



April 2024

From Death Threats to New Life: An Easter Story

Dear Friends,

In my last Dear Friends letter I announced that I will be writing a series of DF letters in 2024 focused on the word “connection”. You can read the first letter in the series here if you missed it: <https://www.rca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TenClay-February-2024.pdf>.

This second letter is also focused on connection to people fleeing Afghanistan.

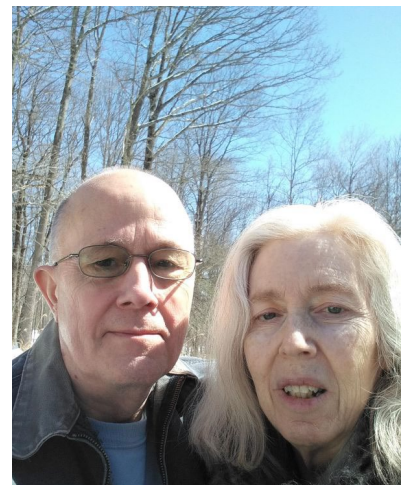
As I’ve previously mentioned, God has presented me and RCA Global Mission with multiple opportunities to care for vulnerable people fleeing Afghanistan since the Taliban regained control of the country in August 2021.

The first opportunity was to work with a network of mission agencies and NGOs to evacuate people from Afghanistan. We said yes to this opportunity and many of you partnered with us by praying for these evacuations and giving financial support. Thank you!

Shortly after the evacuations began, I was contacted by Tom and Jane Lansing, members of First Reformed Church in Scotia, NY, with an urgent request to find safety and refuge for an Afghan family near and dear to their hearts.

Jane and Tom have graciously agreed to share part of the story with you here in the DF letter, in their own words:

We are Tom and Jane Lansing, long-time, close friends with our “Brother” Karimi, a former refugee from Afghanistan. Our church, First Reformed Church of Scotia, a small village church in Upstate New York near Albany, helped legally resettle him through the USCIS in 2016. Friendship and closeness between our two families has grown strong over the years.



Tom and Jane

Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at kgilmore@rca.org to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.

When the Afghan government fell to the Taliban in August of 2021, Brother Karimi made an emergency call to us. “The Taliban is coming to kill my family in Afghanistan. Help us Sister—they will die.”

We sincerely wanted to respond to Brother Karimi’s call for emergency help. But how? During prayer, an idea to call JJ came into my mind. Our church helps support JJ’s mission, and she has visited us many times to discuss worldwide refugee resettlement.

That one call to JJ opened up countless connections to the refugee resettlement community, with truly amazing results. Working with that constant support, and always as a team with Brother Karimi on behalf of his relatives, we had the opportunity to help:

- *Get his family in Afghanistan safely and quickly across the border into Pakistan*
- *Support them in accessing safe housing, food, and supplies*
- *Submit Humanitarian Parole applications—aided by JJ’s advocacy with the RCA—to bring them to America through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security*
- *Partner with Brother Karimi in supporting his family as we waited for the case to be approved*

And finally, miraculously, two years later and in God’s time, they made it to America!

It was hard and dangerous to get these four Hazara people—traditionally victims of prejudice—out of Pakistan. But two weeks ago, they were greeted at the airport by our Brother Karimi, his wife and children, and previous neighbors from their home village. What a joyful reunion!

What did we learn through this mutual experience? Mainly that no matter how small, uninformed, and powerless we felt, God created miracles of connection to make the impossible happen. Also, that nothing would have started if we didn’t know—truly know—our Brother Karimi. He wouldn’t have trusted us, and we wouldn’t have trusted him in order to reach way, way outside our comfort zone. In the end, we learned that the family needed to guide us, not the other way around! We are truly grateful.

I share this story of connection with you on Easter Monday, because it is a story of miracles and God’s providence. God brought this family from the threat of death by the Taliban, through the valley of uncertainty and precarious displacement in Pakistan for 2 ½ years, to the promise of new life free from persecution and filled with hope for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the U.S.

Walking this journey with the Lansing family and the Karimi Family hasn’t been easy. While we are only sharing part of the story today in this DF letter, I will add that there have been many, many obstacles and roadblocks along the way, and the entire time the lives of Brother Karimi’s family members were at risk.

It is a miracle that we were able to add Brother Karimi’s family members to the evacuation list.

It is a miracle that they were safely evacuated to Pakistan.

It is a miracle that God has protected them for 2 ½ years in Pakistan while I explored opportunities to resettle them in five different countries, only to have the door to resettlement close, time and time again.

And it is a miracle, that after 2 ½ years of waiting for their US humanitarian parole visa applications to be processed, that they were finally approved. Thanks be to God!

Yes, I clearly see the hand of God at work throughout this whole journey. But, God also called the Lansings, me, and so many others involved in this journey to put in a lot of hard, faithful work along the way. This is the love of

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Christ in action. This is the faithful response we are called to as people who proclaim the good news of a Savior who has conquered death. Hallelujah, Amen!

JJ TenClay
Missionary & Refugee Ministries Coordinator
RCA Global Mission