

## Pray Without Ceasing

- **Ukraine:** The invasion continues. Pray that a way to peace can be found. The Russians have pulled out of some areas, but continue devastating attacks on civilians. Some cities continue to be under siege & are being destroyed. At least 4 million Ukrainians have fled the country. 6 million more are displaced within the country & some 12 million are trapped & unable to leave. Injury & death totals are not clear, but estimates are that at least 1,100 civilians have been killed. Some 1,300 Ukrainian soldiers have died, & between 7,000 & 15,000 Russian troops have died. There are reports that some people are being forcibly taken to Russia. There are reports that some people have been tortured, women raped, & some executed by Russian troops. . .
- **The COVID Pandemic.** New COVID case numbers are declining in much of the U.S., though a new variant is now gaining ground in the U.S. & in the rest of the world. A second new variant has been found in the U.K. Some countries are still seeing climbing case numbers. Many places are lifting safety protocols, even as the pandemic continues. Doctors & scientists are struggling to understand the realities of 'long COVID' & the increased risk of heart disease (among other things) in those who have recovered from COVID. These issues are affecting more people than once thought – including some who had only a mild case of the virus.
- **Nigeria** – where Boko Haram, bandits & criminal gangs along with corrupt military & government officials continues to be a threat, especially in parts of the country that have become “ungoverned spaces” where the people are at the mercy of these criminals.
- **All those dealing with natural disasters. Among them:** Those facing the spring storm season underway in the U.S. The west & some of the south is in drought. Brazil, where heavy rain has caused flooding & landslides leading to a number of deaths.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – there have been 222 gun incidents in the last 72 hours (206 injured, 95 died). 121 mass shootings (up from 113 last week) in 2022 in which 133 people died & 496 were injured. Ten of these incidents happened April 2,3,& 4 in which 55 people were injured and 13 people died. The 2022 gun death total is now 11,160. 408 deaths & 972 of the injured are children (17 or younger). Many states, including Ohio, are weakening gun laws, despite the fact that the number of homicides & other gun crimes has increased where gun laws are weakened. Access to guns is often more dangerous to gun owners than to others since more than half of gun deaths (6,336 so far this year) are suicides. There are 393 million civilian owned guns in the U.S. – more guns than cars.



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*When we pray for the people in need in our world, we are praying for peace. Peace is not just the absence of war, it is Shalom – living in harmony with each other & with God's creation. Shalom means health, safety, tranquility, wholeness, & rest – the welfare & prosperity of all. Praying for the needs of others is an important first step in loving people as God calls us to. Next steps include using our time, talents, & resources to help others when disaster strikes, offering comfort in times of need, & working for change when the suffering of others comes from discrimination, persecution, exploitation, or abuse. When shalom does not exist for everyone, no one is fully at peace!*

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