

My name is Natasha Williams (nee Gryva) and I am from a North Eastern Ukrainian small town called Shostka in the Sumy region. I am married to a Welsh man, David Williams, and I have been living in Radyr for almost 20 years and I also work in the Welsh NHS as an Occupational Therapist.

Before 24th February not many people in the UK had probably heard about the Sumy region. However, things have changed in the last week. I was woken up by a series of one line messages from my sister, who lives in Kyiv with her husband and three young children. It was pretty early in the morning and the text messages read:

*The war is breaking off
Attacks from all directions
Towards Gluhov (a small town near my home town in the North East)
Children and I are trying to leave Kyiv, stuck in massive traffic for the last 2 hours
Sergey (her husband) stayed behind to fight
Sirens across Ukraine
Bombing airports and bridges.*

I burst into tears and I cried non-stop for 14 hours. It took my sister and her children 15 hours to reach a small town in central Ukraine. They didn't have satnav or mobile phone reception for several hours and the anxiety we as a family experienced, I can't even describe it to you. She managed to reach her mother-in-law safely and unharmed and they are staying there at the moment.

A week forward, I still cry for several hours a day, being grateful that my children and my husband are safe here, however feeling terrible guiltily and sadness that I am not with my family in Ukraine.

On the 2nd day of the war, I received a photo from my sister from her very close friend with the new-born baby hiding in the cellar. That picture made me incredibly sad and angry with myself. I remember thinking; your crying is not helping anybody. I usually have a "Get on with it" attitude, and my normal life motto is, "It is what it is, and keep going on regardless".

I decided to reach out to a local church, and I had Rev'd Vicki's contact from my neighbours. She offered to help immediately. The British public and the British Polish diaspora in the UK and across the world have been incredibly supportive. However, every single day I receive a number of requests from friends and family to support with medical and other equipment for the territorial defence as they are not able to date to get access to funds or equipment from charities.

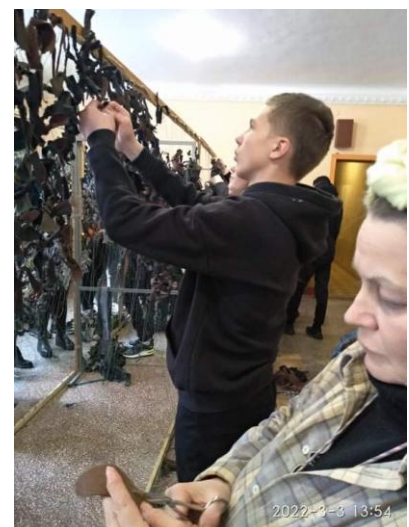
I have managed to link with a charitable foundation that supports the territorial defence in Kyiv where my brother-in-law is based. My brother-in-law and my sister are some of the funders of this charitable foundation. My sister and I also managed to link now my friends from my home town (Shostka) to this charitable foundation. They can request the equipment they are required and receive it. If you would like to support this, please donate via Christ Church, Radyr (details at the end)*.

I am attaching a few photos I received from my friends and family.

I want to express my sincere gratitude who took the time to read this and who have supported and continue to support people in Ukraine.

In the photo on the right is my nephew; he loves computers, and his hope is to study graphic design. He is 15 now, and he wants to help to fight the Russian Army - he is volunteering now to hand-make camouflage nets with his grandparents and the extended local community.

I mentioned this photo earlier – my sister's very close friend with the new born baby.



I received this photo from my cousin. He lives in Kharkiv with his family. This is my nephew. They spend majority of their days now in the cellar.

My 11-year-old nephew expressed his feelings and emotions:

Today is the 7th day of the war...

Most of my family left Kyiv.

I can see my mum is crying sometimes. She is worrying, when she sees our soldiers being sent to war, she is worrying about what has been happening in our country. She is also worried about my dad; he is left behind in Kyiv to protect us and to fight.

I am really worrying about my family and their lives and I don't even know what my brother Danya is feeling now...

But I think everything is going to be ok.



* Rev'd Vicki Burrows has said that any money donated via Christ Church will be passed to Ukraine via me. Donations can be made via the following bank account:

The Garth Ministry Area
Sort code 08-92-99
Account number 67241527

Please add 'Ukraine' as a reference to enable the money to be channelled appropriately.

Alternatively, please put cheques (payable to The Garth Ministry Area) or money in an envelope (marked 'for Ukraine') and leave them in church or take them to the Rectory, Radyr..