

JJ TenClay

A glimpse at what your support made possible

In 2024, I celebrated my 10th year serving as a missionary with RCA Global Mission, and decided to focus on the word “Connection” in ten Dear Friends letters. If you missed any of these Dear Friends letters, please visit my missionary page and on the right-hand side of the page you’ll find the letters in the Resources section, labeled Dear Friends February-December 2024.

I encourage you to go back and review those letters, because they provide inspiring stories of how God has used connections to care for some of the most vulnerable people in our world today: people who are at risk of forced displacement, people on the move, and people in search of protection and welcome. These connections were possible thanks to those who have partnered with me the past 10 years, giving me the opportunity to build a network of global partners that God has used in some pretty miraculous ways to protect the lives and liberties of thousands of people.

In my November Dear Friends letter, I shared my deep gratitude for each and every individual, family, church, classis, regional synod, and beyond who have partnered with me to provide compassionate, Christ-like care for refugees and other displaced people around the world. I’m so grateful that my work allows me to invite individuals, churches, and beyond to partner with me beyond financial giving and prayer support. It truly is an honor to see God at work, using connections—linking global needs to local partners, or local needs to global partners—in miraculous ways to care for vulnerable people all around the world. I look forward to sharing more stories of these connections in 2025.

Our challenges in 2024

2024 was another devastating year for people God has called me to serve. The number of people forcibly displaced from their homes due to violent conflict, persecution, natural and manmade disasters, corrupt governments, failing economies, religious extremism, profound and pervasive poverty, and other factors that threaten the lives and liberties has grown to more than 123 million people. This number has more than doubled in the past 10 years! Less than 1 percent returned home, and less than 1 percent were resettled in countries such as the United States or Canada.

So, what are some of the biggest challenges I faced in 2024?

1. Discerning when God was making a way for me to step into a situation and become part of the solution, and when I needed to say no and focus my time, talents, and resources on other situations.
2. Fundraising for special projects related to refugee care (such as projects in South Sudan and Lebanon), and struggling to find open doors filled with people with open hearts and open minds to hear my pleas to protect their lives and help them heal from trauma.
3. Continuing to care for people who are in desperate need of protection—sometimes for years—and having obstacle after obstacle block their pathways to safe, legal resettlement. The rollercoaster ride of great hope when things seem to be progressing well, then the sudden drop into despair when the pathway closes (which can happen for so many reasons) takes an emotional and spiritual toll.

Please pray

- Pray for the more than 123 million people forcibly displaced from their homes, and for healing and reconciliation for their homelands. Consider choosing one country affected by mass forced displacement (or at risk for mass forced displacement) and commit to praying for that country and her people for the next year. Really dive in to learn about this country and the people who live there. Don’t just

focus on the pain and suffering of this country, but also look for the beauty.

- Pray that more displaced people will safely return home in 2025.
- Pray for open doors for refugee resettlement—in the United States, Canada, and worldwide.
- Pray for my most recent refugee care fundraising project—The [Italy Refugee Empowerment Fund](#). I'm working with fellow RCA missionary ([Hannah Kummer](#)) and an RCA Global Mission partner (Mediterranean Hope) to expand the humanitarian corridors program in Italy, giving churches and groups of citizens in Italy the opportunity to directly sponsor refugees for resettlement in Italy. These refugees will be arriving from Afghanistan, Syria and Sub Saharan Africa. Our goal is to raise \$40,000 USD by June.



Above left to right: JJ, Angel, Hannah, and Grace on a US/Mexico border trip; An Afghan family arrives in the US after years of dedicated work.



Above left to right: Lucy Awate Dabi (South Sudan Refugee Care Project); Food distribution for Lebanon Displacement Relief Fund

CHURCH CONNECTION



What's next @ Love INC...

- Our next **Refresh & Renew** for pastors and church leaders will be Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 12:15 p.m. It's LOVE month and we'll be sharing about ways God's people show love in their community!
- Love INC is reimagining our volunteer **Prayer Team**. We would love to add to our numbers. The team meets every other Monday morning at 9 a.m. at the Love INC office. If you or a member of your church is passionate about prayer please call for more information.
- Our session of **Love & Learn classes** began January 28. Grief Share participants can join at any time in the 12 week session. For more information call Love INC.
- We're excited for our first **Reality Check** for 2025 which will be held at West Sioux High School on February 19. We still need a few volunteers from the Hawarden/Ireton community so call Love INC if you'd like to help that morning.
- Advance notice: Our **Spring Share Event** fundraiser will be Friday, April 11. More information to come in February!



I'M TOO DIRTY

When I arrived at my mom's home in Wisconsin recently I saw the beautiful white snow covering her lawn but later that day as I went for a walk this is what I noticed. Dirty, gray, muddy looking snow.

It reminded me how sin affects each one of us and makes our lives look filthy. The blood of Jesus Christ washes all of that away and makes us "white as snow" before God. A familiar verse from Psalm 51.

When you read this Psalm the bible notes that it's a "psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba". The story itself is found in 2 Samuel 11. As I read it today, it struck me how quickly David's heart was pulled away by sin. First, by his eyes. He wanted what he saw. Then with his body he defiled himself and Bathsheba. She becomes pregnant and now his sin will be exposed. David tries to manipulate Uriah and get him to go home so he'd sleep with his wife hoping that when it was clear she was pregnant it couldn't be pinned on him. However, Uriah is an upright man and doesn't go home. Now David has to think even more of how to make this situation go away. David resorts to what is essentially murder. Intentionally putting Uriah in harms way in battle.

I wonder how much of this spiral of character consumed David's thoughts. My guess is it was all he could think about. How easy we can fall into sin. We're no different than David. We covet. We lie. We defile ourselves and others. We manipulate. Sin is so dark and dirty.

Praise God for the sin defeating work of Jesus Christ! That's why David can bare his soul in Psalm 51. Pleading to God for mercy because of his never ending compassion. These beautiful words counteract the tangled web of sin. David's desperate words acknowledge the evil nature of his sin, God's just character, and the need to be made whole again. He puts his hope in God's merciful hands.

Each day we combat the power of sin and the devil. God knows our frailty and gently brings us back into his fold. Sometimes he uses a "Nathan." The spotlight on our sin can be painful but it's necessary.

I pray today we can experience God's grace in our lives and extend it in the lives of others.

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. [Psalm 51:7]



Meet Vanessa Harig - NW Iowa Director

I'm Vanessa Harig, the Northwest Iowa Operations Director, as well as the Board of Directors President of the Awakening Grace Foundation. I live in Archer, Iowa with my husband Jeff and my three children, Ryker, Joycee and Huntley.

My everyday life changes from day to day. After giving birth to Huntley in October, I decided to not return to my full-time job. Currently, I dedicate my time to my children, my part time waitressing job, and Awakening Grace. My hobbies include but definitely aren't limited to: racing Figure 8 cars in Primghar, attending and helping my step son, Ryker, with his go-kart races, going camping, and playing outdoors with my children. Most days it seems like there isn't enough time in the day to enjoy everything that is a favorite of mine.

If someone would have asked me what Awakening Grace was in 2018, I would have honestly not been able to tell them. I didn't know that such a meaningful, purposeful, and supportive organization existed until my miscarriage.

On November 2, 2019 I was excited and anxious to go to my first ultrasound. I remember growing up I always wanted to become a mom. I always dreamt of the day that I could have ultrasounds, give birth to a beautiful baby, and be a mom to someone who I created. When I walked into the ultrasound room, I was so oblivious that anything could go wrong. When the ultrasound tech pulled up a separate screen to do the heartbeat and nothing moved, I knew. She left the room and came back about 10 minutes later. Her words were, "I'm sorry, but there's no heartbeat". That sentence stuck with me forever. I should have been 9 weeks pregnant but instead, my baby stopped growing at 6 weeks, 4 days.

Looking back, it hurts to admit that I didn't think I would have a miscarriage. I truly didn't even know much about miscarriages, yet alone a missed miscarriage. Thankfully, I was given Nikita's information from a friend and instantly was in contact with her. Nikita walked me through what to expect, as well as walked alongside me the entire time I was using the Miscarriage Retrieval Kit. Having such a devastating loss and laboring at home was lonely and traumatizing, but thankfully, Nikita helped me feel a little less overwhelmed.

In 2020, I bought some items that are used in the Arrows of Hope care packages and donated them to Nikita. We later met and discussed volunteering opportunities and then starting in 2021, I became the Operations Director. I can't put into words the amount of gratitude and honor that I felt then, in 2021, and now, in 2025.

The Arrows of Hope care packages are special to me, and I'm honored to be the one who packages them currently. Each care package is customized and personal because every baby matters. Every loss is different, and we try to reflect that with different resources and support. Packaging care packages is one of the several things that I do with Awakening Grace and it's one thing that allows me to honor each baby lost. It's important to me that no family walks this journey alone and that they are encouraged to grieve, heal, and remember in a healthy way.

We are always here for you. I will always keep sending my love with each care package that I prepare and to each family that I encounter.

January 2025

Newsletter

"Building a Culture of Life"



Celebrating the Sanctity of Human Life

We observed Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on Jan. 19. This memorial day to remember lives lost to abortion was designated by President Ronald Reagan in 1984. He was the first president for whom I ever voted.

I have been involved in the pro-life movement for many years. More than ever, I am convinced this remains the critical social justice issue of our time: to protect the lives of unborn children, while also protecting the lives of women. Without a right to life, all other rights are meaningless. Legalized abortion has cheapened all human life and degraded women. We can witness its evil fruits rotting the culture around us.

Like Eve in the garden, women are still being deceived and men go along with the lies. We treat the blessing of fertility as a problem to be solved and believe abortion is necessary as a back-up for birth control. In the United States alone, we've lost 63 million babies and are still counting.

As Christians, we need to clearly stand for life without being judgmental of women who have suffered abortion. Our hearts ache with theirs over a tragic choice they may have been pressured into. The need to grieve their loss and they deserve our compassion. God's grace is enough to cover every sin.

Of course, it may be necessary for a doctor to intervene in an ectopic pregnancy or following a miscarriage. But these are outcomes we mourn, not celebrate. We do damage when we prematurely end a healthy pregnancy. Abortion traumatizes women. Women have suffered shame, flashbacks, depression, addiction, miscarriage, infertility, even death as the results of legal abortion.

I am grateful to have outlived Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion-on-demand up to the moment of birth. This flawed

Thanks to donors like you, these quality services will continue to be offered **FREE** of charge:

- 1st trimester ultrasounds
- Pregnancy testing
- Options Counseling for unplanned pregnancies
- Baby weigh station
- Breast pump donations
- Breast milk sharing program
- Child watch
- Diapers and wipes



We are seeking an individual to join our board of directors. Reach out to kaleigh@guidingstarsiouxland.org

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decision was reversed in 2022 because there simply is no right to abortion in the U.S. Constitution.

Now, the "choice" has been returned to the states. Sadly, in the 2024 election, 7 out of 10 states with ballot initiatives removed protection for the unborn. **Neither political party is unapologetically pro-life. Politics is not enough to change our society's lack of respect for human life. The work of building a culture of life begins with recognizing the dignity of Womanhood.**

That is why I volunteer for Guiding Star Siouxland, a non-profit women's health and wellness center. Guiding Star is committed to breaking down the cultural fear of fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. This fear tells women their natural, biological processes are something that need to be altered or suppressed.

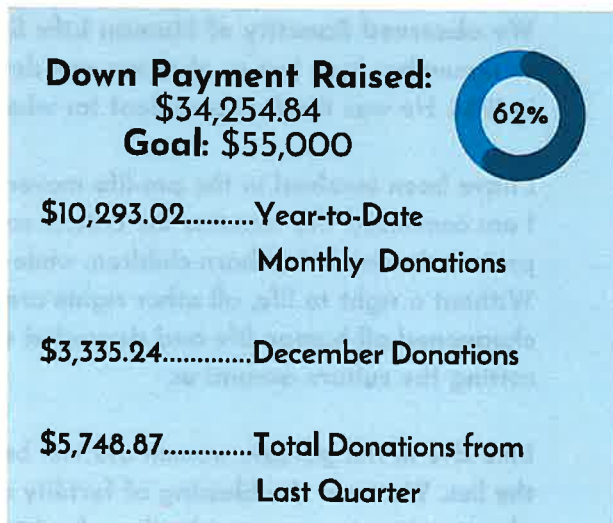
Instead, we want to empower women to embrace their uniquely created feminine design. We want to listen with compassion to the story of every woman who seeks counsel at our clinic. We are here to tell women that their bodies were created beautifully, and that a precious new life begins at the moment of conception.

Thank you for supporting Guiding Star Siouxland with your prayers and gifts because being pro-life means being pro-woman!

Lynn Wielenga serves Guiding Star Siouxland as a board member, weekly volunteer, and as the director of Spiritual Health.



Board members Lynn Wielenga and Cassie Hines served coffee and cinnamon rolls during the Hometown Holidays event Dec. 5 at the Centre Mall in Sioux Center.



FREE 1916 PROJECT
movie night

6:30 PM FRIDAY, APRIL 4

HOUSE OF MISSIONS & EQUIPPING,
101 19TH ST SW, SIOUX CENTER

Best of NW Iowa nominations are starting!
Please consider nominating
Guiding Star Siouxland for the following:

HEALTH / MEDICAL

- Advanced Practice Provider --> DeeAne Otto, ARNP
- Clinic --> Guiding Star Siouxland
- RN --> Makayla De Jong

COMMUNITY

- Community Nonprofit
- Place to Work

You can vote **DAILY** until Feb. 28!