

## The Need For Prayer Is Great

COVID weariness is making many people less careful and less willing to listen to anything about the virus. Remaining vigilant over the long haul is not easy, even when long term health and even life depends on it for other people as well as for ourselves. The great 1918 flu pandemic, to which this pandemic is often compared, was different. After a couple years, the flu strain that caused it did disappear. That is not happening this time. The 'normal' people crave may not return. Pray that we will be able to find and accept a new normal that will let us keep each other as safe as possible and move forward.



We are also watching another tragedy unfold that has no end in sight. The daily dose of war news from Ukraine that comes into our homes is a constant reminder of unspeakable conditions and horrors most of us cannot imagine as we sit in relative comfort and safety. For the people of Nigeria, of Central America, of Afghanistan, of Syria, of Sri Lanka, of South Sudan, and of too many other places in this world, the images of violence and destruction are far easier to grasp because they see and live through similar horrors on their own door steps – if they still have door steps. . . Unbelievably, in this unspeakable Ukrainian drama, Putin seems willing escalate it into a potentially world ending catastrophe, a possibility that has not felt this close for a long time. Pray for those involved; for a renewed regard for the value of human life and an end to the violence. Pray that we may not succumb to complacency, and lead us to the ways we can work for peace for all people in Ukraine and where ever violence is disrupting life.

- **Ukraine:** The latest Russian offensive continues. 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 10,000 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. What happens to these people & where they are is not known.
- **The COVID Pandemic.** New COVID statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO) are appalling & sobering. The WHO now says at least 15 million have died world-wide of COVID or as a result of the pandemic including those who died because they could not get the care, they needed for other reasons because COVID overwhelmed health systems. Many countries are not willing to share their COVID data, & some are not keeping good records. Others have cut back on testing so they no longer have good data. The real total may be closer to 21 million.
- **Countries Dealing with Major Political &/or Economic Upheaval** making life difficult for everyone. Among them are Sri Lanka, Venezuela, the Philippines, South Africa, Nigeria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Democratic of Congo, Columbia (where a drug cartel has “locked down” dozens of towns – forcing everyone to stay home. They burn people’s cars & shoot anyone who leaves their house. They are retaliating for the arrest & extradition to the U.S. of one of their leaders to face drug charges. More than 24 people have been killed & 180 cars burned. At least 138 towns have been affected. The government seems powerless to protect people.)
- **Syria** – Half of the Syrian population, 23 million people, is displaced after 11 years of war. 5.7 million Syrians are refugees in neighboring countries. Most of the displaced do not have a secure food source. Ukraine is normally a big wheat supplier. Climbing food & energy prices due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine are hurting Syrian & other refugees too.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – there have been 187 mass shootings (up from 173 last week) in 2022. The 2022 gun death total is 15,363 now. 569 deaths & 1,373 of the injured are children (17 or younger). 322 were injured, & 114 died in the last 72 hours due to gun violence. Many states, are weakening gun laws, even though the number of homicides & other gun crimes increases where gun laws are weakened.

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