

Voices: Using our hands to care for refugees during the pandemic

April 1, 2020

“These are my hands” is a song we sing often in the Ready for School program. The song says we have 10 fingers and two hands and lists all the things we can do with our hands: clapping, helping, loving, hugging, holding, building, etc.

As the music begins to this familiar song, the children’s faces light up with smiles, and they proudly hold their hands in front of them, ready not only to sing, but also model what they can do with their hands.

When crisis comes, by nature we want to roll up our sleeves and put our hands together to help. We want somehow physically to be involved in meeting the needs of others, either with our skills or acts of service. We want to use our hands.

In this pandemic, we feel helpless not being able to use our hands to serve others. Instead of holding hands with our neighbors to comfort and support each other, we are told to wash them, self-isolate and practice physical distancing. Not joining our hands physically is the greatest act of love right now, as it will save lives.

The God who created our hands to serve is teaching us to use them in new and creative ways to show his love to our neighbors, not just those living next door, but the most vulnerable in our world.

Refugees need community, too

Before we were asked to stay home, I bought basic food items and took donated toys to the children of some of our recently arrived Afghan families. They were so grateful for these small gifts, but most of all, they were grateful someone cared enough to think of them. Through texts, I've shared scriptures of God's love and care for them, assuring them of my prayers, as well as information on when and where the food bank will be having its next food distribution.

While I no longer can share a beautiful meal or cup of tea with my Iraqi friends, I can share words of encouragement. Last night, I received a group call on a messaging app from several of these women and their beautiful children. Everyone was greeting each other simultaneously in Arabic and English. There was laughter and joy in our teleconference gathering.

One woman even shared she had been thinking of me that afternoon and that we need to meet again and share a meal once we are able. There was hope in her words amidst her concern for her family.

Folding our hands to care

One of the greatest ways we can use our hands to serve refugee families during our time of physical distancing is by lifting our hands up in prayer.

Would you join me in praying for refugees who:

- do not understand the need for social distancing and continue to visit each other in their homes, which could spread the virus?
- already have been traumatized in their past and once again fear for their lives?
- have lost their jobs and need to feed their families?
- are in refugee camps around the world without access to sanitation

and medical services?

- may be more open to God's message of eternal hope and salvation?

Thank you for using your hands to serve our refugee neighbors.

Karen Morrow is a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel ministering among internationals and refugees resettled in Texas. She is a member of Church at the Crossing in Aledo.