

Outreach Ministry
1-9-18 Meeting Minutes

Guest presentation on refugee resettlement from Lutheran Services in the Carolinas

Present from Holy Trinity: Lynne Franke and Al Goshaw. Present from Outreach Ministry Committee: Linda Laubscher, Linda Kinsinger, Linda Varblow, Sarah Zink, Neal Mochel, Allison Jones (LCM).

Adrienne Morton from Lutheran Services in the Carolinas started the presentation. She is the Refugee Resettlement Coordinator. Generally organizations get two weeks notice if a refugee family is coming. They quickly get everything together for the family, trying to spend as little as possible because expenditures come out of their resettlement money. Each refugee must have a new bed and new pillow; other items can be used/donated.

Four case managers for all of their clients. Typically families are resettled in Raleigh unless they have ties elsewhere within a 100-mile radius of Raleigh. It is difficult to find landlords who will rent to refugees. US government gives individuals \$925 to resettle.

The organization lost half of their government funding after the new administration changed their policies. Many staff had to be let go and other staff have had to increase duties. Americorp staffers have picked up some of the duties.

Evalyne Kamunge from Lutheran Services Carolinas continued the presentation.

They will resettle many fewer people this year than usual. In the past they typically worked with over 200 families a year, and they expect to have only about 60 this year. All of the people that they resettle have gone through the federal government's refugee status guidelines. Some work with young people from Latin America who have families here who are undocumented, but this is not as common. LSC will send people to agencies in the area who could help them with services.

This year Congolese refugees will probably be the largest group to be resettled in our area. Only about 1% of the people who apply for resettlement from embassies are resettled to a third country. This takes a minimum of two years before they are resettled. They initially flee to a neighboring country from their home country and start the registration process there. Some refugees wait up to 7 years before resettlement.

3.4% of the US total of refugees coming from abroad are resettled in North Carolina. Congo, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Burma, Eritrean, Pakistan, and El Salvador are the countries that will come to the US this year. Syrian refugees will not be coming this year. There has been an uptick in Burmese refugees (most Rohingya) because of the situation

in Myanmar and Bangladesh. This is an issue because there are no Rohingya interpreters in the area.

Refugees have approximately 9 months to become self-sufficient. Refugees receive some assistance in finding housing, household supplies, seasonal clothing, and groceries for 1-2 weeks. Post-arrival they receive employment programs and ESL classes. They receive cultural orientation, assistance with applying for public benefits, Social Security applications, and health screening and immunizations.

The greatest thing that people can do to help refugees would be to help them acclimate to the culture and the community—connecting them to the area and to mentors who can help them thrive. They may have to have a menial job to start with, but someone who knows their skills may be able to help get them into the field that they worked in in their home country. Some refugees have had no formal education. There is a wide spectrum of backgrounds that refugees come from; the stories are all very different. Many people have to be retrained in order to work in their professions. This can be very difficult when they are also working towards self-sufficiency, taking care of their families, etc.

UNC Refugee Wellness – Mental Health help for refugees. This is the only resource in the area. It is a limited resource. Most refugees can use the help, but only about 20% get it. PTSD and stress are very common for refugees. Cultural differences can be overwhelming, and gender roles may be different from their home country. Teenage refugees may be responsible for parenting younger children because their parent(s) need to go to work. Many refugee families face discrimination.

Families receive a loan from the International Organization for Migration to pay for their flights to the US. It can be deferred, but it must be paid back.

Welcome team:

Airport pickup

Warm meals

Health screening appointments

Medical appointments

Financial guidance

English practice

Community connections

6-month commitment

8-15 members

Volunteer opportunities:

Donate items

Purchase groceries

Offer transportation

Employment guidance
English practice
Community connections

A short meeting continued after the presentation.

- 1) Council Report: Linda Kinsinger. The church budget was in the black at the end of the year. The council is looking at finance options on for Renew 300 and refinancing the current mortgage in the hopes that the mortgage payment will remain nearly the same. The council is waiting for bids on the construction. One has come in already and two more are expected.
- 2) Old Business/Current Projects
 - a. MLK Day of Service: Linda V has purchased fabric for 20 no-sew blankets. She will be setting up the Fellowship Hall after the 11:00 service on Sunday. If anyone wants to help, all are welcome. We decided to donate the blankets to Lutheran Services Carolinas since the Linus Project people did not get back to us and it would be expensive to send them to LWR. Linda Heilig offered to help us find funding for the blanket project through Thrivent, and she secured \$250 toward the project. We need to use it within 90 days. We can use the money to buy more blankets for refugees.
- 3) New Business
 - a. Crop Walk is April 22. Sarah Zink offered to coordinate again this year.
 - b. Project 5000: Sarah will look in her files for contact information to get this going in February. Neal and Dana will collect the boxes and transport to the IFC.
 - c. Pharaoh's Daughter: Kristin Somers is looking into having someone from this organization come and talk with us next month.
 - d. Emergency help: Kristin is also looking into how we can help a local Burmese family who lost everything in a fire last month.
 - e. PORCH and LCM: Linda Laubscher is setting up a meeting to discuss a possible collaboration between LCM and PORCH.
 - f. Refugee Resettlement: Linda V will talk with Pastor Will once he returns and discuss how to present the information we heard about tonight to the congregation. We talked about putting together a Welcome Team for a future refugee family coming to this area.
- 4) January Disbursements: \$1,000 for IFC and \$250 for Lutheran Services Carolinas Refugee Resettlement.

Sarah closed with a prayer. Next meeting is February 13.