October 2025
Local Mission 2025 and Churches of Welcome

Dear Friends & Supporters,

September was a full and blessed month in terms of my work as a missionary, and I want to highlight two of the focus areas of my work as we head into October.

Local Mission 2025

Close to 100 people gathered in Grand Rapids, MI, September 23-24, as, together, we learned what "being missional" looks like in various local contexts, and explored ways we can all take our missional engagement to the next level.

For me, it was a joy to hear so many excellent speakers passionately share about missional engagement in their contexts, and to engage in countless 1:1 or table discussions about mission with other participants during the plenary sessions and mealtimes.

I was also blessed to co-present a workshop entitled: ***When the World Comes to Your Door: Intentionally Shifting Your Hospitality*** with Revs. Olga and Stephen Schaffer, as we shared the joys and challenges of welcoming immigrants and refugees into our communities and our churches.

The Schaffers shared stories of how they have seen God at work in transforming and revitalizing their church in Brantford (Ontario), Canada (a church founded by Dutch immigrants after World War II), with the arrival of new neighbors from all around the world. Two things really struck me as Olga and Stephen talked during the workshop: 1) God presented them with the opportunity to welcome their immigrant and refugee neighbors at a time when the church felt weak and on the decline, and 2) saying yes to this opportunity required a lot of humility, patience, charity (assuming the best of others), and discernment, but God has blessed them profoundly along the way. Thanks be to God!

My part of the workshop focused on inviting churches and church leaders into this sacred space of loving our immigrant and refugee neighbors with Christ-like compassion, and letting them know that

they don't have to do this alone. I shared ways I can walk alongside them on this journey into loving our neighbors–including our foreign-born neighbors.

One of the ways I am engaging this work is by leading a new partnership between the Reformed Church in America/RCA Global Mission and World Relief.

Churches of Welcome

The Churches of Welcome program was launched by World Relief in October 2024 as a year-long discipleship and missional journey for churches interested in learning how to better love our immigrant and refugee neighbors and/or how to sponsor refugees for resettlement in the United States. The program is biblical based and helps Christians center a lens of theology and faith when discussing issues of immigration and refugee care. The program has four distinct areas of engagement for churches: LEARN-->DO-->SERVE-->LEAD, and churches will work with both World Relief staff and me to discern which of the 4 areas of engagement each church feels called to explore as they seek to become churches of welcome.

The RCA is looking to enroll up to 30 RCA churches in the Church of Welcome Program, and has grant money to cover the $250 registration fee for 30 congregations. Participating churches are asked to put together a group of five or more people from their congregation who will be the primary participants in this year-long journey, although you can certainly include as many people in this journey as you'd like!

I'm grateful to announce that I will be leading this new partnership between the RCA/RCA Global Mission and World Relief. Besides sharing information with churches about the Churches of Welcome program, I will also provide additional support to RCA churches that join the Churches of Welcome program.

You can learn more about the RCA Churches of Welcome partnership here: https://www.churchesofwelcome.com/pages/rca-churches-of-welcome.

I'm hosting an online info meeting about the RCA/World Relief Churches of Welcome partnership on Tuesday, October 7 at 7:00 PM ET with Daniel Yang (National Director of the Churches of Welcome Program for World Relief): https://discover.worldrelief.org/rca-fall-roundtable.

As I enter into this new partnership with humility and hope, can I ask you for some additional support?

1. Will you pray for me as I settle into this new role of coordinating the RCA Churches of Welcome program?

2. Will you pray that RCA pastors and congregations will receive the invitation to join this program with open ears, open minds, open hearts, and that at least 30 RCA churches will say "yes" to embarking on this journey towards becoming churches of welcome?

3. Will you join me on Tuesday, October 7, for the online RCA Churches of Welcome kick-off meeting? This is a great opportunity for you to learn more about one of the foci of my mission work for the next 1-2 years, and I would really appreciate having some of my supporters join us for this meeting. You can register to attend the info meeting here: https://discover.worldrelief.org/rca-fall-roundtable. [Can't join us live? Go ahead and register so that you will receive a recording of the meeting.]

In Gratitude,

JJ TenClay
RCA missionary