

one ambition

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known..." ROMANS 15:20

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KEEP ON PRAYING!

“But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

Isaiah 40:31

You know the story of Hannah and her life of prayer. But here’s a seemingly inconsequential phrase that you may have missed, I know I did: “So it went on year by year...” 1 Samuel 1:7.

Year after year Hannah experienced the heartbreaking reality: her womb was empty. Scripture tells us: “She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.” Wow!

“So it went on year by year....”

As I reread this simple phrase, I think about my own personal journey of waiting on God. More than that, I think about the many times in the history of missions that God has asked us to wait. There are times when the circumstances we face feel utterly defeating and we are “deeply distressed” as we pray.

I am reminded of the attempted removal of Christianity by Enver Hoxha, the former leader of Albania.

In February 1967, he proclaimed his country to be the first and only pure atheistic nation in the world. All churches and mosques were shut down. Clerics were imprisoned in “re-education camps” where most of them died. Reports told of extreme actions, even sandblasting religious names off tombstones. Like other dictators of his time, he was ruthless and truly wanted religion, “the opiate of the people,” out of his country once and for all. He believed what Karl Marx wrote: “religion is a food of just air.”

Shortly after Hoxha’s proclamation, Richard, a high-level military aid in the US, read the intelligence briefing about Hoxha’s speech. God touched Richard’s heart for the people of Albania. Every single day he prayed that God would open a door for the gospel and raise up emissaries to go to the people. He prayed for the people and those imprisoned.

So it went on year by year....

I met Richard in 1992. More than three decades after the decree, he still held back tears as he talked about Albania. In all that time, he had not stopped praying. In the background, God worked. Richard had no idea what God was doing. He had been called to pray. God spoke to the hearts of a few people to become missionaries as soon as the door opened.

The combination of committed prayer, faith, and obedience produced results that were totally unpredicted. This is the work of God’s grace. Within a decade, a church had been planted, leaders were raised up and they began to send their own workers across the border to Kosovo. Even though Hoxha worked to annihilate the church, God prevented it. He strengthened the church and empowered the Albanian church to send missionaries to other parts of the world. We serve an awesome God.

God worked as Richard prayed year after year after year.

We might think of Hannah and Richard as heroes of the gospel—but they were ordinary people who, in faith, called out to God with hope that he hears and will answer. Their story is our story.

We too must persevere in prayer. And sometimes it seems like we are only waiting. Hannah was discouraged, depressed and deeply distressed—but still she prayed. God heard her and gave her the son she desired. She named him Samuel because it means: “I have asked for him from the Lord.” And then God blessed her with three more sons and two daughters!

Richard waited on God for 25 years. And now there are churches scattered throughout the entire country of Albania.

So it went on year by year....

Dear friend, what are you waiting on? Do not despair. Remember Hannah and Richard. Continue to pray in humility, looking to God for his answer in due time.



Donnie

Donnie Searce
Executive Director



Introduction

Like the seasons of the year, our prayer lives may walk through the spring of new birth, the summer of childhood and opportunity, the autumn of change and challenges and the dark winter of despair.

There are seasons in our spiritual lives where we experience rich fellowship with the Lord. Other times we may feel disconnected and are waiting on him. Praying during these seasons can look different, and that's ok.

Teresa, Doug and Wayne are committed to prayer and they have walked through different seasons of prayer in their life journeys. As you read their stories, may you be encouraged in your own prayer life.

Teresa's Journey

As a child, I learned to thank God for the food on the table and pray for things happening in my life, like a test at school. I put my future in God's hands. I prayed for many years for a husband who loves the Lord. I remember times sitting with my Bible praying, asking God to speak to me through a scripture. I spent time thanking him for the ways he was moving in my life or asking for better understanding. I brought him requests for myself and for others.

As a young mother, times sitting with my Bible for longer periods of time seemed to slip away. My prayers looked much different: short and to the point, more of a desperate plea or a quick praise, "Lord give me strength. Give me patience." (Neh. 2:4) As I washed the dishes or sat outside with the kids while they played, I remember praying, "Thank you for these energetic kids. Help me keep up with them. God, help me teach them to know you and love you."

During parenthood, I needed to be creative in finding reminders to pray. I developed a list of names of family, friends, and missionaries. I liked keeping the list in easy-to-see places; my two favourites were on my fridge for when I was cooking and pinned to my car's visor for when I was picking up the kids from school. Now, I set a reminder on my phone to pray. These little opportunities for prayer are all important and still help me connect with God throughout the day.

Doug's Journey

When I retired in 2015, I made myself available to where God was leading me to pray. I would ride my bike around town, and each time I passed the Pioneers Canada building I wondered what was going on there. I started riding my bike to the office every day to pray. Walking around the office building to intercede for the staff was some of my best times of prayer. The Spirit allows us to engage in intercession and share that load with Jesus (Romans 8:26-27). Anytime we connect with the Lord it energizes us. It's a spiritually nourishing thing.

For 25 years, five days a week I have called my friend at 5:30 am and we pray together. This has helped me have consistency and accountability in my prayer life. I find doing something physical like walking or biking, helps me to focus on prayer. It doesn't have to be a long time, 10-15 minutes even. I pray for each person's needs, for protection, for health physically and spiritually.

Over many years, I have learned to experiment in prayer to keep my time with God fresh. I read the Bible every morning, so that forms the foundation for what I may ask for day to day. I have a book called "Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers". It has been dynamite as a starting point on how to pray. I often go back to the book of Psalms, the Lord's Prayer and an app called Lectio 365.

In his word, our loving Father invites us to participate with him in what he wants to do in us and through us. By praying for others, we empathize more deeply and often see God work in ways we couldn't have known. Whether prayer is praise, confession, or intercession, one thing is sure: God hears us when we pray and answers according to his goodness and will.

I have prayed for many Pioneers Canada office staff that have come and gone. I continue to pray for those who have moved on to other things. I may never know how these prayers are touching people's lives, but every once in a while, I get a glimpse of what God is doing. I was recently encouraged to hear from a mutual friend that a former staff member had gotten married, gone to Bible college and become a pastor. He has no idea I've prayed for him all these years. What a joy to serve him and the Kingdom of God in prayer.





Ordinary People: EXTRAORDINARY GOD

God hears our prayers. Every time we say a prayer, it's like we are knitting a stitch in a blanket. It may seem small and insignificant, but over time becomes something big and beautiful. Each stitch makes it stronger so that it cannot be broken easily. God hears each one of our prayers and uses them to transform our lives and the lives of others, even when we don't see it. Here are a couple of stories of how God has answered the prayers of his people.

Immense Courage

Sometimes we get to take part and see God's plan unfold in the life of a new believer. It's an incredible privilege to join God in his transformative work as he guides us to faithfully continue to pray year after year.

When our family left for North Africa, a group from our church decided to come together in prayer for our ministry once a month. They did this for 10 years. One person they faithfully prayed for was a local man we called "Ken".

When we met Ken, he was a new believer but he was facing many challenges and he felt hopeless. He was struggling to find work, experiencing depression and denied his faith before his family to maintain relationships. Our prayer team prayed for Ken to find a job and to have boldness with his family.

When Ken finally found a job, it did not last long. His employers found out he was a believer, and he was fired.

Despite this incident, he worked up the courage to go to his family and shared with them that he was a follower of Jesus. Trusting that God would care for him, Ken left everything behind and moved to a new city. Our prayer team prayed that Ken would find suitable work and fellowship with other believers. God answered by opening the door to a job at a Christian school in the city. There, he met a local believer and got married.

A few years later, God placed on Ken's heart his fellow North Africans. People like his employers and family who had rejected him for his faith were the same people who desperately needed Jesus. Ken and his family joined a team in Europe where they do Radio Ministry in Arabic to North Africa. Two members of our prayer team were able to visit Ken, their brother in Christ whom they had been praying for all those years.

Wayne's Journey

Prayer is not as much a discipline of "something to check off our list" but an invitation. As an invitation to relationship, we grow closer and deeper with God by sharing our hearts and continually discovering the heart of God. Intercession is an opportunity to join God in what he is doing. As children of God, we can come to him with everything. In our weakness, we can come into the presence of God in confidence and boldness (Hebrews 6:16). We have the privilege of being led by the Holy Spirit in what to pray for our family, community, global brothers and sisters and ourselves.

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by what seems impossible. When praying for these, we have to pray the truth, "Lord I believe, help me in my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). We must surrender our weakness to

him knowing only he can do that which is beyond what we can see or imagine.

I keep a prayer journal with some of the things I've prayed for and the ways God has answered. He prompts me to look back over it and see what I have entrusted to him and how faithful he is. Some answers happen the same day, some take years and some are not the answers we want to hear but as we look back we can see God's hand in each one. We can be encouraged by his faithfulness and love for us.

I find it is helpful to go to a place with no interruptions, and no technology. This allows me to quiet my mind and focus on who God is, to give him praise and to more easily hear his voice. During a busy season of life, the quietest place is in my car. God hears us wherever we are, whenever we come to him.

In his book, "Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God," Tim Keller wrote: "God will either give us what we ask for or give us what we would have asked for if we knew everything he knows" (pg. 288).



Join teams all over the world through prayer. *IMPACT*, our weekly prayer calendar, highlights the needs of our workers, brothers and sisters in Christ, and unreached people groups around the globe. More than that, it shares the amazing ways God has answered your prayers.

Go to pioneers.ca/impact to sign up for *IMPACT* today.

Answered Prayers

One warm evening during my first mission trip in the rural backwoods of Africa, I was scared for my life. After a long day, I was getting ready for bed when I heard rapid gunshots very close by. They were getting closer and closer. I was alone. For the first (and only) time, my teammates were away. I cried out “Help!” to God. I was hoping for a way out. But God clearly directed me to pray and praise his name. As panic enveloped me, I took a deep breath. I sang praises to the Lord, the echo of the gunshots getting louder and louder. I distinctly felt God’s presence. I was afraid, but at peace.

As I think back on the experience, I imagine the disciples may have had similar emotions as the storm raged around them, waves threatening to sink their boat. In panic, they called on Jesus (Mark 4).

After twenty minutes of chaos and gunshots, silence. The next day, I learned the police had caught the armed gunman – only 150 meters away from where I was sitting in my room. I was so thankful to the Lord.

But God was doing a much bigger work beyond my little room and my prayers.

A week later, Kim, a friend from my college and career Bible study in Canada, called me in Africa. She asked me if something happened last Tuesday because she and the Bible study group felt a strong need to pray for me at that time. I was shocked. Because that was the very night of the gunshots. In my time of great need the Lord led the whole group to pray. In God’s mercy, we were able to have a phone call and we got to see what the Lord had done.

Now, whenever someone comes to mind during the day or when I wake up at night, I pray, trusting that whether I find out what happened or not, God is at work. I know each time I pray, God is answering in his way, in his time.



I sought the Lord,
and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears. Psalms 34:4

“

Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Ephesians 6:19-20

”

BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO MUSLIMS

A Conversation with Ed and Joy

God put the nation of Pakistan on their hearts. Islam is the religion of Pakistan, a country in South Asia where 99% of people have never heard the Gospel before.

For over 10 years God worked in and through them while serving in a rural mission hospital in Pakistan. They returned to Canada in 1988 and continue to share Jesus with Muslim university students, refugees and immigrants. Although Ed and Joy complete their formal service with Pioneers Canada at the end of 2022, their love and relationships with Muslims continue.

Pray for Ed and Joy as they close this chapter of official ministry and praise God for all their faithful years of bringing hope to Muslims.

Ed and Joy, we praise God for the many lives he has touched through you. Can you tell us about your friendships with Muslims and what you have learned?

In Pakistan, God poured out a deep compassion and love for our Muslim friends and neighbours. When we returned to Canada, we knew our calling was to seek friendships with Muslim families in Winnipeg. Between our years in Pakistan and serving in Canada, we have learned so much from our Eastern friends.

Their understanding of community is deep and wide. To be part of their community is to be part of their family.

We were honoured to be included in their family, showing love through shared meals, in the warmth and affection expressed among each other, and the immediate care extended to a person in need. If a person chooses to leave their Islamic faith, navigating community can be one of the most difficult things. A new follower of Jesus may face isolation and pressure to return to Islam. We are also sensitive to our friends' desire to be in a community with us. If they choose to decline an invitation to a social gathering, they fear we may be offended and decline to come to their home again.

There are many other complexities to being in a cross-cultural relationship. Muslims new to Canada are often very busy people, trying to balance settlement issues, establishing their careers, and family obligations. Maintaining long-term relationships demands a lot of intentional focus. When there is an instance of Islamophobia in the news or experienced in their personal life, we can expect a temporary pause in our visits until they feel comfortable again.



Faithful followers of Jesus, Ed and Joy live in Winnipeg, Manitoba where they serve the Muslim diaspora. Born in Yemen, Joy spent her childhood among Muslims in Somalia. Ed grew up in the Canadian prairies. They met at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and began their family.

One challenge we have faced in Canada is engaging other Christians in our ministry. Cultural differences, especially regarding our understanding of community, can challenge our Western values of individuality. It can be discouraging and lonely when we don't sense compassion for Muslims among Christians. We invite fellow believers to care for Muslims with a posture of curiosity and compassion.

Can you give us an example of how God is revealing himself to Muslims?

When we share Christ with our Muslim friends, we are never quite sure at what point they decide to follow him fully. It often involves years of processing new truths. In Joy's book, we shared the story of our friend "Jasmine". Jasmine came to Canada with her husband from a war-torn country. They only knew violence and shame. We could sense the toll on Jasmine's spirit and how she had been robbed of her joy and hope. We met regularly with them for meals and tea, always sharing God's love for them. At one point Jasmine shared that Jesus had her heart. By sharing this we knew that she was on her way into the Kingdom of heaven.

We have heard countless stories where people encounter the Holy Spirit through nature and dreams. One day during our long Winnipeg winter, we went for a walk at a local park. This spot is known for the friendly chickadees that eat birdfeed out of the hand of visitors. We took a photo of one such sweet bird and shared it with a few of our friends. We were blown away by the many messages of how this sweet picture touched our friends with cheer. One believer was prompted to give Joy a call and shared that the Spirit had revealed some of her sins. This may sound strange to Canadian Christians, but often followers of Jesus out of Islam first follow because they are touched by the

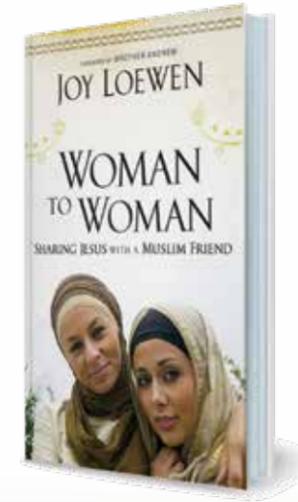
love of Jesus. It can take time for the conviction of their sin to dawn. This is what our friend was experiencing. It was such a sacred time. And to think we were able to have that conversation all because of a little bird photo! God works in creative ways.

What has been the role of prayer (and the Holy Spirit) in your ministry?

Prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit are the heart of our ministry. When we started forty-three years ago, we focused primarily on doing "the work". We had a limited understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit. When we understood the need for reliance on the Holy Spirit, our mindset changed. Instead of him entering our ministry, we began entering his ministry. Praying with Muslims about their concerns has become the biggest part of our ministry. It has stretched our faith and made us very dependent on the Holy Spirit.

In one of Joy's blogs, "Holy Spirit", she shares about what spiritual authority can look like in everyday interactions. We are amazed every time the Holy Spirit comes upon us and we receive boldness (Acts 1:8) to witness about Jesus. You can ask the Holy Spirit for that boldness when you are with your Muslim friend. This may show up by the urge to pray confidently and in faith for a Muslim friend and their need. This is the authority of Jesus rising forth.

Praying silently during a visit with a Muslim friend also helps us hear the Spirit's prompting and often leads to deeper conversation and connection with God. When we invite the Holy Spirit into prayer our Muslim friend is impacted and we are transformed. We continue to be in wonder and awe of all that God allows us to experience as we partner with Him.



Read Joy's book, "Woman to Woman: Sharing Jesus with a Muslim Friend". It can be found on Amazon or Christianbook.com.

Visit Joy's blog at joyloewen.blogspot.com to find more resources and words of wisdom.



We took a photo of chickadees on a cold winter in Winnipeg – it inspired many comments. God used that simple photo to speak into the lives of our friends.



How would you encourage others to pray for Muslims in our community?

Throughout our ministry in Canada, we have said many prayers for our Muslim friends, believers, and ourselves. We trust that God is journeying with us and our friends every step of the way. Some of these prayers include:

- Lord, will you grant me favour and lead me to connect with some Muslim friends. Show me how to pray for them and give me eyes to see others as they are wonderfully made in your image and how much they need you.
- Heavenly Father, please give me an attitude of humility and compassion. Help me to be available to the timing and needs of my friends. Give me a spirit of perseverance, patience and wisdom when the circumstances they are going through are so hard.

- Jesus, help me to share your love and message of salvation in a culturally understandable way. Teach me to share how we can trust in you and find forgiveness for our sins.

- God, would you help me to strengthen the faith of believers and show me ways to cheer them on.

How have you seen God's faithfulness over the years?

We have been very blessed in this ministry; the joys outweigh the challenges. God raised up a team of faithful prayer and financial partners to support us. He has given us a way to equip other believers through Joy's book and blog. God has given us resilience and joy in tough times, he has kept us safe and protected us from evil attacks. We praise God for the many open doors to Muslim homes and hearts.



THE TASEAA* PEOPLE

Fatemah has quietly started to question her Muslim faith, but she can't ask questions of her friends and family for fear of retaliation, so she began to search online. As she searched, she discovered so much more information on the prophet Jesus. As she began to question whether Jesus was more than a prophet, she began to chat with a Christian online. Even though it was extremely dangerous, she was eager to learn more and to meet a Christian in person.*



THE TASEAA* PEOPLE

Region
MIDDLE EAST



Climate
DESERT CLIMATE



Population
11,300,000



Language
ARABIC



Prominent Religion
ISLAM



% of Christians
0.09%

Islam is the world's 2nd largest organized religion



*Name has been changed for security purposes

THE 5 PILLARS OF ISLAM

SHAHADA (*profession of faith*)
There is no god but God, and Muhammed is the Messenger of God.

SALAT (*prayer*)
Muslims pray facing Mecca five times a day: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, after dark

ZAKAT (*alms*)
Muslims donate a fixed portion of their income to community members in need.

SAWM (*fasting*)
During the daylight hours of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims abstain from food and drink.

HAJJ (*Pilgrimage*)
Visit to the holy city of Mecca.

Please pray that:

... God would strengthen the underground church as they grow in faith. May they grow in wisdom and boldness as they share their faith.

... the young people who question traditional beliefs and quietly drift towards atheism, agnosticism or materialism. While they are open to discussions, it's difficult to connect with them.

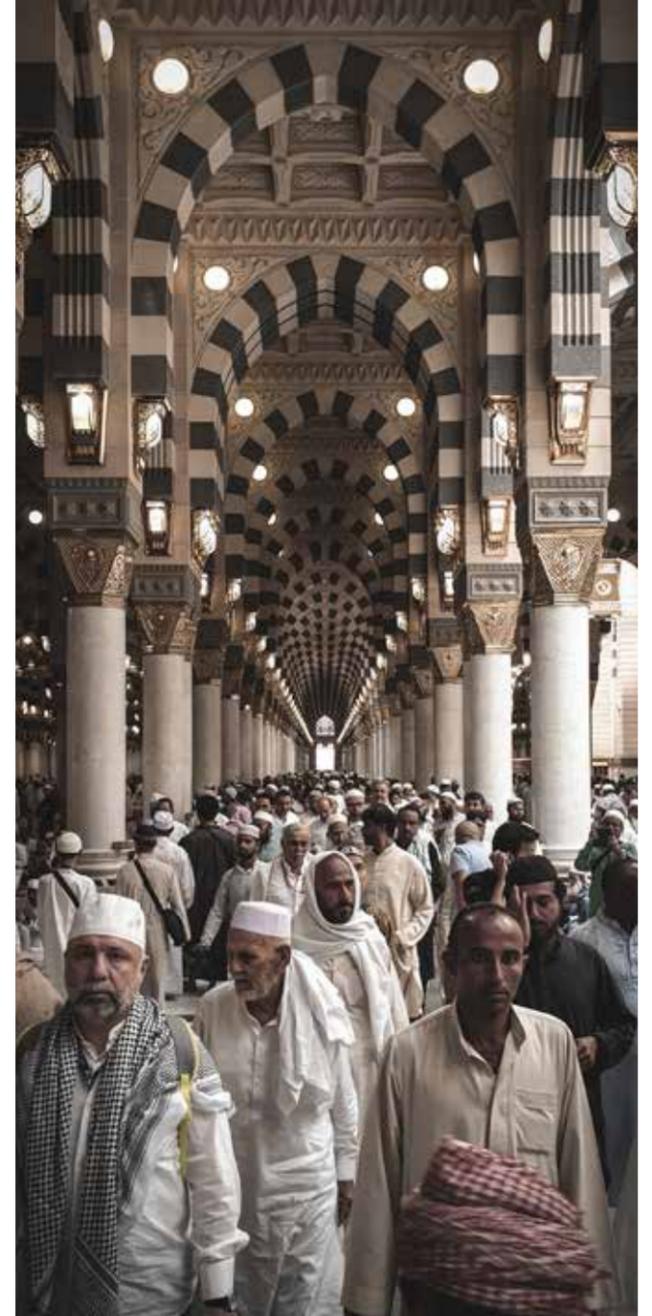
... God would continue to use the internet and other media sources to spread his word.

... Christian content creators would have wisdom and grace as they respond to seekers and to threats. May both the seekers and Christians be safe as they seek truth in a region where other religions are not only disdained but punished.

... men and women will be committed to engage with seekers. May they be wise as they build friendships within the community and balance the needs of young families, the demands of jobs that provide visas, and their desire to effectively incorporate ministry in their lives. May they hear God's voice and prioritize his agenda.

... strong local family units would come to faith. Currently, those who are married risk losing their spouse and kids if they are too vocal about their faith and those who aren't married find it almost impossible to find a believing spouse.

... Muslim men and women seeking answers would engage in conversations that are God-led and that their online friends would speak with wisdom and compassion.



The Taseaa People live in the Middle East. Historically, this population worked in agriculture and livestock, but more recently they work on infrastructure projects. In the poorest sectors of one city buildings are being demolished with little to no notice, leaving tenants and building owners homeless.

Most of the Taseaa people are Muslim, but in recent years, there has been an increased hunger for truth. With that increase, the number of Christians working to reach this people group has also multiplied.

But the hunger for truth comes at a price. In some regions, people of other faiths are forbidden to worship. Freedom of speech, press and religion are basically non-existent. Men and women practicing another religion often face discrimination, abuse, imprisonment, and even death. Despite this God is moving. There is a small underground group of believers coming from a Muslim background who meet together. Some of the Taseaa people have started attending this group.



PRAY, GIVE AND GO

PRAY

Prayer changes lives. Thank you for praying for Pioneers missionaries and their work. God is doing amazing things. We invite you to pray for Pioneers workers for just 15 minutes every day—it's exciting to see what God does with a tiny mustard seed of faith.

- Thank God for Ed and Joy! Their ministry is a powerful testimony of God's guiding hand. Pray that God would lead them as they enter this next season of their walk with him. May God honour the work they have done in the past and bring new families into their circle of friendship. Pray that new disciples would continue to grow in their love and trust in God and become disciple-makers.
- Pray for an increased passion for prayer and that every believer in Canada would pray for a ministry worker and an unreached people group. Pray that we would rely more on the Holy Spirit, constantly learning as we increase in love of God, his Word and our neighbours.
- Pray for the people of Ukraine. May we stand with them, crying out for God's peace, salvation and hope. May they have hope in desperate situations. May they have courage in extreme conditions. May God provide for their needs and bring Jesus' peace.
- Pray for local pastors, volunteers and Christian workers who are bringing God's love as they care for the people of Ukraine. Pray for wisdom and compassion as they engage with families who are separated, mourning the loss of loved ones, their home and their future. May all God's people work in unity.
- Pray for unity amongst Canadian believers. Pray that dividing walls will be broken and God's people would grow in grace, love and forgiveness. May we keep our eyes on Jesus as we pray for our global family.
- Pray for God's kingdom to come on earth even as it is in heaven! Pray for strength and wisdom to reach out to our neighbours in love, boldness and grace. Pray that God would equip all of His people to be ambassadors of love and truth welcoming brothers and sisters, strangers and foreigners into our community in Jesus' name.

GIVE

1. Give to our team working in Eastern Europe, as they care for Ukrainian refugees. Our teams are partnering with local believers to respond with immediate assistance to those attempting to rebuild their lives – both with physical relief and spiritual encouragement. Your donations and gifts will help cover the cost of food, shelter, clothing, transportation and more.
2. Give to our teams reaching out in friendship to Muslim men, women and young people looking for truth. Your gifts will support teams working with the Taseaa people, digital content development and resources for new believers.
3. Give to the work of Pioneers where needed most. In these troubled times, so many people are looking for truth and a hope much bigger than their current experience. Your gift supports Canadians dedicated to Pioneers global ministry.

To give today, complete the enclosed form or visit pioneers.ca/give.

GO

Join one of our 340+ teams around the world for a few months, a year or long-term. We will walk you through the journey of applying, training for the field and team life, partnering with your sending church, raising support and debriefing your experience.

We have immediate need for workers in these areas:

International School in South Asia:

- This role is ideal for someone who is passionate about education. Administrative and teaching positions are available at a new international school that serves the needs of families living and working overseas. If you are a teacher who has a heart to serve TCK's (third culture kids) apply today!

Media Team in Europe:

- Our European Digital Media team is praying for kingdom-minded servants with skills in marketing, graphic design, computer technology, and



communication. Contact us today to discover how you can use your skills to bring hope to the secular and newcomer populations in Europe.

Teaching ESL in North Africa:

- Perfect for TESOL certified English language teachers. This exciting opportunity at a language school may be the perfect fit for you!

Trekking in West Africa:

- This is a very unique opportunity. The trekking team has been serving rural villages for more than 20 years. They are looking for team members who have a heart to share a holistic gospel to bring practical assistance to the people and the message of hope and salvation through Jesus. This is a great opportunity for someone who is looking for an adventure in caring.

Our broken world needs Jesus! Let's have a conversation about how you can join one of our teams around the world or pioneer a new one – together, sharing HOPE!

*“The history
of missions is
the history of
answered prayer.”*

Samuel Zwemer



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