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A Legacy of Compassion: Celebrating Dr. Paul Farmer

BALTIMORE –The World Relief family celebrates the life and legacy of Dr. Paul Farmer, who passed away on February 21, 2022, at the age of 62. As the co-founder of Partners in Health and a practitioner of social medicine, Dr. Farmer sought healing not only at an individual level but also at local, national and global levels. Upon his passing, we both mourn the loss of a dear brother and friend, and we celebrate with deep gratitude the profound impact he had on so many lives around the world.

An inspiration to many in the humanitarian and health spaces, he was discontent with the current state of solutions around global poverty and illness and sought to facilitate change from the ground up. Compassion was a way of life for Dr. Farmer. He set a precedent of deep care and action for all who will follow in his footsteps. He lived a life marked by deep and genuine compassion. To Dr. Farmer, no life was insignificant, no problem was unconquerable, and no person went unseen.

Myal Greene, president and CEO at World Relief, reflects: “Dr. Farmer’s legacy is one of profound impact with many lives saved and improved. During the eight years i lived in Rwanda working in community health there, Dr. Farmer was always a personal inspiration to me. He was an innovative practitioner, an influential voice on behalf of others and a loving and kind man. His work of training and equipping many people speaks for itself. I was deeply saddened to hear of his death, but I celebrate the ways he used his life well to care for so many people. The impact of his work will be felt for generations.”

Emily Chambers Sharpe, SCOPE senior technical advisor at World Relief, reflects: “Paul Farmer spoke often of having a preferential option for the poor. He truly put human beings at the center of his efforts. For him, going to scale was about providing everyone with the same type of healthcare you would want your own loved ones to receive. Paul Farmer thought everyone deserved the best we could provide. I imagine he heard "well done, good and faithful servant" because he treated everyone with such tender care.

Charles Franzén, humanitarian and disaster response unit director at World Relief, reflects: “In Rwanda, Haiti, Malawi and in many other places around the world, Paul was convinced that community challenges would be answered by community solutions. His profound impact is felt and will be felt for many years in those parts of the world far from the eye of the media, the villages beyond the end of the road, where community health workers bring messages that transform the way people look at themselves



as the most important actors in the drama that is public health. The best way to honor the life of Paul Farmer is to follow the path he blazed so tenaciously, to seek the answers to the most difficult health questions through community-directed interventions.”

Prava Chhetri, health and nutrition technical advisor at World Relief, reflects: “I was so sad to hear the news yesterday. I was truly inspired by his groundwork, which is just as amazing as his academic contributions. Back in 2012, he visited a remote (western part of Nepal) place called Accham, which used to be an epicenter for HIV (migrant workers from India returned with HIV infection and infected their wives). During a time when global messaging was around “value of money” or “return on investment” in public health programming, Dr. Farmer promoted equity to health to highlight the needs of people burdened with poverty and disease. He reminded us that the value of money is not up for negotiation to achieve better health outcomes.”

World Relief celebrates the legacy and impact of Dr. Paul Farmer, and our global community of staff, volunteers and partners are deeply touched and inspired by the tenderness and grace with which Dr. Farmer carried out his work, continuing his legacy of seeing every man, woman and child as a neighbor and friend.

About World Relief

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world’s greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we’ve partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.

Learn more at worldrelief.org.

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