



# How to Decide

## Refugees and Immigration

A Resource for Churches

**The decision process can take a lot of time if you have it—or less time. It depends on your situation.**

## Tips on Extending Hospitality to the Sojourner

Co-sponsorship with a Church World Service affiliate office is the preferred congregational response to refugee resettlement. Here's why.

- Members of your congregation will come to know the refugees, learn their stories, their losses, their hopes for their new life—and receive the gifts of the culture the refugees bring with them.
- Your youth and children's groups will learn from the refugees' experience.
- In the excitement generated in planning for the refugees' arrival, the congregation can come together in a new way.
- Your congregation will receive new friends.
- Everyone can be involved—including retirees and homebound persons.

## A Tight Plan—or a Leap of Faith. You Can Do It!

### Volunteer Resources

- One coordinator to maintain contact with affiliate
- Core of five or six volunteers to form a congregational committee
- Five or six additional volunteers to gather donations, prepare a home, organize visitations, and arrange transportation.

### Financial Resources

- Three months support—more or less, depending on when employment is secured.
- Assess funding needs with the help of the affiliate. (Housing and other costs vary across the country.)
- Review funding sources—from the church, possibility of a special appeal to the congregation and /or a fundraising event or of additional assistance from affiliate.
- Decide if you will use the cash assistance and food stamps for which the refugees are eligible after the first 30 days.

**If there are serious deficiencies in any of these areas, then discuss with the affiliate staff what contribution it is feasible for you to make.**

- Discuss possibility of enrollment in the Match grant program and how this might help. When sponsors record their contributions affiliate can match up to a certain level. Ask for details.

### Congregational Resources

- A positive, enthusiastic interest from the congregation to assure continuing support.
- Location of affordable housing. Family needs to be able to pay their own rent within a few months; location is ideally near enough to the church for members to visit. Be flexible about location and avoid making a down payment on housing until the family arrives.

If there are serious deficiencies in any of these areas, then discuss with the affiliate staff what contribution it is feasible for you to make.

### Or Take a Leap of Faith!

Congregations at times have responded to an urgent call from an affiliate office faced with an unexpected, imminent arrival of a refugee family. Though each affiliate office ensures that all necessary services are provided The congregation supplies the confidence that by the grace of God, they can pull everything together for a successful response. This may include

- Readiness of the pastor and Missions Committee to issue a positive, urgent, we-can-do-it call to the congregation to pitch in.
- Funds on hand or the ability to fundraise quickly for such expenses as rent and utilities after the first month
- A few key persons who will organize the response, from securing housing, furniture, and groceries plus other solutions to needs.
- Commitment to longer term planning for ongoing volunteer commitment in helping with medical appointments, school enrollment, ESL classes, and job possibilities.

Imagine the sense of accomplishment and joy if within a week or so of agreeing to help, your congregation has met the refugees at the airport, taken them to a completely furnished apartment, shown them how to use appliances (where needed), and made plans to visit them and work with the affiliate to ensure that all core services are met.

**Note:** There is usually a lead time of a few weeks before the refugees arrive—but this varies with different groups. Ask the affiliate the approximate length of time, and be ready to be flexible.