



## Toolkit and Resources

People of faith across traditions and people of conscience hold a common vision to live in a country where those who are most vulnerable are welcomed. The violence and persecution refugees and asylum seekers face is often unimaginable, and is often rooted in long term colonial and other unjust structures. There are more people displaced than any other time in history, and thus, compassion is needed more constantly than ever. Hospitality and creating a welcoming environment for those in need is a tradition rooted in sacred texts that goes back thousands of years in all of the world's major religions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was founded on global input from all the world religions clearly states in article 14 that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."

Yet in recent months in the United States, we have experienced growing anti-refugee rhetoric that seeks to call us from our commitments to compassion and love for vulnerable children and families. Anti-refugee organizations, in partnership with anti-Muslim groups, have responded to recent atrocities committed by extremists by building an environment of Islamophobia and discrimination against all Muslim people, including refugees. It would be a grave mistake to see these extremists as representatives of Islam. In fact, in the Quran, hostilities must be brought to an end as quickly as possible and must cease the minute the enemy sues for peace (2: 192-3).

We are called to action to work for peace and mutual acceptance as we walk in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers. We seek to counter together any efforts that use religion to justify violence. Through creating Refugees Welcome events around the United States, we can offer a public witness in partnership that will change the public narrative and influence lawmakers, locally and nationally, to stop anti-refugee bills and start passing welcoming policies.

There are more forcibly displaced people around the world today than any other time in history, including nearly 20 million refugees. It is our collective responsibility to respond to increasingly tragic situations of violence and conflict with leadership and compassion. We are in midst of an unprecedented attack on refugee resettlement from the politics of fear that is dominating public discourse, and now is the time to act.

We invite you to join the Refugees Welcome movement, which seeks to provide hope in the midst of the largest refugee crisis the world has faced since WWII. As we approach World Refugee Day on June 20, communities from multiple faith backgrounds, refugee resettlement organizations, refugee and human rights leaders, and organizations that work with refugees are working in partnership to provide a vibrant welcome to refugees among us, and to encourage our country to continue to respond to the world's crisis by offering hospitality to refugees.

The goal of the Refugees Welcome movement is to provide opportunities for refugees to share their experiences with faith and community groups to:

- Build friendships among diverse cultures and faiths
- Strengthen welcome of our refugee neighbors
- Promote refugee integration and leadership, and
- Celebrate refugees' contributions to their communities

Please see the resources in this toolkit to assist your heart, your family, and your group in planning events to welcome refugees and lift up their stories of courage. As you do, you will be helping to grow a narrative of hope that communicates the best of our faith values of hospitality, and our nation's values to welcome those "poor, tired, yearning to be free," in this most critical moment.

**People of faith and conscience walk in solidarity with refugee leaders. Please join us to welcome refugees during this critical time. There are many ways to help.**

As the United States works to protect refugees abroad and resettle refugees around the country, we are asking people of faith and conscience to work with resettlement agencies, refugee leaders, and community members to host Refugees Welcome events. Together, we can amplify refugee stories to shift the public narrative and build welcoming communities. These actions are vital to strengthening the U.S. response to the current refugee crisis, urging the United States to resettle more refugees and ensuring communities have resources to help refugees integrate and thrive.

Please put your Refugees Welcome events on the map so we can show the power of our communities throughout the country that welcome and stand with refugees, here: <http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org/>.

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## **Refugees Welcome Events: An Overview of Activities**

### **Refugees Welcome Dinners: Breaking Bread and Sharing a Meal**

Sitting down together to share a meal is a timeless tradition that unites across all cultures and religions. The act of communities inviting recently arrived immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to join them around the table holds immense meaning and offers a welcoming space to build relationships and learn from one another. This is also a great way to show hospitality and to urge policy makers to support refugee resettlement. Many civic groups and congregations have hosted welcome dinners that double as a fundraising event to collect donations and funds to help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States. Watch the documentary, [Welcome to Shelbyville](#), for examples of how sharing a dinner can break down barriers and transform communities. Resources in Appendix II of this toolkit will help you prepare a Refugees Welcome dinner that will build relationships and understanding around refugee resettlement.

### **Inviting Refugees to Speak at Your Congregations' Weekly Services**

One of the most important roles of an ally congregation is lifting up the voices of those most impacted by the issue at hand. Please consider inviting a refugee leader in your region to share their story during your congregation's weekly service or educational event. By lifting up the voices of refugee leaders themselves, we can help refugees gain a sense of their own power and ability to advocate for their communities. Real stories put the human face on why we should be welcoming these amazing people who have been through tragic journeys to arrive here. Stories also create a transformational experience for others and motivate them to get involved in responding to the largest humanitarian crisis of our time. Check out the faith resources below in Appendix I to integrate sacred themes on refugees into your weekly service along with a guest refugee speaker.

### **World Refugee Day**

On December 4, 2000, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) passed a resolution that June 20th would be celebrated as World Refugee Day. Every year, there are hundreds of World Refugee Day (WRD) events across the country that range from educational events, concerts, food fairs, and cultural festivals. This is an excellent opportunity for everyone to be more engaged with refugee and immigrant communities. Please see how you can join a WRD event in your region and check out this list of events throughout the month of June: <http://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/us/events/> and [www.rcusa.org](http://www.rcusa.org).

### **Multi-Faith Services or Vigils**

In midst of anti-Muslim rhetoric that excludes and isolates our Muslim neighbors, it is extremely important to lift up multi-faith collaboration and cooperation. This is a great

opportunity to publicly represent how people from many faiths can work together for one cause of welcoming refugees. This is also another good venue for refugee leaders to have a chance to raise their voice and tell their stories. Invite the press or show the success of your event on social media.

## **Civic Engagement**

One of the most important goals in welcoming refugees is to support them to become fully integrated members of the community, including by becoming U.S. citizens. Teaching civic participation is part of this process. One of the most important rights as a citizen is the right to vote, but unfortunately many new citizens often struggle with our voting process and need assistance in learning the U.S. voting system. New citizens may forget to register to vote after their naturalization, or if they do, they may need to re-register if they have moved recently. It is also important to familiarize new voters with state voter laws, especially in states with strict identification requirements. New voters are statistically low propensity voters, so it is critical to “Get Out the Vote.” World Refugee Day events or naturalization ceremonies are great opportunities for voter registration and engagement. To learn more, check out the Civic Engagement toolkit, here: <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2012-CWS-Toolkit-Final-1.pdf>

## **Meet with Your Policy Makers**

Developing a relationship and educating your policy makers are necessary steps to ensure robust funding and welcoming policies for refugees. At a time when Congress and U.S. state legislators support discriminatory and unwelcoming policies to exclude certain refugees based on national origin or religion, policy makers need to hear from their constituents. A powerful constituent visit consists of allies and impacted communities who join together, so invite a local refugee leader for your next meeting with your federal or state lawmaker. To learn more, check out the Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) toolkit for congressional visits at [www.rcusa.org/wrd2015](http://www.rcusa.org/wrd2015).

## **Lift Up Welcome Events through Traditional and Social Media**

Share pictures and stories on social media. Make sure refugees provide consent and feel comfortable with their pictures and/or stories being shared publicly. Invite the press to your Refugees Welcome events by sending out a media advisory in advance of, and a media release directly after, the event. Write an Opinion Editorial about the event, or invite a local media outlet to run a story about the weekly service, vigil or shared meal together (see page 15 for more information).

## **Let Us Know How It Went!**

We encourage you to please report back on the Refugees Welcome website at [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org) to share your stories, great ideas, and reflections from your welcoming event. We invite you to post your pictures, reflect on what helped inspire

your community to welcome refugees, and share quotes from leaders and members about what they learned. Please feel free to share information about past events too!

## **Logistics**

1. Contact your [local refugee resettlement office](#) to build a relationship. Ask them if you can be helpful with any events they might be planning. Ask about what they are planning for WRD and how you can be involved. Explore the multiple possibilities together and see if there is a way to include refugee leaders who might be interested in attending and sharing their story at a weekly service, vigil dinner or other event.
2. Meet one-to-one with key leaders in your congregation or community who are interested in helping to plan the event, conduct outreach, and handle logistics. Together you can decide which welcome event makes most sense for your community and how you would like to engage refugee leaders and their stories.
3. Identify refugee leaders in your community through your local resettlement agency. Make sure to meet with them ahead of time to develop a relationship. Work with them on their story, be clear about time expectations and what the audience will best respond to.
4. Once you have the resettlement office and community leaders committed to assisting with the event, sign your event up on the #RefugeesWelcome page at <http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org/>.
5. Understand the issues being discussed in your community around refugee resettlement. Find resources to respond to questions at [www.rcusa.org](http://www.rcusa.org).
6. Identify the best space for the event: a home, church, temple, school, library, or community center.
7. Divide tasks for outreach, cooking, taking pictures, and other logistics.
8. Consider translation needs and ways to ensure the meal includes options for everyone in terms of diet restrictions, allergies and religious preferences.
9. Invite your local and national elected leaders and their staff, as well as other community leaders to be part of the dinner.
10. Contact Megan Cagle with Church World Service at [mcagle@cwsglobal.org](mailto:mcagle@cwsglobal.org) for assistance with media outreach, so people can learn about your event and be inspired to take part in building welcoming communities!

## **Building Relationships**

As you share in these welcoming event and WRD activities, take time to get to know one another and build relationships that will last. Discuss where you come from and your family traditions. Sample discussion topics include:

1. Identifying common core values, passions and tastes. Have a few icebreaker questions ahead of time like: What is your favorite food? What do you like most about the town we live in?
2. Story of self: Take turns telling the story of self in 2-3 minutes about what transforming events in your lives have shaped you. Be respectful if someone does not want to share details about painful experiences, and find ways to focus on

commonalities and sharing different cultural traditions. To learn more about how to share your story of self, click here: <http://billmoyers.com/content/how-to-tell-your-story-of-self/>

3. Ask refugees how you can support and advocate with them, and identify ways to work together in the future.

As you are planning your various welcoming events, please remember how important it is to lift up refugee voices in leadership and to share their experiences through your events. Refugees are the best experts about being refugees!

### **Contact Information for Refugee Resettlement Organizations**

While it's best to build relationships directly with a refugee resettlement office near you (a state by state list is available at [bit.ly/RefugeeResettlementSites](http://bit.ly/RefugeeResettlementSites)), you can also contact national resettlement agency staff for support:

1. Church World Service: Jen Smyers, [jsmyers@cwsglobal.org](mailto:jsmyers@cwsglobal.org)
2. Episcopal Migration Ministries: Lacy Broemel, [lbroemel@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:lbroemel@episcopalchurch.org)
3. HIAS: Elizabeth Mandelman, [elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org](mailto:elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org)
4. International Rescue Committee: Anna Greene, [anna.greene@rescue.org](mailto:anna.greene@rescue.org)
5. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: Joanne Kelsey, [JKelsey@lirs.org](mailto:JKelsey@lirs.org)
6. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Matt Wilch, [mwilch@uscgb.org](mailto:mwilch@uscgb.org)
7. U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants: Esmeralda Lopez, [elopez@uscridc.org](mailto:elopez@uscridc.org)
8. Ethiopian Community Development Council: Lucy Negash, [lnegash@ecdcus.org](mailto:lnegash@ecdcus.org)
9. World Relief: Jenny Yang, [jgyang@worldrelief.org](mailto:jgyang@worldrelief.org)
10. Refugee Council USA: Shaina Ward, [sward@rcusa.org](mailto:sward@rcusa.org)

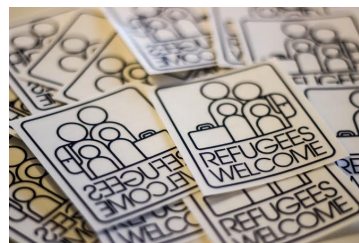
### **Refugees Welcome Sticker Project**

Help share a positive message in your community with the Refugees Welcome sticker! As featured on NBC News and the [Walker Art Center](http://Walker Art Center), this stick helps drown out all the negative and fearful rhetoric against refugees. To read the story behind the sticker, click here: <http://blogs.walkerart.org/design/2015/12/09/refugees-welcome-burlesque-mike-davis-of-burlesque-of-north-america-and-veda-partalo>

You can order stickers for your store, office, or home here (small fee): <http://burlesquedesign.com/products/refugees-welcome-sticker-set>

To download the graphic to print your own signs and stickers (for free):

- Click here for the 8.5 x 11" full page graphic: <http://brlsq.net/files/RefugeesWelcome-8x11.pdf>
- Click here for the 8.5 x 11" sheet of small stickers: <http://brlsq.net/files/RefugeesWelcome-stickers.pdf>



## **Spreading the Word on Welcome: Media Resources**

If you have planned an event such as a dinner, panel discussion, project, interfaith vigil, or weekly service, we encourage you to reach out and invite members of the media. Look online at the local publications or outlets you would like in attendance and search for past articles on immigration or refugees, then consider pitching your event to reporters who frequently cover those issues or other community issues if there is not a designated immigration or refugee reporter.

Consider inviting the editorial director at your local newspaper. By inviting members of the press, you will be able to further share our message of welcoming to a larger audience and also inspire local media to cover refugee issues more frequently in a positive way that highlights broad community support for refugees and resettlement.

To invite multiple members of the press, send a media advisory at least two full business days ahead of the event. Ideally, send the media advisory one week before the event and then again the day before your event.

Please see the draft media advisory below, as well as templates and examples for writing and pitching an op-ed, social media post and graphics, and a media release form.

Contact Megan Cagle with Church World Service at [mcagle@cwsglobal.org](mailto:mcagle@cwsglobal.org) for assistance with media outreach, so people can learn about your event and be inspired to take part in building welcoming communities!



DATE

**For Immediate Release**

Contact:

NAME, PHONE NUMBER

**\*\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\*\***

**Date of Event, Time, Location**

**Local (Faith Groups/Community Groups) Hosts (Dinner/Vigil/Service/Event) to Welcome Refugees in (Name of Town)**

Your City Name, State Abbreviation – As the (City/Town Name) community seeks to meaningfully respond to the global refugee crisis, leaders from (Organization/Congregation) will host (event type) to show support for welcoming refugees. They will be joined by refugees from (country) and (list other special guests, especially clergy or elected officials). Participants will discuss how refugee resettlement positively impacts the community, and what local organizations and individuals can do to welcome newly resettled refugees. All participants will be available for interviews before and after the event.

WHAT: Event type with faith and community leaders to welcome refugees

WHERE: Address of event

WHEN: Date and time of event

SPEAKERS: List of all speakers and their titles

DETAILS: Add event details such as security (if applicable), special visuals (religious symbols, art pieces, etc.), or any other important event information.

###

## Writing & Pitching Your Event and Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

When drafting an opinion piece, research the outlet you are submitting to. Many have a word limit between 750-1200, though some can be as low as 300 or 500. Please feel free to use the points in the draft op-ed below as you write your own opinion article, or feel free to write directly from the heart - what you have to say deserves to be heard!

When pitching your event, op-ed, or other welcoming project, it is important to keep your pitch short and on message. You can pitch either in person, over the phone, or via email. It is important to keep your pitch as short as possible, as reporters are often on a deadline and receive many story pitches every day. Open your pitch with an interesting first line and relate the pitch back to another story the reporter has recently written to increase the likelihood of the reporter picking up your story. Please see the draft pitch below for an example email.

To further increase your chances of the media covering your story, set up an exclusive interview with an outlet for attendees at your event. Making your event exclusive to one reporter makes it more appealing to the journalist and outlet as they will be the first ones to “break” the story that ties into current events at a local level. When pitching an exclusive story, be sure to research the outlets and reporters in your area. Who are the top current event, immigration, or political reporters in your area? Have they written about refugees before? If so, how can you tie your event into their previous work? Answering these questions and using them to draft your pitch will help increase the chances of your welcoming event being covered and featured as an exclusive in a larger outlet.

### *Draft Pitch Email for Media Invitation and Follow Up from Advisory*

Hello,

I hope you are well! I wanted to let you know of a potential story opportunity in regards to the continued debate over refugee resettlement in CITY/STATE and the ongoing response from communities calls to end resettlement. On DATE, ORGANIZATION will host a welcoming dinner/event with refugees from COUNTRIES. Joining together in a meal/discussion, community leaders including LIST, will join refugees to create a welcoming community and discuss issues and concerns around refugee resettlement.

In light of the continued and heated political debate over refugee resettlement, we would like to highlight the human stories behind the resettlement program, particularly how families and faith communities are impacted by these welcoming policies. Given your past articles highlighting refugees in our communities, I would love to offer you an exclusive interview with the group next DATE if you are interested!

I have attached the invitation flyer to this email with a full list of individuals in the group, but please let me know if you are interested or if you have any questions!

Sincerely,  
NAME

*Draft Pitch Email for Op-Ed*

Hello,

As the global community faces the largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II, our organization/congregation is preparing to resettle refugees and do our part to create a welcoming community. Serving as a leader with ORGANIZATION, I had the unique opportunity to host/attend EVENT, (include brief details).

The event inspired me to author the attached op-ed, detailing my experience and reaffirming the need for us all to work together and create an inclusive community. In light of recent anti-Muslim rhetoric in particular, this piece offers a timely response and highlights the urgent need to create a welcoming place for all people.

Please feel free to contact me at EMAIL or over the phone at PHONE NUMBER if you have any questions or would like to discuss the piece in greater detail. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,  
NAME

## Draft Op-Ed

### TITLE

Last week, I joined a group of newcomers for dinner. Abandoning my usual routine of eating in my own home, I accepted the invitation to dine with an incredible group of refugees, faith, and community leaders. Though we met as strangers, we left as friends, united in our dream to make our community one that welcomes people from all backgrounds.

While some have protested the recent resettlement of refugees from backgrounds that may be different than theirs, my experience has shown me that our differences are what make us a stronger and more diverse as a community. *(Details about event should be around 250-400 words. Include personal stories, lessons learned, and your thoughts/experience).*

As a community leader, I urge every member of our community to participate in similar events and challenge the growing Islamophobia and xenophobia in our country. As residents of a country founded on the hard work, determination, and skills of generations of immigrants from all countries, religions, and backgrounds, we must not let our differences divide us, but instead strengthen us. Exclusionary mindsets will only lead to fear and hostility, neither of which have any place in our community.

Love will always overcome hate and as a member of this community, I am ready to stand alongside people of all backgrounds and faith traditions so that we can build communities of acceptance, inclusivity and welcome.

## Social Media

Social media is a great way to spread the word about these issues and to get your friends, family, and other community members involved. Using popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, we encourage you to post a picture of your event utilizing the signs found at [americawelcomes.us](http://americawelcomes.us) and using the hashtag #RefugeesWelcome.

Even if you are not able to take a group photo of all people participating in your event, take individual photos with America Welcomes signs and use #RefugeesWelcome – any and all posts are welcome!

### Sample Facebook or Twitter Posts:

- [Congregation/Family Name] is ready to welcome #refugees! #RefugeesWelcome #WelcomeTogether (photo)
- To welcome is to be whole. We are committed to welcoming #refugees in our community! #RefugeesWelcome #WelcomeTogether (photo)
- Visited @REPNAME's office to tell him/her to vote NO on anti-refugee proposals. #WelcomeTogether #RefugeesWelcome (picture)
- Visited @REPNAME's office to tell him/her to support policies that will welcome #refugees and assist their new communities. #WelcomeTogether #RefugeesWelcome (picture)
- [Organization name] stands with our neighbors of all faiths. @REPNAME, say NO to anti-Muslim rhetoric! #WelcomeTogether (picture)
- Our refugee brothers and sisters make our communities stronger. @REPNAME, vote NO on anti-refugee legislation! #WelcomeTogether #RefugeesWelcome
- This #WRD2016, we celebrate the diversity and resiliency #refugees bring to our communities! #RefugeesWelcome

There is already an incredible awareness on social media around refugee issues. Starting in the fall of 2015, many international campaigns were launched to urge communities around the world to welcome refugees. Building off of those existing campaigns will allow us to connect with an already engaged audience and provide an established platform on which to issue new talking points, news clips, events, and social media graphics to further our message. Existing campaigns and hashtags include:

- #RefugeesWelcome
- #OpentoSyria
- #WelcomeWorld
- #welcomerefugees
- #refugeecrisis
- #WithSyria

Creating a unique hashtag for our campaign will allow us to engage a new audience and track how many people are engaged online with our campaign specifically. Suggested unique hashtags for your campaign are:

- #United4Refugees
- #Together4Refugees/TogetherforRefugees
- #WorkingtoWelcome
- #LovesARefugeeFromHate

### Sample Refugees Welcome Graphics

Feel free to also use photos, videos, or graphics from other supporting organizations. See the example graphics below. It is important to receive permission of all individuals in a photo or video before posting. Please see a draft media release below, or use one from your organization if available.





# A Collection of Other Refugees Welcome Images



## Sample Media Release Form

I give ORGANIZATION/INDIVIDUAL NAME and people acting for and with ORGANIZATION/INDIVIDUAL NAME permission to interview, photograph, video, and/or audio record me to use and to edit, without compensation to me, the items listed below in any medium, including print and electronic (web-based) material for educational, promotional and marketing purposes:

1. Photographs or video footage of me;
2. Spoken (written or recorded) interviews of me and quotes from me;
3. My full name in connection with the photographs, video footage, interviews, or quotes; and
4. My location in connection with the photograph(s), video footage, interviews or quotes.

I have crossed out any points above to which I, or my signatory, do not agree.

I will make no monetary or other claim in connection with the authorized use of my name or photos, video, interviews and quotes, and I now release ORGANIZATION/INDIVIDUAL and partner organizations and their employees and/or partners in education, promotion, publicity and marketing interviews from any claims, demands and liabilities in connection with the use authorized and agreed to here by me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature or thumbprint of subject (if over age 18): \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name and signature of a parent or responsible adult (if under age 18):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Serving as an Example of Welcome to Policy Makers: Action Alert**

As people of faith and conscience, we have an ethical duty to love our neighbor and walk with the vulnerable. We have a moral responsibility to welcome refugees and immigrants and stand with them as advocates against hateful rhetoric and proposals that would negatively impact their lives. The beliefs expressed by extremist groups like ISIS are in direct conflict with the key tenants of the Islamic faith. Islam does not promote violence, discrimination, or persecution. Instead, it is a faith much like ours, promoting peace, welcome, and harmony with all people, regardless of religion. Many of our faith communities have made recent statements that affirm interfaith solidarity against discriminatory and harmful rhetoric and policy proposals.

It is critical for political leaders to hear that their community members want to welcome refugees in the United States and increase assistance to refugees abroad. Communicating with local and national policy makers is a key aspect of civic life, and our Senators, Representatives, and other leaders want to hear from their constituents. As they consider proposals that will drastically impact refugee assistance and resettlement, policy makers need to hear from refugees and from community members who are welcoming refugees.

A sample action alert is below. Please feel free to modify and share with your networks, and urge your community members to call their policy makers.

For more advocacy resources, check out Refugee Council USA's resources, here:

- RCUSA Refugee 101: Who They Are, available here:  
<http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/RCUSA%20Resettled%20Syrian%20Refugee%20Backgrounder.pdf>
- RCUSA Security Screening and Processing for Refugees, available here:  
<http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/RCUSA%20Refugee%20Security%20Screening%20Backgrounder-February%202016.pdf>

See additional information on how to set up a local congressional visits at [bit.ly/localcongressionalvisits](http://bit.ly/localcongressionalvisits) and [www.rcusa.org/wrd2015](http://www.rcusa.org/wrd2015).

**YOUR VOICE IS URGENTLY NEEDED:  
Tell Your Members of Congress to Welcome & Help Refugees!**

**Background:** There are more forcibly displaced people around the world today than any other time in history, including nearly 20 million refugees. It is our collective responsibility to respond to increasingly tragic situations of violence and conflict with leadership and compassion. President Obama announced that the United States will resettle 100,000 in 2017, a proportionally small increase in the context of the global need. We must continue to urge the United States to strengthen its commitment to welcome refugees into our country and support local communities as they help refugees integrate and rebuild their lives.

**Please take action TODAY:  
Call your Senators and Representative: 1-866-940-2439**

Tell your Senators and Representative that you care about displaced people overseas and refugees resettled in the United States. It is time to act with historic leadership and compassion, and stand with those seeking safety and the opportunity to build a new life. Urge your Senators and Representative to **welcome refugees into our communities and oppose any attempt to dismantle the U.S. refugee resettlement system.**

Here's a sample of what to say:

*"I'm a constituent from [City/State], and I urge the [Senator/Representative] to welcome refugees into our communities and oppose any attempt to dismantle the U.S. refugee resettlement system. The U.S. government and communities around the country help to ensure that people fleeing life-threatening situations find protection. The U.S. must demonstrate leadership and increase refugee resettlement. Any efforts to stop, pause, or disrupt the U.S. refugee resettlement system do not reflect our American values of generosity, humanity, resilience, and solidarity."*

Please call this line 3 times to be connected with your Representative and two Senators.

You can also tweet your Members of Congress and your network:

- ".@SENATOR, show that #AmericaWelcomes and support #refugee protection & resettlement! Our community is ready to welcome. #RefugeesWelcome"
- ".@REPRESENTATIVE, show that #AmericaWelcomes and support #refugee protection & resettlement! Our district is ready to welcome. #RefugeesWelcome"

Follow @InterfaithImm on Twitter and "like" Interfaith Immigration Coalition and Refugee Council USA on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

## **Syrian Refugees and More on Refugee Protection & Resettlement**

**We are facing a global refugee crisis that requires a global response.** 60 million people are displaced, the largest number since World War II. This includes 4 million Syrian refugees and nearly 8 million Syrians who are displaced within their country. The global outpouring of public support for Syrian refugees has inspired countries around the world to welcome more refugees, and the United States must do our part. In proportion to each country's population, Germany's welcome of one million Syrians would be akin to the United States accepting more than 3 million Syrian refugees; so far, however, less than 3,000 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the United States.

**The U.S. has traditionally been a leader in refugee protection and resettlement, and needs to show bold leadership now.** After the fall of Saigon and in response to public outcry about individuals losing their lives as they fled for safety, the U.S. airlifted more than 200,000 refugees in 1980 alone and welcomed a total of 759,482 Vietnamese refugees. These individuals are now our friends, neighbors, family and community members. History shows us that where there's a will, there's a way. The United States can and should resettle at least 100,000 Syrian refugees this year, in addition to the 100,000 refugees that will be admitted from all parts of the world.

**We Aim to Resettle Refugees from All Vulnerable Groups.** The savage acts perpetrated by ISIS and other extremist groups today inflict pain and suffering on Christians, Muslims, and people of various faiths. We must provide safety and welcome for vulnerable people of all faiths and backgrounds.

**Refugees Must Complete Several Levels of Screening Before Coming to the United States.** Refugees are the most scrutinized individuals in the United States, undergoing intense background checks, biometric screenings, medical tests, and in-person interviews by the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Defense, and National Counterterrorism Center.

**U.S. Communities Are Essential to the Resettlement Process.** The UN Refugee Agency UNHCR and the U.S. Department of State identify candidates for resettlement, and a U.S. Department of Homeland Security officer reviews every refugee for approval or denial. Communities are the backbone of resettlement in the United States, and extensive consultations are conducted each year with local schools, churches, hospitals, and officials to ensure we place refugees in welcoming communities.

**Refugees Help Local Economies by Creating Jobs and Paying Taxes.** Newly arriving refugees have been the driving force behind the rejuvenation of many cities across the United States. Refugee families have helped create jobs and opportunities in once-strained rust belt communities. Over 80% of refugees are employed within 90 days of arriving in the United States – they start immediately to give back to the community by paying taxes and supporting their families without public assistance.

**Refugee resettlement saves lives and enriches communities.** Our community is committed to welcoming more refugees. Share a story from a refugee in your community, and examples of your community's support and involvement in resettlement!

- Find a refugee resettlement office near you: [bit.ly/refugeeresettlementsites](http://bit.ly/refugeeresettlementsites)
- See how people of faith in every state are welcoming refugees: <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/2015/12/03/welcoming-refugees-state-by-state-resources/>
- Check out the CLINIC Refugee Toolkit: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/clinic-refugee-resettlement-toolkit>
- See which states Syrian refugees resettled in: <http://news.berkeley.edu/syrian-refugees-resettled-in-u-s/>
- Check out this tool for seeing live data collected on refugee entries into the U.S.: [http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/InteractiveReporting/tabid/393/EnumType/Report/Default.aspx?ItemPath=/rpt\\_WebArrivalsReports/MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile](http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/InteractiveReporting/tabid/393/EnumType/Report/Default.aspx?ItemPath=/rpt_WebArrivalsReports/MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile)
- Check out Cultural Orientation Resource Center's *Refugees from Syria* backgrounder, which provides (1) communities with basic information about Syrian refugees, (2) a brief guide to Syria's history, people, and cultures, (3) information on the crisis in Syria and the conditions refugees face in first asylum countries, and (4) strengths refugees bring to their new communities and challenges they face: <http://www.culturalorientation.net/content/download/3970/21954/version/2/file/CAL+Backgrounder+08+-+Syrians+FINAL.pdf>
- For a basic introduction to the worldview of Muslim peoples as manifested in their religion and culture, including: topics on the fundamental tenets of Islam, necessary conditions for successful resettlement, and special considerations when working with Muslim men, women, children, and elderly, read: <http://www.culturalorientation.net/content/download/1360/7921/version/2/file/Muslim+Refugees.pdf>
- For educational resources on Islam and Muslims, read *My Neighbor is Muslim: Exploring the Muslim Faith*, available here: <http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>
- To watch a video featuring refugees, entitled *Look in My Eyes...Refugees at Home in Lancaster, PA*, click here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFLQ5YJXNN4&sns=em>

## Syrian Refugee Stories

Refugees' journeys from around the world and tales of welcome around the United States:

### **Syrian Refugee Featured on Humans of New York to Attend State of the Union**

Refaai Hamo, a Syrian refugee, was personally welcomed to the U.S. by President Barack Obama and invited to the President's State of the Union Address. Hamo stated how honored he felt by this welcome and how he is looking forward to becoming a U.S. citizen, eventually.

<http://time.com/4174365/syrian-refugee-humans-new-york-state-of-union/>

### **Syrian Refugee Family Featured in History Channel Web Series**

Follow the Alteibawi family in these short videos from the History Channel as the family rebuilds their lives in the United States.

<http://www.history.com/shows/history-now/videos/the-alteibawi-family-the-new-americans-episode-1>

### **Syrian refugee family building new life in Seattle**

A Syrian family, the Alhamdans, has been welcomed by their new Seattle neighbors by being invited for dinners and bonding time.

<http://www.king5.com/story/news/local/seattle/2016/02/26/syrian-refugee-family-building-new-life-seattle/80035088/>

### **Syrian refugees' move to US was 'the happiest day'**

A Syrian refugee family, Nedal and wife Raeda, settled in Michigan where they feel the community's support.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35556937>

### **Syrian refugees volunteer at churches in metro Detroit**

Samir Al-Rachdan, a Syrian refugee living in Detroit, gives back to the community that welcomed him by volunteering his culinary skills at local churches.

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2016/01/06/syrian-refugees-volunteer-churches-metro-detroit/78362794/>

### **Some Syrian refugees settling in West Michigan**

Video and story on resettlement process with Syrian refugees, including existing Syrian community. <http://www.wzzm13.com/videos/news/local/2015/09/15/some-syrian-refugees-settling-in-west-michigan/72334990/>

### **Two Families Who Fled War-Torn Syria Face A New Challenge: Resettling In The U.S.**

The Al Roustom family rebuilds their life in Jersey City, NJ.

[http://www.buzzfeed.com/purvithacker/two-families-who-fled-war-torn-syria-face-a-new-challenge-re?bftwnews&utm\\_term=.rpPmm4gB9#.ljpYYJ5O6](http://www.buzzfeed.com/purvithacker/two-families-who-fled-war-torn-syria-face-a-new-challenge-re?bftwnews&utm_term=.rpPmm4gB9#.ljpYYJ5O6)

## **Appendix I: Refugees Welcome Weekly Services for Congregations**

As faith and human service communities, we invite you to share messages of welcome, compassion, and depth of kindness to refugees in your community and around the world by incorporating these inter-faith resources into your congregation's weekly service.

- 1) Litany of Welcoming
- 2) Children's Sermon or Community Ritual
- 3) Prayer: Call to Worship
- 4) Prayers of the People
- 5) Prayers for Refugees
- 6) Lectionary Based Sermon Notes for Refugees Welcome Worship Emphasis
- 7) Poem
- 8) Message from the Pulpit/On The Bimah/In The Minbar
- 9) Versus from the Quran
- 10) Sharing the Well
- 11) Verses from the Torah
- 12) Stand with Refugees this Passover

*Questions?*

*Email Us: [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)*

*Visit: [www.refugeesarewelcome.org](http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org)*

## Litany of Welcoming

Leader: We journey into this special worship remembering your call for Abraham and Sarah to travel to a new land so all families of the earth may be blessed.

**People:** God, help us bless those who have sacrificed and braved dangers to find safety among us.

Leader: We seek, in this and every season, to strengthen as a faith family in our love for others, remembering your words to “do no wrong to the stranger,” and growing to accept one another and ourselves.

**People:** God, strengthen us to be family for newcomers we encounter, welcoming them and offering security and hope through our community, even as you have welcomed us.

Leader: We gather as one, united from lives that are diverse, and recalling how you asked us to care for the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner.

**People:** God, encourage us to know that whenever we share hospitality with others, we find in those relationships opportunities to more deeply see your face and do your will.

**ALL: Lord of grace and love, call us anew in this time to give witness to your heart of generosity. Surround us fully with your love as we worship, so that the joy of your embrace might grow our confidence to open arms wide to the needs of your world.**

## Prayer of Intercession

*Written for Refugee Welcome Sunday, April 10, by Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, corresponding with John 21:1-19 text*

Leader: Loving Lord, filler of nets and hearts with your bounty that moves us beyond bereavement, past tragedies to possibilities, and away from emptiness to joy;

**People:** We pray on this day that you might carry refugees safely to the place where they hope to be, and into arms of welcome and warmth.

Leader: God for whom no one is a stranger, who came with grace again and again to restore and gather your community even following your resurrection;

**People:** Make us also ones committed to re-gathering and restoring hope to all separated from their loved ones, to ones who have been pushed away, or who have run away, from their homes, their nation, their families, their relationships.

Leader: Breakfast griller on the beach, who feeds us constantly with your vision for vitality, and teaches us continually of your imagination for ever-growing compassion;

**People:** Help us always to show your depth of kindness, to respond to feed the lost in ways that nurture your sheep far and near who face persecution and disease, war and violence, conflict and depression.

**All: For in so doing, we remember your flight to Egypt, your suffering journey to the cross. And we claim, through following you, the reality of life overcoming desperation and beyond the grave, the promise of wholeness for a broken world! AMEN.**

## Children's Sermon or Community Ritual

As children gather (or as a full congregation), tell the story of Elijah in the I Kings 19:3-8, lectionary passage. Emphasize how Elijah was escaping for his life, as a refugee, and how he was sustained by God's generosity and hospitality in feeding him. Invite folks to reflect on best ways they prepare for a guest's arrival in their home, and how they might help care for refugees today who are seeking care and welcome.

Then, engage the children (or the full congregation) in an historical ritual of welcome, called a "Door Blessing." Although the custom's roots are often linked with Epiphany, this custom demonstrates throughout the year how God's love and Jesus' experience as a refugee so soon after his birth lead us into a new life of hospitality that seeks to consistently transform the character and depth of our "walk in faith."

The life of Jesus—who was eager to eat with sinners, heal the blind, seek the lost, and ultimately walk towards the cross—challenges us to WELCOME ALL who enter into our doorways. Jesus' life calls us to invite those in need to find the doorways of our homes and congregations, and to seek to serve the vulnerable anew each time we walk through the doorways of our homes and church.

Invite participants to walk to the doors of the church, and to read together this prayer, adapted from *Worshiping With Children*, on the day of your Refugees Welcome Worship:

*God of doors and homes, bless this church (or our homes) this season and every season.*

*Bless all who come and go through this door, both those who live here and those who visit.*

*May all who enter through this door come in peace and bring joy.*

*May all who come to this door find welcome and love.*

*May all who exit this door share hospitality and hope.*

*May the love and joy in this home (or church) overflow and spread into the community and offer comfort to the world.*

Find the prayer and see additional information on the custom of "Door Blessing" at: <http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2013/11/year-epiphany-monday-january-6-2014-or.html><http://liturgy.co.nz/epiphany-chalk-house-blessing-2>

### Prayer: Call to Worship

Leader: Creator of all, we gather today thankful that you have welcomed us.

**All: We give thanks that through our hardest times, God has heard our cry.**

Leader: Just as God has accompanied us on our journey, we are called to walk alongside those who have been mistreated, persecuted and outcast.

**All: Together as a faith community, we are called to be a space of love and safe refuge for all people.**



Leader: Let us work together with refugees and immigrants from many different lands to welcome them in, and let us pray that the crisis in Syria might soon end, so displaced people can someday return to their homeland.

**All: As we wait for You to answer these prayers, we re-commit ourselves to be a welcoming congregation lifting up immigrants and refugees in our midst and preparing ourselves to advocate with them by our side. Amen**

### **Prayers of the People**

Oh God, our creator and liberator, we pray for all those who face the trials and tribulations of exclusion. We lift up all those who have been made outcast in our world; for those impoverished by inequality, for those who find themselves in the cold from homelessness, for those who are treated differently because of their skin color or religious background. Today on this welcome weekend, we say a special prayer for all the refugees in the world who have faced violence and persecution. Now many of them face discrimination upon arriving to the safety of this land. Strengthen our faith to be accepting to all and fortify our witness to advocate for just and humane policies that expand the path of welcome for refugees to join our communities. In the same way, we pray for all those who face sickness and disease, in our congregation and throughout our community, may Your blessing comfort them and may Your healing power touch them. In the Spirit of love and compassion we pray. Amen.

### **Prayers for Refugees**

*[T]he angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. Matt. 2:13-14.*

*The presence and power of God now embraces all those affected by loss and disaster. God's comfort consoles those who have lost loved ones. God's peace and tranquility touch those who have lost their lives. God's healing presence is quickened in those who have been injured. God's blessed assurance uplifts the survivors and blesses them with faith and hope. God's protection and wisdom quicken the minds and bodies of all those who are providing medical aid, relief and rescue. Thank you, God, that all hurting hearts are healed by your abiding love. Based on Ps. 91, from the Unity Church of the Hills.*

*Compassionate God, make your loving presence felt to refugees, torn from home, family and everything familiar. Warm, especially, the hearts of the young, the old, and the most vulnerable among them. Help them know that you accompany them as you accompanied Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in their exile to Egypt. Lead refugees to a new home and a new hope, as you led the Holy Family to their new home in Nazareth. Open our hearts to receive them as our sisters and brothers in whose face we see your son, Jesus. Amen.*

*Father of the poor, God of love, you made us all your children; we praise You and thank You. Full us with a sense of justice. Help us in your work, to take the side of the lowly, to defend the newcomer, to welcome the stranger. Help us now to befriend the friendless, protect the weak children, and work for the rights of all. Lord, on our journey home, bring us together in peace, in justice, and in love, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Lord, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from you loving care. In your kindness watch over refugees and exiles, those separated from their loved ones, young people who are lost, and those who have left or run away from home. Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and those in need. New St. Joseph People's Prayer Book, #331, Catholic Book Publishing Co. (1980).*

- For prayers on refugees and victims of war, visit: <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=1514>
- For an English prayer for refugees, visit: [http://www.invitationtoprayer.org/prayers\\_refugees.html](http://www.invitationtoprayer.org/prayers_refugees.html)
- For a Mennonite prayer, visit: <http://peace.mennolink.org/articles/prayafrika.html>
- For a U.S. Catholic Bishops prayer for migrants and refugees, visit: <http://www.nccbuscc.org/mrs/nmw/prayer.shtml>
- For additional prayers for refugees, please visit: [http://www.awakentoprayer.org/prayer\\_for\\_refugees.htm](http://www.awakentoprayer.org/prayer_for_refugees.htm)

### **Lectionary Based Sermon Notes for Refugees Welcome Worship Emphasis Sunday, June 19**

One of the lectionary texts for this Sunday is I Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a. This text, the story of Elijah and the Lord, lends itself especially well to themes experienced by refugees.

Already in Chapter 18, Ahab has labeled Elijah a “troubler of Israel,” (I Kgs. 18:17) and blamed him for Israel’s great drought. In response, Elijah insisted that Ahab was responsible, due to his nation’s following of the Baals, and turning from the Lord. Elijah urged Ahab to bring together all the prophets of Baal to determine what god has greater power, the gods of Baal or the God of Abraham, Yahweh. In great drama that unfolded through verses 30-41 of chapter 18, the gods of Baal refused to respond to demonstrate their power through fire, while Elijah showed the power of God to bring fire upon request to an altar. Defeated in the contest, the prophets of Baal were then killed by Elijah. Elijah then called Ahab to look for a rush of rain—another provision of God’s power—to come soon to the parched land, as well. The heavens opened up with rain, as Ahab rushes back to his home.

As chapter 19 in today’s passage opens, Ahab begins to tell his wife Jezebel about God’s great power shown in response to Elijah’s request. Undeterred, Jezebel threatens to take the life of Elijah—and Elijah in verse 3 flees to escape, until (in verse 4) he hides under a tree in the wilderness, expressing his fear of death by Jezebel’s violence.

Parallels can be drawn with the nearly 20 million persons around the world who are sent out of their countries as refugees by threats; many of whom are forced to flee because of persecution related to their religion, as well as persecution due to race, national origin, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, and are unable to obtain protection within their home country. (This definition is defined through the Geneva Convention on Refugees.) In addition to this number, an additional 40 million are internally displaced within their own country. Here, Elijah has fled to the very southern corner of the promised land, to Beer-sheba. This location is as far away from Jezebel as he can go.

In his hiding for 40 days and 40 nights, Elijah's experience of suffering and isolation reminds us of the story of any refugee family. (Invite a refugee here to share their own story of isolation during their escape, or search online for a story that will resonate with your community.) The faithful who hear Elijah's experience (and that of refugees today) will also recall Israel's wandering in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights as told in Numbers 14:33-34. Indeed, Elijah compares his journey and fear with those of his ancestors in verse 4.

It is at his moment of greatest desperation, however, and also like that of the wandering Israelites in the wilderness, when God provides food and nourishment to him. In verses 6 and 7, an angel appears twice to Elijah, bringing food and comfort into his place of hiding, and encouraging him to move forward. Community members could be invited here to consider what policies our nation might offer, as well as what supplies and relationships of encouragement we may offer, to have a voice like the angel, to offer to those who are discouraged and deeply vulnerable in their journeys of loss. See the "Refugee Alert" provided through Refugees Welcome materials for policy support ideas—and ask refugees near your community what can best help fill their current needs. Is it assistance with a job? Hospitality kits for school, bath, bedding? Friendship, and listening? Neighborhood touring and introductions into your networks and community?

It may also be important to emphasize that it even took an angel more than once to get Elijah to dare to move beyond his discouragement and fear. Persons engaging with refugees are wise also to anticipate post-traumatic stress, and will be well served to be ready to commit to multiple, gradual, encouraging contacts in order to produce a lasting friendship. In verses 8 and 9, the text describes the ways that God's offering of hospitality to Elijah in his difficulties nevertheless helps to move him step-by-step; providing strength enough through the days to reach Horeb, the mount of God, and then there finding a cave, again finding temporary respite there. Faith communities who wish to connect with refugees may also consider some of the various steps of encouragement they may offer to assist refugees in moving along their pathway to eventual integration, and great leadership in their new homeland.

The final portion of today's text, in verses 15, helps to encourage Elijah, and instill his patience; as here is outlined the long term commitment of God to transform society and structures. Whereas the power of God had been demonstrated in the "god contest" of

chapter 18 in a very visible and dramatic way through the fire, verses 11-15 highlight God's sustaining efforts for healing and change in the world, which are sometimes far more quiet. God will next be calling upon Elijah (at the end of verse 15) to anoint Hazael as a new king over Aram. In verse 16, he'll be asked to appoint Jehu as king over Israel, and also Elisha as prophet to take over for him. Such changes ahead are daunting, overwhelming, and exhausting. Again, the wealth of changes in Elijah's life are comparable to the complete and consuming changes all refugees must face. Yet for Elijah, as for refugees—and indeed for us all—God will continue to work moment by moment, through political processes and personal relationships, and even with a small and sometimes silent voice, to change lives, and to change the world. Such a message leads us to pray with confidence for our God to continue to change the regimes, the international policies, the economic appetites, the extremism, the violence, and the quests for power that continue to produce refugees.

*Psalm 42 and 43, Galatians 3:23-29, and Luke 8:26-39 are also lectionary texts for the week. Psalm 42 may be quoted, as well, in expressing the types of pain experienced by refugees, and by Elijah, as well, as he flees to escape Jezebel's wrath.*

## Poem

Consider reading selections of Warsan Shire's powerful poem to build understanding of a refugee as someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

"Home"

no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you  
breath bloody in their throats  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body  
you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in your belly  
it's not something you ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt threats into  
your neck  
and even then you carried the anthem under

your breath  
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet  
sobbing as each mouthful of paper  
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land  
no one burns their palms  
under trains  
beneath carriages  
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck  
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled  
means something more than journey.  
no one crawls under fences  
no one wants to be beaten  
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps  
or strip searches where your  
body is left aching  
or prison,  
because prison is safer  
than a city of fire  
and one prison guard  
in the night  
is better than a truckload  
of men who look like your father  
no one could take it  
no one could stomach it  
no one skin would be tough enough

### **Message from the Pulpit/On The Bimah/In The Minbar**

Talking Points on Lectionary Text: 1 Samuel 1:4-20. The passage takes place in Shiloh, which was the center of the religious life of the people. Eli, the High Priest, resided there, and the Sanctuary of Shiloh became the place where Hannah came in the passage to pray, revealing the misery of her painful need for a son. Her prayer was to be ultimately heard by God, resulting in the birth of Samuel, and the revival of prophecy for the people through him. In this passage, our emphasis will be on Hannah, the characteristics of her plea, and the relationship of her seeking to the recognition sought currently by the world's refugees.

- **Hannah was suffering in deep pain.** Her causes for pain were multiple. As Hannah had been unable to conceive, her husband, Elkanah—though he was described as having loved her very much—nonetheless married another woman,

Peninnah. Peninnah produced the children he desired, yet left Hannah aching in her heart. Consequently, within the family, there was conflict. Rather than having compassion upon Hannah, Peninnah (perhaps especially because she perceived the great love of Elkanah for her), constantly persecuted and taunted her. Outside the family, Hannah likewise experienced criticism because of her perceived weakness of being unable to conceive and bear a child (especially a son) within a culture where that was valued so deeply.

As was true for Hannah, the pain of refugees is likewise from multiple sources. Especially within Syria, the conflict has been long term—as the war is now in the midst of its fifth year. The numbers of refugees that have been produced are unprecedented from a single region, and have exceeded 4 million. Additionally, 7 million more remain internally displaced in Syria—moved from their original homes, even if still within their homeland. To further exacerbate the misery of refugees, there is external and global lack of understanding of the complexities of the Syrian crisis. Syria's is not a sectarian crisis at its roots, but arose after pushbacks to peaceful revolts against the country's leadership in 2011.

The pain of refugees likewise results from personal criticisms, abuse, and policy pushbacks encountered as refugees move along their journeys from place to place and nation to nation. This past Fall's media carried evidence of these multiple forms of resistance. It's important to note that the processing is long-term, and security checks are multiple and rigorous-- making refugees the most heavily scrutinized of all populations who enter into the United States!

Some refugees entering into the United States now began their processing in 2009! Nevertheless, many politicians and members of our communities continue to misunderstand the high level of scrutiny already experienced by entering refugees; and so mistakenly feel afraid to receive refugees, who are seeking protection and safety.

- **Hannah was without power in multiple ways.** Just as Hannah's pain was generated through multiple sources, she likewise faced a host of challenges as one who was powerless on many fronts. She was a woman in a traditional patriarchal society. She had an inability to conceive, which likewise led to a recognition that she would be unable to produce a male son who could support her and her family in their life and in old saga. She had to "share" her husband with a second wife, who mistreated her.

Yet, as the passage unfolds, we see that Hannah used the strengths and creativity she had to find wise ways to seek a path to safety and new possibilities for her life. She employed her faith, her voice, and her consistent urging in order to ultimately be granted attention to her pleas.

Parallels with refugees cannot be missed; refugees, as well, demonstrate consistent creativity and resourcefulness. Although refugees have left their homes, the stories

of refugee experiences in their resettlement in the U.S. (see the stories provided in this resource) document how refugees have “found their way” over land, over seas, and beyond problems to ultimately resettle in our neighborhoods.

- **Hannah was perceptive, and knew a response from one in power was essential to improvement of her condition.** Hannah’s pain, by verse 8, had led her to despondency and depression. She was clearly at a point where her health was at risk, and where ongoing hopelessness was at her doorstep. However, the passage turns in verse 9 as Hannah determined to carry herself, though exhausted in body and soul, to present her needs. Verse 9 says, “Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord.” It is nearly unimaginable to consider the amount of courage needed to make such a presentation—yet she understood well that a response from one more powerful than herself was needed if her condition were to ever change.

Today, with more refugees than many decades around the world, we are in a moment where refugees likewise need responsiveness from our government, and from our communities, to help at least some of the millions to find a way out of despair. As constituents, we can make a difference now, as we encourage Congress to support additional refugee numbers and to offer additional financing to support them. We can gain courage from Hannah, who asked even at the point of her great exhaustion, for what was needed to change the condition of her misery.

- **Hannah’s faith was pervasive, persistent, and offered with a promise.** As Hannah put forward her asks, she did so in a style of passionate prayer, pouring out her soul to God—whose power was the greatest she knew she could approach. She cried while she prayed, she was praying silently (vs. 13)—but she also was fully active in offering ALL that she could, in order to seek God’s loving response. There are few more humble, yet determined, acts that we can read within the scriptures!! She was not seeking the pity of God, or of the priest Eli; rather, she was seeking to be HEARD. And, she clearly did not see herself as only a victim in her pain, but rather “arrived ready” to offer a lifetime of commitment from herself, as well as dedication of her future son, if she was to be granted the blessing of having one. Her promise was to dedicate him as a Nazirite, whose life would be fully focused upon living faithfully and gratefully to God.

Refugees who live in our communities now most often do so gratefully, and greatly enhance the abundance of our own communities. Refugees contribute by paying taxes immediately. They come “work eligible” with their refugee status—and many bring long-term skills from past careers that they are ready to invest here in their new home upon resettling! Most don’t even know that refugees also pay back every penny of the cost of their air flight tickets to come to the U.S. Will we help them to fulfill the promises their dangerous journeys have made them so determined to offer?

- **Hannah is ultimately paid attention to!** In the passage, we can praise God that—even though Eli first perceived that Hannah was only a drunken woman—she

ultimately convinces him of the sincerity of her request. He blesses her as she leaves, finally hearing her—yet knowing that it must be God’s power which grants her ask (vs. 17). When Hannah leaves the temple, her whole outlook had changed. Hannah’s deep love of God is to be commended, and is rewarded by God’s granting of a son to her.

Faith communities in recent months and years have expressed tremendous respect for refugees from multiple faiths; those who are Christian, but also others of multiple faiths who have suffered deeply. At this time, we are seeing constantly—and challenged to hear—the cries of suffering by Syrians and other refugees. Will we respond to the cries brought to our ears? Will we act like we hear them? There are concrete ways we can honor the suffering, and show that we have heard their needs, through our Refugees Welcome events and following actions—holding dinners with refugees (and perhaps with our local legislators, too!), calling to request additional support for entering refugees, and opening our arms to all who come locally.

### **Versus from the Quran**

God says that to be godly is to be compassionate. He makes His relationship or His Providence to the common man, conditional to common human compassion, by claiming that those, who wish to find Him, will succeed only if they are kind and compassionate to the common people:

- *"O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know and honor each other (not that you should despise one another). Indeed the most honorable of you in the sight of God is the most righteous." Chapter 49:13*
- *"And as for those who strive in Our path — We will surely guide them in Our ways. And Indeed, Allah is with those who are of service to others." Chapter 29:70*
- *"Those who believe and do good deeds — the Gracious God will create love in their hearts." Chapter 19:97*
- *"Thou hast indeed fulfilled the dream.' Thus indeed do We reward those who do good." Chapter 37:106*
- *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat; and those who fulfill their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing." Chapter 2:178*

For additional versus from the Quran, click here:

<http://themuslimtimes.info/2013/10/29/three-hundred-verses-about-compassionate-living-in-the-quran/>



## Sharing the Well

Dr. Sarah Syeed published his essay, “Helping Others in Islam,” in a larger compilation entitled, *Sharing the Well*, a resource guide on Jewish-Muslim engagement.

By time! Truly humanity is in a state of loss, except for those who have faith, do good deeds, and call one another to truth and to patience” (103:1–3). This verse from the Holy Qur’an illustrates that Muslims are responsible for demonstrating a combination of belief, action that helps others, and calling others to a better course. The pursuit of social welfare and social justice, as well as being responsible stewards of our earth and of God’s Creation are among the ways that Muslims can grow spiritually and prepare for their meeting with God after death. In the beginning of this surah (chapter), God swears by time, which also reinforces the idea of the ephemeral and the importance of working to fill time with righteous actions.

Clearly, the world around us needs fixing. Economic recession, environmental degradation, and a social fabric frayed by income inequality, violence, and social disconnectedness are just a few of the challenges facing humanity. Muslims believe that many of these problems are partly the result of humanity being in a “state of loss” (ibid.). The story of the creation of Adam (AS) reflects the tension inherent in being human: that we are created as caretakers of the world but we are also responsible for its problems.

Soumaya Khalifa also shared her essay, “Hospitality: Welcoming the Stranger in Islam”:

Numerous examples of hospitality and generosity are found in the beliefs and teachings of Islam’s primary sources, such as the Qur’an (the Muslim holy book) and the hadith (the tradition of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]), as demonstrated from the stories shared above. Muslims also try to learn from the ninety-nine attributes of God that are found in the Qur’an and make them part of their own character. Hospitality conjures one attribute of God in particular: the Generous (Al-Karim). Al-Karim has other meanings as well, including the Noble, Honorable, and Beautiful. God’s generosity is evident in all creation and all the favors that creation was endowed with. From providing sustenance to blessing everyone with His bounties, one often observes that it is all granted without regard to the recipients’ belief or lack thereof, or to the recipients’ thankfulness or lack thereof. God’s generosity covers everyone and everything in the universe, not just humans.

According to the tradition of the Prophet, “Smile is a Sadaqa.” A Muslim smiling at another person is considered a form of charity or a good deed for which he or she will be rewarded. This simple saying emphasizes the importance of being nice to people and of being hospitable in all circumstances. Hospitality is about human relationships. These relationships build families, communities, and countries. My mother-in-law always said that “a human being is just a remembrance. When one is long gone, people will remember only how he or she made them feel.”

To read *Sharing the Well* in its entirety, click here:

[http://www.isna.net/uploads/1/5/7/4/15744382/sharing\\_the\\_well\\_final.pdf](http://www.isna.net/uploads/1/5/7/4/15744382/sharing_the_well_final.pdf)

For additional resources on Islam and the Quran, click here:

[http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl\\_qura.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_qura.htm)

For educational resources on Islam and Muslims, read *My Neighbor is Muslim: Exploring the Muslim Faith*, available here: <http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>

For FAQs on Islam, check out the Islamic Networks Group (ING) resources page, here: <https://ing.org/top-100-frequently-asked-questions-about-muslims-and-their-faith/>

## Verses from the Torah

As the most repeated commandment in the Torah, we are inspired by the words “Love the stranger.” We are reminded of our history of being stranger and sojourners and compelled to take action to ensure that the “stranger who sojourns” is treated as the “native among us.”

- *“The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:34)*
- *“You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 23:9)*
- *“You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger; I the Eternal am your God.” (Leviticus 19:10)*
- *“God created the human beings in [the divine] image, creating [them] in the image of God, creating them male and female” (Genesis 1:27)*
- *“You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow’s garment as a pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.” (Deuteronomy 24: 17-18)*

## Stand with Refugees this Passover

HIAS, the world’s oldest, and only Jewish, refugee resettlement organization, helps refugees find ways to live in safety and with dignity as we also mobilize the Jewish community’s response to the global refugee crisis. We hope you will find inspiration in weaving the story of the Jewish people’s exodus from Egypt together with the stories of today’s refugees as we offer words of blessing and hope and commit ourselves to acting on behalf of refugees worldwide.

*To use at the beginning of the Maggid, the telling of the Passover story:*

The heart of the Passover Seder is the Maggid, meaning storytelling. Maggid comes from the same root as Haggadah, which means telling. The Maggid tells the story of the

Jewish people's exodus from slavery in Egypt. During the Maggid, we say the words, "אָבִי אַרְמִי אֶבְדָּ יִמְאָר" (Arami oved avi)." This phrase is sometimes translated as "My father was a wandering Aramean" and other times as "An Aramean sought to destroy my father." Somewhere between the two translations lies the essence of the Jewish experience: a rootless people who have fled persecution time and time again.



At this point in the Seder walk with your guests to your front door and place a pair of shoes on your doorstep and read together:

“As we recite the words ‘Arami oved avi,’ we acknowledge that we have stood in the shoes of the refugee. Today, as we celebrate our freedom, we commit ourselves to continuing to stand with contemporary refugees. In honor of this commitment, we place a pair of shoes on our doorstep of this home to acknowledge that none of us is free until all of us are free and to pledge to stand in support of welcoming those who do not yet have a place to call home.”

Invite family and friends to join you by placing a pair of shoes on their doorstep as well. Encourage them this Passover to support welcoming the world's refugees and stand up against the xenophobia and hatred being levied against these most vulnerable people. You might also direct them to the HIAS website for ways they can amplify their support.

To view HIAS' complete Seder supplement, visit: <http://www.hias.org/passover2016>.

Many synagogues and organizations are eager to learn about, support, and advocate for the protection of refugees.

- To learn more about how reform congregations can respond to the refugee crisis: <http://www.rac.org/sites/default/files/RAC%20HIAS%20Guide%20March%202016%20Final.pdf>
- Jewish-Muslim Dialogue Guide: <http://www.rac.org/children-abraham-guide-full-download>
- RAC Blog – Jewish Values and Refugees: <http://www.rac.org/blog/2016/02/02/parashat-mishpatim-welcoming-stranger>

## Appendix II: Sample Refugees Welcome Dinner Resources

We invite you to share the joy of offering hospitality by planning your own Refugees Welcome Dinner or other welcoming event! Here are resources to assist in planning:

- 1) Refugees Welcome “How You Can Join” 1 Pager (to help you build interest in your faith community or organization, to sponsor and register your Refugees Welcome dinner or other event)
- 2) Refugees Welcome Dinner Flyer Template (ready for you to input your own date, time, RSVP link, and sponsors)
- 3) Suggested Program Agenda for Your Refugees Welcome Dinner (for you to adjust as needed for your event)
- 4) Dignitary Invite Letter Template (to use in inviting public officials, faith leaders, and other special guests to your event)
- 5) Sample RSVP Format (with suggested questions which can be typed or pasted into your own google RSVP form, and directions on how to design one)
- 6) Sample RSVP Tracking Document (for keeping your event information organized as you prepare)
- 7) Confirmation Email to Guests Following RSVP (to use to confirm event details and donation information for event attendees who have registered to attend)
- 8) Refugees Welcome “Tent Table” Design (to be printed on paper or cardstock for table decorations at your event)
- 9) Refugees Welcome Dinner Sign-In Form (to be copied for your event greeting table, after inserting your own event location and date)
- 10) Arabic Welcome Greetings/Key Phrases and Welcome Song Handout (to provide each attendee at the event. If you have refugees from other cultural and linguistic groups, make your own, and share with us at [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com) for others to use!)
- 11) Refugees Welcome Event Planning Tips (with a list of best practices and pro-tips to hold your own event!)

*Questions?*

*Email Us: [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)*

*Visit: [www.refugeesarewelcome.org](http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org)*



# Refugees Welcome

how you can join

1. Plan a welcoming event
2. Send your event info to us
3. Share the love on social media using #RefugeesWelcome
4. Join us in advocating with refugees

Find resources and register your event at [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org) or email us at [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)

## PRAY

As people of faith, we are called to love our neighbor, welcome the stranger, and stand with the vulnerable. Let us work together with refugees and immigrants from many different lands to welcome them in.

---

## REFLECT

Can we, from our secure homes, begin to imagine how those forced to flee across borders to escape horrendous circumstances in their homes, feel? "Like a bird that is far from its nest, is one who is far from his home," is a melancholy refrain from Proverbs 27:8 that reverberates across the centuries.

We have been bombarded by the faces of desperate refugees in the news - can we open our arms wider to offer love and welcome to refugees? Can we greet them with Paul's words to the Ephesians in 2:19: "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but...fellow citizens with...members of the household of God"? In these welcoming events, may we seek to imagine ourselves in their shoes, their desperation mingled with hope. And, may we be resolved to take action and stand alongside them in solidarity.



## RefugeesWelcome Dinner Flyer Template

# *You Are Invited to a **Refugees Welcome Dinner***

*Thanks to our Event  
Sponsors:  
(List Sponsors Here)*

*When: **Date/Time***

*Where: **Location***

*What to bring: **1-2 POTLUCK dishes &  
family photos to share with refugees***

*Please **RSVP** by clicking on the link below:*

*(insert your link here)*

*Questions? Contact: (insert contact info)*



For more information about  
RefugeesWelcome, go to:  
refugeesarewelcome.org

Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT





(Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT)



## **SUGGESTED PROGRAM AGENDA for REFUGEES WELCOME DINNER**

*(Adapt as you wish to suit your own context and vision! Be sure to have adequate interpretation in needed language/s available throughout the event through emcee/s and for table conversations. Anticipate two to two-and-a-half hours for the suggested agenda below.)*

- ❖ Welcome of Refugees, Participants, and Introduction to RefugeesWelcome Campaign
- ❖ Opening Prayer/s by Area Interfaith Leaders
- ❖ Welcome Greetings to Refugees by Area Public Officials  
(i.e. Senators, Mayor, Representatives, Delegates, City Council, etc.)
- ❖ FOOD & Conversation at Tables about Pictures/Families (& activities for children)
- ❖ Teaching & Sharing of Refugee Language/s and English Greetings  
(have greetings available also in writing at tables)
- ❖ Singing of Refugee Language Welcome Song (as a group, if desired)
- ❖ Sharing of Refugee Stories/Hopes/Needs by refugee family representatives  
(after and/or before meal)
- ❖ Review of Refugee Needs & Advocacy Follow Ups
- ❖ Presentation of Gift Cards/Other Gifts to Refugee Families
- ❖ Closing Prayer by Interfaith Leader/s

*Please remember to share your photos and memories following your event at:  
[refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)*

*Questions about Refugees Welcome? Contact [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)*



(Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT)



Dear *(Dignitary Name and Title)*,

*(Date)*

We write to invite you to attend, and to offer a brief welcome, at a **Refugee Welcome Dinner to be held in *(location)* on *(date)*, at *(time)*. The event will be at *(location/address)***. The event is a local part of a national campaign through which faith communities around the United States will offer similar events, culminating especially around and following World Refugee Day on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

As our globe continues to struggle with the reality of multiple conflicts which have tragically produced more refugees than in any time since World War II, we are aware that our *(location)* area has become the new home to *(describe background of your intended refugee guests; i.e. Syrian, five Congolese, diverse, etc.)* refugee families who have resettled through approved agencies into our region in recent months. An interfaith team of planning partners, comprised of faith leaders, refugee service organizations, and civic groups *(add others, as necessary)* have worked in recent weeks to plan ways to strengthen personal relationships with these families, to learn further of their struggles and hopes, and to promote their integration by introducing them to foods, families, and friendships within our local faith communities.

At our event, it would be our great pleasure if you would accept our invitation to please be our special guest dignitary to offer a brief, two to three minute message of welcome to our local refugee guests now in our area. Your message of welcome would follow our time of opening prayer by local community leaders *(adapt this description to fit your desired agenda.)* After these moments of welcome, you are invited to remain among us for a potluck which will include *(add in types of cultural foods you may be planning, i.e. Syrian, Congolese, Burmese, Iraqi, etc.)* as well as American foods, and a program including refugee family stories, cultural learning, prayers and blessings, and conversations linking families at tables. We anticipate our event to conclude shortly after *(name time your program will conclude)*.

Thank you so sincerely for your willingness to consider our invitation, and we would be most honored if you are able to accept! Please, can you respond to us by no later than *(insert desired response date)*?

Again, we would be most blessed to have you among us, as we seek to strengthen the peace in our community, and to offer healing to refugees seeking to find hope and to contribute their gifts among us. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact: *(list your local planning contact and contact email and phone.)*

Sincerely,

*(List all partnering organizations on your planning team)*

Questions about Refugees Welcome? Go to: [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)



(Note: **Build your own RSVP form for your event as you prefer.** Below is a **sample** format of questions. To make a google form for your event, go to: <https://www.google.com/docs/about/>. Select the "forms" button along the top, then click on the "go to google forms" button in the middle of the screen, and then select "RSVP" below "start a new form" to type your own form. This will provide you with a unique form link upon completion, which can be pasted into your own event flyer to request responses. The one who creates the form will be able to click into the form through their Google drive, in order to track all registrations for your event! Questions? Email us at: [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com).)

## Sample RSVP Form for Refugees Welcome Dinner

Thanks so much for RSVPing to attend the upcoming Refugees Welcome Dinner, to be held on (insert date), at the time of (insert time.) Our event location is to be (insert location). As a reminder, you are invited to bring:

1) A potluck dish or two, and 2) Photos of your home and family to share in conversation at the dinner tables with refugee families

\* Required

1. Can your faith community participate? (Reminder: We hope for 3-10 from each group to attend, UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 100 total event attendees, including 25 or so guest refugees.) \*

Yes! We'll have 1 representative present

Yes! More than 1 member of our group will help welcome refugees at the dinner!

2. Please list below the names of those from your group who will be attending the Refugee Welcome Event:  
Your answer

3. What is the name and location of your church/faith community? (Please indicate name, city, and state.)

Your answer

4. Are any of your group's attendees children? If so, please indicate the ages (to assist with our activities planning).

Yes.

No.

If yes, are children ages 0-3?

If yes, are children ages 4-7?

If yes, are children ages 8-12?

If yes, are children teenagers?

5. Is your church, or are you, willing to contribute towards the food costs or gift cards for the event? If so, how much can you contribute? (An event planner will follow up with you regarding information about how you can donate.)

Your answer

6. Please write the name, email, and phone number of person completing this form, and others in your group if available.

Your answer

**SAMPLE RefugeesWelcome RSVP Form**

**SUBMIT**



(Location) REFUGEES WELCOME DINNER  
RSVPS  
(Date), 2016



Name/s	Faith Community/Org.	Email/Phone	Notes/Donations Promised	Donations Received?/Other



(Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT)

Greetings,

On behalf of our full team of partners, thank you so much for indicating interest to attend our Refugees Welcome Dinner (*insert date*).

As you remember, the event will begin at (*insert time*) at (*insert location and address*). We are most grateful to our site for hosting our collaborative “celebration of hospitality” as we welcome refugees who are newly arrived into the local area! ***Please remember to bring one or more potluck dishes (with no pork, gelatin, or alcohol) to share with our refugee friends, as well as photos of your family and home to share for table discussion.***

Also, some have asked how they may help to support the financial costs of our event, which include primarily the gift cards to be given to each refugee family, as well as to help cover the costs of cultural food from a local vendor for the event. (We are grateful that this food purchase, itself, will be a further way to support and celebrate local refugee cultures!) Please know that a donation is **not** a requirement to attend. However, I just wanted to share the information about the process for donations, since some have asked.

Donations may be made via check to: (*indicate your plan for receiving donations*). Please put: “Refugees Welcome Dinner” in the “for” line at the bottom of your check. A check may be given in person at the Welcome Dinner, or you may mail it to my attention at: (*insert address*). You will receive a notice of donation for your generosity from (*insert entity as appropriate*).

Thank you again, so much—and we look forward to building relationships with refugees and one another together soon.

Also, we still have some spaces available for attendance at the event, so please feel free to share the flyer above broadly with your friends and network, and encourage them to register using the link on the bottom of the flyer, or access it through the following site: (*insert your link to your RSVP form*).

Please do let me know if you have any additional questions I can answer.

Sincerely,

(*Sign by your event contact person.*)

For more "RefugeesWelcome" Information, go to [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)  
Questions? Contact [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)  
Tweet at: #RefugeesWelcome

 Welcome  
Refugees

Refugees  
 Welcome

For more "RefugeesWelcome" Information, go to [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)  
Questions? Contact [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)  
Tweet at: #RefugeesWelcome



**REFUGEES WELCOME DINNER SIGN IN**



**(Add your location and date here!)**

Name	Group	E-Mail	Phone

For more "Refugees Welcome" Information, go to [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org)  
Questions? Contact [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com)  
Tweet at: #RefugeesWelcome



Welcome!!

Ahlan wa Sahlan

Welcome to (insert state name)! Ahla wa Sahla fi (insert state name)!

A warm hello for the New Americans!

Ya Marhaba bi al Amreekan al Jiddad



Thanks

shukran

شكراً

Hello

marhaba

مرحبا

How are you?

kifal hal

كيف الحال

Goodbye

ma'assalama

مع السلامة

You're Welcome!

Afwan Marhaba - hello

**Ancient Arabic Welcome Song: Tala'al-Badru 'alayna**

**Tala'al-Badru 'alayna,  
min thaniyyatil-Wada'  
wajaba al-shukru 'alayna,  
ma da'a lillahi da'**



To "learn and practice" the first verse of the song, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5HiXM9JGJQ&feature=youtu.be> (Cat Stevens version). To see a children's choir sing the song to Syrian refugees arriving into Canada, go to: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/canadian-childrens-choir-arabic-song\\_us\\_566ed792e4b011b83a6bcd58](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/canadian-childrens-choir-arabic-song_us_566ed792e4b011b83a6bcd58)

*For more "RefugeesWelcome" information, go to [refugeesarewelcome.org](http://refugeesarewelcome.org). Questions? Contact: [info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com](mailto:info.refugeesarewelcome@gmail.com). Tweet at: #RefugeesWelcome*



## #RefugeesWelcome Event Planning Tips



- **Seek to “self-fund” the event thru donations of attendees.** Previous events with 150+ attendees have encouraged participants to bring potluck foods and provide drinks, and have budgeted to purchase cultural foods (about \$300), gift cards (of about \$100 per family of refugee guests), and space use (of \$100). Designate a partner to receive funds, and email registrants ahead of time to bring a donation, if they choose, to help cover costs. Extra funds raised can then be shared with refugees, or invested for future events!
- **Avoid food that is not allowed under some refugees’ religion.** In particular, be careful to avoid pork, any pork-based ingredients such as gelatin, or containing alcohol (for example, as with some vanilla) for Muslim guests. A full guide on halal food restrictions can be found at: <https://www.utoronto.ca/~facilities/documents/GuidetoHalalFoods.pdf>
- **Try to include food that comes from the different traditions of refugees who will be attending.** If your resources only allow for a potluck among the hosts, that’s fine, as this will help introduce new foods to refugee guests. But if possible, consider purchasing foods from a local refugee led business (they may offer a discount if you explain the purpose), or talk to resettlement and ethnic agencies to locate more refugee caterers for the event. This provides another way to build relationships with refugees, as well.
- **Be sensitive about taking photos.** Do not assume that everyone is comfortable having their photo taken, and only take pictures after asking for permission. Some recent refugees may be concerned that being identified here could impact family members still in their home country. Consider designating only one or two official photographers and share those photos with the group following your event. If you plan to use photos for publications or websites, make sure that you get photo releases signed – but also make sure everyone fully understands the release in their own language if it is only written in English. Check before the event about refugees’ comfort with any anticipated media presence.
- **Ask non-refugee participants to focus questions on interests and commonalities.** Too often, refugees who have been through trauma are asked to tell their story over and over. You want to create an enjoyable event where they feel welcomed as their whole selves, not one where they are expected to revisit difficult memories. It isn’t superficial to talk about food, sports, music, or even celebrities – those conversations create a shared space where our guests can feel normal and connected. Invite attendees to bring photos from their family and home, and encourage all participants to use these photos to share in conversation over dinner.
- **Plan opportunities for cultural learning and sharing between refugees and attendees.** Most important will be to highlight refugee voices to speak and share in whatever ways they feel comfortable during the event, as this provides public honoring of the stories refugees choose to share. If you can, share and teach expressions of key greetings, such as Welcome!, Hello!, What’s your name?, My name is \_\_\_\_, Thank you, Goodbye, and Welcome to \_\_\_\_ (name of state). Consider finding and learning a welcome song important to the culture/s of refugees honored in your event—and sing it as a group to the refugees. One example for Syrians is the ancient Arabic welcome song used as Prophet Mohammed was a refugee to Medina, called “Tala’al-Badru’alayna.”
- **Make your commitment to welcome visible throughout your event space.** Have messages of “Welcome” in native language/s of refugees, along with “RefugeesWelcome,” on tables, if possible. Consider handing out “RefugeesWelcome” stickers at the door and for take home (such as those inspired by refugees, thru <http://burlesquedesign.com/products/refugees-welcome-sticker-set>). Provide nametags, and gather sign-ins to stay in touch.
- **Provide action and advocacy ideas for follow ups.** Attendees will feel inspired for next steps following your event. Be ready to offer opportunities for ongoing relationships with and support for refugee family needs, and to promote positive public policies and perspectives about refugees.