Week of Compassion

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August 5, 2026

The Practice of Faithful Accompaniment:

lessons from Indonesia

Dear Friends,

Because of your generosity through Week of Compassion, I recently returned from Indonesia to visit longtime partners and help film our 2027 Special Offering video. What I experienced there has stayed with me.

Indonesia has become a place of temporary refuge for thousands of people fleeing conflict and persecution, many of whom spend years waiting for permanent resettlement. For several days we sat with refugee girls learning English, young women from Somalia who arrived less than a year ago, and teachers who themselves were once students in the very programs they now lead.

Nearly every encounter included tears.

Tears of pain. Tears of frustration. Tears of uncertainty.

One school principal shared openly that most days she struggles to have hope. The reduction in support for global refugee programs—particularly from the United States—has moved from an abstract headline to a lived reality for the people sitting across from us.

During this visit we did not talk about shrinking humanitarian support. We witnessed its effects firsthand.

One day we visited a refugee learning center and hanging prominently on the wall was a plaque that read, “Protecting Urban Refugees through Empowerment (PLUS) Program – Gift of the United States Government.” One of the staff members quietly walked over and covered the U.S. flag with her hands while we laughed together at the irony of the moment. Yet beneath that laughter was grief. The people in that room are living with uncertainty about what comes next.

I have carried the stories of many refugees home with me, including those of three young women from Somalia. The oldest is nineteen. The youngest is seventeen. When their father died eleven months ago, they fled Somalia for their safety. I asked if they had chosen Indonesia.

They smiled and said, “Indonesia chose us.”

Today, they worry about the continuity of healthcare support after August. They wonder what comes next if funding continues to shrink. And yet, they continue to

study, to dream, and to hope.

But perhaps the story that will stay with me the most is of Fatima.

Fatima is in her twenties and teaches at the refugee learning center. During our conversation, she shared that she once sat in these same classrooms as a refugee student. Today, she stands at the front of the room teaching the next generation. In many ways, she embodies what accompaniment can become: someone who was once welcomed now becoming a leader who welcomes others.

Access to education for refugee children in Indonesia remains limited and uneven. While some are able to attend local schools through special arrangements, many face significant barriers, including cost, inconsistent access, and uncertainty about whether their education will be formally recognized. This learning center exists so refugee students from around the world can receive an internationally recognized certificate and have a future beyond survival.

At one point in our meeting, Fatima became emotional. Through tears, she challenged all of us not to simply put bandages on these situations but to think long-term. She apologized for speaking so candidly, and we immediately told her she had nothing to apologize for.

What struck me most was watching Fatima wrestle with what she wanted to say. You could see her trying to navigate the space between reality and hope, between telling the truth and painting a picture that was easier for us to hear.

She spoke of real pain—the uncertainty of funding, the limitations placed on refugee children, and the exhaustion of carrying these anxieties day after day.

The room grew quiet as the weight of her words settled over us.

And yet, perhaps that is where hope is found—not in pretending things are better than they are, but in the honesty of being present with one another and having the courage to sit together in the pain of her reality. There was no need to fix the moment. Our task was simply to bear witness.

In many ways, Fatima gave voice to what the entire visit had felt like: living in the in-between spaces. Between reality and hope. Between despair and possibility. Between accompaniment and the recognition that there is still so much work left to do.

In that moment, I was reminded that some of our greatest teachers are the very people we seek to accompany.

I have no doubt that Fatima will one day lead the refugee learning center. Perhaps she will become its principal. Perhaps she will lead something even greater. She is already advocating not only for her students, but for her fellow teachers, families, and an entire community that continues to live at the margins.

As I returned home from this visit, I found myself reflecting on how complicated hope can be. Sometimes it looks like a teacher returning to the classroom that once formed her. Sometimes it looks like a nineteen-year-old refugee still daring to dream. And sometimes it looks like telling the truth through tears and trusting that someone on the other side of the table will have the courage to receive it.

Through Week of Compassion, we stand alongside partners who continue this work everyday. While we cannot solve every challenge facing refugees around the world, we can ensure they do not face those challenges alone.

The practice of faithful accompaniment remains part of the central mission of Week of Compassion. It reminds us that Christ continues to be found among the people along the margins, and that hope remains alive even amid war, displacement, disaster, and humanitarian crisis. Hope is sustained through relationships—through compassion, presence, and the quiet commitment to walk alongside one another. Thank you for making that witness possible through your prayers, your generosity, and your commitment to our global partners.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Vy T. Nguyen
Executive Director
Week of Compassion

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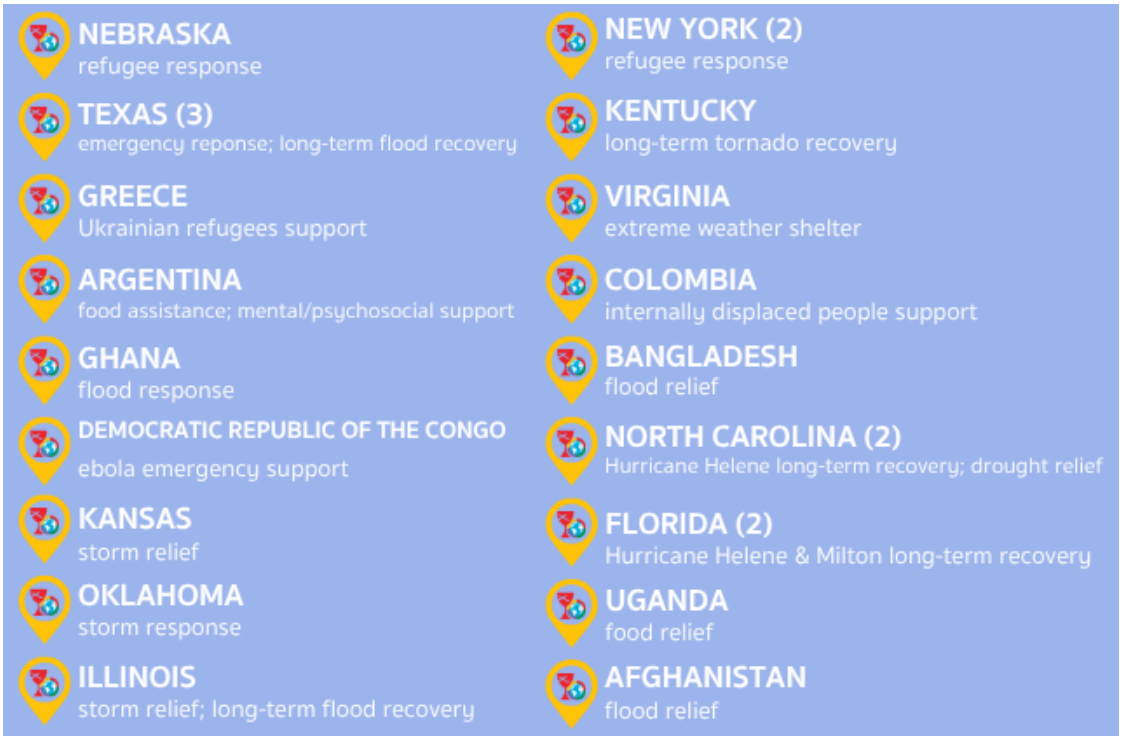

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MISSION : to work with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world
VISION : a world where God's people transform suffering into hope
CORE VALUES : connection - integrity - accompaniment

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