

A Reason For Hope

Once again, we prepare for the coming of God's presence among us through the birth of Jesus the Christ. In our time when so many are caught up in fear and anger, let this Christmas season remind us that through Jesus, God has already given us the things that make for peace and joy in our lives. What are they?



- The gift of salvation
- The gift of his presence through the Holy Spirit
- The gift of love received and shared
- The gift of a community of believers with whom to seek God's leading in our lives
- The gift of giving yourself in service to others
- The gift of forgiveness – both given and received
- The gift of the joy of giving – a full measure pressed down and running over – of the bounty God has given us to give to others

All these and much more come from God – all we must do is accept his gifts and make them part of our lives!

Remember in Prayer:

- **Iran** – peaceful protests against the extreme Islamic government continue.
- **China** – all opposition to government policies is met with violence. The government has eased COVID policy, but now, the number of new COVID cases is overwhelming their medical system.
- **People still recovering from storms & flooding in the U.S. & elsewhere.** There have been new deadly tornados & snow storms this week.
- **Those recovering from earthquakes** – especially a deadly one in Indonesia.
- **Ukraine as the war continues** – attacks against Ukrainian civilians are leaving them without power, heat, & water as winter comes. Anti-war protests in Russia are still met with repression.
- **Haiti** – continuing to dealing with cholera, gang violence, & political unrest.
- **Uganda** – give thanks that the Ebola outbreak seems to be under control.
- **Somalia** –relief help has reached some 6 million people, so a full-blown famine has been averted for now. However, food insecurity continues to be catastrophic. Many people are still hungry. The total number of children who have died is unknown. The danger of famine in the next year continues if the rains do not come since drought, violence, & the resulting displacement of people are ongoing. Those affected by the drought has more than doubled this year to 7.8 million. Drought has displaced nearly 1.3 million of them.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – Wednesday marked the 10th anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in which 20 children & 6 adults died. In the 10 years since Sandy Hook, there have been 4,300 mass shootings, 38 of them in schools. Since 2012, 100 people die every day from guns. Gun deaths are higher than they have been in 30 years. 42,205 people have died in gun violence in 2022 (up 834 from last week), including 1,584 children (up 12 from last week). 37,007 people have been injured (up 616 from last week) including 4,294 children (up 78 from last week). 22,968 of the deaths are suicides (up 462 from last week). There have been 628 mass shootings in 2022 (6 were last week). (Gun Violence Archive statistics)
- **Peru** where a coup attempt failed but political unrest & violence are taking place, & **Germany** where a plot to take over the country was uncovered & prevented.
- **The continuing COVID Pandemic, combined with outbreaks of the RSV virus and flu.** In the U.S. we now have a 'Tripledemic.' There has been a spike in cases since Thanksgiving (45% more new cases & 22% more deaths). Now the number of cases of strep A infection among children is also growing.

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