

Be In Prayer

- **Ukraine:** Pray that a way to peace can be found. A new Russian offensive is underway. Now more than 5.5 million Ukrainians have fled their country. Injury & death totals remain unclear but the U.N. High Commissioner says at least 2,665 civilians have died & 3,053 have been injured. These figures are likely very low. There are estimates that at least 10,100 civilians have been killed in the city of Mariupol alone. A number of mass graves have been found in areas where the Russians have left. Attempts to get civilians out of Mariupol are being made, but Russia is hindering them in some cases holding people for interrogation for as long as a month & in some cases taking people to Russia by force. The use of mines in the Black Sea is now putting all shipping in the Sea at risk since some of the mines have broken free and their location is not known. Some have been found off the Turkish coast.
- **The COVID Pandemic.** New COVID case numbers are rising again in the U.S., including in Ohio. The number of new U.S. cases is up 51.8% in the last 2 weeks. The number of cases in Canada & Mexico is declining but is up by 53.4% in Central America. 7 of the 10 South America countries are also reporting increases in cases. The new BA.2 variant is dominant. In some countries that are seeing an increase in cases, safety protocols, that had been lifted are now being reimposed. In other places, political leaders are ending mandated health safety measures even though medical experts continue to advise following them. The realities of 'long COVID' & the increased risk of several health issues in those who have recovered from COVID – even mild cases, is still being investigated. 2,697,050 people in Ohio have had COVID. 38,428 Ohioans have died from the virus.
- **All those dealing with natural disasters. Among them:** Those facing the spring storm season in the U.S. The west & some of the south is in drought. The number of fires is growing. New Mexico & Nevada are among the states dealing with several large fast-moving fires. South Africa, where heavy rain has caused serious flooding.
- **All Refugees & Displaces People** As we remember the refugees from Ukraine who dominate the news, do not forget there are 84 million forcibly displaced people in the world, 48 million internally displaced people, 26.6 million refugees, & 4.4 million people seeking asylum. 35 million of the forcibly displaced are children. 1 million children have been born as refugees. Only 142,900 people have been able to return to their home countries. At least 4.3 million people are stateless, meaning the countries that are their home (& have been the homes of their families for generations) will not treat them as citizens.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – there have been 173 mass shootings (up from 163 last week) in 2022. The 2022 gun death total is now 14,565. 530 deaths & 1,297 of the injured are children (17 or younger). 237 are injured, & 98 are dead in the last 72 hours due to gun violence. Many states, including Ohio, are weakening gun laws, even though the number of homicides & other gun crimes increases where gun laws are weakened. 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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