

All Saints News March 2022

Kate Davenport: Letter from Ukraine

Monday, 7 March 2022

Dear Friends,

Many thanks for all the kind messages you've sent, by email, what's app and other means, over the past two weeks. Little sleep and a lot of work have meant that I couldn't answer everyone individually so I thought I'd send a slightly longer email around.

It's twelve days since we were woken at 5am on 24th February - our worst fears had been realised and Russia had launched major attacks not only on the partially occupied regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, but on other cities across Ukraine.

Today in pictures of Kyiv, I caught sight of the corner of my street opposite Golden Gate. Normally there's a lady who sits there on a bucket and sells cut flowers. Occasionally I have treated myself to a bunch on my way home to put on the table in my sitting room, which has a stunning view of the golden dome of St Sophia's Cathedral. At this time of year, my flower lady would be selling the first daffodils and tulips. Tomorrow (8 March) is 'Women's Day' and normally she would be doing a roaring trade. Instead the street was deserted and there was a loan figure in fatigues with a Kalashnikov. I wonder where the flower seller is now – sheltering in a bunker or fleeing Kyiv and even Ukraine with just a few possessions?

After an unusually mild second half of February, winter has returned to Ukraine. We've had snow several days this week. And not only at the borders, but at train stations, bus terminals, regional administrations, Ukrainians stand shivering in long queues, trying to escape the bombing and to find refuge somewhere safer. An app on my phone sends me notifications whenever the air-raid sirens go in a city across Ukraine. The notifications are constant, and even here in Lviv, the air raid sirens have wailed nearly every night, and sometimes during the day.

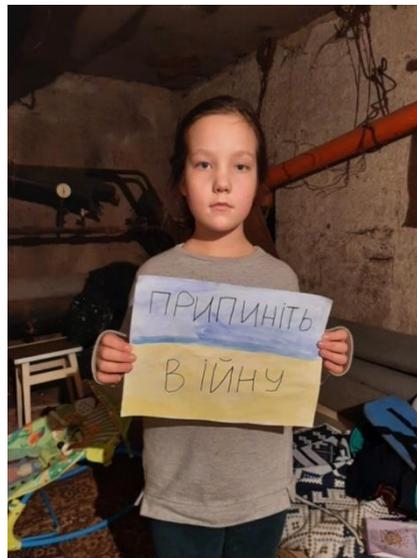
A small team from the embassy in Kyiv moved to Lviv at the beginning of February, in order to have a temporary base in the relative safety of western Ukraine. Having managed a number of high level visits including the PM and the Foreign Secretary, I left Kyiv with the Ambassador on 19 February – just five days before Russia launched its 'special operations'. We have lived and worked in a hotel on the Lviv ring road, where we've run a small consular operation for British Nationals and Ukrainians trying to get out Ukraine to the UK, as well as continuing our usual embassy work of engaging with contacts, monitoring the political situation and now, of course, the daily horrors of war. Since 24 February we have slept little and worked long, including trying to help our locally employed Ukrainian staff get to safety and securing a package of support for them. All of us have heard about heart wrenching experiences- from strangers and from our close friends and colleagues. As the security situation worsened, we reduced our numbers. This morning the final five, including me, with our hearts in our boots, received the instruction to leave Lviv. We have just crossed the border into Poland.

I'm in the final six months of my posting to Ukraine which, despite the challenges of Covid for doing usual diplomatic business, has been the most fascinating and fulfilling of any job I have done. I have completely fallen in love with this country, travelling across it from east to west and north to south. I have vivid memories of so many of the places that are now being torn apart by Putin's shelling. But most of all, I have made many dear Ukrainian friends. Some of them are still in Kyiv. The events of the last two weeks defy words. These are a few of the friends I'm leaving behind.

Elena - my trail running friend - together we ran up and conquered the summit of великий верх at dawn in sub zero temperatures. Here she is hiding with her beloved golden retriever лучик - Sunbeam and his friend.



Iryna - my dancing friend, a primary school teacher with two young children. Here is her daughter Valya in the shelter with a plea for the war to end.



Oksana - generous, thoughtful, immensely talented dancer, cook and jewellery maker, and passionately committed to her country. She has welcomed me into her home to celebrate Ukrainian Christmas and Easter every year and kept me well supplied with homemade jam. Here she is now working 15 hour days in the military kitchen to feed Kyiv's territorial defence units - civilians who have taken up arms to protect the city.

There are countless more, especially my trail running friends, many of whom have now been conscripted.

Apologies for any typos - doing this on my phone in the car. Thank you again for your kind thoughts and prayers over the past weeks. Please pray for a rapid end to this terrible war, and peace and healing for all those left traumatised by it.

With love from
Kate

Parish of All Saints with St John

Gifts for Ukraine

Thank you everyone who has given to the Ukraine Collections. **We are supporting the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) which is made up of thirteen member organisations including the British Red Cross and ActionAid.** These are responding in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries to the Russian invasion. Every pound donated by the British public will be matched by the government - up to the value of £20 million.

Furthermore, here at All Saints, the All-Saints Endowment Trust has offered to match all donations, pound for pound. Huge thanks to the Trustees for agreeing this!

This means that the current level of gift is in excess of £1,400 (with Trustees and HM Government).

If you wish to leave a gift then mark the envelope with the letter 'U' and it will be paid directly to the DEC Ukraine Fund. Or, if you use the card reader, mark an envelope with the 'U' and note the amount (and then put the empty envelope into the card reader box).