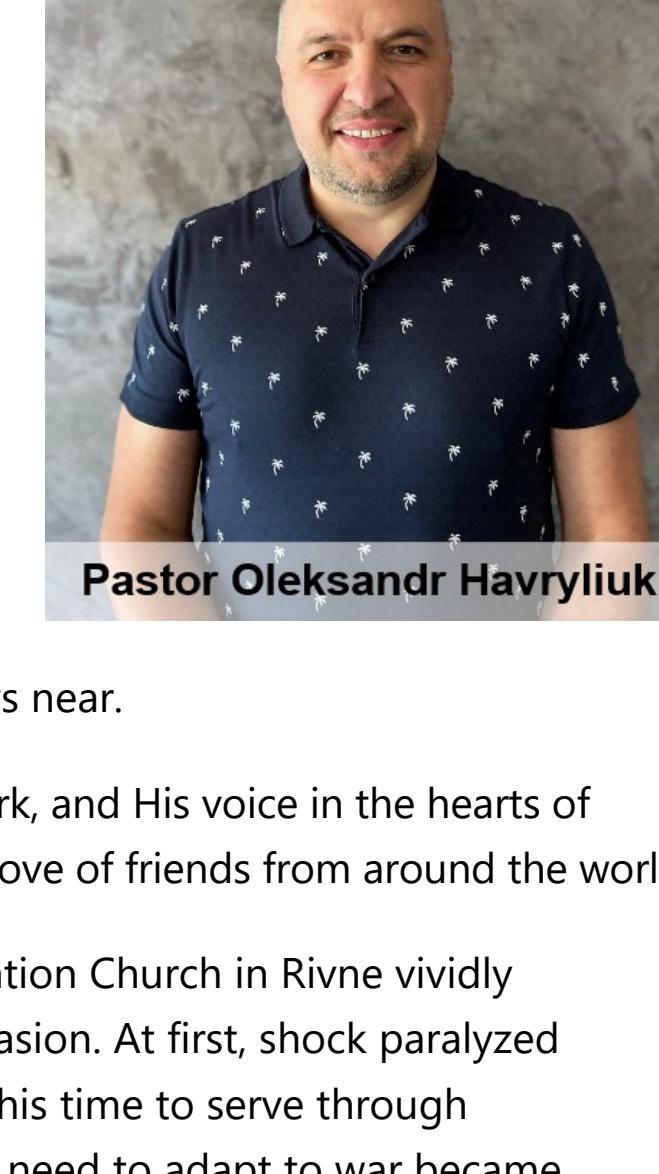


# **GOD is with us and He works through HART: a testimony of faithfulness in wartime**

**Pastor Oleksandr Havryliuk**

**W**ar devastates cities, shatters lives, and takes away what is most precious. Yet, in the darkness of suffering, there is One who remains unchanged—God, who is always near.

This story is a testament to His mercy, His work, and His voice in the hearts of Ukrainians, strengthened by the unwavering love of friends from around the world.

Pastor Oleksandr Havryliuk of the Transfiguration Church in Rivne vividly remembers the first days of the full-scale invasion. At first, shock paralyzed everyone. Then came a deep resolve to use this time to serve through humanitarian efforts. But as time passed, the need to adapt to war became evident. Now, as Oleksandr explains, many are in a fourth phase: exhaustion—fatigue from the constant struggle.

"I'm not speaking only of Ukrainians on the front lines or churches that have been working tirelessly for years," he says. "Even our partners abroad are feeling this fatigue." But his words are more than just an observation. They are a heartfelt appeal to those who have stood with Ukraine from the beginning.

I ask our friends in Canada and the United States—please, do not leave us in this difficult time. You have been with us through these years, showing steadfast love, supporting, and helping us. Please, do not stop." Pastor Oleksandr speaks of HART's mission with special warmth.

"For as long as I can remember, HART has been a faithful partner—sometimes the only one—standing with us."

Reflecting on HART's ministry, he recalls the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew: '...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

**"To me, HART is the hands of God at work.** They feed the hungry, support the vulnerable, and protect the defenceless. In wartime, their presence has become even more tangible to the church."

## **A Church as a Refuge**

Today, the church in Ukraine is both a spiritual and physical refuge. Thousands have turned to it for help, but the financial burden has been overwhelming. The church was simply not prepared to meet such immense needs. At a critical moment, **HART's support became a lifeline**, ensuring survival for many within Oleksandr's congregation.

"There will come a time when the Lord will say, 'I was hungry, and you fed me.' And I know He will speak these words to everyone involved in HART's mission, because they have truly lived out this calling."

What Pastor Oleksandr witnesses today is a spiritual awakening in Ukraine—a renewal of faith and trust in the church. Many have turned to God, including those who never would have before. One example is a woman in his congregation, an internally displaced person named Aunt Shura.

Now in her 60s, Aunt Shura fled from the Kharkiv region, a town that has endured multiple occupations. In the early days of the war, she boarded an evacuation bus bound for Rivne. She had no family or acquaintances there, only the uncertainty of survival. By what seemed like chance—but was clearly divine intervention—she found her way to Oleksandr's church.

"She has now been part of our community for three years, attending services regularly, joining small groups, and preparing for baptism. She once told me something that deeply moved me: 'The war gave me the church.' She is certain that without the war, she would never have met God or believers. And this is another way in which God works—even through war, He turns hearts toward Himself."

## **Testing, Refining, and Strengthening the Church**

God is not only calling new believers; He is refining His church. According to Pastor Oleksandr, war has tested and transformed congregations, revealing their true nature.

"Difficult times expose what is in a person's heart. This war has shown us who we really are. Yet, the most inspiring part is that during this season, new leaders have emerged."

He recalls how, in the early months of the invasion, people threw themselves into service. The usual barriers between ministers and congregants disappeared—everyone became a servant, doing whatever was needed. And from this, unexpected leaders arose, taking responsibility and stepping into action.

"God is doing so much. Though war is a terrible evil, He is using even this to awaken hearts, transform lives, and refine His people."

## **HART's Mission: Tangible Hope in Times of Despair**

With HART's support and God's guidance, Oleksandr's church has realized numerous relief initiatives, including food packages for children and struggling families, aid for the elderly, and scholarship programs.

"Right now, we are deeply involved in humanitarian work in eastern Ukraine, focusing especially on medical aid. We operate a mobile dental clinic, rotating teams weekly to serve those in need. **HART plays a crucial role**—supplying medical equipment, covering travel expenses, and offering immense support."

At the start of the full-scale invasion, HART also provided the church with two minibuses, which continue to run at full capacity, serving the mission tirelessly.

## **The Power of Transformed Lives**

What inspires Pastor Oleksandr most? Seeing lives transformed. "Some of the people we've helped might not have survived without intervention—but they are alive today because someone went and rescued them. Some might never have known God, but today, they are in church, serving, and living a different life."

This war has reshaped his understanding of the church itself. For him, the church is now something much more than a specific geographical location or denomination.

"I have met people from various denominations who deeply love God. I see people in Canada & USA who don't hear the bombs, yet their hearts resonate with us so profoundly that they feel as if they are right here. Their commitment to helping is astonishing."

To those donors and sponsors of HART, Oleksandr expresses his deepest gratitude:

"Thank you for standing with us, even during challenging economic times in Canada. You have not turned away; instead, you continue to support us with unwavering faith. May God give you even more strength, and may more people be moved to give."

I believe that when Ukraine celebrates its victory, it will be a victory not just for our country but for the entire free world. And standing at the forefront of that victory will be HART—the people who never left our side in our most difficult hour."

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