight week-long youth camps in Warsaw, as well as camps by the seaside and in the mountains, for almost 1,000 Ukrainian children. That too was funded by Save the Children.

Do you co-ordinate with Caritas, or other Catholic charities?

Kamila: A little bit with Caritas.

Magda: Not with other Catholic organizations, but others: *PAH*—Polish Humanitarian Action [*Polska*



A class at the Ukrainian school “SzkoUA,” a KIK initiative opened in Warsaw in April 2022 (Source: KIK)

Akcja Humanitarna <https://www.pah.org.pl/en/>] and some small organizations dedicated to refugees, such as *Refugees Welcome* <https://refugeeswelcome.pl/> and *Grupa Granica* [<https://www.grupagranica.pl/>].

How has it been for Poles who offered to host Ukrainian refugees in their own homes?

Kamila: We have open hearts, and we want to host people in our houses and apartments, but after some weeks or a month it might not be so easy.

Magda: It is not so easy having your own family or friends in your house for too long!

Kamila: For some of us, having three, four, or five additional people is also not so easy from a financial point of view.

Magda: For example, I have elderly relatives who hosted a Ukrainian family at the beginning of the war. There were three generations—mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, and kids, and there was a quarrel within this family. The daughter-in-law wanted to stay in Poland, while the mother-in-law wanted to go back, even though they had come from a Russian-occupied area, and her son was fighting in the Ukrainian army. It was so difficult for my relatives to hear this quarrel, and after three months the financial costs of hosting them were also very great. At that point, some younger relatives of mine raised enough money for this Ukrainian family to move into a separate apartment, just to resolve the situation in a humanitarian way.

What is your motivation for being involved in all this?

Kamila: My whole family has long been involved in KIK. My parents were involved in the pro-democracy movement here in Poland. That is how most of the core members joined, and why they are here. So it was something natural, also for my kids. For them it is obvious—they are also in our kids’ and teenagers’ groups, and I’m pretty sure they will continue to be active here.

Magda: Some of our kids have also been volunteering—those who are 16 or older. We try to involve each generation.

Kamila: For me, those are Christian values. Helping people—the main Commandment is to love people, and for me, that is to be Christian. I am well educated, I have the

(continued on page 4)



Demińska and Wroniszewska Interview *(continued from page 3)* **So, the popular attitude towards refugees is not so clear-cut?**

opportunity to live in an ordinary family without basic needs, and so I have to give back and help people on a different path towards their own success in life. While I love my work, I also like to get involved in other activities.

Would you say that this has been the typical response in Poland?

Magda: At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Polish society acted very well. People showed that they were Christian, with big hearts. But a few months before this war, when there was the crisis on the Belarusian border, the response was very sad. People I know, whom I thought were really good Christians—even a few people inside KIK—said, “What! They are trying to cross the border in an illegal way? I don’t feel like helping them. They are just illegal people in Poland, so let’s just push them back.” For me this was a very big moment. When KIK created a place to help on the Belarusian border, I was so glad. I spent a week volunteering there.



KIK-organized summer camp for young Ukrainian refugees
(Source: KIK)

Magda: No. For example, this summer I went with my family to a church in a small village near where we were staying on holiday, a small church full of people. The priest serving Mass started to say such bad things about refugees in his sermon—really bad things, treating them as not human.

Including Ukrainian refugees?

Magda: Actually, his example was of how good Polish people are helping Ukrainians, who are good immigrants, unlike the bad immigrants: Black people, Syrians, Afghans. He was talking about how we are so good, because we were opening our hearts to good immigrants, while those bad immigrants want to invade, rape our women, and so on. He was really aggressive. Without thinking, I walked into the middle of the church, and I said to this priest, “What kind of priest are you, you can’t say such things! It’s not Christian, not human!” My 10-year-old daughter had been dozing off because what he had been saying was so boring to her. But when she saw that I was going and standing in the middle of the church in front of all those people and shouting something, she woke up: “Mum, what’s happening? What did the priest just say?” [Laughs.]

What was the priest’s reaction?

Magda: You know, I don’t remember. I was so angry—I didn’t plan it—that I just went back home and all the family came with me.

Kamila: Unfortunately, it is quite possible that the attitude of this priest was typical. And parish priests have a very strong position in such small villages.

Magda: So now I know I cannot go back to this village. I am probably someone quite notorious there! [Laughs.] ♦

“It was beautiful to see how many Poles were involved in helping Ukrainians”:

An Interview with Sylwia Jankowska

Jesuit Refugee Service [JRS] forms part of “In Action” Jesuit Social Center [Polish: “W Akcji”] Jezuickie Centrum Społeczne, <http://www.wakcji.org/en/>. It is located in a large complex belonging to the Catholic Society of Jesus [Jesuits] and centered upon Warsaw’s St. Andrzej Boboli Church. Founded a decade ago and staffed by approximately 20 volunteers, JRS in Poland is an open resource for refugees requiring assistance with accommodations, material goods, employment, and/or legal status.

Soon to lead JRS’ day-to-day operations, Sylwia Jankowska has worked with the organization for three years. In late August, the editor of the East-West Church Report met her in Warsaw to discover more about JRS’ assistance to those fleeing the ongoing war in Ukraine. The conversation took place in English.

How did you come to be involved in this work?

I was raised Catholic and involved in church activities in my home city, Toruń—that is where [pioneering astronomer] Nicolaus Copernicus was born. I lived in London for five years, where I was also active in a Polish church. I first had contact with refugees coming into the UK in 2014-15. I became interested in that subject, and when I returned to Poland, I decided to volunteer in this organization. I sensed that we were also having these problems in Poland, and that we similarly did not have a good idea of what to do. Once back in Poland, I decided to do my postgraduate degree in Migration Studies.

What did you experience here once Ukrainians began to flee Russian shelling this past February-March?

There was a huge rush to help, a wave of action. The scale of need was far greater than usual. Typically, we assist around three or four people a day. While I cannot provide a number for that period,

our volunteers here were working all the time; it was very intense. We had to put aside all our usual work, as well as the refugees who had been our regular visitors, in order to focus solely upon the Ukraine crisis. We volunteered at the border, providing meals, directions, and information about what was available in Poland.

An independent group of local Catholic volunteers also worked with us to try and find

accommodations for those coming from Ukraine. We created a list of people nearby who could offer housing. When the war started, everyone wanted to help the refugees from Ukraine as much as they could, and Poles were opening up their houses to them. Many are still staying with these families. The Jesuits here found they had some spare rooms, so they decided to open them up to a number of families—around 20 adults and children in total—and they are still hosting them. These families are becoming independent, but very slowly, because this takes time. But there is no hurry to change this situation—it is good that they are here and safe.

What other types of assistance have you offered?

City councils and NGOs—including ours—found places to organize Polish language courses. Some require a fee, but ours—available since March—is free of charge. There are already some people who can speak Polish, but they have had contact with the language on a daily basis.

We have also offered computer courses, as well as services like document translation. We have different locations besides Warsaw: in Gdynia, Nowy Sącz, and Poznań. In Gdynia [on the Baltic coast] we have a Jesuit education center that includes a kindergarten for Ukrainian children. Nowy Sącz [in the far south] works pretty much like here—a refugee point to help with whatever the refugees need. When they come they already have an idea of what they want from us. In Poznań [west-central Poland] we are more specifically focused on psychological help.

JRS volunteers serve food to refugees arriving from Ukraine, March 2022 (Source: JRS)



Sylwia Jankowska (G. FAGAN)

In Ukraine there is another Jesuit center in Kyiv where we have sent funds and material goods. We also have close ties to a Catholic church in Lutsk [approximately 50 miles from the Polish border], whose priest has twice come here to pick up some goods we collected together with the National Museum. He is running a center for refugees who need to stop in Lutsk for a couple of days on their way to Poland or some other destination.

Have you also offered psychological support here in Warsaw?

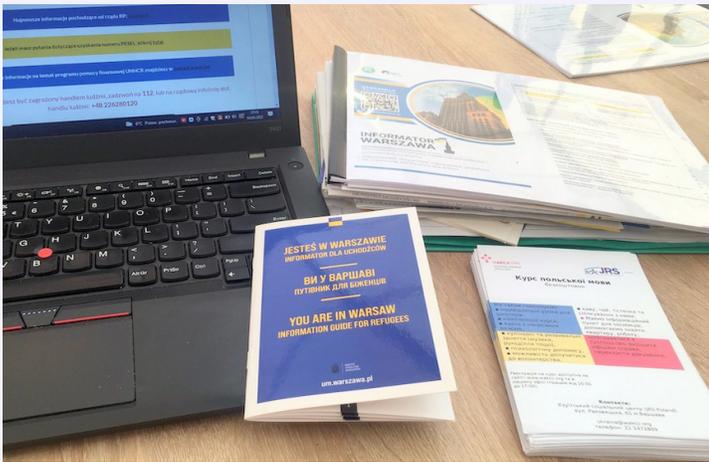
When the conflict started we had professional volunteers holding a special license in psychological trauma. We also organized a short workshop for volunteers on how to handle people with trauma: how they will behave, how to help them, how to talk to them; just an overview of what is going to happen over a couple of weeks or months of working with them. There was no direct counselling—initially, everyone was just focusing on getting to the point of being safe. I do not know if anyone requested counselling. My impression is that people try not to show the trauma they have experienced. They believe they can handle it all by themselves. With a person's permission, we would intervene if we noticed something was wrong—we would always try to find someone able to help.

We are now trying to do something like this for young adults. We realized that the adults are being taken care of because they have to work and learn Polish in order to be able to get by in Poland. Kids are easily accommodated—there are kindergartens and many activities for those under 12. But when it comes to teenagers, there is a gap. In all the chaos, not many activities were organized for them, and they are also in that period of life when they do not want to be treated like kids anymore. They are facing huge trauma right now. We noticed that those older kids who are living here are just glued to their phones—to the news, to their friends who are far away—and it is very hard to get them to do anything. This summer we organized language courses for teenagers. Ukraiński Dom [Polish: Ukrainian House]—an NGO in Poland run by Ukrainians—has also noticed this issue, and we are planning to do something more in collaboration with them.

What has been the reception of Ukrainian refugees by the Polish public?

When the war started, there was a massive natural movement to help refugees from Ukraine. It was beautiful to see how many Poles were involved in helping Ukrainians to escape their country and to host them here. There was so much enthusiasm towards them, so much willingness to help neighbors faced with a common aggressor—but we knew that this enthusiasm would fall very quickly. It would last for

(continued on page 6)



JRS resources for refugees from Ukraine, April 2022
(Source: JRS)

a few months, but at some point all the volunteers would get tired. We would then see the cultural differences and hear complaints about how there is no space in schools for our children, while there is space for Ukrainians, for example; that the government supports Ukrainians financially, but does not take care of our Polish communities.

I think we are beginning to see this now: Many who have volunteered are tired and have given up. Over the summer we had many Ukrainians asking us for accommodations because their regular Polish hosts wanted them to move out. Some warned them beforehand that they could stay for only a short time, but some had promised long-term accommodations and changed their minds. We are therefore afraid that we are about to face a housing crisis. We are already, actually, but the problem of homelessness looks set to become huge very soon.

Many people who are moving to Poland also think they will find refuge in big cities like Warsaw, but Warsaw is so overloaded already, in fact, that we are trying to encourage people to move out of the capital to smaller towns, where there are currently more opportunities for employment and accommodation.

In your experience, how many of those fleeing the war in Ukraine have some form of Christian faith?

We do not really ask about that, as we do not want to interfere. If people are interested, we can share information about local churches. But there was a huge community of Ukrainians here even before the war, so they are pretty well informed in that area.

So you do not promote any religious doctrine?

We are open to every culture. We do not put a label on people or segregate them due to their religion or background; we treat everyone equally. Before the Ukraine crisis we received refugees from many different destinations: Afghanistan, Iraq, Rwanda, North Africa, as well as former Soviet states like Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Some people

who were refugees in the early days of our organization have since become volunteers. We have an amazing man from Ethiopia, for example, who now speaks Polish fluently and is helping other refugees.

We are called Jesuit Refugee Service, so people do know to whom they are coming to ask for help. If they want to talk about faith, we are open for conversation. However, our group of volunteers does not talk about faith in a direct way: “Who do you believe in?” We invite people to attend our Masses and other events dedicated to the faith that we practice, but then it is up to them if they join in or not. So there is always a free choice for people. If it is Christmas or Easter, we organize events here and invite people of other religions to come and enjoy this time with us. It is good to see them participating in our culture and our religion, celebrating our holy days with us, but it is not necessary for them to go to church with us. We are together because we are a family, and we want to celebrate good things together.

There are some people who feel like they need to have more of the spiritual aspect of religion and of being in a community, but we do not want to close ourselves off from atheists or other religions. We just want to work with people, and whatever way they feel like being part of this is fine with us.

Is there something distinctively Jesuit about this approach?

I think so. Poland is known as a very Catholic country, and we tend to generalize that it is the right wing that is more Catholic and conservative, homogenous and unfriendly towards outsiders, while the left is endlessly liberal. But actually, working here feels pretty much in the middle, because this place is both Catholic and open-minded. We know that there is no point in dividing people, because we are all human beings and we should love each other as the Bible says. We should help each other despite where we come from, or whatever our background. The Jesuits have this openness towards everyone—an open heart and willingness to help people irrespectively. ♦



JRS gathering in Warsaw to mark World Refugee Day, September 2022 (Source: JRS)

“No one prepared us for a time of war”:

An Interview with Fr. Marek Blaza

Fr. Marek Blaza comes from Upper Silesia in southern Poland. He entered the Society of Jesus [Jesuits] in 1989, having first encountered the religious order watching the American television series Shōgun as a boy: “I saw that the Jesuits were so smart and cunning, and I thought, ‘I could be like that!’”

While studying philosophy in the southern Polish city of Kraków in the early 1990s, participation in an Orthodox choir awakened Fr. Marek’s interest in Eastern Christianity. On being ordained a deacon in 1999, he was granted permission to serve the Eastern or Greek Catholic Rite—for which he typically uses the Ukrainian language—in addition to the more usual Roman Catholic Rite using Polish.

Now residing at the Jesuit complex in Warsaw centered upon St. Andrzej Boboli Church, Fr. Marek also lectures on the theology of ecumenism and sacramentology. In late August the editor of the East-West Church Report spoke to him about his experience serving the Ukrainian community in Poland, especially those fleeing the current war in their homeland. The interview took place in English.

Fr. Marek Blaza (G. FAGAN)



How many Roman Catholic priests in Poland are able to serve the Eastern Rite, like you?

There are just the two of us. There is also a monk from the Augustinian Order, Fr. Simon Jankowski, who is a parish priest in [the southern city of] Katowice. But he is a Kashub, as I am a Silesian [minority ethnic groups in Poland], so we are not really pure Polish.

How many Greek Catholic communities are there in Warsaw?

Four so far, and very close to Warsaw there are another four. We are not currently able to establish new parishes because we do not have enough priests. Priests can no longer move here from Ukraine, as their government does not grant permission. [Editor’s note: Since the Ukrainian authorities declared martial law on 24 February, male citizens aged 18-60 are generally not permitted to leave the country.]

How has the composition of the Greek Catholic community here changed in recent years?



Jesuits get acquainted with their Ukrainian refugee guests
(Source: JRS)

The first wave of migration was mostly Ukrainians looking to find employment. They were often retired people whose pension was too small to live on, so they came here to work. It was a blessing from God that we had this first wave, because the Polish people are already used to hearing Ukrainian or Russian being spoken here, and those Ukrainians who have already been here for a few years are now helping this second wave that has come since 24 February. As you can imagine, those refugees did not want to come to Poland. They are not like the first wave, people who knew what it means to emigrate. There are also Poles living in England who made the conscious decision to move, knowing that they would have to learn the language, and so on. But these people do not speak Polish, or even read the Polish alphabet. Even if they know the Latin alphabet because they studied English, the pronunciation is completely different. We also have important diacritical signs that almost do not exist in English, except perhaps in French loanwords like *fiancée*. For these people, it is very difficult to stay here—that is why some have already gone back.

Are Greek Catholics among those fleeing Russian occupation, or are they usually Orthodox?

There are Greek Catholics, of course, but they are mostly Orthodox. Even before 24 February we had a lot of Orthodox people in our parishes. Why? Because, as one Orthodox woman said to me: “I like your church very much. You sing everything precisely as it is sung in my village, and the sermon is in Ukrainian. It doesn’t matter whether your employer is the Pope of Rome or the Patriarch. Did I ever see the Pope or the Patriarch? Never, ever. But *you*, Father—I can see YOU.” [Laughs.]

Our bishops have said officially that there is no problem for them to participate in the sacraments—
(continued on page 8)

Fr. Blaza Interview (continued from page 5)

communion, confession, anointing the sick, even the blessing of marriages. So we do not differentiate whether you are Greek Catholic or Orthodox.

Do people like the woman you just mentioned think of themselves as Orthodox under either Metropolitan Onufry [head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which maintained ties to the Moscow Patriarchate until May 2022] or Metropolitan Epifany [head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, maintaining ties with the Patriarchate of Constantinople since January 2019]? Do they care?

No. If that is a problem, they do not know about it. [Laughs] Some of them do know, but now—here in Poland—it doesn't matter, because these churches exist only in Ukraine. Here, you have only the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and they do not go there because the sermons are usually in Russian, or a mixture of Russian and Polish. The services are usually in Church Slavonic, with Russian pronunciation. But these people want to understand the service, and they cannot understand the Church Slavonic—only some words. I also celebrate the Liturgy in Church Slavonic sometimes, but for people who know the language. And so they come to the Greek Catholic churches, because everything is in Ukrainian. For them, this is their sanctuary, a place where they can feel as if they are at home. We try to do that for these people. Of course, sometimes they come to us saying, “Father, I am Orthodox. May I go to confession?” Of course, go ahead. And then they might say, “If I were in Ukraine, I would never, *ever* go to a Greek Catholic church!” [Laughs].

They have a very different attitude towards the Greek Catholic Church there?

Yes, because over there it is a matter of their identity: “I'm Orthodox.” Over here, they are more Ukrainian than Orthodox.



The Jesuits' Collegium Bobolanum, part of the Catholic Academy in Warsaw (G. FAGAN)



St. Andrzej Boboli Catholic Church, Warsaw (G. FAGAN)

Have you had to support Ukrainian refugees who have suffered traumatic experiences as a result of the war?

Yes. As far as offering pastoral care is concerned—confessions and counselling—you have to remember that some refugees hate the Russians. They are aware that this [attitude] is not fair, a sin. They try not to hate them, but it is very difficult, this forgiveness. Oh, there will be a reconciliation process for many, many years! There are also mothers, wives, and sisters of Ukrainian soldiers, some of whom have been killed. We have to console these women, to explain this somehow. It is very important to listen to them and not to speak too much.

Seminary did not prepare us for this—we had to do that ourselves. But I do not blame the seminary, because we lived in peacetime. No one prepared us for a time of war.

What have you learned due to your interaction with those who have experienced the trauma of this war?

Not to use the Russian language! To be careful about jokes referring to Ukrainians and Russians—some of these topics are not recommended now.

I can also understand now that I have great power as a priest. If, for example, I were to say during a sermon “Let's go for the Russians, let's kill them!” then people would go. I feel personal responsibility for every word of my teaching. There are priests who would say, “The Russians—those Muscovites—they are cruel, inhuman,” and so on. I try not to speak like that. For example, I do not say a prayer for the Russians to come back to God, because the point is not that the Russians as a nation are godless. There are Russians who are against this war. There are also Ukrainians who are traitors. It is not as if the Russians are bad, and the Ukrainians are holy—it doesn't work like that. I try to explain this.

However, when I give sermons I do not speak too much about the war. The people know; they have the Internet! They can read! [Laughs.] They are not so stupid that we have to explain to them what has happened. And they come for something different, not for me to tell them something about the war. ♦

“We are trying to show love, because our Ukrainian brethren now need our help”:

An Interview with Fr. Doroteusz Sawicki

Poland has its own Orthodox Church, whose autocephaly—or independence—was acknowledged by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1924 and by the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1948. It currently has approximately 500 parish communities across the country, as well as 10 monasteries, a theological academy, and a seminary.

A native Pole, Fr. Doroteusz Sawicki is auxiliary priest at the Church’s Metropolitan Cathedral of St. Mary Magdalene in Warsaw. He also teaches history at the Christian Theological Academy in the Polish capital, and is director of the Polish Orthodox Church’s charitable foundation, Eleos [Greek: mercy, compassion].

In late August the editor of the East-West Church Report met Fr. Doroteusz at his Cathedral’s offices to learn more about Polish Orthodox efforts to support refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, many of whom are Orthodox. The original conversation took place in Russian.



Fr. Doroteusz Sawicki
(G. FAGAN)

When was Eleos, your charitable foundation, founded?

It was set up in 1996 to help people within Poland, for example through our Christmas Candle initiative. Every year we prepare candles that are sold during the Christmas period, and the proceeds from their sale go to help children in need. We have had some aid initiatives with an international aspect, such as after the 2019 earthquake in Albania, and during the 2021 crisis when many migrants from Syria and Africa came to Poland via Belarus.

This spring, did the Polish Orthodox Church experience a sudden, large influx of Ukrainian refugees seeking assistance?

Initially, we did not believe that it was really war. We hoped that hostilities would end after a few days, and that some kind of peaceful negotiations would start. So first of all we prayed. The war began on a Thursday, and special prayers

Eleos team assembling a consignment for Ukrainians

(Source: D. SAWICKI)



were said in all Polish Orthodox churches that Sunday, for peace in Ukraine and for people to return home alive—these prayers are still being offered to this day.

The movement of people you are talking about appeared in Poland after a few days. We had to gather donations quickly, because they had typically fled taking very little with them. So we gathered clothes, food, hygiene and cleaning products from individuals and businesses, and wherever possible we organized places for people to stay. Our Orthodox schools, monasteries, and parishes gave up premises for this. Then, when it became clear that the conflict would not be over quickly, we also began organizing services to help people find accommodations, work, and legal information about their rights in Poland.

Our foundation, Eleos, also started more long-term projects in two areas: one to help displaced people within Ukraine, the second to provide everything the refugees needed in Poland. To date, we have sent 35 consignments of donations into Ukraine, each containing two or three [metric] tonnes of items such as food, clothes, hygiene products, and medicine, as well as other equipment like hospital beds and wheelchairs. Just yesterday we sent a consignment to the Kamianets-Podilskyi region [in western Ukraine]. Each consignment costs around \$7,000-\$8,000. Within Poland, we have sent around 30 similar consignments to places where large concentrations of Ukrainians are staying, such as old people’s homes.

The refugees also needed to learn Polish, so we organized classes for groups of 20-30 people. We paid for the necessary teachers and equipment, such as textbooks, so that they could learn Polish free of charge. There have been around 15 such courses to date.

(continued on page 10)

Fr. Sawicki Interview (continued from page 9)

In all of this it became clear also that history remains with people—we have not forgotten the very painful events of the 1940s concerning the Polish and Ukrainian populations in Volhynia. We understood that we could return to that, and that we needed to work on integrating Poles and Ukrainians—to find what unites us. [Editor's note: In 1943-5 Ukrainian insurgents massacred tens of thousands of Polish civilians in eastern parts of then-Poland under Nazi occupation, including Volhynia province, which is now part of Ukraine.]

How have you approached this task?

Through cultural activities, with Polish culture in Ukraine and Ukrainian culture in Poland as the main theme. We formed around 25 clubs in parishes as well as other locations, where we paid for renovations and some equipment. Other people prepared the program: meetings, choirs, art... any kind of activity that facilitated conversation. Meals were also required, so Eleos began helping to set up canteen-style kitchens where Ukrainians taught Ukrainian cuisine to Poles, and Poles taught Polish cuisine to Ukrainians. They then distributed the food they had made. We created spaces where people could talk and work, and playgrounds for children. Besides Polish language lessons, we also started computer courses for young people. When they meet and chat together about modern topics, the past is forgotten.

We see the misfortune of the Ukrainian people. This is a tragedy for them—bloodshed, burying loved ones—and as far as we are able, we are trying to alleviate their suffering. In all of this we try to forget those sad times in our common history, when there were similar events between Poles and Ukrainians. While not losing sight of that history, in everyday life we are trying to show love, because our Ukrainian brethren now need our help, just as—God forbid—we might need help from someone else in a similar situation.



A children's event for Ukrainian refugees organized by Eleos
(Source: D. SAWICKI)



Ukrainian guests at Orthodox Easter breakfast, April 2022
(Source: D. SAWICKI)

How did you raise the funds to do all of this?

We have had different sources of funding, including our own.

Did the resources of the Polish Orthodox Church form the largest part?

No, we only have around 500,000 people! To date all these activities have cost around two million Polish *złoty*... more than that, even—between \$600,000 and \$700,000. A huge amount of that sum was given by the Orthodox Church in America [OCA]. They found out what we were doing: First of all individual parishes and people who had family roots in Poland or Ukraine. Then the OCA as a whole asked if they could collect donations and send this money to us. This gave us the means to increase the scale of our work—to hire assistants, to forge links with particular organizations and foundations in Ukraine, to transfer aid.

There have also been other foundations: also in America, the IOCC [International Orthodox Christian Charities], and Filantropia in Finland [an agency of the Orthodox Church of Finland]. The Finnish Lutheran Church is also helping us, and individual Orthodox parishes in Western Europe contacted us and sent aid. So using our hands, other people took action—without their support, we would not have been able to do this work. Local people also made donations, of course, but only around a fifth of the total.

On breaking ties with Moscow in May, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Onufry announced that it would open parishes outside Ukraine in order to support Ukrainian refugees. Are there such plans in Poland, or do Ukrainian Orthodox come under the existing structures of the Polish Orthodox Church?

They come under our existing structures. The structures of the Polish Orthodox Church are almost everywhere in our country and, if necessary, we will create new ones. But just as we have never permitted another Orthodox Church to create structures on our territory, we will not do so in the future. If we did, others would demand the same, and we would be drawn into disputes that we do not need.



Whenever the Church in Ukraine unites, we will be able to return to this topic. While they are divided, we support the structure that existed prior to all these disputes, because we understand that—just as it took us many years to receive autocephaly, it will also take others a long time.

So currently you maintain contact only with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under Metropolitan Onufry, not the Orthodox Church of Ukraine under Constantinople?

If we are speaking about general ecclesiastical affairs, then yes. If we are talking about charitable activity, then we do not ask who is who, only who is in need. We do not take into consideration a person’s religious affiliation. ♦



(Left and right) Staple goods distributed to displaced Ukrainians. In Ukrainian, the handwritten signs announce that the aid is from the Polish Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church in America.

(Source: D. SAWICKI)

“We must do everything possible to pursue this work to the end”:

An Interview with Pastor Oleksandr Demianenko

In late August the editor of the East-West Church Report visited Warsaw’s Life Center, an initiative of Word of Faith [Polish: Słowo Wiary, Ukrainian: Slovo Viry] Church, a 500-strong Ukrainian-speaking Pentecostal congregation in the Polish capital.

Opened just three weeks prior, the Life Center supports Ukrainian refugees by providing social spaces for adults and young people, a kindergarten and children’s play area, courses in Polish and English, counselling, and fitness classes. The Center is funded by the U.S.-based Evangelical aid organization, Samaritan’s Purse.

As he showed the Center’s premises to the editor, Vadym Radchenko—a deacon at Word of Faith—estimated that approximately 1,000 people had used the facility since its opening. He also described how—with the help of volunteers from some 20 countries—his church had set up a collection and distribution point for free clothing, food, and hygiene products at a Warsaw warehouse in March 2022.

According to Radchenko, thousands of Ukrainian refugees have received its assistance and/or the hot meals, overnight accommodations, and legal advice also provided by his church, with as many as 215 families visiting the warehouse on a recent day: “Now the situation is

a little harder—the number of volunteers is decreasing—but the need is still there.” From two hubs inside Ukraine, Word of Faith also prepares and distributes food inside Ukraine.

Radchenko and his family have lived in Warsaw for around 18 months, after moving—like a number of the church’s ministers—from their hometown of Liuboml in Ukraine’s Volyn Region, just 11 miles from the Polish border. They have been replaced, he noted, by ministers forced to leave the Russian-occupied eastern region of Donetsk. Once involved in a criminal enterprise and addicted to drugs and alcohol, Radchenko became a Christian in his mid-twenties while staying at a church-run rehabilitation center in the countryside near Liuboml. Oleksandr Demianenko, Word of Life’s leading pastor, had a similar trajectory through rehab. Previously responsible for border traffic, quipped Radchenko, “He had a ‘team ministry’—but serving another lord!”

Before leaving the Life Center, the editor of the East-West Church Report sat down with Pastor Oleksandr Demianenko to discover more about his path to serving the Ukrainian community in Warsaw. The original conversation took place in Russian.

(continued on page 12)

How did you come to lead a church?

In 2002 I was very sick and given six months to live. I had stomach cancer; the pain was very intense. I was prescribed expensive medicine, and my family and friends gave money, just so I could survive each day. I was also a gangster and a VERY bad person. I ended up in a rehabilitation center for alcoholics and drug addicts that my mother had seen on television. I did not know it was run by believers—I knew nothing about believers. They started telling me about God. People prayed for me. God gave me repentance and completely healed me from my illness. My weight was down to 49 kilos [108 lbs], but I began to eat and put on weight. This gave me faith that God really exists. Earlier, I had been treated everywhere possible—I had connections and large amounts of money—but nothing worked.

From that point on, I began to pray very hard. I experienced God and liked being in His presence. I understood that I had to go to my hometown nearby, so I returned to Liuboml. I was interested to know—was there a church there like the one running the rehabilitation center? I began to search and ended up at a service in an apartment. Understandably, I was the main topic of conversation—my arrival was like the appearance of a dinosaur. I had a bad reputation, and everyone was afraid of me. Then I went to services at an old Pentecostal church to which the people in the apartment belonged.

I brought young people to that church—they began to repent, but they did not understand why you needed to dress in a certain way: cover tattoos, do this or that. The pastor said to me, “Listen, perhaps you might gather at home?” So we began to hold house services. There were many different people there: gangsters, alcoholics, drug addicts, a public prosecutor, the head of a passport office, millionaires’ wives with fancy handbags... [Laughs]. What a time that was! We gathered as a separate group and after 10 years, when we were recognized and blessed by the Pentecostals, we opened a second church in Liuboml, called Ark. This church has mostly been engaged in rehabilitation work.

How and why did you come here to Warsaw?

I was invited by a group of around 20 believers here. Separately, I was offered work here. At that time there was no work in Ukraine—well, for me as a believer. For a non-believer, no problem! But not all work is permissible. I agreed to come for 10 days a month, while continuing to minister to this home group. More people began to come, so we had to rent premises—



Pastor Oleksandr Demianenko (seated) and Deacon Vadym Radchenko (G. FAGAN)

increasingly larger—and that is how our church was formed. Before that, there was only a Ukrainian Baptist church here in Warsaw, but no Ukrainian Pentecostal church. I searched for someone to take my place: I did not want to move to Poland. By the time five years had passed, I understood nevertheless that it was God’s will—affirmed by different testimonies—and I moved with my family to Warsaw. I prayed for love towards the Poles, for Poland. I really did not want to be here! My children do not know Polish and my family could not envisage being here. But when I began to pray, God granted me love, and I started to experience Poland as my home.

Through various Prophets I received word that, “I am sending you to a hardened people, and I will make your forehead like a diamond against theirs, and they will not overcome you.” [Cf. Ezekiel 3:7-9: “All the Israelites are hardened and obstinate. But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone.”] I thought, perhaps God has confused me with someone else? After all, I am a new believer, where will I go? Then a time came when God reminded me of this prophecy and spoke to me through a passage about Abraham, who left his home, his land, and went to a country he did not know. The same thing happened in my life—I had to travel here, stay and live. Then God began to bring a team together. I did not bring anyone—why do that if you don’t want to go yourself? [Laughs] But He brought to me people I had worked with in Ukraine, as well as others, and we have been working in different regional Polish cities for four years now.

Did you have experience working with Ukrainian refugees who came here prior to this year?



Ukrainian children gather at Word of Faith’s Life Center, Warsaw (G. FAGAN)

Yes. It was like a preparation, even. When God called me here, he placed upon my heart the knowledge that we would need to prepare, because there would be millions of people, and we would need to receive them. I thought it was going to be a serious [spiritual] awakening! [Laughs] I did not understand that there would be a war. But not long before [Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine] God revealed to me that there would be a war, and I said this at one of our services. Afterwards some brethren said to me: "Why did you say there would be a war? What war?" We thought there would be a coup in Kyiv, the regime would change, and that would be it. No one thought it would be on this scale. This knowledge was granted by God, and when it all began on 24 February we already knew what to do the next day.

In our church the priority is building relationships; all the rest is fruit. For us it was easy to turn our prayer hall into a storeroom, a dormitory, and a canteen quickly. But we always had difficulties in the past with completing rental payments. Ukrainians have no practice of donating or tithing. But people—including very many Poles—began to appear day and night bringing groceries, clothes, and hygiene products. People started to come offering financial support, and so a movement started to form. We saw that God was working directly in this way. We were lowly servants—we did what God told us to do, took people in, went to the border, fed and clothed people, and there were always sufficient resources.

How do you see your responsibilities changing in future?

I just understand one thing—we must not stop. I cannot fully explain it—point to specific passages of Scripture, or say that God told me this, or that we decided on this path because we are so wise. But there is knowledge in my heart that I cannot violate. We must do everything possible to pursue this work to the end. First of all, it inspires our partner churches in Ukraine. They say that we are giving them hope, and they can also distribute much-needed aid in Ukraine. They are already telling us that they need clothing, for example. So we pray, not knowing where to turn. But then people call us on their own accord, asking, "Do you need clothing?"

God does all this, in completely different countries, across the ocean. The



Aid and recipients (below) at Word of Faith's warehouse, Warsaw (Source: WORD OF FAITH/V. RADCHENKO)

everything. We went to factories where they signed contracts with us to give us groceries at a lower price. Whenever we made requests, everything seemed to come right of its own accord.

Have you noticed a change in the attitude of Polish people towards Ukrainians?

Very much so. The Poles opened their hearts, started to let Ukrainians into their homes, and it was all for free. There was even a sensation of brotherly relations. I think they experienced the initial attack in the same way that we did. They stood with us and helped.

Imperialism is aggression that started with other countries even earlier, and it does not stop—people want

to restore their empire and take over European countries. The Poles understand this, and so they are also worried and want to help Ukraine. My grandfathers and great-grandfathers lived in Poland—our territory used to be Polish—so Poles and Ukrainians are extremely close, especially in the western regions [of Ukraine].

We are very grateful to the Poles. When I went to a store to make the first purchases for the warehouse, I felt great anguish. My heart really ached from the fact that people were dying in the twenty-first century, that people were shooting up my country and setting it alight. What for? I could not understand it, and I asked God, "Where are you in

(continued on page 14)



Demianenko Interview *(continued from page 13)*

all this? How am I supposed to understand it? If you do not grant me understanding of what is being done, I cannot say anything on behalf of the church.” And God gave me a sort of toughness. I cried, but in peace, in hope. I cried because a human heart could not bear it all. I spoke with one of the cashiers in the store, and I could see that she was crying too—tears were rolling down her face. Whoever we spoke to was crying—everyone was moved by the situation. This was how things were in Poland for about two months.

It was a time when you could reassess your whole life and understand that Jesus is the only source of life. In Ukraine, all the prayer houses are overflowing. People are repenting—today we have the opportunity to be reconciled with God, unfortunately through war. But how else?

Do you also have—or did you have—links with fellow churches in Russia?

Yes, I knew many of them, including bishops. I had meetings with them, went to various different conferences, chatted with them. I had very good relations. But today they



Word of Faith members sort clothing and bedding for refugees (Source: V. RADCHENKO)

cannot travel here or support us. The situation in their country is clear—they are just waiting. They do not support the war, but they are silent. I understand them, and I do not condemn them. ♦

Ten Commandments for Ukrainian Refugee Relief Workers

These guidelines are excerpted from Editor Emeritus Dr. Mark R. Elliott’s introduction to the scope of the relief effort undertaken by Protestant Christians, “Best Practices in Protestant Aid for Ukrainian Refugees: 2022.” The full text may be found in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, Volume 42, Issue 7, Article 5, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol42/iss7/5>.

I. Keep promises. “Never make a commitment that does not have a very high prospect of timely fulfillment.”

II. Overcome Ethnocentrism. “Those enjoying a superior economic position too often assume they somehow, therefore, possess superior judgement.”

III. Learn to Listen. “Listening to and learning from Ukrainians... is a recipe for more effective delivery of vital humanitarian aid...and can reduce the temptation to inflate one’s contribution.”

IV. Exercise humility and be willing to sacrifice. In Poland, for example, a 70-year-old woman named Irena took two refugees and their children into her two-room apartment. Irena “gave her best room to the refugees.”

V. Understand the depth of trauma refugees are experiencing. “Some refugees have lost their friends or family members. They’ve seen death.... They are often unable to speak. They are devastated, shocked, grieved. When you see them, you understand that you need to sit with them in silence, cry with them, hug them.”

VI. Avoid burnout. “The Indian medical student [in Hungary] volunteering nearly nonstop would have done well to take a few days’ break in Budapest because mental fatigue and burnout are very real concerns for relief personnel.”

VII. Be flexible and willing to accept directions. “Are you willing to eat, sleep, and work in very difficult circumstances? Are you willing to accept instruction and direction?”

VIII. Give appropriate aid. Along with innumerable accounts of freely offered food, shelter, and transportation for Ukrainian refugees, some offerings were “not really needed.” Other “missteps... emerge from great enthusiasm, but little willingness for cooperation or little attention to information about actual needs.”

IX. Make the most of partnerships. “A noteworthy feature of the current Ukrainian refugee relief effort is the frequency with which diverse parties cooperate...within and across borders, between individual churches, between denominations, [and] between churches and parachurch NGOs and mission agencies.”

X. Be accountable. “To the extent possible, close monitoring of the distribution of funds and material...should be a priority even in the midst of war, ‘not because donors suspect misuse of funds, but rather [because] audits protect all involved with the result that transparency produces greater trust.’”



Noticeboard advertising services for Ukrainian refugees, Kraków, Poland (G. FAGAN)

BOOK REVIEW

Factors Behind the Ukrainian Evangelical Missionary Surge from 1989 to 1999

by John Edward White

Eugene, Oregon, Pickwick Publications, 2020
286 pp., \$36.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-5326-6539-4

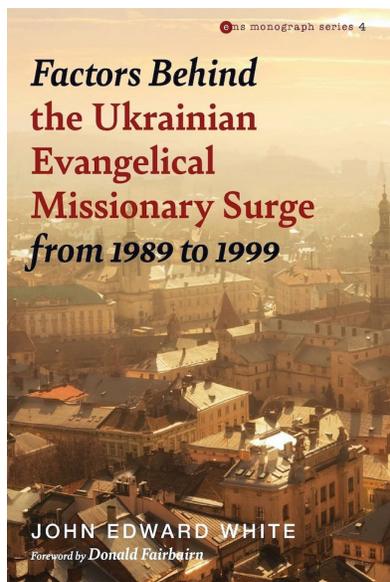
JIM BAKER

While a case could be made that the Christian Church has a mission unchanged since its inception, the pursuit of that mission has been anything but static over time. There are seasons where a notable response—both personal and institutional—to the “missionary call” rises to a level of historical significance. John Edward White has compiled a comprehensive overview of the “missionary surge” that took place from Ukraine in the last years of the 20th century. The very sound of the word “Ukraine” now brings an entirely different range of deep responses that were not present when White published this study, or even when I picked it up several months ago. Aside from Ukraine’s current role in world affairs, this study reminds us that Ukraine, in our lifetime, has been the fount of just such a “missionary surge.” That the chief antagonist in the current conflict is Russia—the area to which many of these missionaries were sent—makes appreciating this history particularly important and poignant. Many Westerners, upon hearing “Ukraine” and “missionary surge,” are likely to recall the robust response of Western Evangelicals to the “fall of the Iron Curtain.” At the same time, however, Ukrainian Baptists and Pentecostals gave rise to an “indigenous movement [that] arguably made more of an impact on Russian society than the massive and expensive western push” (x).

What was behind this surge of missionaries to Russia and beyond? Was it merely that more Evangelicals lived in Ukraine than elsewhere? White sets out a matrix of factors behind such historical movements before detailing the Ukraine story in their light: the human factor (who and from where); the vision that influenced the movement, the means that enabled it, and external factors (“opportunities”). The reward of this work is the comprehensive detail of the narrative, highlighting the human dimension so critical to missionary mobilization. There is also great opportunity for reflection, as White employs some key works on the psychology of social movements as a lens for appreciating why and how this particular movement took root. For comparison, this is complemented by an engaging and wide-ranging survey of “missionary surges” throughout Christian history, viewed through those same lenses.

For most of the Soviet Union’s history, Evangelicals were marginalized at best. They were painted as disturbed and

deviant, as parasites on society. That began to change in 1988, with the celebration of a millennium since the Christian baptism of ancient Rus’. In that time of *glasnost*, it became permissible for Christians to create “charitable organizations” to serve the needy, abused, and addicted. Bibles were published; masses of people were baptized. The stigma seemed to be disappearing. Yet many from both Baptist and Pentecostal churches who



reported a “call” to mission—particularly in formerly “underground” churches—also experienced more resistance than support from their home congregations. Truth be told, many Ukrainians (young people to whom leadership roles were inaccessible, or single women with few opportunities to minister in their local churches) became missionaries because they could not find avenues for Christian service or development locally. Thus, “evangelical Christianity and the desire for missions were able to grow more on the periphery, away from the center of control” (89).

Strikingly, many church leaders remained fearful of losing parishioners to mission work as the surge progressed. Some more “traditional” churches—which survived Communism by going underground and in many ways developing a parallel culture that remained insular after the fall of the USSR—even criticized missionaries from their own denominations for creating a different church culture, with “scandalous” innovations like new songs sung in an unfamiliar style, or women wearing earrings. In such an environment, how did this combination of inspired, untrained enthusiasm and controlling, restrictive leadership give rise to anything sustainable? It was not due to being well resourced—unlike many Western mission efforts, few missionaries in White’s research cite tools for ministry and finances as playing a significant role.

Indeed, while Ukrainians were taking advantage of new-found freedom to travel and a common language to go *en masse* to other parts of the former USSR, hundreds of foreign missionaries (this reviewer included) were moving in to “fill the vacuum” presumed to be left by the departure of the reigning ideology of Communism. We personally observed many people of the post-Soviet world of *perestroika* turning to Evangelical Christianity, perhaps in part because

(continued on page 16)

White Review *(continued from page 15)*

of its novelty. Significantly, however, it was also out of a sense that the Russian Orthodox Church had compromised itself with the Communist government. Many people—including Evangelical converts—remained culturally “Orthodox,” ready to return if the prodigal church could somehow regain its integrity. In many ways, Western Evangelicals arrived as “cultural others.” White reports that many failed to establish healthy partnerships with national churches, some deliberately choosing not to work with them at all. In all this missionary traffic into and out of Ukraine, there was thus very little synergy between Western and Ukrainian efforts.

In Russia, meanwhile, Orthodoxy was declared a privileged religion in September 1997. New legislation made religious activity by non-privileged groups (like Evangelicals) more difficult. Over time, a resurgent Russian nationalism—combined with a recovering Orthodox Church—provided a distinct barrier to the ongoing flourishing of Evangelical churches. We personally encountered many people who had been Ukrainian missionaries in Russia for years before expulsion in the early 2000s. They remained optimistic and enthusiastic about the Gospel, but not so about Russia’s future.

All in all, it seems that this Evangelical missionary surge had as many things going against it as it did for it. Leadership was fraught with turnover as many ministers emigrated to the West. There was also basic indifference due to an inwardly focused church subculture. What made the difference was a growing population of Evangelical youth who insisted upon following what they perceived as the Gospel call to seek and find outlets for ministry. One of the critical elements of the success of the surge is therefore found in the emergence of centers for missionary training and development. These sprang up in both Baptist and Pentecostal spheres—some with foreign connections, but many without—to develop and pass on the knowledge, skills, and practices that would help missionaries stay in the field

and remain effective. Since this support structure emerged after the surge, White’s most direct practical recommendation for facilitating a similar phenomenon is the creation of more of these types of “centers for missionary development” (189).

Unfortunately, recent events have made such an enterprise practically inconceivable. Some of the most significant centers of this surge and the location of many of the original mission development facilities are now war zones: in particular, the city of Donetsk. Yet whether or not tangible results remain from the surge (particularly in Russia), it is clear that Ukrainian participation, on both individual and collective levels, deeply affected all those who responded and went forth.

As I write, the very people who are described in this study are among the millions of Ukrainians who have been violently and involuntarily displaced and are residing throughout Europe and beyond. Here, the factor of the “providence of God” in people movement raises itself. We cannot discern God’s plans, but we know the missional character of many who once bore the label “missionary” and are now being tagged as “refugees.” While the establishment of “Ukrainian mission centers” may not be a realistic possibility, the prospective of God moving from the margins—as God has in the past—continues to keep hope alive. ♦

Jim Baker serves as Team Leader of the Marginal Mission Network in the Europe Division of ReachGlobal, a missionary outreach of the Evangelical Free Church of America. His ministry has included 12 years in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Editor’s note: Dr. John Edward White has twice been displaced from his ministry in Ukraine due to Russian military offensives: at Donetsk Christian University, whose campus was seized by forces of the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic in 2014, and from the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kyiv, bombed (but not destroyed) in 2022. Parts of his doctoral dissertation, which forms the basis of the monograph under review, featured in the East-West Church and Ministry Report, vol. 25 (2017), no. 3, 3-8.

The quarterly *East-West Church Report* explores Christian life in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. We focus on:

- church-state, interfaith, and interchurch relations
- emerging threats to religious freedom for all
- innovative Christian charitable projects and mission
- latest academic research into Christian history and culture in the region

Annual subscription rates are \$23 (individuals) and \$54 (institutions). Payment is either by check (in U.S. Dollars only and payable to *East-West Church Report*) or by PayPal via the “Subscribe” page at www.eastwestreport.org.

Whichever way you pay, please provide (with your check or by email) the e-mail address to which the *Report* should be sent, the subscriber’s name and address, and the type of subscription required (individual or institutional).

East-West Church Report holds 501(c)(3) non-profit status and is largely reliant upon subscriptions and voluntary labor. Please consider adding a donation to your subscription.

Institutional subscribers may distribute issues to those within the institution (e.g. students using a university library). Other distribution/

reproduction of whole issues or individual articles requires the permission of *East-West Church Report*. Once permission is granted, the following statement is to be carried with the reproduced material: “Reproduced with permission of the *East-West Church Report*.”

The *Report* values feedback from readers, including suggestions for potential topics and authors. Please write to the editor at: eastwestchurchreport@gmail.com.

EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

P.O.Box 76741
Washington, DC 20013
U.S.A.

Geraldine Fagan, Editor
eastwestchurchreport@gmail.com
Mark R. Elliott, Editor Emeritus
emark936@gmail.com
Matthew Lee Miller, Book Review Editor

©2022 ISSN 2576-344X (formerly 1069-5664)
Indexed by American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES), OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Christian Periodicals Index.