

China's Drop in Population Has Implications for the World

The Wired Word for the Week of January 29, 2022

In the News

For the first time in six decades, China's population failed to grow in 2022. In fact, it dropped by about 850,000 people according to that country's National Bureau of Statistics.

This makes it likely that China is now no longer the most populous country in the world and that India now holds that distinction. With a reported population of 1.41175 billion in 2022, China likely trails behind India's estimated 1.412 billion in 2022.

The "likely" is because of differences in when the two countries conduct their census. China's is from last year whereas India, which normally counts its population every 10 years, did not do so in 2021, due to the pandemic, and still has not conducted it.

But the fall in China's population, the first such drop since 1961, the last year of China's great famine, is expected to have negative repercussions in that country, especially given that population researchers now expect China's population to shrink by 109 million by 2050, more than triple the decline projected in 2019.

Thus, some of China's own demographers worry that "China will get old before it gets rich" due to soaring health and welfare costs, a shrinking in the labor force and a resulting downturn in productivity. All of this could yield higher prices and inflation in the United States and Europe, experts say.

India, in contrast, has seen its worker-population-ratio (WPR) in 2020-21 increase to 52.6% over 46.8% in 2017-18, reflecting higher engagement of people in productive activities. For comparison, the U.S. [employment-population ratio](#) is 60.1%, down from a high of 63.4% in December 2006.

The head of China's national statistics bureau dismissed the concerns about that country's WPR, saying "overall labor supply still exceeds demand," but if true, it's unclear whether that will continue to be the case.

Contributing to China's population decline is the country's falling birth rate -- just 6.77 births per 1,000 people last year, down from 7.52 births per 1,000 people in 2021. The 2022 rate is the lowest birth rate on record in China. The country's death rate has also risen. For reference, the current [U.S. birth rate](#) is 12.023 per 1,000 people.

Some of the fall in birth rate can be attributed to the country's one-child policy, which was in place from 1980 to 2015. That, coupled with a traditional preference for boys, has created an imbalance in sexes, with latest data showing 722 males and 690 females. In contrast, birth rates are up in India.

Some economists estimate that China's high GDP growth rate between 2000 and 2021 will now slow to between 2% and 5%

China's repeated crackdowns on the private sector and strict zero-Covid lockdowns have also wreaked mayhem on supply chains, as has its oppression (some call it genocide) of its Uighur Muslim population. Oppression of Christians and other religious groups also does not encourage population growth.

China's years of high GDP growth meant that its economy ballooned more than tenfold between the turn of the century and 2021, from \$1.2 trillion to nearly \$18 trillion, according to World Bank data. By contrast, the GDP of the United States, the world's largest economy, is a little more than double its size in 2000.

Economist Michael Pettis, a Beijing-based senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace told *Al Jazeera* that focusing on GDP numbers risks missing the forest for the trees, because such figures only give an incomplete, time-delayed picture of the Chinese economy. "The high-growth era seems to be ending now as per the numbers, but actually, in terms of productive investment, it ended around 10 to 15 years ago," Pettis said.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[China's First Population Drop in Six Decades Sounds Alarm on Demographic Crisis. Reuters](#)

[India's Worker-Population-Ratio Rises to 52.6% in FY21. Fortune India](#)

[Is China's High-Growth Era Over -- Forever? Al Jazeera](#)

[UN Members Condemn China Over Abuse of Uighurs in Xinjiang. Al Jazeera](#)

Applying the News Story

While there are lots of political and economic concerns raised by the population decline in China, this news gives us a chance to explore the idea, promoted strongly by Christianity, that every human being is a precious child of God. That idea is what political scientist Glenn Tinder, in his book, [*The Political Meaning of Christianity*](#), says is the moral center of Western politics. But it's so easy to lose sight of that preciousness when we count people by the millions. This lesson gives us a chance to refresh that belief.

The Big Questions

1. How does the belief in human worth help in cases where lives must be considered on both sides of the equation? In other words, when taking one life might prevent the loss of another life? What examples of life against life can you think of?
2. Why do we count the death of a human being as a greater loss than the death of an individual member of any other species on earth? Why do we often consider the deaths of the young as greater tragedies than the deaths of persons in old age?
3. Who or what establishes the ultimate worth of all human beings?
4. Are all humans of equal worth in your eyes? Why or why not?
5. Are all humans of equal worth in God's eyes? Why or why not?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Matthew 10:29-31

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

(For context, read [Matthew 10:5-31](#).)

The context for this remark from Jesus starts with verse 5, where Jesus began his instructions to the Twelve prior to sending them out on a preaching and healing mission to the cities of Israel. Jesus knew it was going to be a difficult task, and Jesus told them to expect not only trouble but even persecution. In that light, Jesus told them not to fear those who can kill the body, but to press on doing God's will so as to gain eternity.

In making his point, Jesus commented about sparrows, which had so little value that two were sold for a penny. But not even these insignificant creatures could fall to the ground, said Jesus, without God's knowledge. And then he adds the words of the verse quoted above: "... you are of more value than many sparrows."

Questions: Jesus' statement is a comparative one and does not explicitly say "you are of more value than all the rest of creation." So is it an unreasonable jump to understand it as meaning that humans are of great worth? Why or why not?

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (No context needed.)

This verse from the creation story summarizes God's creative act in making humankind. But he made them -- us -- "in the image of God." Some theological interpretations of that phrase suggest that the "image of God" means a certain quality or character granted to humans -- in short, the soul. Others argue that it means a role or task assigned to humanity. But still others see it as a definition of humankind that refers to the sanctity and inherent worth of every human being as a whole person. In other words, the value of the person is not just because of his or her soul, but because God has stamped his image in some way on the person's entire being.

Whatever the interpretation of the phrase, note that the passage containing this description of the creation of humanity ends with these words: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good."

Questions: Which of the suggested interpretations of "the image of God" makes the most sense to you? Why?

Psalms 8:4-5

... what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. (For context, read [Psalm 8:1-9](#).)

This psalm contains the clearest statement in scripture about the worth of human beings -- mortals, as they are called here. They -- we -- are made just "a little lower than God." It should be noted, however, that the psalm is not in praise of humankind, but in sweeping praise of God. The psalmist observes that humans have a high place in the creation, so much so that they have been given "dominion of the works of [God's] hands" (v. 6).

Yet compared to the divine majesty of the Creator, "what are humans ...?" The psalmist has an appropriate sense of the ranking of humankind -- of great worth when compared to the rest of creation -- but far less than God. Though he says mortals are only "a little lower than God" that "little lower" is a huge and unbridgeable gap. We, the created, have great worth because he, the Creator, wants it that way.

Questions: In what kinds of actions do we show that we are only "a little lower than God"? What is the challenge for us in this psalm?

Psalms 139:14

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. (For context, read [Psalm 139:13-18](#).)

The imagery in verses 13-18 provides a picture of God the Giver of Life, forming and shaping the psalmist himself while in his mother's womb, leading the psalmist to exclaim, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (By "fearfully" the psalmist means that the contemplation of God's life-giving act has filled the psalmist with awe.)

This verse presents the biblical view that human life is not merely the result of biology, but the result of God's intentional will and work. By inference then, human life is of great worth to God.

Questions: How is the worth God has assigned you expressed in your everyday life? What is the implication of this passage for how you treat others?

For Further Discussion

1. Is the population decline in China a matter that should concern you? Why or why not?
2. Respond to this, from TWW team member Mary Sells: "My take on [the China population story] can be akin to the loss of practicing Christians. What happens to the effectiveness and power of the church when it loses its audience? Presumably China could have challenges holding its grip on 'manufactory to the world' when it has fewer people to fill its businesses, which also affects its financial strength in the world economy.
"I have observed and experienced the shuttering of Catholic churches and 'job sharing' where priests are serving multiple parishes since there are also fewer priests. Fewer priests, fewer churches, less money to put into parishes and good works (hospitals, education, charitable efforts, etc.). Are we reacting to the issue as well as creating part of the spiral?"
3. Discuss this, from a reader's review of [The Political Meaning of Christianity](#), by Glenn Tinder: "The heart of Tinder's book is his claim that the Christian tradition, properly understood, makes it obligatory upon believers to recognize two fundamental, and tension-filled, claims. First, that as God calls upon us to emulate his love, and to treat all human beings as the exalted individuals they are, it is incumbent that we strive to fully respect human liberty, and to establish societies wherein real communities of love may exist. Second, that as fallen creatures we are not only too sinful to ever will such communities into existence, but we will be too limited in our ability to see beyond ourselves so to avoid doing harm to others -- treating them instrumentally, as a means, rather than as the God-graced ends each and every individual most fully is -- when we go about the whole business of establishing societies."
4. What economic and/or political policies ought the United States pursue toward China in light of its population drop?
5. Consider this: [One report on immigration and China](#) notes, "For immigrants and returning migrants, there has been a narrow focus on migration's economic benefits, while broader questions of integration and societal diversity remain unaddressed. Pathways for permanent residence remain extremely limited. Despite China's looming demographic crisis, there is also little long-term planning for future immigration that might be needed to offset consequences of population aging."
TWW team member Frank Ramirez comments, "One of the interesting factors, in my mind, in China's decline, is its ethnically homogenous population, alongside its disdain for ethnic diversity. Consider the persecution of certain minorities. Birth rates go down with a rise in education and prosperity as a matter of course, but in a healthy country immigrants not only take jobs that the more established population disdains, but they also have lots of children. As controversial as immigration is in our society, it's essential for growth economically. And we need all the children to pay into the social safety net for the benefit of an aging population that does not have as many children as their elders."

Responding to the News

Some time this week, communicate with someone you know in a way that makes it clear that you believe he or she is of inestimable value and precious in God's sight.

Prayer

Help us, O Lord, to value each person as you do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Extent and Intensity of Persecution of Christians Rising Globally

The Wired Word for the Week of January 29, 2022

In the News

According to [Open Doors](#), an organization dedicated to promoting religious liberty, the persecution of Christians is rising in frequency and intensity around the world. More than 360 million Christians around the world (20 million more than in 2021) reported high levels of discrimination and persecution in 2022. The number of Christians killed for their faith rose to nearly 6,000 last year, up from fewer than 5,000 the year before. In addition, almost 5,300 Christians were abducted in the latest research period, which covers October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

In "[The 50 Countries Where It's Hardest to Follow Jesus in 2023](#)" released this week, *Christianity Today* reported attacks on or forced closure of more than 2,100 churches in 2022. In addition, "more than 124,000 Christians were forcibly displaced from their homes because of their faith, and almost 15,000 became refugees."

According to the [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom website](#), "particularly severe violations of religious freedom means 'systematic, ongoing, [and] egregious violations,' including violations such as: (A) torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; (B) prolonged detention without charges; (C) causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction or clandestine detention of those persons; or (D) other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of persons."

Various dictionaries use a number of terms as synonyms for persecution, including: hostility, ill-treatment, maltreatment, mistreatment, oppression, censorship, control, repression, forced conversion and assimilation, victimization, abuse, discrimination, tyranny, punishment, torment, pogrom, witch hunt, harassment, hounding, harrying, badgering, teasing, bullying, molestation and persistent annoyance. We might add to these the "[systematic, ongoing, and egregious](#)" targeting of specific people or groups in order to deny and deprive them of basic resources needed to survive (such as food, water, medical care, security) and human rights.

It should be noted that Christians are not the only ones who experience persecution. People who identify with other religions or with no religion may also be mistreated. Persecution may also be directed at people for non-religious reasons, such as ethnicity, gender, race, political ideology, age, disabilities, etc..

More than 4,000 contributors, including researchers and attorneys, provide data to aid in developing Open Doors' World Watch List, which measures various pressures that cause distress and suffering in the private lives, families and communities of Christians around the world. For 30 years, the nonprofit has been collecting and publishing data identifying the 50 countries where Christians face the most persecution for their faith.

According to Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List just released, North Korea heads the list of countries where Christians face the most persecution, followed by Somalia, Yemen, Eritrea, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Sudan.

While some Christians express concern about religious persecution in the West, Lisa Pearce, interim CEO of Open Doors U.S., remarked, "I would say to American Christians that relative to many, many, many places in the world, you have extraordinary freedom. Use it well."

Wybo Nicolai, a former Open Doors global field director who first created the World Watch List, noted that increased persecution has not crushed the church. Instead, "What we noticed is not just an increase of persecution, but also an increase in the size and the strength of the body of Christ. Yes, a lot of atrocities, a lot of drama; at the same time, a lot of church growth, as well," Nicolai said.

That reality seems to lend credence to the observation attributed to Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian, in his *Apologeticus*, written in Carthage in A.D. 197, "*Plures effimur, quotiens metimur a vobis: semen est sanguis Christianorum*," which has been translated: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." According to *Wikipedia*, a more literal rendering might be, "We multiply when you reap us. The blood of Christians is seed."

"In a number of countries in the world where it is hardest to live as a Christian, where the consequences are most grave, the church is continuing to grow," Pearce said.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[The 50 Countries Where It's Hardest to Follow Jesus in 2023. *Christianity Today*](#)

[Christian Persecution Higher Than Ever as Open Doors' World Watch List Marks 30 Years. *Religion News Service*](#)

[US Commission on International Religious Freedom Website. *USCIRF*](#)

[International Religious Freedom Reports. *U.S. Department of State*](#)

[China's State Bodies Are Suppressing Religious Freedom. *UCA News*](#)

Applying the News Story

The psalmist described his experience with persecutors who spread malicious lies about the righteous, plotting against them and creating an atmosphere of terror and fear for one's life. In that situation, he clings to his trust in God and prays for deliverance ([Psalm 31:13-24](#)). His enemies are many and relentless in their oppressive attacks, but he chooses to put his trust in God when he is afraid, because he "*knows that God is for him*" ([Psalm 56:1-11](#)). In such a case, "What can a mere mortal do to me?" (Psalm 56:11). Paul echoes that sentiment in Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who is against us?"

Jesus told his disciples that whoever sacrificed for his sake and for the sake of the good news *would* experience persecutions and receive a reward in this age and eternal life in the age to come ([Mark 10:28-30](#)).

Jesus warned his disciples that he was sending them out like sheep into the midst of wolves and that they would be flogged, persecuted, hated and maligned because they bore his name. But they were not to worry about how to respond to accusations against them; instead they were to rely on the Holy Spirit who would speak through them. They were not to fear those who had no power to kill their souls, but remember that the One who had the power to destroy both soul and body in hell valued them so much that he counted all the hairs on their heads. So they had no reason to fear God either, since he loved them that much ([Matthew 10:16-31](#)).

The disciples were not to be alarmed, knowing that Jesus had told them ahead of time that these things would occur. So they were to expect persecution and prepare themselves to face it. In this way, the one who endures to the end will be saved, Jesus said ([Matthew 24:3-14](#)).

The Big Questions

1. Have you or someone you know ever been persecuted? To the degree you are comfortable speaking about it, briefly describe the experience.
2. How would we in the United States know if we're being persecuted? And how does what we might experience here compare to what's happening in other countries?
3. How would you expect Christ's teachings to shape the way his followers respond when experiencing persecution?

4. What spiritual disciplines might be especially helpful to prepare to face persecution that may come in the future? Should we as Americans incorporate those disciplines into our own lives, as individuals and as congregations, and if so, why?

5. How can we best support brothers and sisters in Christ who are being persecuted?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Matthew 5:10-12, 44-45

[Jesus said,] "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ... But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. (For context, read [Matthew 5:1-16, 43-48](#).)

Jesus connects persecution with blessing, rejoicing, gladness and reward in a way that seems counterintuitive to most of us. Who among us enjoys it when people persecute, revile and lie about us?

Jesus goes on to say that his disciples are salt of the earth and the light of the world (vv. 13-16). Salt may seem like a small, insignificant thing. But before refrigeration, salt was essential to keep food from spoiling and to fight disease. The lack of salt can lead to shock, coma and even death.

Shining as light in a dark world may seem like a fool's errand at times. What difference can a small candle make when night falls and envelops the world? But ask a sailor what would happen without the light of the moon and the stars, or the guidance of a lighthouse.

Even so, those who are persecuted "for the sake of righteousness ... on [Jesus'] account" function as salt and light in a corrupt and darkened society. They prove that corruption and darkness do not have to be humanity's default setting, but that something different and better is possible.

What is different? Becoming children of our Father in heaven (meaning, we have "God's DNA" within us now, and so it is possible to love our enemies and to bless and pray for our persecutors, whom we would previously have hated and cursed). Paul wrote about this change when he instructed the Roman believers: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" ([Romans 12:14](#)) and explained to the Corinthian church: "when reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly" ([1 Corinthians 4:12-13](#)).

Questions: How is suffering "for the sake of righteousness," different from suffering just because pain is part of the human condition, or because we have done something dangerous, unwise, or evil? How can we distinguish between persecution "on Jesus' account" and suffering we may experience for some other reason?

What reward in heaven is great enough that it could enable us to rejoice when we are persecuted without cause?

Philippians 1:12-14, 29-30

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the progress of the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ, and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. ... For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. (For context, read [Philippians 1:12-30](#).)

Although Paul's letter to the Philippians was written from prison, it is not filled with anger, disappointment, sadness or regret, as one might expect. Instead, it expressed hope and joy that God was turning even Paul's negative circumstances into something good. As Paul said elsewhere, he had learned to be content, whatever his circumstances ([Philippians 4:11-13](#)). So whether he lived or died, Paul's hope was simply that Christ would be exalted through him (Philippians 1:20-21).

Paul pointed to at least two tangible blessings that resulted from his unjust imprisonment: 1) that the gospel made inroads throughout the whole imperial guard, who learned of Christ as a result; and 2) that the way God strengthened Paul, and the way Paul conducted himself in prison, emboldened other believers to speak the word fearlessly.

Questions: How can we avoid minimizing the horror and pain persecuted people are experiencing, while still holding fast to the hope of our faith? What possible good might come out of any persecution you might suffer? While it is natural for us to want to avoid pain if at all possible, why does Paul call suffering for Christ a privilege?

Hebrews 12:1-4

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (For context, read [Hebrews 12:1-13](#).)

These verses follow an entire chapter about heroes of the faith, many of whom suffered greatly because of their commitment to follow God. These are assembled as "a great cloud of witnesses" who have finished their "race of faith" and now cheer us on from the stands, as fans, friends, family members and coaches who want to encourage us to keep our eyes on the prize of finishing well.

Athletes know the phrase "No pain, no gain." To them, it means they have to put in effort and endure hardship, muscle aches and pains if they hope to be competitive. Running our spiritual race involves taking up our cross and following Jesus to the hill of Calvary. Such a prospect most likely makes us shudder.

But this passage points to the victory Jesus already achieved beyond the cross, since he has already taken his seat in the position of authority and power at the right hand of the throne of God. When we view our own spiritual race from that perspective, we can find the courage to persevere in our own struggle against sin.

Questions: Who are the people in your "cloud of witnesses" who most inspire and encourage you not to give up when you face obstacles, spiritual pain and difficulty, and hostility from critics? Take a moment to thank God for these people.

How can you train yourself to focus on the joy set before you, so that you can endure hardship until you cross the finish line? How does keeping your eyes on Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of faith help you?

Acts 12:1-5

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him. (For context, read [Acts 12:1-19](#).)

When James, the first of Jesus' original 12 disciples, was killed, and Peter subsequently arrested, it wouldn't have been surprising for other followers of Jesus to scatter to the four corners of the earth, in fear for their lives. And there are plenty of times when flight is the right (and sometimes the only available) response to persecution (as in the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt in [Matthew 2:13-15](#) or the scattering of believers, reported in [Acts 11:19](#), after the murder of deacon Stephen).

But for whatever reason, that is not what happened in this case. This time, "many had gathered and were praying" in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark ([Acts 12:12](#)). And God sent his angel to free Peter from a maximum security prison, providing a way of escape.

Questions: What would you most want prayer for if you were experiencing persecution? How can you find out how persecuted Christians want you to pray for them? How can you intentionally and consistently keep prayer for persecuted Christians a priority?

For Further Discussion

1. Discuss this, from TWW team member Mary Sells: "I have not had anyone 'spit words' at me in many years when I speak of my faith, yet I do notice when people are uncomfortable, unreceptive or state disagreement. I ask the Holy Spirit to give me the words and whatever else needed."

What kinds of interactions heighten hostilities and what kinds defuse them? What training, if any, might be helpful to Christians to prepare them to effectively speak of their faith to people who are disparaging them?

2. Who in the Bible, in church history, or in your own life, are examples of people who behaved honorably while facing persecution? What do you want to imitate from the way they acted?

3. How might people rationalize or attempt to justify the persecution of others for their beliefs and/or religious practices?

Responding to the News

In an article entitled, "[How Should We Respond to the Persecution of Christians?](#)", the National Christian Foundation suggests several ways to support persecuted Christians, including through intentional prayer; education of Christians to raise awareness of the issue; protests against injustice; communicating with civil authorities to advocate for religious tolerance and freedom; providing practical help to those who have lost houses, churches and family members due to persecution; and encouraging persecuted churches and individual Christians under fire through letters of appreciation and support that let them know they are not forgotten, but are loved and remembered in prayer.

Use the links in this lesson to learn more about factors that contribute to the persecution of the Church, the needs, courage and vibrant testimonies of persecuted Christians, and ways you can connect more deeply with those in such circumstances.

For those ready for a deeper dive into how to help persecuted Christians who have been displaced, research how you might sponsor refugees fleeing persecution. This recent article "[US Allows Individuals to Sponsor Refugees](#)" contains some clues about how to get started. Check out the [U.S. Refugee Admissions Program: Reception and Placement](#) under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State, Welcome Corps based in the [Office of Refugee Resettlement \(ORR\)](#) through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [Refugee Council USA](#), nonprofit resettlement agencies, and programs through your denomination.

Prayer Suggested by [John 16:33](#); [Romans 8:35-39](#)

O God, when we and our brothers and sisters in Christ face persecution in this world, give us the courage and peace of Jesus, who has conquered the world! Whether we are afflicted or distressed or persecuted or starving or unclothed or in peril or under threat of death, may nothing shake our confidence that none of these things can separate us from your love in Christ! May our faith in you endure to the end, so that we may be saved. Amen.