

**“We really assumed that once we felt a call to the Muslim world we would be ‘in the Muslim world!’” explained Paul.** “We looked at opportunities to serve in South Asia or the Middle East, but God directed us here, specifically to our home town—the one place I told the Lord I would never go.” In time, Paul and his family came to see God opening doors for them in the US that might never have been open to them in the countries their new friends came from.



**“It’s been a pretty incredible journey.** Our small group decided to invite some international students to come to game night at our house. A Saudi student was among those who showed up. He called the next day and asked if he could move in with us to practice his English. Next thing we knew he was living with us and became like part of our family. Two weeks later, he said ‘My cousin is coming from Medina. Can he sleep on the couch for a few nights until he finds an apartment?’ Since then, Paul and his family have been able to build meaningful relationships with hundreds of Muslim students, living out the gospel in their midst and sharing it with those who wanted more.

**I asked Paul what advice he might give American Christians who want to build relationships with Muslim students or other internationals.** “My biggest encouragement is to show up. God has done the heavy lifting in bringing them here from places like Saudi and Libya and Iran, some of the least-reached places in the world, and these are future leaders in their country. Just show up in their lives.”

**Practically, what can we do?** “One of the biggest needs or opportunities is to actually open their homes. I find that this is doable for a lot of Americans, to actually host an international student. Most universities around the country have programs they can plug into. If they have a student live with them or even just come to their house for Thanksgiving, that student can open a whole world to them. Those first two Saudi guys who stayed with us invited us into their whole community. We’ve been able to meet hundreds of Saudis because of that.”

**“For them to see the gospel lived out in the context of daily life, it’s been really powerful,” Paul added.** “He’s already been at work in their lives. They come with all kinds of questions. Some, in light of what ISIS is doing, have really been wrestling and asking some tough questions about Islam. Faith is part of our everyday conversations with them.”

## South Carolina State Fire Chaplain

Some weeks ago Chris had a “chance” encounter with the South Carolina State Fire Marshall, who happens to have his office just a few miles away from where we live and regularly brings his staff to have lunch in the cafeteria on our campus.

A tragedy at the firefighter training academy brought to the staff’s attention their need for a chaplain of their own, and they were ready to start looking for one. Now, after a flurry of emails, texts, and lunch meetings, Chris has been named State Fire Chaplain.

This is a new position for the state; they’re still exploring what it might entail. But they are building the job around Chris! Since this is (at least initially) a volunteer position, he will continue working as a chaplain for Providence Hospital while we see what happens. But we’re thrilled at the possibilities.

Next week he’ll start setting up shop in his new office at the Fire Academy (which he describes as [“a 208-acre Disneyland for firefighters”](#)).

## Amazing Things

A recent edition of Missions Catalyst highlighted stories of [God doing what only He can do](#).

One reader responded,

“God is doing such amazing things in the Middle East in the last two years! It is like nightmare turning into a very sweet dream.”

In the last two weeks I've done four interviews for a series of articles about people like Paul. All are reaching out to the [world next door](#): refugees, immigrants, and international students. These will be published on the Pioneers website and other newsletters as part of a larger campaign. It's hard to think of anything I'd rather do than telling stories like these. And I've done it all from home, typing madly away while listening through a headset to the stories they told me over the phone.

This month I've also been filling in for a member of our agency's communications team by trolling through 20-30 missionary newsletters a day looking for gems to feature in [Pioneering Prayer](#), a weekly email publication that promotes intercession for ministries Pioneers is involved in around the globe. What a privilege!

## Travel Report

In October I taught in four [Perspectives](#) classes in three states in eight days, narrowly missing Hurricane Matthew on my way to and from Miami. Whew! Grateful for the chance to connect with the 200 students and encourage them with insights from contemporary missions trends and history. Thanks for praying!

In November, almost 60 church leaders representing 90 Pioneers missionaries and appointees coming from their churches gathered in Orlando for a [Church Partner Forum](#) put on by my team. This is one of the best ways we've found to nurture growing relationships with partner churches. Since a similar event planned for March is already full, we've just added another one, May 2-4. I'm starting to lose count of how many times I've traveled to Orlando since we moved to the East Coast; it is handy being close.

With gratitude,



(for both of us)



## Ways to Reach Us

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## Prayer

+ Thank God for the fruit and favor Marti is seeing from her communications work.

+ Pray for Chris as he begins his new position at the Fire Academy!

+ Lift up our relationships with our parents and kids as we celebrate the holidays far apart.

+ Ask God to guide our steps in decisions about what's next.

+ Let us know how we can pray for you!