My Virtual Service in Hungary

I am a 21-year-old university student in the U.S., studying public health at Kent State University with a hope to go into ministry with a focus on women’s health next fall. When I found out about the awesome work being done by Global Ministries and the great community partnerships that have developed, I wanted to be involved! In February 2020 I was confirmed to serve as a short-term service volunteer in Budapest, Hungary. I was supposed to serve that summer with Kalunba, the refugee ministry of the Reformed Church in Hungary. I was to work with refugees, offering English lessons, women’s health education, and public health education, as well as some ecumenical work with the Reformed Church of Hungary. Then the COVID-19 pandemic began to sweep across the world, and international travel was not an option. At first, I was sad, but I soon realized that volunteering for Kalunba in some capacity was necessary, because I was to be counted on!

Navigating the time difference was a challenge, as was connecting with others. My colleagues helped by connecting me with students for English lessons or physical exercise through Zoom. I ended up doing weekly yoga and English sessions with a young woman about my own age. We became friends and shared about our lives. It was more than just a tutor/tutee relationship. We did yoga videos, prepared applications for academic opportunities, and kept connected on social media as well.

Although this experience was not what I expected, I have gained valuable skills in communicating through technology with people whose first language is not English and with people that have different backgrounds than my own. In addition, I have seen how ministry goes beyond the “church” setting. I felt the spirit strongly during my time. I am so grateful for the connections with Kalunba and I hope to make it to Budapest soon!

Claire Weihe served as a short-term volunteer with Kalunba, the refugee ministry of the Reformed Church in Hungary, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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CLAIRE WEIHE

“...have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Ephesians 2:13

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