

Pray Without Ceasing!

- **Ukraine:** The latest Russian offensive continues. Pray for those living in Ukraine with the daily bombardment, hunger, thirst, fear, danger, & the destruction of their world all around them. More than 5.5 million Ukrainians have fled the country. Pray for those who are living as refugees in foreign lands. Pray for those who are so desperate for home they are willing to take the risk of returning to Ukraine even as the war continues. More mass graves are being found in areas where the Russians have left. Pray for those in Russian held areas who are being taken to Russia, often by force, & often having to endure abusive interrogation in the process. What happens to these people & where they are is not known. In Russia, not everyone supports Putin's war despite an intense pro-war propaganda campaign & government control of the media. Many Russians are willing to run the risks & openly protest the war. 15,000 protestors have been arrested so far.
- **The COVID Pandemic.** The COVID picture this week is a cause for concern. The number of cases in the U.S. is up 58.2% over the last 2 weeks with an average of 99,998 new cases a day. As of last week, there have been a million COVID deaths in the U.S. & counting. There is now an official diagnoses code for long COVID so that it can be tracked. Just between October 1, 2021 & January 31, 2022, 78,252 people have been diagnosed with long COVID. Public health officials say the number is probably much higher if everyone who has had COVID would be checked. What's more, 76% of those with long COVID did not require hospitalization when they first got the virus, but were experiencing long COVID symptoms after a few months. This means even light cases of the virus can lead to long-term consequences. There is also concern that we are in the early stages of another surge in cases, including growing numbers of hospitalizations. Be in prayer for those who are sick & their caregivers. Pray that we will be able to find & accept a new normal that will let us keep each other as safe as possible & move forward.
- **Countries Dealing with Major Political and/or Economic Upheaval** making life difficult for everyone. Among them are Sri Lanka, Venezuela, the Philippines, South Africa, Nigeria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Columbia, Syria, Afghanistan. . .
- **All those dealing with natural disasters. Among them:** In the U.S.; those facing spring storm season; & continuing drought in some of the west & south. The number of fires is growing. New Mexico, Nevada, & California are among the states dealing with several large fast-moving fires. South Africa, & India where heavy rain has caused serious flooding. Some countries are experiencing drought & food shortages in some areas & flooding in others.
- **All Refugees & Displaced People** We see daily remembers of the plight of refugees from Ukraine & our hearts go out to them! We must also not forget the millions of other refugees in the world. 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 203 mass shootings (up 16 from last week's 187) in 2022. 7 of them happened over the weekend. The 2022 gun death total is 16,340. This is 977 people higher than last week. 601 deaths & 1,496 of the injured are children (17 or younger). 260 were injured, & 120 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. The number of gun crimes – especially mass shootings that are motivated by racism & white supremacist views is a gut-wrenching reflection of our current political climate.



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