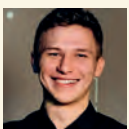




# GOD AT WORK IN UKRAINE

**Aaron Poppleton** interviews **Rudi Migovich**, the President of the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine.



**Rudi Migovich** trained as a neurologist and is now the President of the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine



**Aaron Poppleton** is a GP and Wellcome Trust clinical fellow at Keele University. He is the Chair of the CMF Global Committee

**R**udi, please tell us a little bit about yourself

I used to be a neurologist, but since the beginning of the war I have been devoted to working full-time for the Christian Medical Association (CMA) of Ukraine. I have an amazing wife and a wonderful son.

## How have things been for you and for Ukraine over the past year?

Things have kept going. However, with the war, the way we live is different. Ukraine is a big country. You have to understand that right now, 80-90 per cent of Ukraine is away from the front line. The closer you get to the battlefield, perhaps 50-100km from the frontline, the damage is ongoing. You can be in Kyiv with a relatively peaceful life – restaurants and coffee shops are open. At the same time your friends and family members are fighting away from home.

People who you knew have already died, including many believers. So normality and crises are happening at the same time. People are putting off big decisions. On a personal level, we had our son during the Covid pandemic. We were thinking we'd be ready for a second child. However, we have decided to pause until the war is over. I could be drafted to fight at any moment and be killed. I have a responsibility that I didn't have before. So this is the daily reality. You don't make plans. You don't do important things that can be for the long-term.

## how is the health situation in Ukraine?

Ukraine had many hospitals. The war has meant that we have had to rationalise. A lot of people have left or moved within the country, both doctors and patients. Services are holding up, but the challenges are different. Some hospitals receive far more patients than before. We also have to care for many

### key points



- The war has upended medical care across Ukraine, even in those areas far from the war zones.
- It has shaken the faith of many, but many more have come to a deeper faith as they see God at work in often dramatic and practical ways.
- The authors outline what our sister fellowship is doing to help care for those affected by the war and ways Christian health professionals in the UK can get involved.



SCAN FOR MORE

injured and wounded people. But we're trying to do our best. Ukrainians are leading and working under immense and constant pressure. It's not surprising that over time we are seeing people burning out. But we are encouraged by human bravery and resilience. So, it's all a contrast. You can hear a horrible story like when a Ukrainian soldier was beheaded, but then the next day you hear of a medical worker who miraculously saves multiple lives. Amazing things and horrible situations come together. A lot of successes and a lot of problems.

### tell us a bit about the work of CMA Ukraine during the conflict

By the grace of God, we were able to hit the ground running. We had good relationships with other Christian medical movements across the world. These contacts became international partners that helped us to be more effective. Our biggest project is a medical supplies warehouse, through which we have received and transferred more than 500 tonnes of medical supplies. This equates to millions of dollars. We've just received a truck of 50 anaesthetic machines from the NHS in the UK, as well as supplies from the UK Nightingale Hospitals.

I mean it's miraculous – we never expected to be given so much. It is amazing what we have received. Increasingly we are focused, not on quantities, but on the qualities of the receiver. Our main question is not how to get more, but how it can be given in the best way. We are trying to only work with trustworthy recipients.

It doesn't matter whether they are a hospital, a military unit, or a church. They have to be free from corruption. Clear, open, transparent, and qualified.

We partner with some great churches. However, they need to be well prepared. Taking risks with medical care can be dangerous. Similarly in hospitals, people can receive equipment and do something bad with it. I won't share with you the challenging situations we have come up against – simply that people can behave in corrupted and evil ways. Medical supplies are not going to change them. For that reason we've also launched more educational projects because we believe that only education can change the system. If you look on our website, you can see a clear focus on education.

This includes practical skills, like ultrasound, surgical techniques, first aid, scholarship programs, and mobile techniques. A lot of things with the aim of improving the quality of healthcare. We want to positively transform our healthcare and society in a Christlike way.

### what has God taught or shown you during this time?

To pray. Prayer works. It's obvious, but I recognise it in an absolutely different way.

Second, I think sometimes I do not hear a lot of God, but I can see a lot of God. This is what has become different for me. When I grew up, I learned to read the Bible and pray. This is like conversation with God. Right now though, I see the ways God has worked through many people's stories. I used to find it hard to believe in miracles in our age, but I have started to believe. To give an example, there have been multiple times where we have been planning and discussing what we really, really need. The next day it's miraculously given to us.

Some guy or some driver will supply the exact thing.

To give you another story, we were contacted by one pastor when there was an evacuation from the front line. They had received a call from a church member about their grandfather who was still at home. They said that he was ready to go and was waiting. We went to the

address and found an older man who was not ready. He didn't want to go. I started to convince him. I told him about the bombing and the danger. The Russian army was soon going to occupy that territory. We managed to convince him and evacuated him. In the evening we received a call again. 'Why didn't you pick up my grandfather?' I said that we did, but they told us that he was still waiting. The next day we went to the same address. We discovered that the house had a dividing wall. The man we had evacuated had been on one side. On the other side there was this other, older man who'd been waiting for us. We evacuated him. One week later we were driving near this house. A rocket had struck that individual house. We have many, many, similar stories.

### how has the conflict affected people's faith?

The conflict has impacted on our faith and practice. Some people were in shock for the first few weeks or months of the conflict. They struggled to

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concentrate enough to read the Bible. You know, they couldn't pray. Yes, it was difficult. Not because God was away but because of numerous different reasons happening at the same time. Many communities came closer together. If Covid separated us, the war united us.

We have heard stories of people coming to faith because of the conflict. This is the most difficult time that we have faced. For example, we have a mobile clinic. Everything has been taken from the



hospitals in the occupied territories. Medical help is so valuable. We do it in cooperation with local churches. It's like Jesus; we help them physically and share his message of hope.

One church in Mykolaiv had 60 members before the invasion. They were under occupation for nine to ten months. Now they've been liberated, a lot of the members have gone away. But they have more than 200 visitors every week. The church became like a shelter – an answer to a prayer for help. People are not just coming to take. They are repenting. Of course when you're facing a human situation of unimaginable horror, you have to find a solution for it. There is a sense of that.



I don't want to describe a fairy tale to you. Some people have struggled with their faith or become hardened in their unbelief. People are asking how God can let these things happen and not stop it. The suffering people are going through is mind-blowing. I cannot describe it. But some people are finding God in this struggle.

We have a lot of soldiers who have shared with us and who are asking, even begging, for prayers from us because they were afraid. People are asking deep spiritual questions at this time.

### how can people support you in prayer and practically?

- Please pray for peace and unity in Ukraine. People don't need to die. We want to see victory over darkness in our country.
- Please thank God that he has supplied so much of what we needed. We know it's not easy to

give money and equipment. We believe and trust in ICMDA – they have been very accountable. All that we have asked for has been donated. We joke that the corruption would have continued without the war. Of course we want the war to end. But we want to be transparent and open as we rebuild our communities. Please pray if you can. Practically, if you can donate, donate. If you can do something for Ukrainians, do something. We have a website that lists many projects. You can look at it and consider which you are interested in. Examples include teaching and training plastic surgery, ultrasound, and many other areas. We are blessed through our communication and the relationships that we have built with you. And really, I can tell you how the medical system is now changing for the better because of those relationships.

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- Please pray for the staff of the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine and their families. I know the strain that the conflict and work can place on their relationships. So many people are separated by the conflict in Ukraine. Some family members have only seen each other once a month, or even not at all over the past year. It's not easy. We hear of people getting divorced, even Christians. You have to work more and you have to serve more. A lot of men are being drafted to fight. We see children who have missed their education due to hiding in bomb shelters. Some have lost their parents. We see post-traumatic syndromes. All this impacts on family life. Please pray for the CMA's staff and their families. The sum of small steps now will drastically impact on the future.

- Please thank God for a good relationship with the health authorities in Ukraine. Before the war we were a small Christian organisation – no one recognised us. Now we have been accredited by the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, we have received special medals. If nothing else, it shows that the government respects us.
- Pray for leaders. We really, really need good leaders. Good leaders that care about people. We can talk about numbers and projects, but if there aren't good leaders, we can't achieve our projects. People who will be responsible enough to take the lead. The mobile clinic is a key example of this which is really important to us. Our vision or motto is medical workers who care for people. When we serve people, we want to

serve them as Christ. It's not just a poor lady or a small child. It is Christ you are treating. Skill has to be combined with compassion. To not just see people in terms of health, disease, or finances, but like Jesus. People who live out Matthew 25:34-40:

*'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed*



*clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*  
(v35-36) ●

You can find out more about supporting the work and mission of CMA Ukraine at [cma-ukraine.com](http://cma-ukraine.com)

You can support the ICMDA Ukraine Appeal at [icmda.net/ukraineappeal](http://icmda.net/ukraineappeal)



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