

October Prayer points: Praying for the Nations

Country	% Christian	
Bolivia	89% predominantly RC	Significant human rights issues included: torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by government officials; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems concerning judicial independence; restrictions on free expression, the press, and other media, including violence against journalists by state security forces and censorship; serious acts of corruption; lack of investigation of and accountability for violence against women; crimes involving violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons; and use of child labor.
Costa Rica	82% 25% Protestant	Major debt issues partly as a result of covid have lead to increased civil unrest. Deforestation is cause of some environmental problems. Some concerns about human rights abuses although generally the country is regarded as a functioning democracy.
El Salvador	82% 25% Protestant	Large numbers of violent gangs make this one of the most dangerous countries in the world. Police and army have also committed atrocities. Large numbers of displaced persons due to violence. Easy access to weaponry and drugs and break down in family structures.
Dominican Republic	83% Predominantly RC	The Dominican Republic is fraught with numerous problems including violence against women and against immigrants from Haiti, the degradation of the environment, and principally inequalities in the education system. There has been progress in some areas, but the country urgently needs more far-reaching social policies that are genuinely geared to the changes needed to ensure a decent future.
Ecuador	94% Predominantly RC	Ecuador faces chronic human rights challenges, including weak institutions, poor prison conditions, laws that give authorities broad powers to limit judicial independence, violence against women, far-reaching restrictions on women's and girls' access to reproductive health care, and disregard for indigenous rights. A newish government is trying to address this but there are also chronic economic issues to deal with. Recently reported prison riots leaving over 300 people dead this year.
Guatemala	87% 40% Protestant	Still bearing scars of a 36 year civil war that ended in 1996. Problems with gangs and drugs and easy access to arms means this is a dangerous country. Serious environmental issues including extensive deforestation.
Honduras	88% 41% Protestant	Violent crime is rampant in Honduras. Despite a recent downward trend, the murder rate remains among the highest in the world. Poverty, violence, and insecurity cause significant outflows of migrants and asylum-seekers. Human rights groups

		reported unjustified lethal force and other excessive use of force by security forces during a police and military crackdown on public protests between March and July. The crackdown left several people dead and many more injured.
Panama	92% Predominantly RC	Panama experienced the highest number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in Latin America with significant consequences on its GDP for 2020, as the economy relies on sectors severely affected by the pandemic such as air transportation, tourism, and construction. Poverty increased by two percentage points, while public debt shot up by almost 20 percentage points of GDP. Like other countries in South and Central America, Panama has faced serious environmental issues. For much of the country's history, money took precedence over conservation, and an ethic of "man over nature" pervaded the culture. Forests were routinely chopped down to make room for cattle. Soil was depleted and habitat destroyed. Steps are now being taken to redress this but a lot of work is needed.
Paraguay	96% Predominantly RC	Significant human rights issues included: alleged killing of minors during a security operation; reports of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment by security forces; harsh and at times life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; substantial problems with the independence of the judiciary; violent intimidation of journalists by organized-crime groups; widespread corruption in all branches and levels of government; lack of investigation of and accountability for violence against women; and child labor, particularly in domestic service and informal agriculture. Paraguay is one of the poorest and least developed South American countries. It has environmental problems relating to deforestation and pollution of waterways.
Suriname	50% + split RC/Protestant	A Dutch colony until 1975, the country is heavily dependent on foreign development assistance through either bilateral aid relations or multilateral financing institutions. Although there has been economic growth in the past decade, this has had adverse development effects by widening inequalities in an already vulnerable society. With over 60% of the population living below the poverty line, the country faces many social problems including in housing, access to health, education and gender equality. Finding a balance between ethnic group interests and those of the nation at large is a pre-requisite for sustainable growth and development.
Uruguay	58% Predominantly RC	Uruguay stands out in Latin America for being an egalitarian society and for its high income per capita, low level of inequality and poverty and the almost complete absence of extreme poverty. In relative terms, its middle class is the largest in America, and represents more than 60% of its

		<p>population. Uruguay is positioned among the first places in the region in relation to various well-being indices, such as the Human Development Index, the Human Opportunity Index and the Economic Freedom Index. Institutional stability and low levels of corruption are reflected in the high level of public trust in government. According to the Human Opportunity Index constructed by the World Bank, Uruguay has managed to attain a high level of equal opportunities in terms of access to basic services such as education, running water, electricity and sanitation.</p>
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Protestant includes all except RC.