



July 2024

There is Hope in Connection

Dear Friends,

Today I'm writing my sixth Dear Friends letter for 2024 focused on the word "connection." If you missed the first five letters of this series, you can read them by visiting my RCA missionary page at www.rca.org/tenclay, scrolling down to the Resources section, and clicking on the links for the DF letters from February- May 2024.

I first became acquainted with Partners Relief & Development in 2019. My RCA Global Mission supervisor Scott Engelsman and I met with a Partners staff member for lunch in West Michigan (Partners has an office in Ada, Michigan), and we began discussing what a partnership between RCA Global Mission and Partners Relief & Development might look like.

Partners Relief & Development is a Christian-based humanitarian organization, serving mostly in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, with a mission of "ensuring children and communities affected by conflict and oppression are safe, healthy, and have access to education." It became clear that the goals and mission of Partners aligned well with those of RCA Global Mission, especially as we were beginning to expand our mission and ministry with refugees and displaced people worldwide—and a new partnership began!

Our first project together was rebuilding a school for Yazidi children in Northern Iraq, helping a group of people who had been forcibly displaced from their community return home after ISIS carried out a campaign of mass killing, displacement, starvation, and human rights abuses against them beginning in 2014. I encourage you to read this synopsis [<https://www.nadiainitiative.org/the-genocide>] of the events that occurred, written by a non-governmental organization founded by Nadia Murad, a young Yazidi woman who survived captivity by ISIS.

One of the many reasons this project resonated with me is because it allowed us to help forcibly displaced people return home safely, empowering the Yazidi to participate in rebuilding their community after experiencing years of death, displacement, trauma, and loss. This is something we see way too infrequently in the world of refugee care, as less than 1 percent of refugees worldwide have the opportunity to return home safely.

This project brought such hope to hundreds of Yazidi children and their families. It was the beginning of a key mission partnership between RCA Global Mission and Partners Relief & Development...one that has continued to

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provide compassionate, Christ-like care for some of the most vulnerable groups of people, and in the midst of some of the most underserved humanitarian disasters in the world.

In honor of five years of partnering with Partners Relief & Development, I invited Karah Brink, Partners staff member, to share a few words of reflection on this fruitful partnership. Here is what Karah wrote:

At Partners we have a saying that we repeat often, 'war zones are our workplace'. We have the honor of working alongside resilient communities across the Middle East and Southeast Asia to see kids living free and full lives. We have had the incredible joy of partnering with JJ and the RCA community to see kids back in school and families in the midst of crises caused by conflict or disaster receive emergency relief & support in their greatest hour of need in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Türkiye.

When JJ comes to my mind, I think of hope. Over and over again, when disaster strikes or conflict endangers vulnerable communities, JJ is one of the first people I think to call. I think of her not only because she and the RCA community have responded rapidly with solidarity and love on behalf of thousands of kids and families, but also because talking to her always brings a breath of hope. JJ's tender spirit and deep respect for communities impacted by conflict come through in the questions she asks, the prayers she offers, and the stories she shares.

Martin Luther King Jr. charged us, "In a real sense, all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." In the face of the widespread devastation that exists in areas of the world where conflict has torn apart communities, the actions of thousands of people around the globe who recognize the fabric of interdependence that we are woven together in is a bright beam of hope. The RCA family is an integral part of this woven fabric. We are so grateful to be a part of this community that puts love into action every day. We are also deeply thankful for JJ's friendship and the hope she nurtures. To me, JJ is someone who embodies what it means to act on the belief that we are all interconnected and that our thriving is bound up in each other. It is in friendships like these that ensure change-making and peace-building flourish.

Will you join me in giving thanks to God for Partners Relief & Development? I'm so grateful for the ways God has brought Partners Relief & Development and RCA Global Mission together to put love into action for refugees and displaced people throughout the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

I also want to take a moment to thank each and every one of you who have supported the joint projects between RCA Global Mission and Partners Relief & Development over the past five years with financial and prayer support.

Rebuilding a school for Yazidi children in Northern Iraq.

Funding eight schools for Rohingya children in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Afghans after the Taliban regained control of the country.

Contributing to earthquake relief efforts in Syria and Türkiye.

Thank you. Your contributions have made a world of difference for some of the most persecuted and vulnerable populations in the world in their greatest times of need, and I am deeply grateful.

RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.



Connecting in Hope,

JJ TenClay

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