

# MESSENGER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER &amp; PRAYER GUIDE



Neighbors talking with a volunteer at the Neighbors Welcome Desk

PHOTO BY TIMM WENGER

## JOIN THE JOY!

by Nita Landis

Mr. Ahmadullah Faizi of Pennsylvania CareerLink reached out to the new Neighbors Welcome Desk at Neighbors Community Center at Hub450 early this year: “Do you have anyone who could teach an Afghan woman who just arrived in Lancaster how to drive? She has come to CareerLink for help in finding a job. If she can get her driver’s license, her job possibilities will expand significantly.”

A volunteer from the Welcome Desk reached out to her friend Sheila, who enjoyed teaching her own daughters to drive and who delights in connecting with people from oth-

er cultures. Sheila agreed to connect with Mariam\*, meeting her once a week for driving practice. In March, Sheila reported: “I just came home from Mariam’s fifth driving lesson. She is making progress. To put things in perspective, she had never been in a car before she came to the U.S. in October 2025. She is a very courageous young woman!” Sheila and Mariam continued their weekly lessons, and Mariam also assigned herself extra practice in a friend’s car. By April, she had her driver’s license and a whole new set of employment possibilities.

Stories like this one gladden the

hearts of the ten individuals who began talking, dreaming, and praying together in early 2025 when Church World Service (CWS) Lancaster lost half its staff and a lot of its capacity to serve vulnerable new neighbors due to changes in U.S. immigration policy and funding. The group wondered how they could help to ensure Lancaster’s capacity to offer a Christ-like welcome to refugees and other immigrants fleeing danger and deprivation in their home countries.

With guidance from the Holy Spirit and Matt Johnson of CWS Lancaster, the group settled on two

\*Name changed for sensitivity reasons.

initiatives: raising funds to hire a new Welcome Community Coordinator, who is now serving with the Parish Resource Center team, and creating a welcome desk at Neighbors Community Center, a program of EMM. They envisioned the Welcome Desk as a place where neighbors needing help could ask for it and where neighbors and organizations wanting to provide help could offer it.

As the team of dedicated volunteers who staff the desk connects these two groups of people, a stronger sense of community grows for all involved, enriching the “social soil” of Lancaster. Timm Wenger, director of Neighbors Community Center, has a winsome way of describing the hope embedded in their work: “We want to shorten the length of time until Lancaster feels like home.” While many new neighbors arrive from other countries, Welcome Desk volunteers are also able to offer welcome and help to neighbors arriving from other cities in Pennsylvania or from other states.

Joshua had been recently released from a recovery program in the Allentown area and was trying to find his way in Lancaster when he showed up at the Welcome Desk one afternoon in May. A Welcome Desk volunteer listened compassionately to his story, sent information about free community meals in Lancaster to his phone so that he would always have a place to eat, and “guarded” Joshua’s bag of belongings for a few hours while he walked around trying to find a friend to whom he’d entrusted some personal items that he wanted to get back.

When the volunteer mentioned that she would be praying for

him, he immediately put down his things, closed his eyes, and opened his hands, wide open to hearing and receiving her prayers at that very moment. When he returned a few hours later to collect his belongings, she refilled his water bottle and shared a few encouraging words. Before he left, Joshua said simply, “You’ve been so kind to me. Thank you.”

Who is my neighbor? This question to Jesus from an expert in the law, who “wanted to justify himself,” may be one of the Bible’s most famous questions. The story Jesus told in response (see Luke 10) invites us to be neighborly to anyone in a difficult situation, even (and maybe especially) when we don’t share a family, ethnic, or religious connection. Jesus’ story leads the expert in the law to conclude that the true neighbor to the Samaritan man who fell into the hands of robbers was the one who had mercy on him—the one who showed kindness to him in his distress.

The volunteers at the Welcome Desk seek to show kindness to those in distress. A neighbor’s distress may be as simple as not knowing how to use Lancaster City’s parking app to avoid a parking ticket. It may be as puzzling as having no idea where to find a tutor to help you prepare for the ServSafe exam so you can get a job in food service. Or it may be as bewildering as trying to find someone willing to spend a whole day driving you to Newark, NJ, for an asylum hearing that you must show up for even though you don’t have a car and have no family around to assist you.

In its first eight months of operation (September 2025–May 2026),

the Welcome Desk has had almost 200 contacts (more than 160 unique contacts), with 88% being requests for help and 12% being offers of help such as donated vouchers for buying food at reduced prices, English tutoring, assistance with finding housing or jobs, willingness to teach Arabic to interested neighbors, or simply a request to be contacted about whatever needs arise.

The Neighbors Welcome Desk invites you to join the joy of increasing the flow of God’s loving-kindness in our community in two ways. You can direct folks who need help to the Welcome Desk, sending them to the first-floor lobby of 450 N. Prince St. in Lancaster. (You can find current desk hours at [NEIGHBORSLANCASTER.ORG/WELCOME](https://NEIGHBORSLANCASTER.ORG/WELCOME)). Or you can share the Welcome Desk phone number so people can call or text: 717-203-9878.

A second way to join the joy is to contact the Welcome Desk to offer help. What do you have to offer? Perhaps you could help someone learn to drive (a frequent request) or assist with finding a reliable used car. Could you teach basic computer skills or give free drum lessons (a recent request)? Or maybe one of the options on our Director’s Wish List appeals to you (visit [NEIGHBORSLANCASTER.ORG/GIVE](https://NEIGHBORSLANCASTER.ORG/GIVE)).

God has entrusted the Lancaster community with many new neighbors from many places in the world. May we be found worthy of that trust by being neighbors who overflow with loving-kindness.



*Nita Landis volunteers as the coordinator for the Neighbors Welcome Desk.*

# JULY DAILY PRAYER

## WEST AFRICA

1 | Pray for the Bambara in the Gambia. This majority Muslim group has syncretic beliefs, incorporating practices like ancestor worship. Ask the Lord to reveal himself and his truth to them in a way that is compelling to them.

2 | In rural Sierra Leone, the rainy season affects access to health care, distribution of essential medicines, and home visits facilitated by Nyandengoh! for children with disabilities. Please pray for protection for the children and for the team as they faithfully serve in this challenging season.

3 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in West Africa.

4 | Pray for the Susu in Sierra Leone. They are a majority-Muslim group. Pray that as the Susu would experience a meaningful revelation of Jesus.

5 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in West Africa.

## CENTRAL EUROPE

6 | Join Darrel and Miriam\* in prayer for continued steadfast faith in Jesus for the 11 people who were baptized in June. Pray for the Persian church plant to continue to find unity as they grow together. Pray also for good connections with supporters during home leaves for them and for their family, and for their team member Nick\*.

7 | Pray for God to call short-term workers to serve in Central Europe.

8 | Pray for the Deaf community in the Czech Republic, which numbers around 13,000. Pray that they would have opportunities to engage meaningfully with biblical resources available to them in Czech Sign Language.

9 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Central Europe.

10 | Pray for the Bengali diaspora in Germany, who number around 39,000. The majority of the group is Sunni Muslim. Ask the Lord for an impactful revelation of Jesus to be given to them.

11 | Join Vojta and Stacy in prayer for believers in the Czech house church network to grow in surrender, obedience, and courage.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

12 | Pray for the search process for the Southeast Asia Regional Representative position.

13 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Southeast Asia.

14 | Join Gerry Keener in praising God for an excellent response to the Fundamentals of Christian Leadership Part 1 training held in March with 18 students and 32 pastors of the Vietnam Mennonite Church. Pray for continuing grace and strength as he conducts part two of the class from July 14 through 17.

15 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Southeast Asia.

## CENTRAL ASIA

16 | Pray for the 7,206,000 people living in Kyrgyzstan. Ask that the 22 unreached people groups in that nation would receive revelation of the truth found in Jesus.

17 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Central Asia.

18 | Pray for the 20,670,000 people living in Kazakhstan. Pray for the 27 unreached people groups in this nation to have the opportunity to hear about Jesus.

19 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Central Asia.

20 | Pray for the 36,695,000 people living in Uzbekistan. Ask the Lord to reveal himself meaningfully to the 26 unreached people groups in that nation.

21 | Join Elizabeth\* in prayer for her home leave this summer. Since she only sees her family once every two years, pray that she can have quality time with each family member, especially her 8 nieces and nephews, aged 1-14.

## LANCASTER, PA.

22 | Join Brody and Abigail\* in prayer for their family to experience peace, wisdom, and energy, as recent days have brought stressors. Praise God that their condo sold quickly, and for each of the new financial partners who have come alongside them.

23 | Pray for Linda and Phil Gottschalk, as earlier this month, they left Europe to return to

Lancaster, Pa. Pray for them as they continue to serve with EMM as non-resident workers for the next three years, teaching online with a school in Romania, and working with the Christian-Muslim Relations team.

24 | Pray for the volunteers who serve at Neighbors Community Center at Hub450, our building in Lancaster, Pa. Ask the Lord to sustain them, and provide meaningful moments of connection that remind them of the effectiveness of their work.

25 | Ask the Lord to call more volunteers to serve at Neighbors Community Center at Hub450. May those looking for a meaningful opportunity to make an impact feel compelled to volunteer.

26 | Pray for wisdom and discernment for EMM staff as they process many applications, for both short and long-term assignments. Praise God for the call that He is placing on people's lives!

## OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

27 | Ask the Lord to call people to give to the EMM Impact Fund, supporting vital infrastructure that provides training for cross-cultural ministry, crisis care, and counseling for workers, as well as administrative accountability to ensure the stewardship of resources.

28 | Pray for Nour Ambuamsha, who served as an IVEP placement with EMM from last July until earlier this month. Pray for her as she adjusts to life back at home in Beit Jala, Palestine.

29 | Pray for Peter and Christy\* as they finish up their time in France, and prepare for another transition, to Beirut, Lebanon, in late August. Pray for peace and an effective ceasefire in that region.

30 | Join Sonya Harnish in prayer for spiritual and physical stamina for Crossroads Camp staff and volunteers as they serve Albanian children, youth, and church groups during the 12-week summer camp season.

31 | Join Carissa Sherer in praying for the children with special needs that she works with, and ask God to reveal His love to each one on a level they can understand.

*Some prayer requests adapted from joshuaproject.net.*

*\*Names changed or omitted for sensitivity reasons.*



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

# COME AND SEE WEST AFRICA

Join EMM this **January 6-18, 2027**, as we visit the growing Christian communities of Gambia, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau. Participants will learn about the growth of the Anabaptist church, experience the mission context of the region, and witness how the gospel has taken root among previously unreached peoples.

The trip cost is \$2,500 person, and includes airfare from/to Dulles airport, local transportation, and lodging, but excluding vaccinations, medicine, and souvenirs.

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