

Refugee News & Request

St. Mary of the Lake parish has a thriving refugee ministry - a working group which is part of the larger Justice, Peace, and Outreach Commission. We celebrate our one-year anniversary this month, in collaboration with Lutheran Social Services, in welcoming, supporting and mentoring refugee families.

Our parishioners have shown great interest and generosity in discovering ways to love, listen, and then to take action. In March we presented information and delicious food that deepened our connection to our Afghan friends through hospitality following each of the weekend masses. Later that month we sent out an urgent request for cleaning supplies. The storage unit at LSS is now bursting with mops, brushes, buckets and brooms!

People are interested in what more they can do to help refugees coming to Minnesota. Here are a few suggestions:

- Offer to join the Refugee Working Group. We meet monthly to catch up on the various activities of our refugee friends and explore areas to continue to help. This can include calls to non-profits, rides to appointments, picnic planning, finding out how to use a bus card or helping to download an app.
- Help with the organizing/sorting of donations after they are received at the parish or other off-site location (such as Lutheran Social Services' storage unit) throughout the year.
- Write a letter to your Congressional representatives. Let them know how important it is to support migrants and refugees. We are especially interested in the Afghan Adjustment Act. You can find information at www.refugeerights.org.
- Google "Pope Francis and Refugees" and read the many statements, letters, and encyclicals that our Holy Father has written on this subject.
 - At the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis visited the island of Lampedusa, off the coast of Italy, signaling the importance he places on welcoming the stranger. His constant call for "welcoming, integrating, protecting, and promoting" those whose lives have been upended by war, economic crisis, or climate change has been received by people all over the world, Christian and non-Christian alike.
- Finally, and most importantly, join us in prayer!

We all have immigrant stories in our families. Take an afternoon to find out yours. And then reach out to someone whose story is brand new. You will be richer for it.