



May 2023

Don't Give Up!

Many of you know my daughters, Sophia and Petra, personally, and know that they have been active participants in this ministry since Tim and I said yes to joining the RCA Global Mission team nine years ago. This was certainly true while our family was living in Italy, serving migrants, refugees, and people who experienced human trafficking and exploitation, but they both have continued to find ways to actively participate since we moved back to the U.S. as well.

One of the ways Petra (who is now 13!) has participated recently is by using her artistic and crafting skills to create paintings and friendship bracelets, either selling them to raise money for various refugee care projects or giving them away to raise awareness about the people being served by these projects: supporting schools for Rohingya refugee children living in Myanmar and Bangladesh, evacuating vulnerable people from Afghanistan, and providing emergency care for people fleeing Ukraine. One year ago, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, Petra made one painting that we didn't sell. Created just as spring was springing here in New York, she painted a field of yellow set against a blue sky (to represent the colors of the Ukrainian flag), adding a tree and a few shrubs we see as we exit our front door (to represent our home and Petra's connection to the people of Ukraine). Then she added some spring flowers and butterflies (to represent hope). At the bottom of the painting, she wrote, "Don't Give Up!!"

This one we didn't sell. I framed it and it's been sitting in my home office.

We had no idea that almost a year later it would bring great comfort to a young Ukrainian who would come live with us, making my office her bedroom. It was one of the first things she saw when she woke up in the morning and before she went to bed at night.

Last week, we helped her move to a place closer to her new employment. The painting stayed in my office. Petra tried to load her up with all kinds of candy, one of Petra's favorite stuffed animals (an octopus that says "choose kindness" on the front),



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and the painting before the move; the young woman graciously accepted some of the candy and the stuffie, but didn't want Petra to part with her beautiful artwork. This week, I took a photo of the painting and sent it to the young woman as a reminder of her time living with us and our love for her and her beloved homeland.

Don't give up!

This week has felt very heavy for me related to my work, and I'm thankful to still have Petra's painting in my office, as it has also brought me encouragement.

Listening to the pleas of family members and military advocates who are desperate to find safety for vulnerable Afghans who didn't make the cut to be airlifted to the U.S., and of those who DID make the cut, but now worry that their temporary protection in the U.S. will not be renewed.

Don't give up!

Receiving updates from Ukrainians whose loved ones have been affected by the recent drone and missile strikes, stopping whatever I was working on at that moment to pray.

Don't give up!

Continuing to reach out to mission partners around the world to explore safe passage and a legal pathway to refuge for individuals and families that have been referred to me, but hitting dead ends or lengthy waits for answers.

Don't give up!

Inviting individuals and congregations to host a [Meal for Peace](#) to support the vital work of providing care for South Sudanese refugees living in Uganda, wondering if the invitation will help us raise the funds needed to share the love of Jesus with the people of South Sudan, or will be a missed opportunity to provide them with compassionate, Christ-like care.

Don't give up!

Receiving the news that my Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) support has decreased, invoking some anxiety about whether or not the funding and prayer support needed for me to continue this work will arrive.



Don't give up!

This ministry is too important. The needs of refugees and displaced people—whether living halfway across the world or in our neighborhoods—are great, and the blessings we experience by living out the biblical mandates to love those who are experiencing persecution, violent conflict, natural disasters, and other threats to their lives and liberties are great as well.

So as I share with you some of my struggles this week, I also want to share my deep, deep gratitude for you, your support, and your encouragement.

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

And I want to leave you with some encouragement: if you are experiencing trials and tribulations this past week....month...year...don't give up! As Psalm 46 tells us:

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah*

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar; the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice; the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Selah*

*Come, behold the works of the LORD;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations;
I am exalted in the earth."
The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge.
Selah*

If you are interested in learning more about my work, have questions about this ministry, or would like me to visit, please contact me at jjtenclay@rca.org.

Thank you,
JJ TenClay

[Note on my work: As a missionary serving God through RCA Global Mission, 100% of my support comes from ongoing Partnership-in-Mission (PIM) shares and one-time gifts. I am not a paid staff person of the RCA or RCA Global Mission.]