

## **Greetings to the Saints of Mission Presbytery!**

Well, friends, before you ask - as of this writing we've not had a grandbaby appearance yet. This coming Monday was the original due date. And so we now understand that if the baby has not made his debut by Sunday, he will likely be induced on Monday. Thank you for all of your concern for Alex and Angela, that darling baby, and his nervous grandparents. We continue to covet your prayers.

Now, what's really on my mind: Ukraine, Russia, our young men and women who are once again deployed, and everyone in harm's way.

I had the chance to visit Kyiv back in the mid-70s with a group from Austin College. At that time, it was still a part of the Soviet Union. It is a beautiful city. I watched along with you in wonder and awe in 1989 as the Berlin Wall fell, and as three areas of the Soviet Union gained their sovereignty in 1991. And I do not understand how, today, such a bald grab for power can be tolerated - much less put the welfare and lives of thousands of people at risk.

Perhaps we can turn once more to the teaching of John Calvin, who taught us that - in my words - idolatry remains the #1 sin today. If there is anything that is loved more than God - wealth, pipelines, power - it has become a false idol. While I take comfort in the fact that false idols never prevail and will ultimately reveal their emptiness, that doesn't always mean it's going to be easy in the short term.

I pray for the good people of Ukraine, as well as for the good people I know personally who live in Russia - and for all of those innocents whose lives stand to be impacted. I pray for a member of my first children's ministry in Brownwood, David Hale, who now carries the title of "Major" as he works for our protection and security. I pray for the man I met on that trip to the Soviet Union who asked that we "wealthy Americans" from Austin College return to the United States and "buy up all the guns" - because all of his siblings had been killed in World War II, and now his only son was in the Russian military. And as we face a yet-unknown future, as far as any engagement we as a nation will have in this conflict, I pray for us all.

I hope you will join me in this prayer from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which you can find in our Book of Common Worship, page 628.

*We bring before you the disunity of today's world:  
the absurd violence, and the many wars,  
which are breaking the courage of the peoples of the world;*

*militarism and the armaments race, which are threatening life on the planet;  
human greed and injustice, which breed hatred and strife.  
Send your Spirit and renew the face of the earth;  
teach us to be compassionate toward the whole human family;  
strengthen the will of all those who fight for justice and for peace;  
lead all nations into the path of peace,  
and give us that peace which the world cannot give.  
Amen.*

-----

**Presbyter “Sightings” (as it were)**

**February 24** - Meet virtually with Pastoral Care Committee and Stewardship Committee

**February 28** - Meet virtually with Hill Country Region

**March 1** - Meet virtually with Staff and with the Victoria Region

**March 2** - Preach for Ash Wednesday at the Mo-Ranch Worship Service; meet virtually with the Synod EP Forum

**March 5** - Meet virtually with Mission Presbytery (hope to see you there!)

**March 6** - Worship with the saints in Goliad for their 170th Birthday

**March 7** - Office closed following the Presbytery meeting