

MESSENGER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER & PRAYER GUIDE



Left to right: Michael C., David P. and Nathan R. at Long's Park Lancaster. PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

WAITING FOR YOU by Michael Clancy

Nathan grew up in a well-to-do family in the suburbs of Chicago. His dad was active in the synagogue, and his mom was Christian, so he grew up attending church. But to Nathan, it felt entirely forced. It wasn't what he wanted to do. Of six children, he was the self-described black sheep, constantly running into trouble. By the time he moved to Georgia to live with his biological father, things went completely off the hinges, leading to a high school arrest and serious charges.

Moving back to Chicago didn't fix it. Things only got worse.

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic began, Nathan was homeless on the streets of Chicago, trapped in a heavy cycle of meth and mar-

ijuana. For him, it always started with weed. He eventually packed what little he owned and came out to Myerstown to meet half-siblings he barely knew. But you can't outrun addiction. The drugs followed him, and he landed right back behind bars in Lebanon County.

Chaos was completely driving his life. After his release, he went on the run, violated probation, and served another two months. His court-appointed attorney told his father about Jubilee Ministries, thinking the life-change program would offer the stability Nathan desperately lacked. Nathan didn't want it. He stayed exactly one day and walked out, planning to flee the state entirely.

But sitting in a house in Myerstown, looking at the familiar dead end ahead, he made a conscious choice: Jubilee wasn't such a bad place. "Maybe I should go back and give it another go."

That was 2021. That's when we met.

Nathan wasn't looking for Christ at the center of his life back then. He just wanted to break a fifteen-year pattern of homelessness and drugs. Part of him still clung to the romantic fantasy of the vagrant life—just a man, a backpack, and a dog traveling the world. After six months, the rebellion flared up again. He couldn't handle the rules—specifically, he wanted to smoke cigarettes, which Jubilee didn't allow. He left

for the Lebanon Rescue Mission, stayed for a short time, got his own place, and held down a job for seven months.

Then the pot got the best of him again.

This time, the marijuana triggered a severe psychosis. He started experiencing schizophrenic tendencies, perceiving things that weren't real. The mental turmoil eventually cost him his position making coffee for the church at Freedom in Christ Fellowship.

Nathan's journey has been a zig-zagging mess between faith and addiction. Whenever he fell back, the condemnation was brutal. The enemy would accuse him, making him feel like he wasn't even a Christian. Yet Nathan always knew God hadn't abandoned him. He knew God was in his corner; it was Nathan who was making the conscious decision to live life on his own terms.

This journey has a lot to do with relationships. Regardless of Nathan's addiction or the condition he was in, it didn't change how we felt about him. I remember one particular moment. It was after a Christmas Eve worship service, and I saw Nathan walking away, so I yelled out and asked him what he was doing. He was completely transparent: "Probably going to smoke weed, and hopefully not harder drugs," he said. So I asked him to come over for dinner. That evening, Deb and I brought him to our house. He was high, and I knew it, but that didn't mean we shouldn't show him the love he needed. He was so much more than a man trapped in addiction; he was a child of God.

Not long ago, Nathan was struggling between the desire to smoke marijuana and his desire to stop. He really wanted to stop, but just couldn't. I hated seeing him using, but at the same time, I loved that he was transparent, real, and willing to

talk to me about it.

Not long after that, I had a vacancy at the Willow Street Christian Community House. I presented him with an agreement and told him flat out: "You can't smoke weed here. I love you, and if you smoke, I'll kick you out." Nathan didn't sign it right away; he took a week to think about it.

When he finally said yes, he handed me his monthly fees and his medical marijuana card.

That plastic card was his ultimate safety net, his legal permission to smoke whenever he wanted to. Handing it over was a physical symbol that the old life had to go. It set him free. He didn't stop there, either. Recognizing the patterns of addiction, he quit smoking cigarettes six months ago, and more recently, he deleted his social media accounts to stop the mindless doom-scrolling. He began tackling the chaos across the board, peeling back the layers like an onion through continuous pruning.

He sat and told me about the moment of total surrender. He said it happened out in the river when Daniel and I baptized him. As Nathan stepped into the water, a massive snake broke from the rocks and swam away down the river. For Nathan, it was a tangible sign of the old life departing. It still gives him goosebumps to talk about it.

Today, Nathan has been completely sober for more than eight months and free from nicotine for more than six. Life at the Willow Street Christian Community House doesn't feel like an institution; it feels like independent living built on a true brotherhood. He lives in a safe, loving environment.

And every Sunday morning at 9 a.m., before anyone else arrives at Freedom in Christ Fellowship, you can smell the patchouli oil in

the kitchen. Nathan is there, quietly working behind the scenes, brewing coffee for the church. The church didn't judge him when he zigzagged; they knew him by name and welcomed him each time he returned. As an introvert, serving quietly fits him perfectly, but his vision has expanded. He wants to be used by Christ in mission work, whether elsewhere in the country or overseas.

If Nathan could sit down face-to-face with a guy sitting exactly where he used to be, staring at the ceiling of a prison cell, convinced he can never get it right, he wouldn't offer a complicated sermon.

He would tell him that the depth of God's grace operates on His time, not ours. "He's always been waiting for you," Nathan says.



Michael Clancy is an urban missionary through EMM working in Lebanon, PA



Nathan making coffee at church.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

SEPTEMBER DAILY PRAYER

CENTRAL EUROPE

- 1 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Central Europe.
- 2 | Pray for the Bosniak in Germany, of whom 94.6% are adherent to Islam. Many live in Germany as a result of the civil war in the 1990s. Pray for 0.1-2% of the group who are Christians to share Christ in meaningful ways.
- 3 | Join Jan Heindel in praying for the leadership team of the church plant in Dobříš to have wisdom for how to follow up well with students from summer camps. Ask the Lord to inspire more mission vision with their community and provide the laborers needed.
- 4 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Central Europe.
- 5 | Pray for Karen Hess as she meets with young college-aged women and young mothers at the beginning of a new school year. Pray for wisdom and encouraging words to share.

WEST AFRICA

- 6 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in West Africa.
- 7 | Pray for the Bullom people in Sierra Leone, of whom 80% adhere to Islam. Pray that the 2-5% who are Christians in their group would reach out to others within their group to share the Gospel.
- 8 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in West Africa.
- 9 | Pray for the Susu people living in the Gambia, with 97% of the group adherent to Islam. Pray for increasingly creative ways to distribute the Susu New Testament and portions of the Old Testament among them.
- 10 | Join Jon and Heleen Yoder in prayer that God will call a couple to come alongside the Nyandengoh team to serve children with disabilities and their families in a Muslim context in Sierra Leone.

LANCASTER, PA.

- 11 | Pray for the worker families who are completing service with EMM in 2026 and readjusting to life in Pennsylvania, other parts of the U.S.

- 12 | Pray that the volunteers who serve at Neighbors Community Center at Hub450 feel encouraged and uplifted.
- 13 | Pray for Phil and Linda Gottschalk as they acculturate to the US after 40 years in Europe. Pray for their new three-year term as non-resident EMM workers. They will continue to teach online for the Baptist Theological Institute in Bucharest, Romania. Phil will also work with the EMM Christian-Muslim Relations Team.
- 14 | Ask the Lord to place on people's hearts the opportunity to serve with Neighbors Community Center at Hub450.
- 15 | Ask the Lord to bless the gathering at the Business Leaders' Breakfast this morning. Pray that they will be impacted through the stories they hear about local businesses in Central Asia and the global impact.

CENTRAL ASIA

- 16 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Central Asia.
- 17 | Pray for the Karakalpak who live in Kazakhstan and who are 80% Muslim. Pray for the many who face health issues and lack access to adequate medical care. Pray that they would meet Christ and experience him as Healer.
- 18 | Pray for Elizabeth* as she completes and releases a book she is writing. Pray for her as she prepares to host a short-term team in Central Asia during the first week of October. The team is comprised of participants from five countries.
- 19 | Pray for the Balkar people living in Uzbekistan, of whom 100% are adherents of Islam. They participate in folk-Islam and Balkar traditions. Pray that they would be introduced to Christ in ways that are impactful to them.
- 20 | Ask the Lord to call long-term workers to serve in Central Asia.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- 21 | Join Mark and Sarah Schoenhals, Steve Horst, and Bethany Tobin in prayer for the Isaan Doorways Partnership Gathering, Sept 16-20, in Det Udom. This brings together various organizational partners and LEC leaders, all working to prepare new workers to

serve long-term in the Isaan region.

- 22 | Ask the Lord to call short-term workers to serve in Southeast Asia.
- 23 | Pray for the Aheu in Thailand, who are 90% Buddhist. Pray that the Lord would reveal himself to them in a way that is deeply compelling to them, so that they can be free from their efforts to appease ancestor spirits.
- 24 | Pray for Brody and Abigail* that the Lord would provide the funds needed for them to begin their term. Pray that He would also raise up the church partners needed to support them in mission.
- 25 | Pray for the Lord's continued direction for the work in Southeast Asia and for wisdom and discernment as He leads those serving in the region.

OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

- 26 | Join J.C. Ebersole in prayer for All-nations Association of Bible Schools (AABS) as they build a team of business persons who will travel overseas and train the teachers of their associated schools to teach the new Small Business Development course in addition to the theological courses.
- 27 | Pray for Austin and Griselda Zuercher during their home leave. Pray that they can connect well with supporters, raise the needed funds, and recruit MST members for the needed roles. Pray for Griselda as she works to improve her English during this time.
- 28 | Continue to lift Peter and Christy* in prayer for their move to Lebanon.
- 29 | Join A and A* in asking the Lord to complete the funding for the reconstruction of a one-room nursery and women's literacy center in the village they relate to in the Atlas mountains.
- 30 | Join Jonathan Bornman in prayer for partners in Tanzania as they work to dub the Unexpected Peace documentary into Swahili for distribution in East Africa.

Some prayer requests adapted from joshuaproject.net.

**Names changed or omitted for sensitivity reasons.*



Eastern Mennonite Missions

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CALLED

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AN INSPIRING RETREAT FOR DISCERNING A CALL TO MISSIONS & MINISTRY

Come explore God's direction, timing, and preparation in your personal calling. Leaders will walk alongside each participant to provide resources and identify next steps. During this retreat, sponsored by Eastern Mennonite Missions and LMC, we will come together for worship, teaching, reflection, and tools for next steps. Registration fee includes four meals and one night of lodging.

OCTOBER 2-3, 2026
The Welcoming Place, Akron, PA

- **\$125 per person**
- **\$195 for two people**
(registering together)

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a fellowship of anabaptist churches

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\$1,645,000
2026 IMPACT FUND GOAL



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