

And God Made People

For many of us, the most consequential thing that we have lost during the last several years has been our faith in each other. The fear and uncertainty of a pandemic has been part of this. When faced with the unknown, and an unpredictable danger, people are more susceptible to anyone or anything, no matter how farfetched, that is presented as an easy fix to return things to 'normal' (meaning when we felt in control). The more out of control the world feels, the more many of us look for people or things to blame. If someone suggests a scapegoat (usually someone or something new or different and also powerless with no actual responsibility for or ability to change the situation) it becomes easy to latch onto the idea and take out our frustrations on that person, group, or thing. It can be comforting to assign blame. You can answer the 'why' question, and not have to consider your own role and responsibility for the situation at hand or the hard work and sacrifices that may be required to improve things. Unfortunately, a few people who understand these human tendencies, are willing to use their knowledge for personal gain. It is because too many of us have been willing to let this happen that people have lost faith in each other. The people around us are, and always have been a diverse group – even within our families and communities there has never been agreement on everything. For years we have shared joys and sorrows; lived, worked, solved problems, and had fun with each other, but suddenly we are being repeatedly told that if someone holds certain views, they are a threat, not to be trusted, are even out to 'get' us. We are told seeking common ground, dialog, reason, and diversity are bad things. Too many of us are forgetting the friendship, comradery, community spirit and accomplishments working and living with these people around us in the past made possible. People are messy, contradictory, imperfect, sometimes disappointing, sometimes surprising, creative, unpredictable, sometimes shortsighted, sometimes hurtful, sometimes compassionate, sometimes exasperating, sometimes astonishing creatures of God's creation and all of them are made in God's image. We need to start looking for God's image and grace in people again. Yes, it can be hard work, but God calls us to do the work required to be his people together. The rewards are heavenly!

Pray for:

- **The people of Yemen** – 4 + years of fighting have left 24 million + people (2/3 of the population) needing humanitarian assistance. Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis, says the UN. The Church of the Brethren & partners are helping reduce food insecurity, provide safe water, & promote good hygiene. 3,000 Church World Service hygiene kits are on their way.
- **Volcanic eruption, Indonesia** – At least 22 have died. Whole communities are buried in ash.
- **Those dealing with COVID.** Case number are growing worldwide. In some places, the numbers are the highest ever. The Omicron variant is already in a third of U.S. states. Scientists are rushing to understand Omicron as the world struggles to respond to it. Pray for those trying to find the best ways to stop COVID & care for the sick, especially the 37% of those facing long term symptoms. With the holiday season underway, help everyone remember stopping the spread of COVID depends on the actions of all of us. Forgive us where our attitudes, views, or world outlook, have made it easy for people to disregard facts & mistrust the medical, scientific, & public officials who are trying hard to understand COVID; keep us all safe; stop this pandemic.
- **Those living with gun violence.** 5 mass shootings in December. 49 in November, including the Michigan school shooting – a known-to-be troubled teen killed 4 & injured 7. This tragedy is compounded by the role the shooter's parents may have played in facilitating it.
- **People forced from their homes** by persecution, conflict, violence, & human rights violations, (more than 82 million of them). Pray for refugees facing winter without shelter. Remember those who cross water to reach safety. The total number drown crossing the Mediterranean is unknown. 30 drown crossing the English Chanel in November. The total number lost in the Chanel is unknown. Remember refugees trapped along borders. Every life is precious regardless of age, nationality, ethnicity, gender, politics, or religion.



And God Made People

For many of us, the most consequential thing that we have lost during the last several years has been our faith in each other. The fear and uncertainty of a pandemic has been part of this. When faced with the unknown, and an unpredictable danger, people are more susceptible to anyone or anything, no matter how farfetched, that is presented as an easy fix to return things to 'normal' (meaning when we felt in control). The more out of control the world feels, the more many of us look for people or things to blame. If someone suggests a scapegoat (usually someone or something new or different and also powerless with no actual responsibility for or ability to change the situation) it becomes easy to latch onto the idea and take out our frustrations on that person, group, or thing. It can be comforting to assign blame. You can answer the 'why' question, and not have to consider your own role and responsibility for the situation at hand or the hard work and sacrifices that may be required to improve things. Unfortunately, a few people who understand these human tendencies, are willing to use their knowledge for personal gain. It is because too many of us have been willing to let this happen that people have lost faith in each other. The people around us are, and always have been a diverse group – even within our families and communities there has never been agreement on everything. For years we have shared joys and sorrows; lived, worked, solved problems, and had fun with each other, but suddenly we are being repeatedly told that if someone holds certain views, they are a threat, not to be trusted, are even out to 'get' us. We are told seeking common ground, dialog, reason, and diversity are bad things. Too many of us are forgetting the friendship, comradery, community spirit and accomplishments working and living with these people around us in the past made possible. People are messy, contradictory, imperfect, sometimes disappointing, sometimes surprising, creative, unpredictable, sometimes shortsighted, sometimes hurtful, sometimes compassionate, sometimes exasperating, sometimes astonishing creatures of God's creation and all of them are made in God's image. We need to start looking for God's image and grace in people again. Yes, it can be hard work, but God calls us to do the work required to be his people together. The rewards are heavenly!

Pray for:

- **The people of Yemen** – 4 + years of fighting have left 24 million + people (2/3 of the population) needing humanitarian assistance. Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis, says the UN. The Church of the Brethren & partners are helping reduce food insecurity, provide safe water, & promote good hygiene. 3,000 Church World Service hygiene kits are on their way.
- **Volcanic eruption, Indonesia** – At least 22 have died. Whole communities are buried in ash.
- **Those dealing with COVID.** Case number are growing worldwide. In some places, the numbers are the highest ever. The Omicron variant is already in a third of U.S. states. Scientists are rushing to understand Omicron as the world struggles to respond to it. Pray for those trying to find the best ways to stop COVID & care for the sick, especially the 37% of those facing long term symptoms. With the holiday season underway, help everyone remember stopping the spread of COVID depends on the actions of all of us. Forgive us where our attitudes, views, or world outlook, have made it easy for people to disregard facts & mistrust the medical, scientific, & public officials who are trying hard to understand COVID; keep us all safe; stop this pandemic.
- **Those living with gun violence.** 5 mass shootings in December. 49 in November, including the Michigan school shooting – a known-to-be troubled teen killed 4 & injured 7. This tragedy is compounded by the role the shooter's parents may have played in facilitating it.
- **People forced from their homes** by persecution, conflict, violence, & human rights violations, (more than 82 million of them). Pray for refugees facing winter without shelter. Remember those who cross water to reach safety. The total number drown crossing the Mediterranean is unknown. 30 drown crossing the English Chanel in November. The total number lost in the Chanel is unknown. Remember refugees trapped along borders. Every life is precious regardless of age, nationality, ethnicity, gender, politics, or religion.

