

## ***A Time to Pray For Peace***



We are known as a Peace Church because we take seriously the teaching of Jesus to love our neighbors *and* our enemies; to do good to those who may hate us or hurt us; and to repay evil with good not more evil. We take seriously the commandment not to kill, and the understanding that following the teaching of Jesus is where our first allegiance lies. Therefore, our early faith ancestors, and many of our ancestors in more recent generations have not participated in war as a matter of conscience. May 15<sup>th</sup> is International Conscientious Objectors Day, a time to remember those who have taken this position, often at great risk to themselves; and advocate for governments around the world to honor the faith and conscience of those who believe that participation in war is wrong, by allowing them to serve others in ways that protect and sustain life rather than taking it. This week, pray for those who are living with violence and war.

- **Haiti** – the situation there continues to get worse. Much of the country, especially the capital, is under gang control. The gangs use fear, intimidation & violence, including rape to ‘control’ territory. Women & girls are particularly at risk. One third of the women & girls in Haiti have been sexually assaulted or raped by gang members.
- **Syria** – 12 years of war there continue. Half a million people have died. Some estimates are that at least 55,000 more civilians have been tortured to death by government forces.
- **Sudan** – 2 military groups are fighting for control of the country. The violence is cutting food & other essential services for many. Hundreds of thousands of people are displaced by the fighting. Many foreign nationals have gotten help getting out. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese have also fled Sudan, but the rest are trapped, many without food or water & under constant bombardment, especially in the capital.
- **Ukraine where the war, now over a year old, continues.** The total number of people killed in the war is not clear but, is estimated to be at least 200,000. No one is releasing clear records.
- **The Tigray region of Ethiopia** – where at least 600,000 people have died in 3 years of war. The actual numbers could be much higher. The conflict has been marked by atrocious war crimes & extreme brutality on all sides including torture, ethnic cleansing, murder, sexual violence, & restricting food supplies to cause starvation. Peace efforts have brought some respite from the violence, but the situation is by no means resolved. Be with the people as they try to find a way to make peace work.
- **Myanmar & Bangladesh** – cyclone Mocha has caused major devastation. Many affected are already refugees from violence
- **Around the world, millions of people flee their homes due to political crisis & violence** – 103 million have fled their home countries; 53.2 million are displaced in their home countries
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – Already this year, 15,818 people have died in gun violence (up 780 from last week) including 664 children (up 34 from last week). 12,795 people have been injured (up 806 from last week) including 1,628 children (up 99 from last week). 8,976 of the deaths are suicides (up 396 from last week). There have already been 225 mass shootings (up 17 from last week). (Gun Violence Archive statistics).
- **Canada** – where 103 wildfires are burning in the west
- **Rwanda** where there was major rain & flooding May 2-3. Many homes, infrastructure, food stores & crops were destroyed. Brethren Disaster Ministries has sent funds to help with relief efforts. Uganda was also affected.
- **Congo** – hundreds of thousands are still recovering from flooding. A cholera outbreak in refugee camps & surrounding communities continues.
- **Those dealing with COVID** –the ‘emergency phase’ of the COVID pandemic is over, but the pandemic is not over. COVID is still serious. Thousands still die of COVID every week & millions more are suffering from debilitating long-term effects.