

FIVE YEARS, 16 CONGREGATIONS, 17 FAMILIES, OVER 100 REFUGEES HELPED - OUR MISSION OF GIVING HELP AND HOPE TO LOCALLY SETTLED REFUGEES

"Every time I want to talk with you guys, I remember your kindness, blessings and helpings."

Two years ago, when the 2024 annual report of the Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry opened with these heartfelt words from one of the refugees we serve, the Refugee Ministry was comprised of volunteers from six congregations serving four refugee families.

As this report is written in late September 2026, the Refugee Ministry now has continuing relationships with 17 refugee families (79 family members!), and so far in 2026, has helped roughly two dozen other local refugee men, women and children with temporary or one-time assistance.

We are Episcopalians, Lutherans, Quakers, Methodists, Jews, Unitarians, Roman Catholics, Mormons, and people of no specific faith, all working together to help mostly Muslim refugees from Afghanistan. We have also helped Nicaraguans, Rohingya from Myanmar, Guineans, and have offered our help to local Haitians and Syrians when our federal government terminated their legal immigration status.

Using the financial contributions from many, many people within and outside of our Christ Church congregation, and from the Christ Church parish budget and several of our partner congregations, here're some examples what money given to the Refugee Ministry has made possible over the past 12 months:

- Help paying rent (monthly assistance for two families, occasional or temporary assistance for others, forestalling eviction for still others)
- Help paying for utilities (gas, electric, water, sewer), and landlord-related charges
- Help paying for community college tuition, books and fees for certification programs and for-credit classes
- Helping families adjust to termination of food stamps assistance, not because they are not still poor or are not working (and paying taxes), but because they do not yet have green cards
- Setting up "healthcare assistance accounts" for the adults whose Medicaid coverage was terminated, again not because they are not still poor, or are not working (and paying taxes), but because they do not yet have green cards
- Covering one-time costs for registering and titling donated cars and for families moving to Maryland; help paying for car repairs and inspections
- Helping pay for much needed dental work not covered by Medicaid, or when there is no insurance, or an emergency procedure is needed
- Buying shoes and socks and underwear (items that should be new, not used)
- Assisting with legal costs and filing fees for green card applications
- Paying for multiple odds and ends needed by families who just didn't have the financial bandwidth to pay for something needed, not discretionary



Donations of time, talent, knowledge, and items from the *many* people and congregations across the Refugee Ministry have meant:

- Transportation to jobs, community college classes, medical appointments, food banks and other food distribution sites, social services meetings, job interviews, grocery stores and halal food markets, school meetings, soccer practices and games, mosque, social gatherings
- Being on top of routine and emergency medical, dental, vision needs – making and accompanying to appointments, obtaining records, ensuring translation, following up, figuring out Medicaid
- Tutoring for children and adults - in English, computer literacy, financial literacy, reading, math, community college coursework. Finding and arranging for English language classes, in-person and on-line. Being "talk buddies" for people learning English.
- Public school registration for students of all ages; help with parents interfacing with their children's schools and teachers; enrollment assistance and in-depth follow-up for children in infants and toddlers and pre-school programs. and for older children with disabilities – in six different school districts.
- Preparing and presenting education sessions on options for healthcare after losing Medicaid coverage and on "standby guardianship" agreements.
- Developing a database of healthcare providers for low-income families across Central Maryland.
- Creating an interactive "decision tree" to help families figure out healthcare coverage options.
- Accompanying families to immigration-related meetings, interviews, proceedings
- Requesting and coordinating donations of furniture, household goods, food, clothing, diapers, gift cards, children's toys and books, etc., etc., etc.
- Help finding immigration-related legal assistance
- Contacting U.S. Senator Van Hollen's office and Maryland state legislators for assistance with immigration and social services issues
- Everything involved in finding and landing a job - leads, ideas, resume writing, interview practice, distributing resumes, acting as references
- Connecting families and individuals with governmental and non-profit organizations

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- Finding housing, registering with food banks, finding utility cost reduction programs, running interference with Medicaid and temporary cash assistance issues, helping the families understand budgeting and the banking/credit and debit card, insurance, paying of bills and loans systems in this country, working with landlords on housing issues
- Responding to emergency calls for help of all kinds; trips to emergency rooms and walk-in clinics
- Receiving and distributing used electronics, wiped clean and in good condition – laptops, iPads, mobile phones, printers, Chromebooks, monitors
- Helping put important communications into grammatically correct English
- Arranging for paid and volunteer translators and interpreters
- Maintaining close, frequent communication with our partner congregations about what help (financial, volunteering, and otherwise) is needed and what they can give
- Being friends, advocates, mentors
- Answering every request for help with "here's what we can do; here's where you can also find help; we will do what we can; we welcome you; we are glad you are here"



- **Pray**. For the refugees we are helping, for the families who are still separated, for refugees everywhere
- **Volunteer in the Ministry**. Contact Ann Barnes at annbarnes001@comcast.net to talk it over.
- **Donate**. No amount is too small (nor too large!) via Realm or by check payable to Christ Church and marked Refugee Ministry. Every penny goes to direct support of the refugees we serve.

To read more about the Interfaith Refugee Ministry, go to https://www.christchurchcolumbia.org/refugee-ministry.

On behalf of the Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry and the refugees to whom we give help and hope, thank you for your interest, your concern, and your support.

Respectfully submitted by the Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry Leadership Team
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