



ANNIE
ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING®
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

UNITED

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS
MARCH 6-12, 2022

The unity of the church is tied to the mission of telling the world God sent His Son to display God's great love. That reality is convicting. A lost, divided world should look at the church and see something radically different.

There is a very practical step we must take; prayer. We must follow Jesus' example when He prayed for His church: that we would be one as Christ and the Father are one (John 17:11).

We need true unity—the kind that comes only when we rally around the life-changing gospel and the mission of

sharing that hope with a world that desperately needs to be saved from sin and reunited with the Creator.

This week, we'll look at six stories of missionaries and their families who are investing their lives to advance the gospel.

HERE'S A PREVIEW:

- Michael and Traci Byrd never expected to return to inner-city Saint Louis. But armed with the gospel and an unimaginably good macaroni and cheese recipe, they are reaching one of the most difficult neighborhoods in the US for Christ.
- It's been crisis after crisis—hurricanes, earthquakes, pandemics, economic crises—for Puerto Rico, an island in need of hope. And Itamar Elizalde helps teams of volunteers bring that hope—both practical and spiritual—to Puerto Ricans in crisis.
- The military life comes with unique challenges—challenges those outside the culture could never fully understand. That's why army veteran Jared Huntley, along with his wife, Jen, feels uniquely qualified to reach servicemen and women in Washington, DC, with the light of Christ.
- Hospitality is opening doors to the gospel in the Niagara region of Canada. For missionaries Steven and Cindy Martins, each shared cup of coffee is an opportunity to build relationships and reach new people with the good news.
- The numbers just don't add up. In Denver, Colorado, the marijuana dispensaries and breweries outnumber evangelical churches by the thousands. People are looking for solutions in all the wrong places. But missionary Brianna McKinney is there to tell them about the real answer.
- Many Arabic-speaking countries are closed to missionaries. But when the COVID-19 pandemic forced a Cincinnati-based, Arabic-speaking church to meet online, it opened opportunities for people around the world to hear the gospel in their heart language from North American missionaries Amer and Vicky Safadi.

As you read these missionaries' stories and pray for them this week, consider how you're a part of the effort as the mission moves forward. Your giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering helps missionaries live and work in some of North America's darkest corners. Your gifts and your prayers help shine light and bring hope.

United to Reach Our Nation and Beyond

NOW MAY THE GOD WHO GIVES ENDURANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT GIVE YOU THE SAME ATTITUDE OF MIND TOWARD EACH OTHER THAT CHRIST JESUS HAD, SO THAT WITH ONE MIND AND ONE VOICE YOU MAY GLORIFY THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

—ROMANS 15:5-6

It is estimated 275 million people in North America are lost. That's men, women, young adults, and children. Among that population is more than 40 million people living in the United States who were born in another country. That's about one-fifth of the world's migrant population—more than any other country.

Almost every nation in the world is represented in North America, making it one of the most complex missions fields. And immigrants, even from countries closed to the gospel, continue to come here for a better life.

And these millions represent people made in God's image—people in need of gospel hope.

These are the people thousands of missionaries across North America are working to reach. And these missionaries depend on your prayers.

They are taking the gospel to a region of 366 million people where the spiritual and cultural divides are deep and growing. Only the love of Christ can bring true unity and transformation.

As you read each story during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions and lift up the missionaries' requests, you are joining them on mission and providing vital support for their work.

And your generous giving to the annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering makes an eternal impact across North America. You and your church are the fuel that enables thousands of missionaries to be sent, to plant churches, and to serve the needs of people who desperately need a gospel witness.

When we come together to pray, give, and go to reach the nations throughout North America and our local neighborhoods, the church becomes a beautiful representation of God's vision for every nation, tribe, and tongue to be saved and united in praise to Him. Through all our differences, we can be transformed and united by the unchanging, life-giving gospel of Jesus.

PRAY

Pray to have eyes open to see the people around you in need of the hope of the gospel.

Pray for the thousands of missionaries across North America working to reach new people even in the most challenging circumstances.

- **LEAD WOMEN ON MISSION:**
- Use with meeting plan on pages 6-7 in
- Women on Mission Leader (Spring 2022).



Day 2

**Reaching a Place Many
“Turn Their Backs On”**

**Michael & Traci
BYRD**
Saint Louis, Missouri

Traci Byrd never would've guessed chicken would be such a big part of her ministry one day. And she definitely wouldn't have guessed it would be happening in a neighborhood she and her husband, Michael, swore they would never move back to.

They are both native to inner-city Saint Louis, but they had no desire to stay.

“It was just a bad neighborhood, and we didn't want to raise our kids there,” Michael said. “The schools were terrible. Our kids couldn't go out and play without us being nervous.”

So they left, planning to never return.

But after serving in another urban area for several years, Michael said God gave him “a burden to see inner-city churches planted in areas that many turn their backs on.”

And that meant North Saint Louis—the area he had turned his back on—an impoverished neighborhood that is about 95 percent African American. The crime rate is high, drug use is rampant, and most homes have only one parent.

“They are people who feel abandoned, uncared for—people who feel like they've got to rob Peter to pay Paul,” Michael said. “The heart of Faith Community Bible Church is to make Jesus known by caring for them.”

The church has fleshed that out in several ways—and one is through chicken.

The Byrds thought about opening a food pantry, but then they realized the need wasn't for free food—it was to know how to make the food bought with food stamps last longer. Traci started gathering women in her home to teach

them how to take a pack of chicken and make it stretch by making meals like chicken pasta and chicken pot pie.

The women loved it, and the relationships built in the kitchen have lasted. Traci's newfound ministry also shaped the way Michael started looking for needs in the community.

He began to organize block parties with free barbecue, rappers, and activities for children. And he and Traci both started plugging into people's lives and discipling them over meals, during trips to the grocery store, and any other time they could connect.

“People have to work, so we get in where we fit in,” he said. “We spend life together.”

Michael says his inner-city neighborhood may be rough, but the root problem—sin—is the same as anywhere else, and the remedy is the same too.

“All people have the same heart condition in small towns and in the big urban centers,” Michael said. “We all need the same Jesus.”

PRAY

Pray Michael and Traci would continue finding creative ways to care for their community.

Pray they would have favor with the people in their neighborhood.

Pray God would open hearts to the gospel through Faith Community Bible Church.

A portrait of Itamar Elizalde, a woman with long, curly brown hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark green top and a gold chain necklace. The background is a lush green field with mountains in the distance under a cloudy sky. In the top right corner, there is a dark blue banner with the text "Day 3" in white. To the right of the portrait, the text "Hope for the Storm-Tossed of Puerto Rico" is written in white. Below that, "Itamar ELIZALDE" is written in large white letters, with "Guaynabo, Puerto Rico" in a smaller font below it.

Day 3

Hope for the Storm-Tossed of Puerto Rico

Itamar
ELIZALDE
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

When Itamar Elizalde thinks of what it's like to be vulnerable, she thinks of a man she met as a volunteer team was working on his roof in Puerto Rico.

"He had been in construction and did really well for himself and then seven years ago was in a bad accident where two people died," Itamar said. "And it wasn't his fault, but he was involved, and so he was laid off. He was injured, so he couldn't go back to work, both because he was seen as a liability even though he was cleared and because he was injured and could no longer function as he did before."

The bottom had fallen out underneath him. And then it fell out around him too.

In 2015, Puerto Rico entered a "dire economic crisis," Itamar said, and two years later, hurricanes Irma and Maria ravaged the island, killing thousands and knocking out the fragile electrical grid.

Then in 2019, a political scandal brought more hardship to the US territory, and at the beginning of 2020, six weeks of nonstop earthquakes destroyed hundreds of homes in the southwest. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

All those things had compounded, and he told Itamar, "It just seems like I can't catch a break."

He was "trying to be a good husband, a good father, a provider," Itamar said, and he felt hopeless.

Many others across the island feel the same way after these past several years, and it's into this space the North American Mission Board's Send Relief ministry center has been established with the goal of sharing practical help and eternal hope.

Itamar moved there in late 2019, right in the heart of Puerto Rico's growing need. It was a full-circle move for

her—she was born in Puerto Rico, but her parents moved the family to Worcester, Massachusetts, to plant a church when she was young.

She hadn't intended to move back, but after spending some years in the criminal justice field and then student ministry, she led a GenSend student team to Puerto Rico in March 2019.

While there, she realized God was calling her to move her life there.

Now Itamar serves as the on-the-ground coordinator for volunteer teams that come in to help with construction projects—work that opens doors to share about the hope found in Jesus. Sometimes that impact is immediate. Other times, it's laying the groundwork for what's to come, she said.

"The Lord has used tragedy to awaken the hearts of many on the island who previously placed their hope on money, family, health, and stability and can now see how fleeting it all is in light of the solid-rock hope found in the gospel," Itamar said.

PRAY

Pray hearts would open to the gospel in Puerto Rico.

Pray Itamar's team and volunteers would share boldly as they meet physical needs.

Pray more missionaries would come to serve alongside them in Puerto Rico.



Day 4

Finding Community in a Transient Military Life

**Jared & Jennifer
HUNTLEY**
Washington, DC

Jennifer Huntley didn't know her husband, Jared, back when he was serving in the army. She wasn't there for the years he struggled to keep his life together while seeing and experiencing traumatic events during deployment.

By the time she met him, Jared had experienced the life change offered in Jesus, and he had a heart for sharing that with others—specifically, people in places that didn't have a church on every corner.

Eventually that call led him right back to the place he'd come from. The Huntleys moved to Washington, DC, to relaunch Pillar Church, part of the Praetorian Project, a family of multiplying churches in military communities. The focus is to reach nearby military bases as well as the surrounding community.

One way the Huntleys are seeing God move is through the women Jennifer disciples.

"Women who are military members or who are wives of military members experience unique challenges in their families and in their spiritual lives," she said. "What you typically will hear is that the constant moving from place to place makes it difficult to establish genuine, meaningful relationships, to feel connected to a church body, or to have a sense of rootedness or feeling at home."

There are also challenges surrounding deployment and being separated from their spouse for long periods, a situation that can cause a sense of isolation and deep loneliness.

That's why at Pillar Church, Jennifer wants "to be deeply intentional in our conversations with women who come across our church body and help them to see that we are willing and able to invest in their

life and in their family's lives even if they only have a short time in our city."

"We believe that by keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ and the gospel, we can encourage women to set their hope on the One who is always with them," Jennifer said. "We also want to equip and empower them to use this transient season in their life to reach the many, many people they will meet along the way with the good news of salvation."

Others may look at the transience of military personnel as a reason not to invest as deeply in those families, but the Huntleys see it as a natural mission-sending machine.

"We're supposed to send," Jared said. "If the government is already moving these people all over the place naturally, why not instead of seeing that as a problem see that as an opportunity to say, 'Let's disciple these families, and then they're going to take the gospel with them everywhere'? To me, it seems like a great way to accomplish the Great Commission."

PRAY

Pray Jared and Jennifer would have favor on military bases and in the community surrounding Pillar Church.

Pray God would open hearts among military personnel and grow them in their faith so they could go as missionaries to their future assignments.



Day 5

Opening the Door to Neighbors and Jesus

**Steven & Cindy
MARTINS**
Saint Catharines, Ontario

Steven and Cindy Martins have become good at inviting themselves to other people's houses. They still have thousands of homes to go in their area, but that number is getting smaller all the time.

Where they live—the Niagara region of Canada—89-90 percent of the population of more than 400,000 doesn't believe in God. So, since planting Sevilla Chapel in 2019, Steven and Cindy have been strategically and intentionally going door-to-door in the city of Saint Catharines. They've been sharing with everyone they can.

And the gospel has been on the move in homes like Gonzalo and Abril Alcazar's. The day Steven met them, he asked Gonzalo whether he and Cindy could visit and share God's Word with his family. They began to walk through the Gospel of Luke together. They did it in their heart language—Steven and Cindy are also Spanish speakers. And they kept meeting up to study together every Friday night.

Over time, member after member of the Alcazar family decided to follow Jesus, and today Gonzalo is the simultaneous translator for services at Sevilla Chapel and "wants to help in any way he can with his wife," Steven said.

The bilingual church—which worships in English and Spanish—is meeting a need for a multicultural congregation to reach out to the ethnic groups scattered across the city. The Latino population, for one, is growing quickly as people move out of overpopulated Toronto into Saint Catharines looking for more space to live and employment at nearby farms.

Cindy said the chance to be exposed to English in church is a draw for the women, who work hard to

supplement their family's income but need to know English to get better jobs. It's a challenge for them to find time to come together for Bible study, as these women often work multiple jobs to stay afloat.

"In our church, we are doing this Bible study once a month because a lot of the ladies are busy," she said.

But when they can get there, they connect through the chance to learn language.

"It's been very good for them," Cindy said.

Steven said support from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering helps him and his wife continue their ministry among the lost of Saint Catharines.

"We're going to the streets. We're giving people Bibles. We're sitting down with people and having Bible studies with them," Steven said, noting that gifts through the offering allow them to spend more time doing that so they can reach the whole city and eventually the whole region.

For them, it's not just about planting a church with a big membership.

"It's 'Let's see how many people we can reach with Jesus and see how many people are being transformed by the gospel with discipleship,'" Steven said.

PRAY

Pray Sevilla Chapel would continue making and multiplying disciples in Saint Catharines.

Pray Steven and Cindy would have favor with the people of the city as they knock on doors and share the gospel.



Day 6

Turning the Spiritual Tide in the Mile High City

**Brianna
MCKINNEY**
Denver, Colorado

Brianna McKinney said one of the things she loves most about her role in Denver is every day is a little bit different.

Some days she's painting a mural on a nearby magnet school for refugee children. Other days she's helping pack backpacks for children entering the foster system, or she's having conversations with the homeless as she hands out bags of necessities. Still other days she's coordinating large-scale food distribution efforts or coaching teams of students who are there serving for the summer.

But every day Brianna is grateful to be there.

"Denver is such a beautiful place, and it attracts many people," she said. "There is so much work to be done and so few laborers to help do it. We are just in need of more people."

Brianna was assigned to Denver as one of the North American Mission Board's first journeymen, a new program for college graduates who are willing to commit two years of full-time missionary service to an area of great need.

Typically, journeymen serve alongside compassion missionaries or church planters to assist and expand their work. Brianna serves at the Denver ministry center and helps the director, Jason Tipton, meet needs locally and develop partnerships with churches, church plants, and community organizations. She also coaches and onboards GenSend college students for summer missions projects.

The city is one of great spiritual need, she said. People are often isolated and lonely, and Denver has only one evangelical church for every 32,000 people.

To put that in perspective, there's one marijuana dispensary for every 2,000 people and one brewery for every 7,000, she said.

"Our goal, our hope, and our vision is that those numbers can switch, and we are now one evangelical church for every 7,000 people, or the dream, one evangelical church for every 2,000 people," Brianna said.

Through the center where she works, she and others are building relationships, seeing nonbelievers welcomed into churches, and seeing people come to faith in Jesus.

"One thing I love about the ministry center here in Denver is we're not trying to reinvent the wheel. We're coming alongside existing ministries and helping strategically partner our churches to further the mission," Brianna said.

She said the funding provided by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is vital to the work, and she wouldn't be able to be there without it.

"Look at how the mission is moving forward," she said. "It's because Southern Baptists give that we now can go and do what we passionately love, and financing is no issue."

PRAY

Pray for more workers to be called to Denver to serve alongside the church plants.

Pray for perseverance for the church plants, missionaries, and core teams in Denver who are seeking to love their communities well.



Day 7

A Heart for Arab People

**Amer & Vicky
SAFADI**
Cincinnati, Ohio

When Vicky Safadi lived in the Middle East, going to women’s homes for tea was easy. Most women were around their homes in the afternoon and ready to welcome guests for conversation.

But when she immigrated to the US, she had to find a new rhythm for reaching Arab women.

“Here, a lot of ladies, they really appreciate when they feel they are loved and there is someone who cares about them,” she said. “But you need to wait for the weekend to have tea and talk.”

One young woman Vicky met at a local store in Cincinnati said she had family in the area, but she rarely got to see them because she worked 14-hour days.

So Vicky planned a time to meet with her on the weekend.

“And then we went to Starbucks, and we just sat for two hours, and then I shared the gospel with her. It was her first time hearing about Jesus in her life,” Vicky said. “At that time, she started coming to my home and building this good relationship.”

That’s how Vicky and her husband, Amer, live their lives—inviting people to their home and having conversations.

And that’s why new people come through the door every week at the Arabic-language church they planted in Cincinnati in late 2019. Within three months of planting, the church had 55 Arabic-speaking people from eight countries, and it continues to grow. The livestream ministry it started during the COVID-19 pandemic now also reaches thousands of Arab Christians and nonbelievers around the world.

“It’s amazing,” Amer said, noting that even in the midst of a pandemic, God is still “working in a great way.”

The Safadis ask every Arab person or family they meet to come to their church or their house to have tea and talk. They’ve found God keeps crossing their paths with people who need to hear the gospel in their heart language.

“It’s easier to share the gospel in Cincinnati than in the Middle East, but it depends on the trust and the relationship you build with them during the moment or the days that you have with them,” Amer said.

“Sometimes the person that you saw, you don’t know if you will see him again, so at that moment you have to share the gospel with them. The people at [English as a second language] classes or other places, you will see them regularly; you build a relationship with them and trust with them to share the gospel, and God opens their heart. It’s not about us. It’s God and the Holy Spirit that open their heart to accept Him. It’s not about us at all.”

PRAY

Pray the Safadis would have favor with the Arabic-speaking people they meet and God would orchestrate those meetings.

Pray the Holy Spirit would work in the hearts of the Arab people of Cincinnati.

Pray the Arabic-language church in Cincinnati would continue to grow and reach its city and beyond.

United We Pray

North America needs the hope of the gospel. Prayer is the answer.

“We had been asking people to pray for quite some time for someone to reach the Arabic-speaking population in our area,” said Cincinnati-area pastor Travis Smalley. God sent church planters Amer and Vicky Safadi, and now Arabic-speaking people in Cincinnati and around the world are hearing the gospel. That’s what prayer can do.

Thank you for praying this week for the featured missionaries you have met during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions. These missionaries are only a few representatives of a larger missionary force. Because of your faithful prayers and giving, every day there are thousands more workers reaching people across every possible divide with the life-giving message of the Savior.

Your prayer support is the vital engine for missionaries’ ministries. With millions uniting in prayer to lift them up, missionaries are receiving the strength to persevere in hard places and finding people of peace who build bridges. Spiritual doors are miraculously opening. Lives are being transformed.

In Luke 10:2, Jesus laid out His first missionary strategy: “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” It’s simple but profound. Jesus’ strategy is prayer. Prayer isn’t the least you can do—it’s the most.

And that prayer strategy isn’t limited to one week or one season of the year. We invite you to continue praying for the featured missionaries, and many others across the US, Canada, and their territories, throughout the year. NAMB’s prayer resource, PrayForPlanters.com, gives you a unique opportunity to meet and pray for missionaries in multiple states, territories, and provinces.

You can see their prayer requests, send notes of encouragement through the website, and join a missionary’s prayer team by subscribing to regular prayer updates. Gain an up-close and personal view of a missionary’s community through a virtual prayerwalk. See the neighborhood where a new church is being planted. Pray over the homes, schools, and businesses you pass as you navigate through the street-view map.

One of the first things every missionary knows is he or she can’t do it alone. Missionaries need faithful and committed prayer partners like you. Thank you again for being part of a powerful prayer force that continues to expand God’s kingdom.

PRAY

Pray Southern Baptists would faithfully support missionaries through prayer.

Pray God would show you a missionary family or families you could uplift and encourage through your intercession.

Pray for and encourage more missionaries by visiting PrayForPlanters.com.