

## Christ Has Come!



Despite the sadness and suffering; the frustration and confusion; the suspicion and the anger of these days, **Christ has come!** Celebrating has been difficult this season. Faces are missing from around the table. Some have been lost to COVID, while others are absent, only present on a screen, or as voices through a phone as we strive to keep each other safe yet still keep in touch. Our sense of family and community has been strained and we are impatient for 'the good old days' in a new way that is more intense and perhaps more narrowly focused than ever before. Now, for many, the past does not represent a way of seeing the world quite as much as it does the freedom to safely physically touch and hold loved ones close. *Pray for families, especially those who must be apart or alone.*

At the same time, the realities of different world views and outlooks on life have never been framed in quite the way they are now. The thirst for power, self-centeredness and the willingness to destroy anyone who disagrees with you is being modeled in the highest places to the detriment of us all. The human tendencies to look for or create villains; or play the blame game rather than taking responsibility for our own actions, are in the forefront with encouragement from some leaders who regularly do both. The continuing damage being done by past wrongs that have too long been denied rather than corrected, has repeatedly showed a very public face bringing loud cries for change by many, and yet tragically denial and even praise from some. There are a favored few who abuse power and take advantage of the privileges of their positions for their own good at the expense of everyone else; heartbreakingly, with the largely unwitting support from some of those they hurt the most. *Pray for forgiveness where you have contributed to harming others through self-centeredness.*

Yes, this is not the first time the world has been torn apart by deceit, greed, or the thirst for power. It is also not the first time disease has ravaged the population bringing suffering and death to thousands. Yet, once again the message of Christmas is the same. In a manger in Bethlehem, a baby came to bring light and peace to the world! No, he did not bring a bit of magic that can 'fix' everything as we sit back and watch. He brought the good news that there is a new way to live that comes from God. It requires commitment and daily effort on our part. It requires constant striving for wisdom and truth as we work at living together with all our differences and gifts for the good of all. Just as remembering the coming of Jesus has done in the past, Christmas offers an opportunity to start again fresh to make the world a better place. The world that baby was born into in Bethlehem was not perfect either, but with him, hope was born and the tools we need to make a difference for good came with his ministry. Do not let go of that hope, and get to work! *Pray for God to help you find the work you can do to make a difference for good in this new year.*

### This week, pray for:

- **Everyone** as we prepare for the start of a new year. May we all start fresh, open to new possibilities, & willing to work together to make a difference for good in the lives of everyone.
- the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Help everyone continue to do all we can to keep each other safe. The pandemic still grows worse. Remember those who handle, administer, & receive the vaccines. Remember those who are caring for the sick & the dying. Remember all who are suffering.
- **Nigeria**. Boko Haram fights government forces in the Askira Uba area, Borno State (northeastern Nigeria). There is also reason for thanksgiving. 39 people were baptized in the Rijau area of Niger State (western Nigeria). 14 children were named, 39 dedicated, & 98 people took part in communion. God is at work! Just learned Christmas celebrations were not possible for many. Several Boko Haram attacks on Christmas Eve & the day after Christmas left several church buildings (some for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time) & many homes burned; at least 12 people dead, & many abducted including an EYN pastor. Many spent Christmas hiding in the forest from Boko Haram

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