

“Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.”

John 13:14-16

Foot Washing in a Time of Hand Washing



ANDREW LARSEN

Last year, I had only been in the Philippines a few days before COVID-19 restrictions started. Those first days were a crucial time to build initial relationships, establish community, and develop rapport, yet we were on “community quarantine” with limits to travel, closed businesses, and police checkpoints throughout the city. I’ve been called to the work of Justice, Peace, and Human Rights (JPHR) in the West Visayas. But when movement is restricted, how do you meet your neighbor? How do we maintain and uphold our communities in a time of social distancing?

As we wash our hands, I recall a powerful story about foot washing. Jesus demonstrated a revolutionary idea in the most intimate, gentle way. Jesus took water, removed the sandals from the feet of his closest companions, and washed the dust and grime off their feet (John 13:12-16). In one of the greatest acts of subverting the social norms, Jesus, the miracle worker/Son of God/leader/prophet/king/messiah washed the feet of his friends and followers in the role of a servant. A servant. We are to follow the example of Jesus by washing feet, being a servant to those in need.

Foot washing today comes in the actions required to walk alongside communities in need. While we may be physically distant, this is an opportunity to come together in the way we respond to the marginalized and how we uphold and respect the sanctity of life.

During this COVID-19 time, wash your hands. But also wash the feet of your neighbors.

Andrew Larsen serves with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. His appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church’s Wider Mission, and your special gifts.

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