

Dear Friends,

Each year about this time I struggle to condense into a letter a year of work with people in need here and abroad. There are so many amazing stories. The timing is perfect as we turn our attention to the greatest gift ever given.

The Joy and Sadness of Christmas

Christmas is a time of celebration with family and friends - of Christmas lights and carols. I love this season. And yet I'm mindful that this is not a joyful time for many people. We are in the process of helping a Parkland patient return to his family in another country for his last days. For that family, it is a time of goodbyes and sadness.

Many of the patients we worked with this year were in their 30's, leaving spouses and little children behind. This will be their first Christmas without their loved one. There is loss around us every day but our involvement in their lives helps to remind us that we ought to mourn with the grieving and to be joyful for every moment of life we enjoy.

Aid Beyond Our Borders

Croatia

We continue to provide food through a little church in Samabor, Croatia to the poor in two communities. Most are elderly and do not have enough income even for food.

Zimbabwe

Zanda has returned to his family. We are very concerned for his safety and the safety of his family.

Jordan

Kalthoum Qewar was referred to us when her husband died several years ago. He was a minister in Jordan. Kalthoum has tried since that time to continue helping those they left behind.

We traveled to Jordan and Israel in May of this year. I expected it to be a real eye-opener and it was. A container of aid was scheduled to leave here in October bound for three small churches in Jordan. It will leave in January.

There are hundreds of thousand of refugees fleeing Syria on the border in Jordan and Turkey. The UN is assisting with aid for the refugees outside Syria. According to news accounts, there are two million refugees in Syria that cannot be reached with aid. They left their homes in summer and so lack winter clothing or blankets.

Churches and organizations continue to work in Syria. We are in the process of trying to learn exactly what the situation is in certain areas and if those workers can accept aid at a border and transport it in to the area of needs.

Conclusion

Recently I was struck by a line in the Christmas Carol O Holy Night: “Fall on your knees! Oh hear the angel voices.” There is a sense in the build-up to that line that this is the only appropriate response to such wonder – to the sacred. Reverence is an old-fashioned word that we would do well to bring back into our lives – reverence for Christ in all things. He is present in the heart of every man. Otherwise we would have no life. The question we should ask ourselves at every turn is, “Do I treat each person with reverence, even the poor man begging on the street or the prisoner?”

This reverence not only asks us to live a life of integrity but also to advocate for others in our everyday life. I watched the movie Ben Hur (subtitled *A Tale of the Christ*) again recently. There is a scene that is a striking example of how we should live – how we should care for each other. Ben Hur, a wealthy Jew who lived in Jerusalem in Jesus’ day, was given a life sentence for not cooperating with the Romans. They had to walk shackled through the desert in the heat. When they stopped for water, the prisoners had to wait for water until the guards and their horses were first served. Then the guard decided that Ben Hur would not be given water. As he is writhing on the ground from thirst, a man whose face was never shown, offered him water. As soon as the guard sees what’s going on, he yells for the man to stop. The man that you have by now realized is Jesus stands up and faces the guard squarely. He never says a word – he just confronts the guard with His presence. The guard begins to shift and withdraw under His gaze.

Today we call this non-violent protest. One first must live with their eyes open in order to see the need. Without anger or judging, you simply confront the unacceptable behavior. Sometimes words are necessary but often they are not. This is the power each of us possesses – the power to change the world.

Thank you for your prayers and support. May you see the Kingdom of Heaven spread out before you this wondrous season.

God bless,

Rae England