



“When time comes”

– Faith based contributions in Ukraine.

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Front page photo: [The Collection of War Photos](#)

Executive Summary

Faith-Based Contributions in Ukraine: Lessons Learned, Strategic Relevance, and Policy Implications

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has generated one of the most significant crises in Europe since the Second World War. Attention has largely been on military assistance, humanitarian relief, and economic reconstruction, but the war has also highlighted the critical role of faith-based actors in supporting social resilience, community cohesion, trauma recovery, and local service delivery. The essential fact is that Ukraine's primary artery of civil society is the church and faith-based organizations, who stretch into all corners and villages of the country.

This report presents lessons learned from cooperation between Danish and Ukrainian faith-based organisations supported through the Nexus framework of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Drawing on experiences from humanitarian interventions, trauma-healing initiatives, church diplomacy, and dialogue platforms, the report examines how religious institutions and faith-based organisations contribute to Ukraine's immediate response to war and its longer-term recovery and reconstruction.

The findings suggest that faith-based actors represent a strategically important yet often underutilized component of Ukraine's civil society ecosystem. Their comparative advantages stem from their local legitimacy, extensive volunteer networks, ability to reach vulnerable populations, and long-term presence in communities affected by conflict.

In this executive summary, we present the main findings and experiences of the first phase of collaborations (2024-2026) and its strategic implications and policy relevance.

Faith-based actors are essential components of Ukraine's social resilience infrastructure

The war has reinforced the role of churches and religious organisations as trusted local institutions capable of mobilising humanitarian assistance, psychosocial support, and community solidarity. Across Ukraine, faith-based organisations have become first responders in communities affected by displacement, loss, trauma, and social disruption. Their reach extends beyond formal humanitarian programming and includes informal support networks that are often inaccessible to international actors.

This role is particularly significant in a context where public institutions are overstretched and where many affected individuals remain reluctant to seek support through formal mental health services.

Trauma and psychosocial needs constitute a strategic challenge for Ukraine's future recovery

One of the clearest findings emerging from the project is the scale of psychosocial trauma generated by the war. The Trauma Healing Institute and Ukrainian Bible Society demonstrated measurable positive outcomes through trauma-healing camps and support programmes targeting widows, children, and other vulnerable groups. Participants reported improved emotional wellbeing, reduced isolation, strengthened coping mechanisms, and increased capacity to support family members affected by trauma.

These experiences highlight a broader challenge facing Ukraine: the long-term societal consequences of war-related trauma among civilians, veterans, displaced populations, children, and frontline communities. Mental health and psychosocial support should therefore be viewed not

merely as humanitarian interventions but as strategic investments in Ukraine's future social stability and recovery.

Religious institutions possess unique access to vulnerable populations

The Ukrainian context remains deeply shaped by religious institutions despite ongoing secularisation trends elsewhere in Europe. Many Ukrainians continue to seek support from local clergy and faith communities before engaging with formal healthcare systems. Religious actors therefore serve as trusted intermediaries capable of identifying needs, reducing stigma associated with mental health support, and facilitating referrals to specialised services when required.

This trusted position creates opportunities for effective locally-led interventions that complement public services rather than substitute for them.

Faith-based partnerships strengthen localisation and local ownership

The collaboration and experiences from it demonstrates that long-standing partnerships between Danish and Ukrainian organisations enabled rapid mobilisation following the 2022 invasion. Unlike many short-term humanitarian arrangements, these partnerships are characterised by mutual trust, local ownership, and institutional continuity. Such relationships align closely with international commitments on localisation and provide a practical model for supporting Ukrainian-led recovery efforts.

The findings suggest that future reconstruction initiatives will benefit from investing in locally rooted organisations capable of maintaining community trust over extended periods.

Churches and religious networks contribute to future peacebuilding capacity

Faith-based actors are uniquely positioned to facilitate dialogue, trust-building, and community-level reconciliation processes because of their embedded presence within society and their moral authority among local populations.

Our current initiatives focused on public theology, just peace, church diplomacy, and interfaith cooperation represent important investments in the social infrastructure that will eventually be required for sustainable peace.

Policy Implications

We conclude the following policy recommendations on basis of the documented experiences in this report.

- **Prioritise psychosocial support as a reconstruction objective**

Psychosocial recovery should be integrated into broader reconstruction strategies rather than treated solely as a humanitarian concern. It is a high priority for a war-torn country as Ukraine, as it in the long run will secure a better basis for reconstruction and fewer trauma-related health problems for servicemen, families etc.

Funding mechanisms should increase support for among other trauma-healing initiatives, build up of capacity for psychosocial help, community-based mental health programmes, and capacity-building for local practitioners capable of responding to long-term psychological needs.

- **Expand support for veterans and affected families**

Ukraine faces a growing challenge related to veteran reintegration and family wellbeing. Future programming should prioritise comprehensive approaches that combine psychosocial support, family counselling, social reintegration, and community-based support structures. Faith-based organisations can serve as important partners in delivering such interventions.

This will become crucial for the reconstruction of Ukraine as servicemen and their integration is crucial to a long term sustainable peace and reconstruction.

- **Invest in social cohesion and peacebuilding capacities now**

Preparation for future reconciliation cannot wait until the end of hostilities. Programmes supporting dialogue, community resilience, interfaith cooperation, and civic trust-building should be considered part of long-term recovery planning. Such investments help reduce future risks of fragmentation and social polarisation.



1. Introduction

This report is a joint undertaking by the Centre for Church-Based Development (CKU), the Interchurch Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, and the National Council of Churches in Denmark (NCCD). While each organisation engages Ukraine through distinct networks and approaches, we share a common focus on the role of faith-based actors in responding to the consequences of Russia's full-scale invasion and in supporting Ukraine's immediate relief efforts, recovery, and long-term reconstruction. Together, our perspectives provide a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of the contributions, challenges, and opportunities facing faith-based organisations in Ukraine.

The purpose of this report is to document the experiences, lessons learned, and key findings emerging from activities implemented under the Nexus funding framework of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It seeks both to account for the collaboration established through the programme and to assess the broader relevance of faith-based engagement in Ukraine's humanitarian response and recovery efforts.

The report is structured in four parts. Following this introduction, Chapter 3 provides an overview of Ukraine's religious landscape and examines the significant transformations that have taken place since the full-scale invasion in 2022. Chapters 4 and 5 present the activities undertaken in Ukraine and Denmark, respectively, highlighting their outcomes, impact, and strategic implications. The report concludes by synthesising the principal lessons learned and outlining their implications for future policy, programming, and partnerships.

A central component of the Nexus programme was the "Pathways to Peace" initiative, implemented in partnership with the Ukrainian Bible Society, the Danish Bible Society, the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), and the Ukrainian Trauma Healing Institute. The initiative was designed to strengthen other CKU-supported faith-based interventions by providing expertise in trauma healing, facilitating exchange between Ukrainian and international partners, and creating a platform for dialogue on the concept of a just and sustainable peace. In addition to documenting this initiative, the report also provides an overview of other faith-based interventions supported through the broader Nexus framework in Ukraine.



Photo: Trauma Healing Institute

2. The religious landscape in Ukraine: Partners

Over the past 30 years, the religious landscape of Ukrainian churches has evolved from a relatively unified structure under Soviet influence into a fragmented and later partially consolidated system shaped by politics, identity, and war.

After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the dominant church was the **Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP)**, which remained canonically subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time new church structures emerged, most notably the **Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP)**, which sought independence from Moscow and positioned itself as a national church. Alongside it, the **Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC)** reappeared, reviving a tradition of ecclesiastical independence that had existed briefly in earlier periods of Ukrainian statehood. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, these churches coexisted in a competitive but relatively stable environment, often vying for parishes, property, and symbolic authority. The division largely reflected broader geopolitical orientations: the UOC-MP was associated with ties to Russia, while the UOC-KP, UAOC, and UGCC were more aligned with Ukrainian national identity and independence.

A number of Protestant Churches have been present in Ukraine for centuries, most notably (German) Lutheran churches, but also Methodists, Baptists and Adventists have congregations. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, numerous Pentecostal and Evangelical groups tried to establish themselves in Ukraine. However, membership of Protestant Christian churches remains small in percentage and has historically been viewed with some suspicion and fear for proselytization.

In western Ukraine, the **Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC)** resurfaced after decades of suppression under Soviet rule, contributing to a diverse and regionally differentiated religious map. Alongside these major bodies a series of the minor Ukrainian protestant communities was organized and formed with the Muslim community and the Jewish a common council called **The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO)** in 1996.

The balance between the major Orthodox churches began to shift significantly after 2014, when Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine intensified the political role of churches. The question of ecclesiastical independence became more urgent, culminating in 2018 with the creation of the **Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU)** under metropolitan Ephraim (Dumenko, b. 1979). This new church was formed through the unification of the UOC-KP and the UAOC, and it received a tomos of autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, formally recognizing its independence.

The establishment of the OCU marked a major turning point, effectively challenging the dominance of the UOC-MP and reshaping the Orthodox landscape into two competing bodies: the newly independent OCU and the Moscow-affiliated UOC-MP. The Russian Orthodox Church rejected this move and severed relations with Constantinople, deepening the ecclesiastical divide. In the years following, many parishes began transferring allegiance from the UOC-MP to the OCU, reflecting shifting political and national loyalties.

Changing landscape since the full-scale war

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the relationship between the Orthodox churches of Ukraine and the Russian Orthodox Church has undergone rapid and consequential change. At the start of the invasion, the leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church –

Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), Patriarch Kirill openly supported Russia's actions, framing the war in spiritual and civilizational terms and late even calling the war a "holy" one. This stance deeply affected the position of the UOC-MP, which had historically been linked to Moscow but operated within Ukraine. In May 2022, under growing public and political pressure, the UOC-MP declared that it was severing its formal ties with the Moscow Patriarchate and proclaimed its independence. However, this move was widely viewed with skepticism by Ukrainian authorities and society, who questioned whether the break was genuine or merely symbolic. At the same time, the rival Orthodox Church of Ukraine positioned itself as the national church fully aligned with Ukrainian sovereignty.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, the Ukrainian state increased scrutiny of the UOC-MP. The Security Service of Ukraine conducted raids on monasteries and church properties, including the historically significant Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, citing concerns about pro-Russian activities and collaboration. These actions were part of a broader effort by the government to limit Russian influence within Ukraine's religious sphere. Several priests and monks were later charged and imprisoned for their direct aid to Russian invaders.

Simultaneously, many local parishes began transferring their allegiance from the UOC-MP to the OCU, often through community votes but sometimes amid disputes and tensions. Ukrainian media and political discourse increasingly labeled the UOC-MP as the "Russian church in Ukraine".

In 2024, the Ukrainian government proposed a law aimed at local religious communities. The law allows local authorities to close down parishes if they assist the Russian army. Internationally, the law was criticized in some forums for restricting religious freedom, while other organizations, such as the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations and its Danish counterpart, the National Council of Churches in Denmark, argued for the necessity of such a law in times of war.

Since its implementation, the law has not been used to close down a single parish. Consequently, some scholars, such as Sebastian Rimstad, view the law as primarily symbolic and as a tool to exert additional pressure on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate.

Recent developments (2025-2026)

The current status, as documented in the report *"Enforcing Faith Through Power"*, **a rise in religiosity among Ukrainians has taken place since the outbreak of the war, with 22% stating that they have become "more religious following the start of the full-scale invasion."**

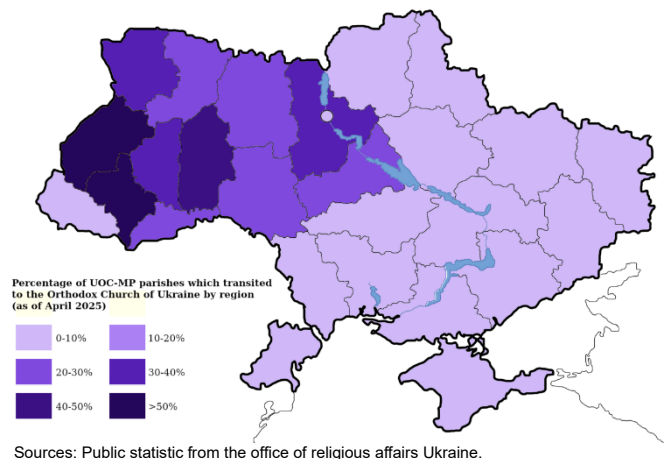
The highest level of religiosity was recorded in the western regions of Ukraine (85%), particularly around Lviv, the center of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. In contrast, the eastern regions were below average at 55%. Historically, eastern Ukraine has been the most Russified and secularized region following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The report also highlights an increased focus in Russian media on the UOC, which receives Russian-backed media coverage promoting claims of persecution. This has intensified following the law on religion in Ukraine passed by parliament in 2025, as mentioned in last section. In Russian media, this has been framed as an attack on the UOC.

The report *"Enforcing Faith Through Power"* as well as reports from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) identifies several additional pressing issues for religious communities in Ukraine, most notably the continued persecution of Christian communities in the occupied territories, administrative restrictions on freedom of religion in these regions, further persecution and forced deportation of religious leaders from the OCU, the Ukrainian Greek

Catholic Church, and Protestant churches, a growing documented number of cases of violence and torture against religious leaders, and the **continued destruction of religious sites, which had reached 643 by 2025**. Religious leaders in Ukraine have faced severe persecution during the war. **A total of 67 clergy members has been killed, while 30 have been taken into captivity.** Among the most notable cases are two Redemptorist priests of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Father Ivan Levitsky and Father Bohdan Geleta, who were abducted in Berdiansk in November 2022. They were subjected to 18 months of torture before being released in June 2024.

In another case, Evangelical deacon Anatoliy Prokopchuk and his 19-year-old son, were abducted in November 2022 in the Kherson region and were later found killed after having been tortured. Similarly, Stepan Podolchak, a priest of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, was reportedly abducted and killed in February 2024 in occupied Kalanchak after refusing to transfer his parish to the Moscow Patriarchate.



According to the Kyiv based Institute of Religious Freedom's reporting since 2022, the overall picture is that it is Russia's occupied territories that produce the biggest challenge to religious freedom in Ukraine. The Russian attack against Ukraine has turned former religiously pluralistic Ukrainian regions into territory with gross violations of religious freedom. A broader issue concerns Ukrainian children who have been deported or forced into adoption programs from occupied areas, as well as the growing number of prisoners of war and detained civilians. Ukrainian authorities estimate that around 20,000 children may have been forcibly deported, including by organizations backed by the Russian Orthodox Church. In 2025, Nordic Lutheran churches raised this issue at the World Council of Churches assembly in South Africa, but a statement on the matter was blocked, among others, by the Russian Orthodox Church. The Nordic churches reiterated their commitment to helping the children return during the primates' visit of Nordic Lutheran churches to Kyiv in October 2025.

On the ground, Ukrainian authorities estimate that 1,378 parishes have transferred their allegiance from the Moscow-loyal church to the Ukrainian one. A large proportion of the parishes that have not transferred are located in eastern Ukraine and in areas under Russian occupation, where it is unlikely that they have the freedom or resources at present to make such decisions.

The situation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) therefore remains uncertain. The UOC-MP faces increasing pressure from Russian authorities in occupied territories, has lost much of its western base, and its traditional heartland in eastern Ukraine is under constant military threat. Additional pressure comes from the Ukrainian state, which has revoked the citizenship of several leading figures of the UOC-MP due to their refusal to renounce Russian citizenship. A poll from 2025 shows that 22% of the Ukrainian population trusts the leader of the UOC-MP.

It is in this polarized context that faithbased, and other actors navigate and operate. In the following two sections we will describe direct project activities in Ukraine and Denmark implemented by the authors partners to this report and their partners.

3. Project Activities in Ukraine

As part of the project two main activities were conducted in Ukraine: One activity was the conduction of camps for 242 widows and their 433 children. The Trauma Healing Institute of the Ukrainian Bible Society (THI) has contextualized a holistic faith-based trauma healing methodology that enables practitioners to include the spiritual dimension of healing. For the women who have lost their husbands and the children who have lost their fathers, this dimension is essential to include in a context like that of Ukraine. As made clear above, the Ukrainian context is inherently religious, and as expressed by the Ukrainian Ambassador in Denmark, Andrii Yanevskyi at a roundtable discussion in Denmark in February 2026, there is a stigma associated with seeking trauma treatment in the public health system. These two factors prompt many traumatized people to seek help in the churches in Ukraine, and therefore it is crucial that the churches are equipped to facilitate trauma healing, where they can and that they know when to refer people to more professional therapy.

In spite of the ongoing war, THI was able to conduct the planned camps and from quantitative and qualitative surveys among participants.

For **widows**, the following changes were reported most often:

- Ability to cope with acute grief and traumatic loss (safe space to express pain)
- Ability to overcome social stigma and isolation (reduction of sense of being different, countering discriminatory social narratives, forming new identity)
- Restoration of motherhood (skills to support own children in grief, regulation of own emotions to remain emotionally accessible to children, re-establishing of routines and predictability for children)
- Spiritual perception of the loss (handling existential questions of *Why us? Where was God?* Search of meaning in the continued existence, faith as foundational resource)

For **children**, the following changes were reported:

- Improvement of sleep
- Reduction of aggression / auto-aggression
- Restoration of interest in games, education, communication
- Ability to talk about their father without paralyzing pain

Younger children (5-10 y.o.)

- Being able to express feelings that cannot be explained with words through art
- Normalization of 'odd' reactions (aggression, regression, hyperactivity)
- Creation of rituals to remember their father (drawings, letters, stories)

Teenagers (11-17 y.o.)

- Being able to discuss difficult topics in groups (anger towards their father, survivor's guilt, fear of the future)
- Being able to work with their new identity (*Who am I without my father? Will I become like him?*)
- Gained skills of self-regulation (breathing exercises, prayer, sport)

“After losing my husband, my world seemed to stop. There was a feeling of emptiness, confusion, and not knowing how to go on. The hardest part was not only to endure my own pain, but to remain strong for my child. She is my anchor and at the same time my reason to keep moving forward. At the camp, for the first time in a long while, I felt understood without words. When we women gathered together – each with her own story, but with the same pain – I felt that I was not alone. That means so much.

Thank you to everyone for your openness, your support, and for being there. It is easier together”

–THI camp participant



Photo: Trauma Healing Institute

Called to Freedom

The other activity was a national forum in Kyiv, gathering 350 practitioners from around the country. The theme of the forum was “Called to Freedom” and the aim was to gather community leaders, psychologists, chaplains, educators, and volunteers from across Ukraine to share experience, support one another, and seek renewal. Unfortunately, due to security concerns, it was not possible to have Danish representation there as originally intended, but some of the local partners of the other grant holders under CKU were able to participate. The forum was an important step in building an interconfessional network of trauma healing practitioners with shared resource and referral mechanisms across denominations.

4. Project Activities in Denmark

The Danish and Ukrainian churches and Christian organizations have had some ties before the full-scale war of 2022. Several of the minor protestant churches in Ukraine – Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostals and Baptist – were part of the same European communities. The Danish Methodist pastor Christian Alsted served as bishop for the Methodist church of the Nordic, Baltics and Ukraine for a decade, wherefore he was also the episcopal overseer of Ukraine. The Norwegian and Danish Bible societies had in the 1990s helped the founding of the Ukrainian Bible Society, wherefore the connection was strong and further strengthened by the deputy chair of the Ukrainian society, who had been educated in Norway.

In 2022, the Interchurch office (The Lutheran Evangelical Church of Denmark's office for Interchurch dialogue -LECD) and its church spearheaded a major effort to both welcome Ukrainians but also strengthen relations with Ukraine. A report from September 2022 maps the LECD work on Ukrainian displaced people during the first phase of the war and conclude that it was the largest social-diaconal mobilization of the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Denmark since World War II.

The work continued for many church and faith-based organizations in Denmark building on the initial contacts. In the Christmas of 2022, a Ukrainian Orthodox priest from the independent Orthodox church of Ukraine held the first Christmas Service in Denmark for Ukrainians in Skjern and late the same week a joined ecumenical one in the Cathedral in Copenhagen, as the first joint church-service between Ukrainian Orthodox and The Lutheran Evangelical Church of Denmark. This grew into a joined cooperation to found a Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Denmark (founded in 2024) and several diplomatic visits to each other, such as the primates visit in 2025.

In 2025, the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations and its Danish counterpart, the National Council of Churches in Denmark, signed a memorandum of cooperation to further strengthen cooperation.

“When times come” - conference in Copenhagen May 2025

The memorandum between the church councils was signed as part of a delegation visit from Ukraine to Denmark. A major part of the visit was a conference held on May 26th 2025 and organised by the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO) and its Danish counterpart, the National Council of Churches in Denmark, together with the Danish Bible Society, CKU (Centre for Church-Based Development) and Interchurch (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark's office for ecumenical relations) on just peace and reconciliation.

The conference was kindly hosted by The Ukraine House in Copenhagen and addressed three main themes:

1. UCCRO presented the current situation in Ukraine, including the challenges faced by religious communities and their priorities and objectives during the ongoing war.
2. A Ukrainian representative from the Trauma Healing Institute presented their work, focusing on the widespread impact of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Ukraine. It was emphasized that the war has led to a significant increase in psychological suffering, which must be addressed as an integral part of both ongoing support efforts and future reconstruction.
3. A panel of Ukrainian and international theologians discussed the concept of just peace in the present context, including the conditions under which meaningful reconciliation and forgiveness may be possible. The discussion drew on experiences from other European

conflict zones, including the former Yugoslavia, with a view to identifying lessons learned and avoiding past shortcomings.

The conference became a focal point for the Danish and Ukrainian sides to share experiences, insights and points of view, in particular related to the larger theme of reconciliation. As one key Ukrainian delegation member expressed the situation – it is hard to forgive someone, who haven't asked for forgiveness. The question remained for the Ukrainian side “when time would come” for such a conversation.

The final session consisted of a discussion on potential initiatives to support UCCRO and its humanitarian partners. Members of the Danish Parliament participated in this session.

On the following day, the Ukrainian delegation presented their perspectives and experiences to a cross-party group of parliamentarians at the Danish Parliament, in a session hosted by the Speaker of the Parliament, Søren Gade.



Photo: CKU

Hosting of Conference of European Churches yearly summit

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the National Council of Churches in Denmark convened a meeting of the European National Councils of Churches and CEC Member Churches from 15–17 September 2025 in Nyborg, Denmark. The gathering consisted of aprox. 70 representatives from across Europe, who in their conversation focused on the role of Christian citizenship and the responsibility of churches in engaging with public life amid shifting politics, renewed security concerns, and the ongoing call to peace across the continent. The meeting explored how citizenship is not a neutral or abstract concept, but one shaped by specific

geopolitical contexts. The Russian war against Ukraine was highlighted as an essential backdrop for such a conversation but also illustrating the diversity of Christian responses: some affirm democratic values, others critique them; some advocate for just peace, while others invoke the concept of just war. These perspectives, participants noted, underline the importance of ethical discernment and contextual analysis in shaping an authentic Christian witness today.

At the meeting, representatives of churches in Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, but also Estonia and Ireland in the meeting presented contexts of conflict or tension, in which churches are challenged to contribute to peace, reconciliation, and unity. This was used as a common place for conversation on what constitutes a just peace and reconciliation.

Round table Discussion in February 2026

In February 2026, National Council of Churches in Denmark, together with CKU and Folkekirken Nødhjælp (DanChurchAid) gathered faith-based organisations for a roundtable discussion with Ukrainian Ambassador Andrii Yanevskyi and Lars von Spreckelsen-Syberg, Deputy Head of the European Neighbourhood Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

In his opening remarks, the Ambassador highlighted the crucial role of churches and faith-based actors in trauma healing and psychosocial support - emphasising that many Ukrainians turn to their local priests or ministers when experiencing trauma or psychological difficulties.

Secretary General dr. Emil Saggau shared an overview of the religious landscape of Ukraine and gave an update on the current situation. He was followed by Peter Bo Larsen, Country Director for DanChurchAid in Ukraine, who presented key insights from the report "Faith-based actors in Ukraine - mapping Contributions, Needs, Divides, and Growth Areas in Wartime," and underlined the most important aspects of faith-based work in the country. The report was developed by Dialogue in Action / Діалог у Дії, ADRA Denmark, Norwegian Church Aid / Kirkens Nødhjelp, and Folkekirken Nødhjælp (DanChurchAid).



Photo: CKU

5. Conference of European Churches: Pathways to peace

The national Danish Ukraine Nexus project is best viewed within the broader European attempts by churches and faith-based organisations to support their Ukrainian partners during the full-scale war. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a network of protestant, orthodox and catholic churches across Europe, and since June 2023 CEC has served as a platform for Pathways to Peace, connecting European and Ukrainian churches. The activities have included a visit to UCCRO, the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, two European conferences on peace and theology as well as the Russian-world concept, and two network activities in Ukraine on ecumenical formation and public theology.

More information on Pathways to Peace is available [here](#).

6. Other Faith based Contributions in Ukraine

Actors: International Aid Services, Charity Gift, PMU, EDOBRO

Regions: Odesa, Oblast, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Rivne, Lviv, Mykolaiv

Contribution:

We are currently implementing three interventions in Ukraine, driven by strong support from the Danish denominations within our membership base.

Two of these interventions are based in Izmail (Odesa Oblast) and focus on providing psychosocial support and immediate care to internally displaced people, children and the elderly. These projects also include capacity building for our church-based partner organizations.

The third intervention¹ is implemented in collaboration with our Swedish sister organization, PMU, and our Ukrainian partner, EDOBRO - and their youth branch YMBF. Through this partnership, we run integrated child safety camps in six different urban regions (Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Rivne, Lviv, Mykolaiv, and Odesa).

With our Nordic partners we are also currently running a fundraising campaign across our denominations in Scandinavia, to raise funds for our Ukrainian sister churches (Danish example letter attached).

By working closely with churches and church-based partners, we are able to deliver psychosocial support at the individual, family, and community levels tailored to target youth and other high-need groups, such as displaced families.

¹ Edobro project co-financed by PMU: Its core activity is 78 one-day camps offering psychosocial support (PSS), mine safety, and digital literacy for children, alongside 78 sessions for parents to build skills for supporting children at home. Facilitators and volunteers will be trained to sustain activities in communities. To ensure long-term impact, three methodological guides will be produced and integrated into the work of at least 250 schools, NGOs, and faith-based organisations. Regional coordination meetings will unite local authorities, civil society, and international partners to assess needs, share results, and develop policy briefs for integration into local strategies."

Actors: The Baptist Union in Denmark, The Ukrainian Baptist Union

Regions: Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, and Kherson

Contribution:

The Baptist Church in Denmark cooperates in Ukraine with the Ukrainian Baptist Union (UBU) through a long-standing partnership that has been formalised since 2023 and is rooted in a shared engagement within the European and global Baptist networks. The work in Ukraine covers activities in 18 regions, including Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, and Kherson. The main activities consist of summer camps focused on psychosocial support for children affected by war, as well as food security for internally displaced families in frontline areas. As a follow-up to the psychosocial support, children are offered structured group activities based on Biblica's trauma-informed curriculum, which helps them process experiences, build resilience, and strengthen coping skills. The work is implemented through local Baptist churches, which function as trusted and well-established actors in their communities and are often among the first to respond to humanitarian needs. The particular strengths of the churches lie in their close relationships with families, cooperation and engagement with local authorities, strong volunteer networks, and their ability to create safe spaces for children and young people. Through volunteer training, the organisation of children's camps, and follow-up community activities, the project combines humanitarian assistance, civil society strengthening, and peacebuilding. At the same time, the partnership contributes to building the capacity of churches so they can deliver support in line with international standards for protection, accountability, and psychosocial well-being.

Actors: National Council of Churches in Denmark (NCCD) and The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO).

Regions: All regions and in Denmark

Contribution:

We are working to ensure collaborate work on church-based diplomacy and policy in regards to different agenda a) just peace as a theological concept b) sanctions on church-related organisations involved in potential war-crimes c) coordination of efforts in international fora, such as the World Council of Churches etc.

In May 2025, we signed a memorandum of understanding, which has since then been used among other for a project for Ukrainian chaplains, who – together with their families and kids - have been offered a shorter stay in Denmark away from the frontline. A pilot of the initiative was carried through in September 2025 for 20 families and funded through private initiatives. The project is in collaboration with the Danish Chaplains service in the armed forces of Denmark.

In the coming year, we seek to expand this program and continue to search for ways to build the partnership with UCCRO wider.

Actors: Interchurch Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Conference of European Churches (CEC), the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, (OCU).

Contribution: The Interchurch Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark is partnering with and supporting churches in Ukraine in a number of ways:

- a) supporting Ukrainian refugees and migrants in Denmark through local parish initiatives such as cultural events, homework tutors, language café, etc.
- b) supporting the establishment of a Danish Ukrainian NGO supporting pastoral visits from the Orthodox Church in Ukraine (metropolitan Epiphanius) to Denmark;
- c) engaging with the Ukrainian network of churches through UCCRO together with our European Conference of Churches (CEC) and their program Pathways to Peace, especially focusing on building capacity in public theology with Ukrainian churches. We visited and celebrated Defenders Day with the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and the Lutheran Church in Ukraine (GELCU) 30. September – 2. October 2025.



Photo: Camp Maximum

Actors: Acts Mission, Camp Maximum, Pilgrim International

Regions: Cherkasy Oblast

Contribution: Rehabilitation of Ukrainian Veterans and their families

In cooperation between Acts Mission from Denmark and Camp Maximum from Ukraine this project aims to rehabilitate Ukrainian veterans and their families through therapy, family care, and reintegration support. It features a two-phase program: Phase 1 involves an intensive recovery program with emotional, physical, and family-focused healing; Phase 2 transitions participants to government-operated veteran hubs, offering ongoing psychological, social, and practical support. The initiative involves local churches to be involved in building family networks to support the reintegration of both veterans and their families. Camp Maximum will provide training for staff and volunteers and Danish churches are involved for expertise in social initiatives, fostering sustainable veteran care. Endorsed by Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy, the project aspires to expand its model nationwide, aiding thousands of veterans and promoting community cohesion during ongoing conflicts.

Actors: Danish Bible Society, Trauma Healing Institute, Ukrainian Bible Society,

Regions: All regions

Contribution:

We are working with the Ukrainian Bible Society and have supported them through our fellowship in the United Bible Societies since 1996.

In 2014 the Bible society in Ukraine founded a Trauma Healing work, that provides biblical trauma healing through support groups and camps for widows and children who have lost a parent.

The Trauma Healing Institute was founded official in 2023 have trained more than 6000 volunteer group facilitators who are facilitating trauma healing groups in all the different denominations working together with the Bible Society and all over Ukraine.

The Bible Society are reporting a rising demand for bibles and are currently handing out 1000 bibles a day, a project that we are also supporting.

In the coming year we will continue to support this and are working at getting churches to help us in doing so. This summer we have been picked as the fundraising project at a large church summer camp, SommerOase, where we are planning to get Deputy General Secretary Anatoliy Raychynets and Victoria Raychynets, leader of the Trauma Healing Institute at the camp to share and to create more awareness on support from churches



7. Concluding remarks

A Ukrainian colleague remarked that a just peace and reconciliation will come “when the time comes.” The remark is both sharp and realistic, yet it also carries a quiet echo of the hope embedded in the Christian gospel. It is sharp in its refusal of the idea that a simple or “cheap” peace can be achieved at present without immense costs — in human lives as well as resources. It is realistic, too, in acknowledging that the prospects for such a peace remain distant, not least because the Russian side appears unwilling to accept its terms. The war in Ukraine is perhaps something more fundamental for both sides, which also helps explain its ongoing and deeply entrenched nature. It is not merely a war over resources or political power. It is a conflict shaped by imperial ideology, in which the idea of a Russian Christian civilisation is presented as being in existential opposition to the West, with the destruction of Ukraine portrayed as a necessary condition for success. In other words, the struggle has become existential for both sides, and a costly peace settlement could be perceived as a fatal blow to either side in the long term.

At the same time, the statement also reflects a fundamental Christian hope: that justice and peace will ultimately be restored — if not in this life, then in the next. As the Epistle of James states: “Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:18).

The work of faith-based organisations in Ukraine balances between these same two realities: a realistic understanding of the facts on the ground and a steadfast hope that peace and justice will prevail. In Ukraine, faith-based relief actors have played an essential role in supporting communities affected by conflict and displacement. This report has provided an overview of the Danish contribution so far, which all partners seek to expand and further develop.

In our roundtable discussions and conversations with partners, particular emphasis was placed on the urgent need for strengthened psycho-social support and trauma-healing initiatives, recognizing the deep and long-lasting impact of war on individuals and society as a whole. Ukraine is facing ever-growing challenges related to returning soldiers and civilians suffering from trauma and other psycho-social difficulties. The need for veteran support is therefore urgent and will be a key element in the rebuilding of Ukraine.

This rebuilding must begin now. There is an urgent need to move beyond emergency relief towards longer-term, sustainable approaches rooted in Ukrainian realities. This shift entails strengthening equitable partnerships with local civil society actors and faith-based organisations, in line with principles of locally led development, while also engaging constructively with public institutions at local and national levels. The future of humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine will depend on deepening these partnerships—ensuring that support is not only sustained but increasingly anchored in local ownership.

Throughout our work, the importance of preparing for future reconciliation has been consistently emphasised. This includes fostering inter-church dialogue and strengthening cooperation across faith communities, while recognising the church not only as a driver of reconciliation, but as a vital space where dialogue, trust-building, and healing can take root. In this regard, churches and church-based organizations in Denmark are uniquely positioned to contribute. Through long-standing relationships with churches and faith-based organisations in Ukraine, they can support locally rooted initiatives that bridge divides, accompany communities over time, and connect grassroots efforts to broader reconciliation processes. Looking ahead, when the time comes to move towards a just and enduring peace, such locally anchored engagement will be essential.

High-level dialogue and coordinated reconciliation efforts will need to build on — and remain closely linked to — these trusted networks, ensuring that processes are both credible and deeply embedded in Ukrainian society, thereby laying the foundations for sustainable peace and social cohesion.

Such work requires sustained funding like the funding made available through CKU. Funding for psycho-social support and the education of trauma workers in Ukraine must be prioritized. Closely connected to this is the need for funding dedicated to veteran support and the integration of veterans into civil society. Finally, resources are needed to strengthen networks among military chaplains and to promote Danish faith-based organisations and councils as potential platforms for peacebuilding, dialogue, and reconciliation efforts at the local, regional, and global levels.

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