

**CHRIST CHURCH INTERFAITH REFUGEE MINISTRY - 2025 ANNUAL REPORT
PREPARED FOR THE CHRST CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING – 19 OCTOBER 2025**

***FOUR YEARS, SIXTEEN PLUS CONGREGATIONS, EIGHT FAMILIES AND GROWING -
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”.

When the 2024 annual report of the Interfaith Refugee Ministry (IRM) opened with these heartfelt words from one of the refugees we serve, the IRM was comprised of six congregations serving four families.

As this report is written in early October 2025, the IRM has continuing relationships with eight refugee families (with 30 family members), and so far in 2025, has helped nearly 30 more local refugee men, women and children with temporary or one-time assistance.

Members of more than 16 different congregations, and many people not affiliated with religious organizations, now help these refugees and often other refugee families supported by their congregations. We are Episcopalians, Lutherans, Quakers, Methodists, Jews, Unitarians, Roman Catholics, Mormons, and people of no specific faith all working together to help (mostly, but not exclusively) Muslims.

Some of the major milestones since last October in the families we serve:

- Three more of our families became financially self-sufficient in 2025. (Three of the eight came to us financially self-sufficient; the other two currently receive significant financial assistance, principally to pay rent, but both are on tailored financial plans to become financially independent.) We continue to help with one-time or temporary financial needs.
- A condo was bought!! Thanks to a Howard County program helping moderate income families.
- When a family’s car was carjacked and totalled in early 2025 – meaning the father could not work his delivery job – enough money was donated so quickly that within a week he was able to buy another used car, but one new enough to be eligible to drive for Uber and Lyft, significantly increasing this family’s income.
- A medical professional in Afghanistan now works as a certified dental assistant
- Two teenagers graduated from high school
- A new American citizen was born
- After nearly a year of discouraging job search, two members of a family now have fulltime work
- Members of the families we have helped are now helping other refugees – with their knowledge, donations of used clothing and household items, translating and interpreting, transportation

To many people in our congregations, the word “help” automatically and only means money, and, of course, money is needed to help these families who arrived here with literally nothing. But money is just one piece of the help that we can and do give.

Here are examples of just *some* of the help – financial and otherwise – given by the Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry and its many partner congregations so far in 2025:

- Rent and utility payments for two families of the IRM’s eight families (in gradually declining amounts); one time help for our families and other refugees, including joining with several local churches in one-time efforts to stave off eviction for two families not part of the IRM
- Tuition, fees, books, required materials for classes and certification programs at local community colleges
- Transportation to jobs, the community college, doctors’ appointments, food banks and other food distribution sites, social services meetings, job interviews, halal food markets, etc.
- 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.
- Public school registration for students of various ages; help with parents interfacing with their children's schools and teachers; enrollment assistance and in-depth follow-up for three little boys in infants and toddlers and pre-school programs. Five different county school districts.
- Providing "know your rights" presentations and information in coordination with Luminus. Helping families know what to do if they are stopped by ICE or other immigration officials
- Requesting and coordinating donations of furniture, household goods, food, clothing, diapers, gift cards, children's toys and books, clothes, etc.
- Assistance in preparing for upcoming termination of SNAP (food stamps) and Medicaid as a direct result of the July 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) – every one of our families will be impacted by these changes, as will thousands of other refugees living in our area
- Especially for our newer families, helping as the ministry has funds available with the cost of their utilities, medical bills, WiFi, car insurance, immigration-related legal bills, gas, halal food, rent, driver's license costs
- Help finding immigration law assistance
- Contacting U.S. Senator Van Hollen's office multiple times for assistance with immigration issues
- Helping First Lutheran Church of Ellicott City get organized to take the lead in helping a new family that needs significant assistance of all kinds right now
- Job leads, ideas, resume writing, interview practice, distributing resumes, acting as references
- Fund-raising, including running the white elephant/rummage sale table at the WOCC annual flea market, asking organizations and individuals for financial contributions
- Connecting families and individuals with governmental and non-profit organizations
- 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
- 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, desk tops
- 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"

How you can help:

- **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 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 (Paula Rees, Diana Hall, Pat DeLorenzo, Steve Alpern, Jan DeBoisierre, Cherrylynn Williams, Ann Barnes)