

Capital Region Prayer Guide

30 days of prayer for our friends and neighbors





INTRODUCTION

*“...seek the peace and prosperity of the city
to which I have carried you into exile.
Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers,
you too will prosper.”*

–Jeremiah 29:7

Welcome to the 30-day prayer guide for the Capital Region of Pennsylvania. This prayer guide is written by local people and began with a desire to meet God where he is working in our community. God has placed us where we live for a purpose and we want to grow our love for the people around us and awareness of their needs.

In this guide, you will find entries devoted to specific categories of people where we seek to highlight some of the challenges and concerns of those people for which we can pray. Other entries focus on a theme or regional concern, where we seek to show the uniqueness of the needs in our community and guide us into prayer for them. There are several times where there is space provided to reflect on how you see these concerns affecting your own life or that of your neighbors and loved ones.

We recognize that a guide like this cannot address each of our individual experiences of living in the Capital Region, nor can it capture all the nuances of each topic or all the perspectives on each issue. Our desire is that it would guide us into ongoing prayer for our neighbors and community. Whenever you encounter information that is

surprising or of particular interest, we encourage you to learn more and continue praying beyond the bounds of this guide.

Prayer is an integral part of our ministry and mission as Christians. Even Jesus demonstrated a life of prevailing prayer. Spiritual renewal in our region will not come without prayer. May this guide help us to pray more intentionally for the Capital Region and, as we do, may the Spirit of God align our hearts with his and show us how to join his work here.

Consider these tips for using the prayer guide:

- Make notes throughout the guide or highlight the things that stand out to you.
- As you think of people within the various categories, write their names down and pray for them specifically.
- Re-use this prayer guide as often as you find helpful!

DAY 1

PRAISE

***“I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will praise you and extol
your name for ever and ever.”***

—Psalm 145:1-2

We have much to be grateful for as residents of the Capital Region of Pennsylvania. By simply looking around, we see the beauty of God’s creation in the woodlands, mountains, and fields. We have numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation and adventure as we enjoy hiking on the Appalachian Trail, hunting and camping at nearby state parks, and boating and fishing in waterways like the Susquehanna River, Yellow Breeches Creek, and Conodoguinet Creek. We experience the distinctness of all four seasons without too many weather extremes.

The Capital Region has a rich agricultural history and continues to be spotted with farmer’s markets and farmstands, in addition to the festivities at the annual Pennsylvania Farm Show and Dillsburg Farmers Fair. Our heritage includes a legacy of resourceful and industrious people who have faced the changing times and developing landscape with perseverance and creativity.

As needs have arisen among our neighbors, our community has responded by coming together to provide support and social services. With our region located relatively close to major cities like Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and New York City, we have access to many

educational opportunities, cultural experiences, and other resources.

Today, we embark on a journey of prayer for our region, which will highlight various needs and areas of concern, but let’s begin by simply praising God for this place we call home.

- Thank God for the gift of living in a region with so many resources and opportunities.
- Praise God for the natural beauty we enjoy in our area.
- Pray that God would be made known through creation, which reveals his strength, provision, creativity, and common grace (Ps 19:1-4; Ps 104:24-28).
- Pray for the continued flourishing and prosperity of our region.



DAY 2

LOCAL CHURCHES

When William Penn founded Pennsylvania in 1681, he sought to create a “Holy Experiment,” where religious freedom would be the foundation of the colony and church would be separate from the state. Many who had suffered religious persecution came to Pennsylvania for refuge and the colony attracted Quakers, English Anglicans, French Huguenots, Scottish and Scots-Irish Presbyterians, Irish Catholics, Anabaptists, and Jews. Penn’s idea of religious freedom was adopted by the nation’s Founding Fathers and is now extended to the whole of America in our Constitution.

This freedom to worship according to one’s conscience brings a diversity of people to our country and our region, and we are grateful for the benefits this law provides. However, as Christians, we also know and desire to share the joy and hope of worshipping the one true God.

According to the Association of Religion Data Archives, in 2020 about 25 percent of the Cumberland County and Dauphin County population were

members or attenders of Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, or Black Protestant churches. That number increases to 39 percent if you add adherents of Catholic churches. It’s safe to assume that the percentage would be much smaller if we could know who of those have a personal, viable, and active relationship with Jesus that is lived out in their everyday lives.

Let us thank God for Christ-centered churches in our area that are seeking to honor God and love their neighbors, despite variations in their expressions of worship. May we grow in our unity of heart and vision to see every person in our region encounter and be changed by Jesus.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray that religious freedom would continue to be practiced in our region so that all people feel welcome here.
- Pray for the Capital Region Gospel Partnership, a group of churches that is seeking to facilitate prayer for gospel transformation in our region, bring church leaders together to build trust and shared vision for gospel saturation, and catalyze Christians to participate in Jesus’s mission in the places where we live, learn, work, and play.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring revival in the Capital Region that leads to confession of sin, fervor for the gospel, and community engagement in the name of Christ.



DAY 3

SENIORS

Individuals who are 65 years or older are described as senior citizens. In Pennsylvania, seniors make up 19 percent of the population. Our region is an attractive place to retire due to tax benefits and senior living opportunities.

The biggest challenges facing the senior population are:

- Physical, mental, and cognitive health. Many health conditions and diseases develop or become more pronounced as people age. Examples include dementia, Alzheimer's, macular degeneration, osteoporosis. Advancing age is the major risk factor for a number of chronic diseases.
- Social participation. Seniors need connections with families, friends, and others to counteract isolation and being or feeling alone.
- Financial security. Many seniors live on fixed incomes and the rising cost of living and health care expenses can greatly reduce financial security and impose personal financial restrictions.
- Independence. Personal transportation limitations and the decreasing ability to perform everyday tasks lead to reduced independence for seniors.

For some seniors their well-being remains fairly constant as they live out the end of their lives. But for many, issues of well-being decline as they age or were not in place as they entered their senior years.

The Cumberland County Aging and Community Services office supports the senior population of the county. They report that the key issues they deal with are the lack of affordable housing, lack of nursing home space, and shortage of care providers. They report more seniors are seeking assistance due to financial stress and the high cost of living. Some clients are experiencing food insecurity, inability to pay health care costs, and difficulty paying property taxes, heating costs, and daily living expenses. Some of their clients are at risk of homelessness or have become homeless.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray that as seniors age and face increasing struggles, they will be strengthened with hope and faith.
- Pray that non-elderly people will show compassion and care for the elderly, valuing their legacy, wisdom, and experience.
- Pray that elderly will live their lives to the fullest, seeking out community, help, and relationships.
- Pray for senior living communities like Messiah Lifeways, Bethany Village, and others who provide residential accommodations and community services.



DAY 4

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

***“So show your love for
the stranger, for you were
strangers in the land of Egypt.”***

—Deuteronomy 10:19

Our capital region is among the fastest-growing in the state. Recent additions include people from all over the US and the world. Some moved here for career opportunities, with years of formal education. Some moved here for safety, with few resources. All are adjusting to new circumstances and culture; some are learning language and job skills.

WAYS TO PRAY

- People who just moved need extra-strong support networks. Cultural differences amplify the need, even as they make it harder to build those networks. Pray for friends and neighbors to welcome and help.
- Pray for finding a safe, affordable place to stay in a historically expensive housing market. Pray also for good relationships between tenants and landlords, and among neighbors.
- Differences in language and certifications can leave immigrants under-employed, leading to discouragement and economic hardship. Pray for jobs that will pay the bills and use their God-given abilities and skills developed through education and experience.
- Pray for transportation: public, car-pooling, or a personal vehicle, plus licensing, insurance, and upkeep. All are more difficult with language and document barriers.
- Healthcare was in short supply for many refugees in their sending country, resulting in long-term health effects. Finding appointments can be difficult with fewer resources. Pray for healthcare.
- Pray for English as a Learned Language classes to be available to and found by students. Pray for churches like Immanuel Alliance Church and Living Water Community Church, as well as organizations like Catholic Charities offering such classes: for volunteers to have time, endurance, and wisdom in teaching; for organization and love, for fruitful conversations.
- Pray for families, as each generation adjusts at a different rate, causing cultural differences within the household.
- Pray that our region will feel like “home” someday, and for perseverance for when it doesn’t.

DAY 5

LOCAL SCHOOLS

Pennsylvania has 500 school districts—nearly each one with its own full-time superintendent, hired by locally elected school board members. There are at least a dozen public school districts and several private schools in the Capital Region.

Our schools provide educational experiences for the students that help create productive, responsible citizens and fulfill their diverse potentials. But school systems also provide jobs that help keep our economy stable and facilities that serve all ages in the community. Perhaps you've played tennis or pickleball on school courts, used a classroom to learn a new skill in a recreation department program, or even browsed a craft show in the hallways of a school.

Did you know?

- Over 39 percent of students in the Mechanicsburg Area School District are eligible for the free or reduced-price school lunch program. The percentage in Northern York County School District is 28.5. About 75 percent of students in Central Dauphin School District are eligible. [Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education]
- With 250 professional employees and a support staff numbering 175, the Northern York County School District is the largest employer in the eight municipalities it serves.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Write down the schools located within your neighborhood and pray for their safety and prosperity.
- Pray for individuals who work in local public and private schools as administrators, faculty, support staff, and leaders of extracurricular activities. Pray for their skill and discernment as leaders and mentors.
- Remember businesses and community organizations that supplement school budgets and support students with sponsorships, scholarships, donations, and volunteers.
- Pray to elect school board members who have a heart for service and have a vision for the best outcomes for all students.
- Pray for students to be sufficiently equipped to learn and take advantage of opportunities offered by their school.
- Pray for homeschool families, that they would find joy in learning together, that parents would have patience as they teach, and children would be diligent in their schoolwork.
- Pray for the students, district employees, and school board members within our local congregations to be able to model the love of Jesus in their daily interactions.

DAY 6

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Our capital region hosts over a dozen institutions of higher learning. Students from our church and our region attend schools both locally and far away.

List some college students you know:

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray that the truth and beauty the students encounter in college friendships and learning would provoke a search for the Kingdom of heaven.
- Students of traditional college age tend to be asking big questions about life. But for some, a focus on academic success or career preparation orients them to material concerns instead. Pray for students to be open to spiritual conversations.
- Pray for churches, campus ministries, and Christian peers to be in contact with people who are interested, searching, or in particular need of Godly counsel.
- International students might have a unique opportunity at colleges in the US to hear the gospel and decide to follow Jesus. Pray for this, and for these students' witness when returning home.
- Over 80 percent of college students say they're struggling emotionally. Pray against anxiety, burnout, and

depression. Pray that students would find restoration in community, hope in Jesus, and healing via medical treatment when needed.

- College students are with people their own age more than ever before or after, giving rise to potentially lifelong friendships. Pray for openness to new friendships, healthy boundaries, and kindness to people not like themselves.
- College tuition has become proportionally more expensive over time, even after adjusting for inflation. [Source: AARP]. Pray for scholarships, jobs, grants, and affordable loans.
- Pray that first-generation college students and students whose backgrounds make them feel uncomfortable on campus will find friends, mentors, and a home away from home.
- College is often a time of taking new responsibility for self. Pray for sustainable rhythms, time-management, vocational discernment, and effective problem-solving.
- Increasingly, young adults are choosing not to attend college, but pursue technical training, immediately enter the workforce, or take a "gap" season. Pray that these young adults would discern the direction they should go, receive godly wisdom in navigating the challenges of early adulthood, and find support and friendship in a new stage of life.

DAY 7

MY NEIGHBORS

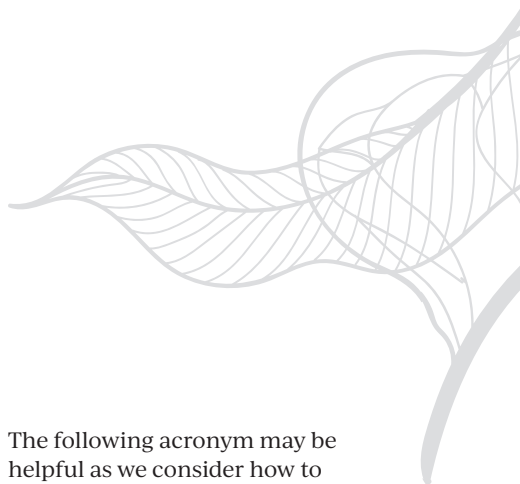
Today, we will take time to reflect on the places where we live and pray for our neighbors. When Jesus gave the second greatest commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, it was not a metaphor, but a call to action (Mt. 22:36-40). It is an invitation to think about those who actually live next door and to be part of pointing them to the life-transforming grace of God.

Consider the households that are in closest proximity to you—maybe a house next door, the apartments to your left or right, or the mobile home nearby. Perhaps you live in a more rural area: think about who you run into regularly, whether it be while you're walking your dog, at the grocery store, or working out at the gym. Write down the names of three of your neighbors.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Knowing God has placed you where you are for a reason, pray for open eyes and hearts to know and love your neighbors.
- Pray your neighbors would see the compassion and generosity of God through you.
- Ask God what might be a next step of deepening relationship with your neighbors.



The following acronym may be helpful as we consider how to **BLESS** our neighbors:

Begin with prayer	Today is a good start!
Listen	Ask questions; consider the conversation God is already having with them
Eat	Everyone needs food and most of us eat 21 meals a week; find a way to share a meal together.
Serve	Is there a need they have that you or other Christian friends can help to meet?
Share your story	As the Spirit opens the door, share about God's goodness in your life.

Find out more at blesseveryhome.com.



DAY 8

HOMELESSNESS

- CARES Family Shelter housed 65 men, women, and children of which 41 were children.
- CARES Men & Women Shelter housed 67 men and women in July; 18 individuals were over the age of 60.
- CARES Street Outreach had 70 open cases of individuals living unsheltered in July.
- CARES Homeless Prevention avoided eviction for 12 households in July.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for organizations like Community CARES, Bridge of Hope, Family Promise, and more who are helping to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming unsheltered in our region.
- Pray that staff and volunteers who work with the unhoused population will be able to meet the needs of those they serve with empathy and compassion.
- Pray for individuals and families who are unsheltered to seek the help of organizations and agencies who can help them in their extremely vulnerable situations.
- Pray that financial resources will be available to continue and expand organizations that work with those experiencing homelessness.
- Pray that housed individuals will become empathetic and supportive of a portion of the population many of us do not understand and have often ignored.

Individuals and families who lack stable, safe, and functioning housing are considered homeless or unsheltered. It is challenging to obtain an accurate count of the unsheltered population as some people are “invisible,” residing in cars, abandoned structures, and on the streets. Others live temporally with family and friends or reside in motels. Homelessness exists in all areas of our region including affluent areas, small towns, and rural areas. The greatest cause of homelessness in our area is the lack of affordable housing followed by the high cost of living and job loss. It is a growing problem.

Most shelters in the Capital Region are located in Harrisburg and Carlisle. One such organization is Community CARES, a non-profit organization that seeks to provide emergency shelter and resources—a home base so residents can start working towards a successful future. In July 2024, they reported that there are currently 289 households declaring homelessness in Cumberland County. CARES is working with 214 of them directly:

DAY 9

ADDICTION

For the individual, addiction is a relentless adversary, hijacking their brain chemistry and rewiring priorities. It erodes self-control, distorts perception, and blurs the line between want and need. What begins as a means of escape or pleasure quickly spirals into a desperate craving, a cycle of highs and lows that leaves people trapped in a perpetual state of longing.

The toll on relationships within the family is staggering. Spouses bear the brunt of the emotional turmoil, torn between their love for the afflicted individual and the need to protect themselves and their children from harm. Children grow up in an environment fraught with instability, their sense of security shattered by the unpredictability of addiction. Siblings are left to navigate their own complex emotions, grappling with feelings of guilt, anger, and resentment.

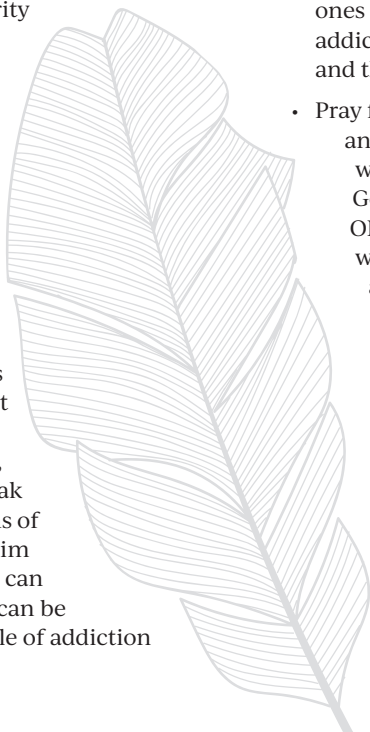
Yet, amid the darkness of addiction, there is always hope. With the right support, resources, and determination, individuals can break free from the chains of addiction and reclaim their lives. Families can heal, relationships can be rebuilt, and the cycle of addiction

can be broken, but it requires courage, perseverance, and a willingness to confront what lies within.

Several in our own local churches can attest to what prayer can do for those living this hell. Prayer is the pathway to freedom for those struggling.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for complete healing and freedom.
- Pray that the desire and urges will be taken away and self-control will rule in their minds and their spirit.
- Pray for restoration of relationships, careers, and lives. Pray for the loved ones of those struggling with addiction to find support, love, and the capacity to forgive.
- Pray for people to find safe spaces and safe people with whom to walk out their recovery. Thank God for organizations like ONE80 Ministries as they walk with those who struggle with addiction and introduce the freedom found in Christ. The journey is only beginning once someone is sober. Then the work really begins. This work of repairing and rebuilding takes endurance, courage, strength, and above all else Jesus!



DAY 10

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In Pennsylvania, counties are divided into local governments called municipalities. A municipality may be a township, borough, or city. There are about 2565 municipalities in Pennsylvania.

Cumberland County scored the greatest growth of all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties in the most recent census with an outstanding 12.2 percent population increase. Neighboring York County increased by 6.6 percent. Dauphin County increased by 6.8 percent.

Our local townships and boroughs take care of our daily needs from architectural review to zoning, along with fire, parks, police, roads, recreation, storm-water, and wastewater services. Our local municipalities also provide residents with a sense of community. In addition to a professional staff, most townships and boroughs rely on residents who serve as volunteers on advisory boards and commissions.

Did you know?

- In addition to local government, our region contains the Cumberland County seat in Carlisle, the Pennsylvania state capital in Harrisburg, and three federal government military operations.
- Pennsylvania has a long history of volunteer fire service, reportedly being the home of the nation's first volunteer fire company started in Philadelphia around 1736.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Consider the individuals who serve as elected officials and volunteer board members in our local municipalities, some of whom worship in our local churches. If you're not sure who the elected officials are in your municipality, look them up online and pray for them by name.
- Pray for the outreach of local churches to our community in local government events such as Upper Allen Township's Fall Festival.
- Pray for individuals employed in the local, county, state, and federal government agencies in our immediate area.
- Support local fire and emergency responders with prayers for safety, thanksgiving for their service, and continued financial support for their departments.



DAY 11

MARRIAGES

Connection is hard. And we all long for it. It is wired into our bones to want a safe other to be there for us. That is called attachment. Western culture tells us adults shouldn't need another, that we should be able to cope with emotions on our own. The culture is lying! That's not how God made our brains. God's heart is relational (as seen in the Trinity, Jesus's love, and 1 John 4), and God rooted creation in that relational, connecting love. We are made to need a safe haven person to lean into to co-regulate our emotions, share the load, and deal with the enormity of life—together!

We also learn relational strategies in childhood that we bring into our intimate relationships. They fuel what Dr. Sue Johnson called "Negative Cycles." Eighty percent of all couples in distress get caught in a cycle where one partner pursues, turning up the heat to get connection, and the other withdraws, turning down the heat to protect the relationship from conflict. These anxious and avoidant attachment patterns affect not only our intimate relationships but also our parenting, friendships, work life, heart health, immune system response, and more. Healing our connections and supporting couples on this journey really matters!

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for couples to slow down, look into each other's eyes, and take time to soak in each other's presence daily. Just as Jesus invited the disciples to slow down and come away from the crowds and busyness (Mk. 6:31), we too need that with our spouse.
- Pray for couples to create and nurture attachment rituals that feed their connection on a daily basis: how we say "Hellos" and "Goodbyes," moments of reaching and responding throughout the day, doing breakfast, tea breaks, love notes, walks, and reading together. For more attachment rituals, check out: <https://growingconnectionsforcouples.com/resources-for-couples>.
- Pray for couples caught in negative cycles (and us when we are in that place!) to slow down, listen to the vulnerable feelings (often fear) underneath our protest or withdrawal, and share the soft feelings (not reactive anger or numbing out) to exit the cycle and reconnect.
- Pray for courage to get help when the relationship is struggling. Thank God for books like *Created for Connection* and *The Hold Me Tight Workbook*, both by Dr. Sue Johnson, and websites like CentralPAEFT.com (find-a-therapist) and GrowingConnectionsforCouples.com (resources to nurture connection).
- Praise God that healing and transformation are possible!

DAY 12

SINGLE ADULTS

Single adulthood has, perhaps, the most diversity of experience within it. Census data for central Pennsylvania merely affirms that single-dweller households are in the minority in our region and offers little else. But among single people, there are men and women who have never been married and those who are widowed or divorced. Single people may live alone or with dependents (children or adults) or a roommate (family or non-family). They may have consciously chosen to remain unmarried for various reasons or have adapted—or are adapting—to the reality over time. One's employment and socioeconomic status, age, gender, and other family and social connections and responsibilities also significantly contribute to the unique challenges and joys single people experience in life and the meaning they derive from it.

Consider this story from a single woman who has never been married: A few years ago, I walked into my local pizza shop, and after the usual friendly greeting, one friend behind the counter asked, "Why are you always lonely?" The question stung and immediately sent my thoughts spiraling. Is that how he saw me? Lonely and sad? It was true that I usually came in alone, but I thought I was doing ok. I might not be living the life I imagined at this point in my adulthood,

but most days, I actually enjoyed the freedom and flexibility that life as a single person afforded me, even if some things felt harder. I took a deep breath and clarified that alone and lonely don't mean the same thing. Or at least, they don't have to.

Daily, and depending on the situation, one's feelings can vacillate between confident and uncertain, content and anxious, trust in God's provision and fear of the future. This is true for many people, regardless of one's marital status.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Reach out and ask your single friend how you can pray for them specifically.
- Pray for courage for those who are single to share their lives with others and that they would know the blessing of community when they do.
- Pray that every day and in every situation, single adults would live with faith and reliance on God's provision.
- Pray that in all things, those who are single would experience the peace and presence of Jesus.

If you've prayed for a specific person, encourage them by letting them know. And for more perspectives from single adults about their particular experience in the Church, see the **Summer 2024 issue of the Brethren in Christ journal *Shalom!*** titled "Singleness in the Church."



FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION

Not all children are raised in stable, supportive, and safe environments where they are able to thrive. When home environments are not safe, children and youth may temporarily live in out-of-home placements known as foster care. The goal of foster care is to give a child a safe home until they can be reunited with their birth parents. If the courts determine that it is in the best interest of a child not to be returned to their birth parents, they are made available for adoption. The goal of adoption is to create a family through permanent placement of a child.

Children and Youth Services (CYS) is the agency responsible for child welfare. In Cumberland County, at any given time in 2023 they were working with:

- a low of 165 and a high of 217 children receiving in-home services.
- a low of 163 and a high of 181 children in foster care.

There is a dire need for foster parents. In some cases, children have had to be placed in other parts of Pennsylvania because there weren't enough resources within the county. But fostering and adoption are not the only way to support children and families in these broken situations. Through organizations like Keystone Family Alliance and The Cracked Pot Coffee Shop, the church can participate in care communities to support foster families, encourage social workers, offer mentorship for children and parents, donate items to meet

the needs of families connected to CYS, support children aging out of the foster care system, and more.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray that more people will agree to become foster and adoptive families to meet the dire need.
- Pray for an increase in the number of parent mentors who support struggling biological parents.
- Pray for changes in attitudes toward biological parents to one of acceptance, healing, and love rather than judgment.
- Pray for children in the foster system, especially those placed in group homes. Pray that they will know they are valued and loved, find stability and healing from trauma, and be placed in permanent care with a loving family.
- Pray for workers and leadership of agencies involved with vulnerable children as they deal with tragic situations every day.
- Thank God for organizations that are engaging the church in our region to serve vulnerable children and families.



DAY 14

GOSPEL HINDRANCES

Everyone's story of coming-to-faith is unique. Whether you grew up in a Christian family, received Christ at a young age, and experienced your faith developing as you grew, or you have a distinct memory of being transformed by Christ and giving your life to him, there were barriers you needed to cross in order to trust in him. There are countless reasons why individuals do not personally seek after God. Today we consider a few possible hindrances for people living in the Capital Region.

- **Family tradition:** There are many multi-generational families who live in close proximity to one another in our area. This has many benefits and joys, but it can also cause us to idolize privacy, be skeptical of new ideas, and closed-off to outsiders. This could mean that a Christian family keeps mostly to themselves without sharing their faith with those around them, or a non-Christian family may be suspicious of the good news of Jesus.
- **Self-sufficiency:** Our region values a strong work ethic. But this can lead to reticence in admitting our need for help in general and a Savior in particular.
- **Cultural Christianity:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated changes that were already in process toward secularization in our region and country. Even in light of these

shifts, there are remnants of cultural Christianity, where people who were raised in or around church have generally Christian values and behaviors. This can lead one to think they are in right relationship with God because of their good actions even if they haven't submitted their heart and life to Christ.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Ask God to reveal areas of your own life where the Gospel is being hindered.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of specific people you know who seem to be hindered by one of these issues. Pray for their eyes and hearts to be opened to God's mercy.
- Ask God to reveal his deep love to those who don't know him.

DAY 15

DAY OF THANKSGIVING

***“Give thanks to the LORD,
for he is good; his love
endures forever.”***

—Psalm 107:1

As we arrive at the halfway point of this prayer guide, let's give thanks to God for who he is and what he has done.

Think back over the last few weeks and months. Consider God's work in your life and in the lives of your family and friends. Write out your praise and thanks to God today:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



AREA AT A CROSSROADS

In the early 19th century, as Conestoga wagons headed west toward Pennsylvania's mountains, many stopped in Mechanicsburg, conveniently at about the halfway point between Harrisburg and Carlisle. Several mechanics had settled along Trindle and Simpson Ferry Roads to fix wagon wheels damaged by the potholed route. While there, the Frankenberger Tavern served meals and provided lodging for pioneers heading west.

Mechanicsburg continued to grow when the Cumberland Valley Railroad was completed in 1837, and the town was designated as a water station. Workers could restock the train with firewood and water. Grain and feed companies, lumber yards and factories were purposely built alongside the railroad tracks.

Mechanicsburg has historically been a place where weary travelers were refreshed and restored.

Today, our region continues to be a transportation hub in Cumberland County with Norfolk Southern rail lines, Old Dominion Freight Line, and the Enola rail yard. Interstates 76, 81, and 83, as well as US Routes 11 and 15, provide easy access to major cities both north-to-south and east-to-west. Because of this, the presence of warehouses, distribution centers, and trucking and service facilities has increased greatly in our region. While this kind of growth brings several challenges, including more

truck traffic, loss of farmland, strained infrastructure, etc., it also brings new job opportunities, economic viability, and an increase in passers-through to whom we have the opportunity to extend hospitality. Let us pray that God would once again make our region a place where travelers on life's journey would be refreshed and renewed, not only physically, but spiritually.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for our local government leaders as they seek to stabilize and improve infrastructure to sustain heavy truck traffic.
- Pray for organizations like New Hope Ministries as they provide job and skills training like forklift certification and CDL training, so those pursuing employment can find jobs and meet needs in our area.
- Pray for Christians and churches to find ways to engage in ministry at truck stops, hotels, and service centers in order to share the good news with those passing through.

DAY 17

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking involves the use of force, coercion, or fraud to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. It occurs in many forms including forced labor, debt bondage, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. Human trafficking does not require smuggling across borders, kidnapping, or physical violence. Human trafficking affects every community in the United States across age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds. It is the fastest growing criminal industry and is estimated to be worth \$150 billion.

The target age for victims is as young as 14 years old. Victims are often young girls but can also be boys. Traffickers often use social media to find victims and advertise sexual services. Trafficking is fueled by a demand for cheap labor, services, and commercial sex. Law enforcement and service providers report that many victims fall through the cracks and get unnoticed and unreported due to its covert nature, secrecy, and the stigma that surrounds it.

In Pennsylvania, 80 percent of human trafficking criminal cases involve sex trafficking victims. Prosecuting such crime, which involves manipulating victims into engaging in sex acts and other types of labor, is difficult because of the secrecy and stigma that surround it.

South central Pennsylvania accounts for more than a third of human trafficking offenses statewide. There are anti-trafficking organizations and ministries in our region like Greenlight Operation, Peace Promise, and She's Somebody's Daughter, that offer services for vic-

tims of human trafficking, including emergency shelter, housing, trauma counseling, job skills training, and intensive care management.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for safe rescue and restoration of the victims of human trafficking.
- Pray for volunteers and workers who rescue and walk side by side with victims.
- Pray for resources that agencies and organizations require to meet the increased need to help victims.
- Pray for law enforcement who work to identify and prosecute traffickers.
- Pray for greater community awareness of the reality and signs of human trafficking in our midst.



DAY 18

FOOD INSECURITY

If you've ever skipped a meal, you know what it's like to be hungry. But what if you didn't even get one meal a day and were uncertain if you would have food to live in the coming days?

Food insecurity is a term used to describe households with limited or uncertain access to adequate food to meet the needs of their members because they have insufficient money or other resources to obtain food. Food insecurity is associated with numerous adverse social and health conditions and is increasingly considered a critical public health issue. Key causes of food insecurity include unemployment, cost of living, poverty, and income shocks. The prevalence of food insecurity among single parent families is high compared to other groups. Children and the elderly are the ones most vulnerable to food insecurity.

Food insecurity exists in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Cumberland County is considered a rather affluent county yet 11 percent of the population and 16 percent (1 in 7) of children live with food insecurity. The overall food insecurity rate in the county holds significant differences across race demographics. It is four times higher among Hispanic individuals and five times higher among black individuals compared to white individuals. Recently, community organizations that provide food to people in the county, such as Project Share and New Hope Ministries, have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people seeking food assistance.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for organizations such as Central PA Food Bank, Project Share, and New Hope Ministries to keep up with the demand for food assistance.
- Pray that organizations will have resources to share food and have an adequate volunteer base.
- Pray for empathy and compassion for those who do not experience food insecurity toward those who do.
- Pray that sustainable solutions will become known that will empower communities to overcome hunger and end poverty.
- Pray for comfort and help for those who feel defeated and weary by hunger's grip on their lives.
- Pray that the Church would support efforts to satisfy people's hunger, both physical and spiritual.



DAY 19

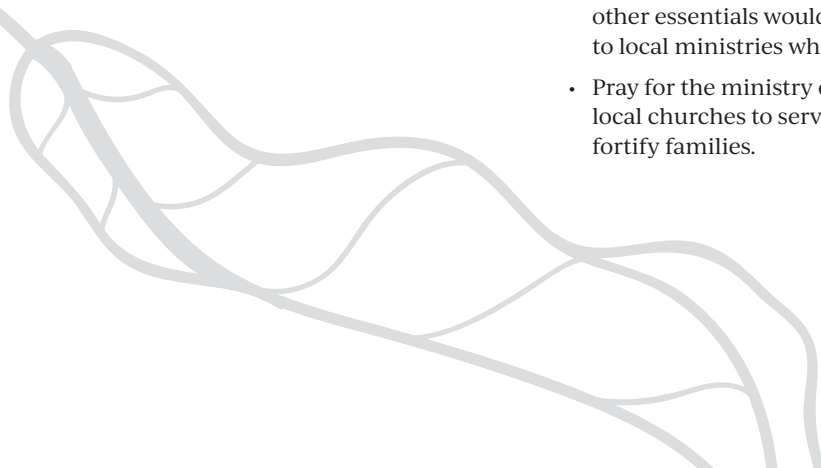
FAMILIES

Solid family structures are important to the healthy functioning of a society. We live in a region that values family bonds and celebrates family legacy. But, there is also plenty of brokenness within local families. According to recent census data, about 23 percent of families in Mechanicsburg Borough have a single parent household. In Harrisburg City, that percentage is 41. Parents and extended family, friends, and mentors seek wisdom, social support, and strength to raise their children. Families struggle with busy schedules, expensive childcare, high stress levels, clashing ideologies, unmet expectations, and other hardships like addiction and illness, which threaten to break them apart.

Multi-generational households are becoming more common today. Sometimes this is a cultural decision, sometimes an economic one, and sometimes it's the result of family care situations like an aging parent moving in. This is one reflection of the changing dynamics and complexities of families.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for the stability of families in our region. Pray for parents to look to Jesus to be their source of wisdom and selfless love as they raise their children.
- Pray that families would be able to celebrate their bondedness without being closed off to others. As Christians, pray for the ability to remember that God's definition of family goes beyond blood relation.
- Pray that families would have the heart and resources to address generational sins and cycles of brokenness. Pray against the evil one who seeks to destroy families.
- Pray for single-parent households to find support and strength.
- Pray for grandparents or other family members who have stepped into a parental role to have wisdom and perseverance.
- Pray that families struggling with expensive childcare, housing, and other essentials would be connected to local ministries who can help.
- Pray for the ministry of our local churches to serve and fortify families.



DAY 20

DISABILITY

About 14 percent of people in Pennsylvania have a disability that makes self-care or independent living difficult. Until the United States Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, life for someone with a disability was extremely difficult, frustrating, and isolating. Dismissed, hidden away in state hospitals (sometimes by family members), and ignored or feared by society, those with disabilities carried a stigma of being “broken” and pitiable. Finding safe, gainful, long-term employment was difficult, as was getting assistive devices such as walkers and wheelchairs or finding transportation for the mobility disabled. While the ADA did not remove all hardship for those with disabilities, it did offer help, respect, and recognition for those with limiting physical conditions, emotional illnesses, and learning disorders.

Throughout history, the Church has played a role in working with and caring for those with disabilities in our midst. For centuries, Church communities have provided safe havens where challenged folks are respected, accepted, loved and given meaningful employment as they are able. At its best, the Church understands that Jesus’ love and grace compels us to help with every resource at our disposal. However, inclusion and relationship development remain as challenges for many people with disabilities.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Praise God for local churches and ministries that are directly serving people with disabilities and intentionally creating inclusive community, like Paxton Ministries, Living Water Community Church, West Shore Free Church, and more. Pray for more churches and individuals to respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting for how to be more welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Pray for children and adults with disabilities to be treated fairly and to find welcoming community.
- Pray for caregivers and family members to have strength and find respite as they serve their loved ones.
- Pray for the staff and leadership of agencies and ministries who serve people with disabilities to have wisdom, compassion, and stamina.
- About 19 percent of persons in our state with a disability live in poverty. [Source: 2019 United Way of PA report] Pray they would receive the necessary support services.
- Pray that the good news of Jesus would be spread among people with disabilities and that our region’s churches would be blessed by the contributions of people with disabilities in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 12:21-26.

DAY 21

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Business and productivity are part of God's good gifts to humanity. To ethically practice business with consideration for the good of the community, environment, and the world creates opportunity, provides for needs, and allows many to purposefully cooperate for the common good. Business has potential to supply families, promote health, create prosperity so God's good gifts can be accessible, and to help bring shalom here on earth.

Because of this, we care about our business community and desire to lift them up. We reside in an area that is historically agricultural and industrial and has grown businesses that have local, regional, and global reach. Many of our local small businesses struggled significantly during the pandemic and only now are rebounding. Many are learning how to grow in a new context and respond to new customer behavior. Businesses large and small are struggling to find qualified people to fill critical positions. And businesses are constantly needing to adapt amid economic and political changes.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Think of local businesses that you frequent or that are closest to you. Pray for their prosperity and heart to be open to see the positive Kingdom purpose of enterprise.
- Pray for business leaders to have courage and creativity.
- Pray for Christians in enterprise to serve as unto the Lord and sacrificially give and bless as they work.
- Pray for God's forgiveness and transformation where there is exploitation, inequity, extortion, and malice in business. Pray our communities would welcome all and provide opportunity for all.
- Pray for schools and training programs to thrive and respond to the needs of the business sector in our region, providing great candidates for jobs.



DAY 22

MY WORK

As Christians, who we are at our jobs is just as important as who we are on Sunday mornings. Yet for those not working in vocational ministry, it can be difficult to know how to integrate our faith into our work. And not all of us have paid jobs. Even so, work is something we are created for (Gen. 1:28) and something we are called to do as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23-24). Dorothy Sayers, the late author who was also a Christian, talked about work this way:

... not as a necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money, but as a way of life in which the nature of man should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfill itself to the glory of God. That it should, in fact, be thought of as a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that man, made in God's image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing. [Source: "Why Work?" by Dorothy Sayers]

In our work, we can love God and love others by doing our work well, delighting in using our skills, modeling godly character, shaping the culture of our workplace, extending grace and love to those we work with and for, being proponents of honesty and fairness, and bearing witness to Jesus's work in our lives as God opens the door.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Reflect on your work and ask God to give you joy in it.
- Pray God would remind you that your identity is not in what you do, but in Christ.
- If there is a situation or person you're struggling with at work, present it to God. Release to him any fear, inadequacy, anger, or other negative thoughts and feelings. Receive his peace, affirmation, forgiveness, compassion, and wisdom.
- Pray for those you work with: for opportunities to get to know, encourage, and share God's love with your co-workers; for your managers or supervisors to have wisdom and be equitable; for clients to feel valued and cared for.
- Pray for those searching for a job, that God would provide for their needs and open opportunities for them to use their skills.
- Pray for those in unfulfilling jobs, that God would either provide meaningful work elsewhere or that God would help them to see opportunities to serve, love, and reflect Christ where they are.
- Pray for those who are retired, that they would be able to identify where they can use their gifts and experience to serve, mentor, and bless others, while also making space for rest.

DAY 23

MILITARY INFLUENCE

Three bases in Cumberland County host over 12,000 military and civilian personnel. Additional members of the National Guard and Reserves who live here permanently but train and serve elsewhere, combined with veterans and retirees, make the military a significant influence in our region.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Young people just entering the military face physical challenges, distance from family and friends, and new disciplines. Pray for safety, healthy connections, and adjustment.
- Service members face frequent and extended separations from any spouses and children for training or combat deployments. This strains individuals and relationships. Pray for faithfulness, good communication, and re-integration once home.
- The above-mentioned challenges can produce strong people and families with robust bonds, ready to bless their communities. But when too many adverse events pile up, it takes time and effort to recover. Pray for healing and support where needed, and for growth that rises from adversity.
- Children of military families experience the adventure, opportunity, and hardship of military service without having chosen it for themselves. Pray for God to use their challenges for good.
- Many service members in our region are preparing to take on senior leadership roles. Pray for rest, and for wisdom and strength for the future as they influence thousands under their commands.
- Civilians form the backbone of the workforce at Carlisle Barracks, Naval Supply Activity Mechanicsburg, and New Cumberland Defense Depot. Pray for all to appreciate their service. Also pray for creativity and diligence in sometimes discouraging jobs.
- Several factors attract people to central PA who are veterans or retired military. Pray for fair financial judgments of the toll military service took on the bodies and souls of these folks. Pray for each to find their next vocation, as most have second or even third careers, and for the adjustment from military life.
- The prominence of military force and presence in war speaks to the brokenness among people and nations in our world. Pray for wisdom, humility, and creativity to pursue peaceful resolution of conflict. Pray for kind and productive dialogue between people and nations and a heart of service toward one another, even our enemies. Pray for Christians to remember our primary citizenship is in God's Kingdom. Pray that Jesus' way of the cross would be our pattern in our relationships with others.

DAY 24

CHILDREN & TEENS

It's no surprise that today's children and teens face difficult issues their parents and grandparents never imagined. Our kids have only ever known the existence of smartphones and were born into an age of instant gratification, self-optimization, and endless possibilities. They are continuously asking themselves questions like: Who am I? What job will I have? Do I like my body? Do I respect my parents? What gender am I? Which sex(es) am I attracted to? Should I go to college? Will I be able to get a job where I can make a difference but also make enough money to live? Will I go to church? What religion should I choose, if any? Who are my people? Where do I belong?

Our children are part of a society where everything seems fluid and there is no clear path to follow. A typical teen today faces mental health struggles, gender identity questions, fears of an active shooter at school, concerns about climate collapse, pressures to perform in academics or athletics, technology and social media addictions, peer pressure, family expectations, the residual effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more. No wonder they experience record high rates of anxiety and depression.

But our kids have a lot to offer, as well. They have a global worldview, they are oriented toward justice, and they are curious, adaptable, and diverse.

Did you know?

- Sixty-one percent of Gen Z have a medically diagnosed anxiety condition (Harmony Healthcare IT survey, 2023).
- The average age a teen is first exposed to pornography is 12 years old (Common Sense Media national survey, 2023).
- One in five Gen Z adults (born 1997-2003) identifies as LGBT (2022 Gallup Poll).

WAYS TO PRAY

- Write down the names of children and teens who are close to you and pray for any specific concerns you know they have.
- Pray that our kids would find their identity in Christ who is always near and never changes.
- Pray that children and teens would turn to God in their fears and find peace in Jesus.
- Pray for God to give our kids the hope of Jesus and guard them from despair.
- Pray for God to give them creativity and boldness to pursue small and big ideas that will make a positive impact.
- Pray for parents and caregivers to have wisdom and grace in how to support, guide, and communicate with their kids. (Thank God for axis.org, which has several gospel-centered resources to connect parents and teens with Jesus.)

DAY 25

MENTAL HEALTH

Perhaps you've had experiences like this: You were in a city park when you saw a young woman walk by gesturing with her hands and talking . . . to the air. Or you were at a family gathering and your Uncle Bob was quiet and distant, not his usual self. Maybe you work with someone who has a reputation for rapidly shifting moods. We've all seen or met someone struggling with a mental illness, whether it looks obvious like this or not. As Christians, we desire to offer our sympathy—but there is more we can do.

Sympathy sees, but empathy feels. Jesus had a knack for inviting his hearers to move from sympathy to more profound empathy. Consider the parable of the Good Samaritan, substituting the beaten traveler with that young woman in the park suffering with schizophrenia, your Uncle Bob overwhelmed with depression, or your co-worker struggling with bipolar disorder. Jesus calls us to be good neighbors to those who struggle with mental illness.

Jesus enables us to extend community. The number one issue many who struggle with mental illness face is isolation. Paxton Ministries is a Pennsylvania licensed Person Care Home in Harrisburg that provides “housing, help and healing” to approximately 85 mentally challenged adults, male and female. A couple who are former employees recount their first-hand knowledge of the impact that a loving, caring community can have in the lives of mentally ill folks: “During our ministry at Paxton, we watched over and over again as young and old moved

from lives of isolation and rejection, to one of acceptance, of community. Trust was built through eating meals together, sharing stories, listening, forgiving and asking forgiveness, praying for and loving, being with and being a family.”

WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray for those struggling with mental illness to find resources, community, and support.
- Pray for God to strengthen and provide for ministries like Paxton Ministries. Consider volunteering there.
- Ask God to lead you to sources to become better educated about mental illness: What is schizophrenia? Bipolar disorder? Depression? (These are three of the most prevalent diagnoses in mental health.)
- Pray for creativity and wisdom in how to interrupt the isolation in a friendly way. Some ideas may include visiting your Uncle Bob, asking the young lady if she'd like a cup of coffee, or sharing lunch with your co-worker. Pray for the Spirit to enable you to listen, smile, and be willing to be vulnerable.

DAY 26

RECREATION

Take a few moments to note below: what are the third places you frequent? (With home as first, and work as second, third places are where you interact with others informally, without planning.) Maybe it's a gym, park, library, café, shop, etc.

1.

2.

3.

Under each third place, write the names (or if unknown, descriptors such as “Green Shoe Guy”) of people you encounter there.

WAYS TO PRAY _____

- Thank God for how those people have blessed you.
- Pray about how God might bless them—perhaps through you? Write down any ideas.
- Pray for ways to help people know and be known (learn people's names, etc.) and write ideas that arise.
- Pray for that place to flourish, for God to plant seeds of his Kingdom there.



EAST-WEST SHORE DIVIDE

If you have lived in south-central Pennsylvania for any length of time, you will have either seen or been made aware of the divide between the East Shore and West Shore. Although the presence of the Susquehanna River is a physical line with “sides,” this separation is less natural and more orchestrated than one can immediately see.

With the rise of the Industrial Revolution, the shores of the Susquehanna River became prime real estate for the steel industry, drawing many people to pursue work and economic advantage. Then the civil war emancipated 3.5 million enslaved people, who could now theoretically enter free society, but on the ground floor. They had no inheritance, no family land, and no political representation.

Communities all over the country wrestled with “sharing” resources and status, and segregation, deed restrictions, redlining, and violence became the tools to keep people “in their place.” Towns on the West Shore were considered “Sundown Towns,” where it was understood that people of color could work there during the day but needed to leave by sundown. In these same towns real estate was restricted to white residents, with clauses in property deeds that forbade renting or selling to persons of color.

The division we see today is the result of years of withholding, restricting, and threatening. The physical separation leads to disparity in healthcare, education, credit, insurance, and access to resources. And these divisions can contribute to narratives of fear or indifference.

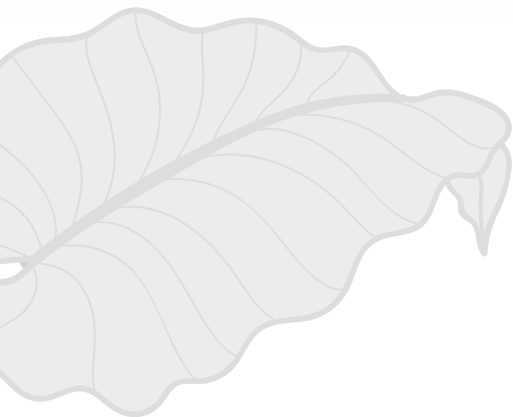


WAYS TO PRAY

- Pray that God would show us how to be welcoming to others and help us identify ways we might come off as threatening to others.
- Pray that we would have the heart of Jesus to consider others above ourselves (Phil. 2:3).
- Pray that we would desire to give generously because of what we have received in Christ, using our gifts as stewards of God's grace (1 Pet. 4:10).
- Pray for The Center for Public Humanities at Messiah University, which has been working on a project called Digital Harrisburg. It is an excellent resource for learning to see the shadow of racial inequality in our region.
- Pray God would open our eyes and ears to see, hear, and understand the stories of those who have had different experiences than us, and that he would guard us from the temptation to compare, compete, or respond to our insecurities with a mentality of dominating another.

DAY 28

HARRISBURG



As the capital city of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg has historic and governmental influence in our region. Harrisburg played a vital role in the industrial revolution, with steel and iron being its leading industries. It was also an important railroad center. But, as steel declined, the city's economics also fluctuated, contributing to a decline of nearly half its population between 1950 and 2000. And the city has continued to face many challenges.

In 2011, Harrisburg filed for bankruptcy after years of economic volatility due to a waste-to-energy incinerator project. The city has also struggled with high rates of crime, rampant drug use, and a large homeless population. "Tent city" has been moved several times, most recently from an underpass beneath Interstate 83 to a less noticeable area hidden by trees and shrubs.

Although small in population (about 50,000), Harrisburg is incredibly diverse. Neighborhoods within the city range from the bustling Capitol Complex to the artsy Midtown,

mansions-turned-commercial Front Street to downtrodden Allison Hill. The range of cuisine at Broad Street Market speaks to the ethnic influence in the city. And Harrisburg's growing population of Bhutanese refugees is among the largest in the U.S.

WAYS TO PRAY

- Praise God that the city was able to pay off \$125 million of debt in 2022. Pray for wisdom for city leaders as they continue to establish economic viability, as well as engage in other capital projects, including a 10-year plan to improve traffic conditions and increase safety for all road users.
- Pray for a sense of community and connection within the city, as people from many different backgrounds navigate life together.
- Pray for people to invest in the city, not only financially, but relationally; not only going into town for work, but contributing as residents.
- Pray for protection and safety: from crime; for those who are homeless; for those struggling with drug use.
- Pray for gospel-centered churches and Christian ministries in Harrisburg that are seeking to demonstrate and declare God's love, including Bethesda Mission, Center for Champions, Eden Village, HELP Ministries, Wildheart Ministries, and more.

DAY 29

REMEMBER & REFLECT

***“Only take
care and keep
your soul
diligently, lest
you forget the
things that your
eyes have seen,
and lest they
depart from
your heart all
the days of
your life.”***

—Deuteronomy 4:9a

As we reflect on this prayer journey, let's take time today to consider what God has been doing in our lives and community.

Look back through the prayer guide, reflect over the last month, and make note of the following:

1. Which items of prayer have convicted you?
2. Have you witnessed an answer to prayer?
3. Has a particular topic or issue been on your mind?
4. Have you experienced the Holy Spirit at work in a particular area of your life?

Spend some time thanking God for his faithfulness and ask him to continue working on your heart and the hearts of your family, friends, and neighbors, drawing us all closer to him and his vision for our lives.



DAY 30

CLOSING PRAYER

In February 2023, in an article in The Atlantic, the late author and pastor, Tim Keller (1950-2023), wrote about how American Christianity is due for a revival and spiritual awakening. While our society is secularizing and the Western church is in decline, Keller believed that renewal is possible.

He said that for revival to come in the U.S., three things must happen:

1. The church must
“escape political captivity.”
2. We must distinguish
“the gospel from moralism.”
3. We must unite in
“extraordinary prayer.”

Let us unite in extraordinary prayer together. And may God surprise us with his glory and grace as he awakens our hearts to the riches and wonder of Christ and his Good News!

Join in praying the following prayer:

Father,

We cry out for more of your Kingdom in and through the church in our region! Please break through our darkness, free us from our bondage, and open doors for greater ministry. Fill us with your Spirit and empower us by your grace, and we will surrender and faithfully follow Jesus in fulfilling your gospel mission.

Amen.





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Thank you for sharing your time, insights, and skills.

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or small group, please contact
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Grantham Church

BRETHREN IN CHRIST

421 Grantham Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

717-766-0531

granthamchurch.org