

April 17, 2017
Kyiv, Ukraine

Dear friends in Christ,

I wish you and your loved ones a Happy Easter. May the joy of the resurrection fill your hearts and minds with a spirit of thanksgiving and praise, as together we glorify God for Christ's victory over sin and death. As our Christian friends here in Ukraine say, "*Христос воскрес! Во истину воскрес!*" Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Unlike most years, in 2017 the observance of Easter in the Orthodox and Western church traditions falls on the same day. So on Sunday, all across Ukraine, believers of all denominations—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant—celebrated the holy day of Christ's resurrection.

Here in Kyiv, our United Methodist community celebrated these most holy days of the Christian year with two special worship services. On Maundy Thursday, members of our English-language student group joined with the Russian-speaking United Methodist congregation for a very solemn service of worship. As one body, we sang hymns of praise, listened to the reading of Scripture, and reflected upon Jesus' sacrifice for us as we celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion.



And then on Easter Sunday, the entire United Methodist community—Ukrainian families, international students from Africa, and other guests and visitors—joined as one for a festive celebration to welcome the risen Christ. Following worship, the community gathered around a *трапеза* ("trapeza"), or long table, to share a meal and enjoy fellowship. The ritual of the Easter "trapeza" comes from monastic times, when holy brothers would emerge from their solitude to break bread with fellow Christians.



In addition to these sacred celebrations, the people of Ukraine also embrace the more secular traditions of this Easter season. One beloved tradition, also marked in other



societies around the world, is the painting and displaying of Easter eggs, or *пysанки* (“pysanki”). Here in Kyiv, in St. Sophia’s Square, the very heart of the historic district, hundreds of large painted wooden eggs have been placed in metal stands. Decorated by a cross-section of city residents—from renown artists to ordinary school children—these “pysanki” serve as a reminder of this season of new birth in a joyful and whimsical spirit.

The people of Ukraine take courage and hope in this season of resurrection. It is a much-needed balm, as war continues in the east of the country, and political and economic turmoil create havoc and uncertainty in the daily

lives of citizens across Ukraine. I ask you to continue to keep the people of Ukraine in your prayers, that the conflict would end and that all those many lives broken by war and suffering would find healing.

And I also ask you to pray for our growing ministry with international students here in Kyiv. Each Sunday, we gather together for a time of Bible study and fellowship, before joining the Ukrainian United Methodist congregation for worship. On the first Sunday of every month, I lead a service of Holy Communion in English, where students and young adults gather to worship God, offer prayers, and sing songs of praise in their native language. And throughout the week, I provide pastoral care and counseling to the student community, and make home and hospital visits to those in need.

I give thanks to God for our developing ministry in Kyiv, and for the opportunity to represent you in this ministry, as a missionary of the United Methodist Church.

May God bless you in this season of Easter!

Yours in Christ,
John

To support my mission service in Ukraine, [click here](#) to make a donation through the secure Global Ministries website. Fully 100% of your donation goes in support of mission service. Thank you for your prayerful and generous support.

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