

## Heeding the cry

Mark Pickering writes on how we can respond to the war in Ukraine as Christian health professionals

*The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: 'Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.'* (Joshua 10:6)

*During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.* (Acts 16:9-10)

The church is one of the most global, multilingual, networked organisations on Earth. Facebook, Amazon, Disney – they may have the money and the reach, but when it comes to boots on the ground, not even the Chinese Red Army can mobilise as quickly or as widely. God knew what he was doing when he set up his bride at the beginning of Acts!

Starting with just twelve men – a ragtag collection of fishermen, farmers, and a tax collector or two, Jesus established a community that would take his good news as far as India and China, Britain, and Spain, within a generation.

That mission has continued throughout the last two thousand years. In 862, the Byzantine theologians and brothers Cyril and Methodius were sent to take the gospel to the Slavic subjects of Prince Rastislav of Moravia. They devised a writing system to enable the Scriptures to be translated and read in the native tongue of the Slavs, the descendant of which is the Cyrillic alphabet still used to this day. A century later, Vladimir the Great of the Kyivan Rus was baptised at the capital of his kingdom, Kyiv, making his nation Christian. The territory of the Kyivan Rus covered much of what is now Ukraine, Belarus, and Western Russia.

The subsequent history of Russia and Ukraine is too long and too complex even to summarise here. But when we see them at war, we see brother fighting brother. In some cases, literally – many Ukrainians have relatives in Russia. More than half the Ukrainian population speak Russian as a first or second language. Their churches share a long common history. Kyiv has been the cultural and spiritual heartland of this region's peoples for over a thousand years.

That is the horror of this war, and both nations will carry the scars for generations. But we all feel this – Ukraine and Russia are not so far away from the UK, both in geography and shared history. Which brings me back to the church. Christians are mobilising, not to shed blood but to help one another. Across Europe,



they are welcoming refugees and providing aid to those still in Ukraine.

CMF has the wonderful privilege to be part of the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA). This is a network of over 80 Christian medical and dental fellowships across the globe. We have enjoyed meeting with our brothers and sisters from Ukraine and Russia at many ICMDA events across Europe and at our regular SYD (Students and Young Doctors) leadership conferences in the UK. We hear from these friends and siblings in Christ about what is happening on the ground, their needs, and how we can help them.

We have heard the cry out of Gibeon and Macedonia, and we cannot but respond to our Christian family's call for help.

Through ICMDA, we can get real help and medical supplies to where they are needed the most. The Christian Medical Association of Ukraine (CMAU), working under the Ukraine Ministry of Health's authority, is providing a portal to get medicines, consumables, and equipment to hospitals, health centres, and frontline paramedics across Ukraine. ICMDA member bodies across Europe are gathering supplies, arranging transport, and warehousing. In the UK, a warehouse in Derby has been set up to collect medical aid. However, with the Russian invasion moving into West Ukraine, there is a narrowing window of opportunity to get supplies into the country. And with the increasing attacks on civilian targets, the tolls of the injured and dead are rising. These supplies will save lives.

CMF and ICMDA are working hand in glove on this. We need volunteers from the UK to collect, store, catalogue and pack drugs, dressings, infusions, equipment, and other supplies. We need donations to fund the cost of buying and shipping, as well as donations of specific items.

If you can help in any way, visit the ICMDA website at [icmda.net/ukraineappeal](http://icmda.net/ukraineappeal).

Please, above all else, pray! Pray for those families torn apart by the war; for the millions of refugees (mostly women and children) now in Western Europe; for those in the country ministering to the sick, treating the wounded, and facing the risk of bombardment as they do so. Finally, pray in the words of Psalm 46:9-10 that God would end this war, break the weapons of destruction, and cause the nations to stop and know his name and his power!

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