

***FIFTY YEARS OF REFUGEE FAMILY SPONSORSHIPS
AT NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY***

A SPONSOR'S GUIDE TO THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE



TOM CHARLES

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I. PREFACE

Tom Charles has put together an incredible amount of material in this guide that is intended to pass forward something of one congregation's lasting witness and commitment to welcoming the stranger and entertaining angels unaware (Hebrews 13:2) While we hope it will be helpful in sparking others in this ministry of the church of Jesus Christ, the breadth of information cannot begin to communicate the transformation and impact on peoples' lives.

More than fifty years ago Henry and Barbara Broad led a grassroots movement among lay people in the congregation to welcome its first refugee family. Now in 2017 we can look back on twelve families coming from eleven different countries and countless volunteers from several generations of the church's life. The ministry has continued due to the grace of God and the passion of faithful people. The work has always been informed by world events and crises. While the support of federal and state officials has disappeared these last few months, the encouragement, partnerships, and support of the Princeton community has been invaluable.

A few theological strands run through this rich tapestry of effort. Those affirmations provide encouragement and direction for Nassau Presbyterian efforts to this day. (1) Refugee resettlement ministry strikes to the very core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a unique opportunity for disciples to live the faith and act on their convictions. (2) This resettlement ministry at Nassau Church is wondrously led and carried out by lay people. It is a stunning picture of the priesthood of all believers. (3) The efforts of so many go toward the support of so few because we believe that Jesus offered his teaching and lived out his teaching one person, one face, one name at a time. So in our case, unapologetically, one family about every five years.

On behalf of the Session, the Deacons, the staff, and the congregation of Nassau Presbyterian Church we are so excited to share this manual and we offer it to God's glory and with deep gratitude for Tom Charles, Sue Jennings and Ann Youmans and the hundreds of faithful disciples who work with them in the service of welcoming strangers and entertaining angels.

David A. Davis
Pastor
February 2017

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III. INTRODUCTION

The NPR stories in the fall of 2016 about the Syrian Muslim refugee family being sponsored by Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey, prompted a flood of requests to the church office for advice on how to become a refugee sponsor. With apologies to all those congregations making those requests; we are only now responding with this guide to the resettlement process, intended to encourage and support new sponsorships by faith communities across the country.

The benefit of this delay is that we are now able to address the new reality, a moratorium on new refugee entries, a reduction in the admission quota for the year, and a ban on Syrian entries, all representing a frontal attack on a venerable program once widely supported by the political establishments.

Even with the dramatic reduction in the numerical resettlement goals for the current fiscal year, the need for refugee sponsors has never been greater due to (1) the growing financial constraints on the national referral agencies, (2) the need to share by example the refugee story with doubting communities around the country, and (3) the ever present need to welcome the “stranger” in a turbulent world.

Our intent in sharing our resettlement experiences and lessons is to enable and embolden other religious groups to take on this challenging but rewarding work. There is no better way to respond to the current questioning of our national and religious values and, at the same time, to energize our congregations than by doing this good work.

So, if you have sponsored a refugee family in the past, we’d encourage you to do so again... and to share with us your comments, suggestions and experiences relating to this guide.

And, if you have not sponsored a refugee family in the past, please consider doing so... and let us know if we can be of any help in moving through your decision-making process.

Tom Charles
Co-Chair of the Refugee Resettlement Committee
Nassau Presbyterian Church - Princeton, New Jersey

Note: The commentary and recommendations in this guide represent the personal opinions of the author and have not been reviewed nor approved by the Session of Nassau Presbyterian Church. They also are not intended to be authoritative legal interpretations; proper legal counsel should be consulted concerning all related matters.

IV. BACKGROUND

- A. “Becoming Local” – Associate Pastor Cynthia Jarvis – NPC Newsletter – April 28, 1994
- B. “Kindness of Strangers...” – Tim Irwin – UNHCR – March 18, 2008
- C. Letter to the Editor – Pastor Dave Davis – December 4, 2015
- D. “Living Out the Christian Faith” – Pastor Dave Davis – January 14, 2016

BECOMING LOCAL

Wallace [Alston] often quotes G.K. Chesterton in saying, “Nothing becomes real until it is local.” In that sense, it would seem like the elections in South Africa, the carnage in Rwanda and the insanity in Bosnia are destined to be forever unreal to us. Some may be glad to keep it that way! Yet, in the incredible providence of God, in God’s providing for the integrity of our lives and the dignity of others’ lives, we have been given a chance to make Bosnia “real” by bringing into our community an incredible family whose lives would otherwise be in terrifying danger.

“Mr. and Mrs. Kopanja are considered neither fish nor fowl in this conflict,” began the letter from Lutheran Community Services of New Jersey ... “as he is a Christian and she a Muslim. They are not acceptable to either side involved in this war and in consequence would be in great peril regardless of the outcome of the conflict.”

To say a bit more (which is all we know), Mrs. Kopanja is a dentist, Mr. Kopanja an economist and they have two daughters, ages 6 and 10. They will arrive in the next few weeks and need simply everything, for they come with barely the clothes on their backs. Clearly, we were not ready, but as Tom Charles and your editor talked, there was no question these people were a gift of God to us! We had to say “Yes” and to say so with great excitement and anticipation.

...

We have been beside ourselves since Tom Charles called the office with the sheepish but assured suggestion from Lutheran Community Service that we move our timetable up! Please consider what part you can play in welcoming the Kopanjas as they incarnate in our midst the plight of hundreds of thousands of their people in a place which has only been headlines and now is about to become local. Thanks be to God!

Associate Pastor Cynthia Jarvis
Newsletter - Nassau Presbyterian Church
April 28, 1994

Kindness of strangers eases refugees' arrival in United States

Tim Irwin – UNHCR News Stories – March 18, 2008

The schedule for the week ahead runs to five pages, with each day broken down into near hourly tasks assigned to different volunteers. At the dining room table in a house in Princeton, New Jersey, the creator of this plan of action runs through each item with the couple at the centre of the activity.

Za Bik Thang, his wife Par Tha, and their three children arrived in Princeton in mid-2007 from Malaysia, where they had lived as refugees for several years after fleeing persecution in their native Myanmar. Tom Charles and other members of the Nassau Presbyterian Church were on hand to meet the family when they arrived in the United States and have been providing support ever since.

"We were a little scared of coming to the US," recalls Za Bik from the family's rented home, which was arranged for them by the Nassau congregation. A pending move to an apartment in an affordable housing complex closer to downtown will reduce the couple's commute to their jobs.

For now, Charles continues in his role as traffic controller, ensuring the smooth movement of the five Thang family members to and from school, work, English lessons, choir practice, dental appointments, chess club meetings and church services.

"We have around one hundred volunteers from our church working in refugee resettlement," says Charles. "A core group of between 15 and 20 are involved in the day-to-day assistance, so the errands are spread around. Morning pick ups to get Za Bik to work are done by the early risers, while getting the kids home from school is done by people who have the afternoons free."

The Thangs are the eighth family the Nassau congregation has sponsored as part of a programme that goes back nearly 25 years. Among those assisting the family are individuals who a few years ago were on the receiving end of the community's efforts. Dental care is provided by a former refugee from Bosnia; the pool of drivers includes a Sudanese refugee who arrived in Princeton several years ago.

The church is one of many religious groups in the north-eastern state of New Jersey involved in refugee resettlement. Referrals come from agencies such as Lutheran Social Ministries, based in the New Jersey capital, Trenton.

The director of its immigration and refugee programme, Rev. Stacy Martin, says voluntary groups can provide a level of attention which surpasses what agencies dealing with hundreds of cases a year can offer. "The sponsors and the refugee families can create genuine relationships that go well beyond the 12 to 18 months we would typically be in contact with a family," she says.

Resettlement in the United States is largely handled by faith-based organizations, which turn to their communities for volunteers when additional assistance is needed. According to a US

Department of Labour survey published in 2007, more than one quarter of the population – around 60 million people – had volunteered for an organization in the previous 12 months.

"Volunteers offer a distinctly personal touch that builds on the support offered by local resettlement affiliates," says Ralston H. Deffenbaugh Jr., president of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, a national resettlement agency.

Even with assistance, establishing new lives in a foreign country is not without challenges. Unable to speak English, the Thang children initially found the classroom a frightening and lonely place. Everyday costs such as rent, groceries and visits to the doctor can seem overwhelming. Here, too, the Nassau congregation has stepped in, helping Za Bik to land a job at a supermarket chain while Par Tha does alterations at an exclusive menswear store.

The couple have also been given financial planning advice. "When we first arrived we couldn't do anything for ourselves. Today we can live our lives, though we still rely on rides," says Za Bik, who has begun the process of getting a driver's license.

For the Nassau congregation a commitment that began nearly 12 months ago is nearing its end, and it is apparent that not just the Thangs have benefitted. For Charles, working with resettled refugees "has been one of the great joys of my life." Former strangers are now friends, foreign cultures are understood and accepted and the often abstract concept of helping those less fortunate has taken the tangible form of an embrace.

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Rev. Dr. David A. Davis, Pastor

December 4, 2015

Nassau Presbyterian Church has been resettling refugees in the Princeton community for over fifty years. Families have arrived in our community from Cuba (1964), Cambodia (1980), Vietnam (1984), Hungary (1989), Bosnia (1994, 1999), Sudan (2003), Burma (2006), and Iraq (2010).

The effort has involved serving one family at a time, providing support of all kinds, offering a brief stay in a church member's home, building relationships, and celebrating the launch toward independence. We have witnessed family members in various careers: restaurant management, computer networking, dentistry, tailoring, library science, teaching and more. Several families have joined in our effort to support subsequent families resettling.

Together with Princeton Theological Seminary, our congregation is working with Church World Service to receive a Syrian refugee family soon after the first of the year. We look forward to the next chapter of what has become an essential part of one congregation's attempt to live out our faith, honor our heritage, and give glory to God.

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Living Out the Christian Faith

Reverend Dr. David A. Davis – Princeton Theological Seminary website – January 14, 2016

In response to the Syrian refugee crisis that has overwhelmed Europe in the fall of 2015 and the disturbing politicized fear-filled rhetoric of the public square in the United States, Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey, has joined forces with Princeton Theological Seminary and community partners to receive a Syrian family in 2016.

Nassau Presbyterian Church has been resettling refugees for more than fifty years. Families have arrived from Cuba (1964), Cambodia (1980), Vietnam (1984), Hungary (1989), Bosnia (1994, 1999), Sudan (2003), Burma (2006), and Iraq (2010). In each generation the ministry has been led, driven, and carried out by lay people rather than church staff.

To ensure that our resettlement efforts are successful, we provide support like inviting refugees to stay in a church member's home, and helping them build relationships and a support network.

We've joined forces with local organizations like the Jewish Center of Princeton. Individuals from outside the congregation have assisted with language education, local businesses have provided employment opportunities, Princeton Theological Seminary has provided temporary housing, and a local nonprofit organization has provided permanent housing.

The refugees' stories about being picked up at the airport, receiving a driver's license, or celebrating a child getting into college continue to inspire our efforts. We have celebrated refugees who went on to have careers in restaurant management, computer networking, dentistry, tailoring, library science, and teaching. Several local families have even joined our efforts to support families who were resettling.

Of course, Nassau Presbyterian Church is not alone in resettling refugees. The great cloud of witnesses includes many pastors and congregations who discovered that refugee resettlement ministry brings a community close to the heart of the gospel. By welcoming strangers (Matthew 25) and entertaining angels unawares (Hebrews 13), countless numbers have found themselves in the transforming presence of Christ himself. As the community of faith travels the road together, some might remember a sermon, a worship service, or a youth trip, but few will ever forget a few years spent with family from a far off land.

We look forward to the next chapter of what has become an essential part of a congregation and a community living out faith, honor, heritage, and giving glory to God.

V. GETTING STARTED... THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

A. THE DECISION TO SPONSOR A REFUGEE FAMILY

The decision to sponsor a refugee family is a significant one, both in terms of the responsibility and work involved on the part of the sponsor as well as the personal and congregational rewards that can result from this commitment.

On a personal level, this experience can be both intense and fulfilling as the relationship with a refugee family is a very personal and ongoing one. For many of us, this work of welcoming the “stranger” brings us as close to fulfilling our Christian identity as anything that we do.

Ironically, refugee resettlement work can also be seen as a very authentic American activity, honoring the history and values of the country. Welcoming and working with a refugee family is one of the most patriotic endeavors I can imagine.

For our children, this relationship can be life changing as well, especially when a refugee family lives in one of our homes for several weeks prior to the availability of permanent housing. It’s no coincidence that my daughter, Marisa, now lives and works in Yangon, Burma, after a refugee family from that country lived with us (and prepared meals for us!) after their arrival in the United States.

For the congregation at Nassau Presbyterian Church, the sponsorship process represents one of the most active and sustained mission initiatives that we engage in, bringing us closer to the challenging ideal of a “missional” church. Also, by sponsoring a Syrian Muslim family and working closely with a local mosque (the Islamic Society of Central Jersey) throughout the resettlement process, our interfaith relationships have been dramatically expanded and nurtured.

But, then again, it’s not about us... it’s about them.

In our experience, refugees have been committed, courageous, appreciative, and very hard working people... they are the ones who have been brave enough to leave behind family and friends to find a better life... they live for their children... they are the salt of the earth. Based on these experiences and the extensive vetting process that refugees must go through, we have had no hesitation in again sponsoring a refugee family, even one from Syria.

Refugees who are formally approved and resettled under the UNHCR process are the fortunate ones... less than 1% of all refugees (people who have left their origin countries under duress) are formally resettled. The others return home, are assimilated into communities in adjoining countries, or languish in refugee camps, sometimes for decades or more.

Those refugees who have an independent sponsor when they arrive in the United States are even more fortunate as they represent, I believe, less than 20% of all refugees coming to our shores... the balance (+80%) are resettled directly by one of the nine referral agencies that receive case assignments from the U.S. Department of State. Such direct resettlements typically involve the referral agency finding an apartment and a job for the refugee and providing limited, short term

financial support. This usually means that a refugee family is on its own after three months when the referral agency necessarily moves on to their more recently arriving cases.

For all these reasons and especially in these times, the need for refugee sponsors is critical.

The opportunity to live out your faith and to provide a positive, faith-based counter-narrative to the current political opposition to refugees is before you... please find it within your heart and soul to sponsor a refugee family!

B. PLANNING

1. The most important things to plan for.

The three most important things to arrange in advance of a refugee's arrival are (1) a place to stay, (2) adequate financial resources, and (3) an organized and coordinated committee structure to manage the process.

2. Finding a residence.

Finding a residence is the most pivotal step in proceeding with a sponsorship.

Ideally, you will find, at minimum, temporary housing via a member of the congregation, a local educational institution or a social service agency.

A very short-term alternative that we have used in the past is to have a congregation member host the family in their home. Although not allowed by all referral agencies, this option does provide the host with an enhanced opportunity to become acquainted with the family and to encourage conversation. In the two cases when my wife and I hosted a refugee family in our home, they both offered to do whatever they could to help out around the house... and they both ended up preparing our meals for several weeks! In both cases, the experience was a very positive one and had a providential impact on my wife and my children.

Proximity to shops and public transportation is an issue when deciding on a residence but more so when looking for permanent housing. When living in temporary housing after arrival, the family will typically not have a licensed driver and will need transportation assistance from the sponsor.

3. How much money do you need to resettle a family?

Not including the cost of housing, we try to have \$10,000 in our refugee fund prior to each sponsorship and we accumulate these funds via \$2,000 set-asides from our church's annual operating budget, hence the typical five-year interval between our sponsorships. Major expenditures include household preparation, initial food purchases, driving instruction, and car insurance. If the family is able to find work quickly, then ongoing expenses paid by the congregation may be limited. If the family is not able to find work and must apply for public assistance, plan on the application process taking up to 3 months before benefits are received.

4. Organizing and coordinating our time and talent.

A proper organizational structure with an appropriate delegation of tasks is crucial to a successful sponsorship and can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

With our extensive experience over the years, we have volunteers who have done this work before and can operate quite independently in their respective areas of responsibility. Hence, we operate rather informally with a single informal committee meeting each week (usually between church services on Sunday) and with most communication by email and, to a lesser degree, by phone. Responsibilities among our four main coordinators have evolved to include (1) referral agency contacts / finance / public assistance and health insurance / scheduling / publicity, (2) regular family contacts / school / after-school homework programs / recreational opportunities / family support assistance, (3) medical / dental / disability support programs, and (4) English as a Second Language training.

Alternatively, for sponsors managing their first case, a more formal structure may be appropriate with more regular meetings and fuller discussions of the issues being dealt with. The dilemma here is how to accomplish the work that needs to be done directly with the family in addition to frequent and long meetings. Also, it's a lot to expect that the multitude of decisions that have to be made can all be made in a committee setting... we've had the benefit of working together before so that our level of trust allows a less formal and, hopefully, more efficient process.

Priority setting is an important part of coordinating the required activities and requires a firm but consultative hand in its application. An "Activity Priority List" (VI. Organizational Material – A) from early in our most recent resettlement process is enclosed.

Another recommendation is that the long list of necessary activities (VI. Organizational Material - B) be broadly delegated to different volunteers with the proviso that the individual's skill sets match with the task. Having a large number of people involved can complicate the process but, assuming people are conscientious and complete the tasks in a timely manner, this can be a fruitful collaborative effort.

Also, having different personality types among your senior volunteers is a positive as the volunteers can play different roles with the family, for example, one providing unconditional support and another being more direct and constructive, especially when hard decisions have to be made.

In terms of volunteer vetting, our church has a formal Child, Youth, Volunteer and Staff Protection Policy which we apply to both church member and non-member refugee volunteers, especially those that will be working with the refugee children as tutors and drivers.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges in working with volunteers is in managing and, hopefully, meeting their expectations. You ideally will have more volunteers than you need and it can be difficult to find something for everyone to do. At some point, you'll need to begin saying, as gracefully as possible, "thank you for your interest but there are no unmet needs at this time."

5. Partnerships.

Partnerships between the sponsor and other organizations can be vital to a successful resettlement effort. In our most recent case, a partnership with the Princeton Theological Seminary provided a seminary residence for the use of the family during their first year. We have also worked collaboratively with the Islamic Society of Central Jersey with volunteers from the mosque providing shopping assistance, companionship, translation services, rides for the husband to Friday Prayer, and instruction for the children in an Islamic and Arabic Studies program at the mosque on Saturday afternoons.

6. Translators.

With our current family speaking very little English upon their arrival, we have had to depend on translators for all substantive conversations during the first nine months. ESL lessons have been helpful in improving their conversational ability, especially for the wife, but even now a translator is required for serious and detailed discussions.

Although we have a list of almost fifty Arabic speakers in the Princeton area, we have quickly learned that simply knowing the language does not equate to being a proficient translator. For important conversations we try to use someone who can translate with accuracy, insight, and sensitivity, who does not interject their opinions into the conversation, and who can follow up a discussion with further color and suggestions made privately to the sponsor. So, out of the fifty translators who have volunteered to help, we have found approximately 20% of that number can do the full job that we are looking for. Many more, of course, are wonderfully helpful in informal, social situations and we appreciate their contributions as well.

7. Finding a referral agency.

In order to sponsor a refugee family, a sponsor typically needs to work with an in-state affiliate office of one of the nine national refugee *referral agencies* that are approved by the U.S. Department of State and from whom they receive cases. These nine national agencies include Church World Service (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and the World Relief Corporation (WR).

A list of affiliate offices compiled by the Refugee Processing Center on a state-by-state basis can be found at www.wrapsnet.org/rp-agency-contacts. These are the offices within your respective states that you need to contact about a refugee family sponsorship.

In the case of New Jersey, there are four affiliate agency offices on the list, including CWS in Jersey City, IRC in Elizabeth, an *affiliate* of HIAS in East Orange, and an affiliate of USCCB in Camden.

We had previously received cases from the LIRS office in Trenton but, when that office closed, we were told by the U.S. Department of State that we could not work with the LIRS office in

Philadelphia due to the rule that a sponsor can only receive a case from a referral office located within the same state. We, fortunately, were then able to connect with a new but very efficient Church World Service office in Jersey City. This office was also the first that we have dealt with that required a much recommended vetting process for the sponsor, including background checks on myself and another program coordinator.

A possible alternative source for refugee family referrals are *state-based organizations* that distribute cases to sponsors after receiving them from one of the nine main referral agencies. Two examples of such organizations are Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS) in Connecticut and the more recently opened Refugee Immigrant Services and Empowerment (Interfaith-RISE) in New Jersey.

Note that the terminology relating to these different types of resettlement organizations varies widely; the definitions used here are (1) “referral agency” (one of the nine national groups approved by the U.S. Department of State, (2) “affiliates” of a referral agency (which operate on behalf of the referral agency on a state level), and (3) “state-based organizations” (defined in the paragraph above). The term “sponsor” applies to an organization, such as Nassau Presbyterian Church, that has direct, long-term resettlement responsibility for a specific family.

Working with any organization that refers a refugee family to a sponsor necessitates a discussion about the respective responsibilities of both parties. In our case, we have always taken on the full responsibility of the resettlement process with the referring organization simply monitoring our activities via the required home visits and periodic reporting by phone or email.

8. Publicity.

For more than fifty years, Nassau Presbyterian Church has done this resettlement work without publicity, except for an occasional local newspaper story about some of the families. This all changed with our recent sponsorship of a Syrian Muslim family when the Syrian tragedy caught the attention of the country and Deborah Amos of NPR heard about our family.

Ms. Amos, who was teaching at Princeton University as a visiting scholar, was prompted to ask about our work by a banner posted outside our church that read, “Refugees are welcome here.”

From this introduction came a series of NPR radio reports and accompanying articles now posted on the NPR website (XIII. Articles – A/B) that shared the family’s story with a wide and receptive audience. And from those reports and articles came an avalanche of inquiries to our church office, offering support, donating funds, and requesting advice... the latter of which have prompted the writing of this sponsorship guide.

This reporting inquiry also forced us to think about how to manage the media process, most importantly with the involvement and approval of the family. In this context, the related questions that we asked the family and their responses (VI. Organizational Material – D) established the manner in which their story was reported.

And, to her eternal credit, Deborah Amos told the family’s story with respect, insight and great sensitivity.

9. From support to independence.

The goal, of course, in refugee resettlement work is to support the family until they can become functionally and financially independent. This progression from support to independence does not just happen at one point in time but needs to be a series of many small steps. These steps can begin early in the process when the sponsor hopefully provides a framework in which the refugee can make informed decisions on how to proceed. Other examples of important steps include enabling the refugee to pay their own bills, write their own checks, visit their children's school teachers on their own, and drive their own vehicle. In our most recent case, even the decision by the parents concerning what types of Halloween costumes the children could wear was an important one. I mention this topic here in the Planning section because it is an important topic to discuss with volunteers even before the arrival of the family.

C. THE MONTH BEFORE ARRIVAL

1. Residence confirmation.

Confirming the availability of the projected residence and, if necessary, paying a security deposit should be completed at least two weeks prior to the refugee family's arrival date... err on the side of earlier rather than later on this. Also, if you're planning on having the family pay the utility bills themselves, make sure you get the lease prepared in the refugees' name and signed by them as you'll need that document to set up the utility accounts.

2. Utilities set up.

If you're setting up the household prior to the family's arrival, you will most likely have to set up the utility accounts in the name of the sponsor or a volunteer. Once the family arrives and has some financial resources, you'll need to transfer the accounts over to the refugee. This is important both to move them toward independence and to begin establishing their credit history.

3. Telephone arrangements.

First priority here is to install a land line or purchase a cell phone so that the refugee has a phone available to them immediately upon their arrival. We're partial to the Great Call flip cell phone advertised by AARP... this phone can be purchased at most local pharmacies for about \$80, has a monthly service fee of approximately \$30, and does not require an extended term contract. Be sure to double check the reception of the phone at the residence location as well as the 911 functionality.

If you subsequently want to upgrade or augment this service, you can purchase a "smart" phone for the family and have it added to an existing account of a willing volunteer in order to keep the cost down, at least initially.

4. Soliciting furniture donations.

The collection of pre-owned furniture for a refugee residence is best done on a targeted basis, i.e. getting as much as you can from just a few donors. This makes the contact and collection logistics a lot easier. The moving of furniture is also a great way to involve high school youth in the resettlement process.

5. Employment alternatives.

It's never too early to explore employment alternatives for the refugees, especially if you have some specific information about their vocational backgrounds. It's also helpful to consider "stepping stone" jobs, an initial one not requiring English fluency with a subsequent move to a more vocationally-related job at a later time.

6. Medical and dental service provider arrangements.

It's helpful to identify both doctors and dentists who are willing to assist the family prior to arrival so they can provide immediate care if needed. By definition, this means that care will be offered on a pro bono basis, at least until insurance is arranged (assuming that the provider accepts that insurance).

In our current case, medical care is provided through a local clinic (and covered by a state-provided healthcare plan). Dental care is provided, in turn, by three different dentists, one (who accepts their insurance plan) for the adults and two (both on a pro bono basis) for the children. In a remarkable example of paying it forward, the dentist for the adults is also a former refugee sponsored herself by our church and who has treated all our subsequent refugees whether or not they have had insurance.

7. Cultural study.

It's really important that all volunteers have a sense of the cultural uniqueness of the refugee family before their arrival. Volunteers need to be able to anticipate all types of situations and know how to react to them. The difficult task is to respect the new arrivals' cultural traditions while introducing them to our practices.

More information about the cultural background of Syrian refugees can be found in a remarkable report, "Refugees from Syria – November 2014," by the Cultural Orientation Resource Center at www.culturalorientation.net/library/publications.

8. What will you know about the refugee family before their arrival?

Relatively little... typically only family makeup and dates of birth, educational and vocational backgrounds, and English language skill abilities (the latter of which sometimes can be inaccurate as we have been told that it is self-determined rather than evaluated by the interviewer).

This information is reported via a *refugee profile* (VI. Organizational Material – E) prepared by the U.S. Department of State and appears to be the same document that we have seen with each

refugee family over the past 25 years. It is quite surprising to us that this document and the pre-arrival information sharing process have not been improved and expanded over the years. For example, it would seem appropriate that a sponsor might be given a photograph of the soon arriving family (and vice versa), simply for arrival identification purposes. It is also surprising that more information is not being shared with potential sponsors even as the refugee vetting process has become much more comprehensive over the last several years with the inclusion of reviews by multiple national security agencies.

One would also hope that the refugee profile would be shared with a potential sponsor prior to the sponsor's commitment to take on the family but we've sometimes been told that the document cannot be shared for "legal privacy" reasons. In this case, a referral agency should at least be verbally sharing with the sponsor all relevant information so that the sponsor can make an informed decision about the resources that will be needed.

In the case of our most recent family, we were told prior to our commitment that the head of the family was blind, injured in a mortar attack on a civilian area in Damascus. We were then able to consider the resources available to us before committing.

The sponsor should always be assured that it is their decision whether or not they take a specific refugee family and the referral agency should be compliant with this process. A sponsor should always be able to say "no" if the circumstances and their resources do not match up.

D. THE WEEK BEFORE ARRIVAL

1. Preparing a household.

Moving in furniture, buying household goods, making sure all systems are in working order, writing out instructions for appliances, making sure the telephone works (including the 911 functionality), posting emergency contact telephone numbers, verifying smoke and carbon monoxide alarm operation, sharing the family's name with a welcoming neighbor.

Our goal is to provide a household environment that the family will find comfortable and will be able to maintain on their own.

2. Stocking the shelves.

Appropriate food stuffs... ethnic needs should be recognized. Again, not too much... you want them to go shopping within the first week or so.

3. Planning for their arrival.

This is the time to confirm all greeters, drivers, translators, and residence hosts.

E. THE DAY OF ARRIVAL

1. Meeting the refugee family at the airport.

As the refugee has typically just experienced a long and nerve-wracking trip, we have always just had a small group meet the arriving refugees... including no more than four sponsor representatives (including translators) and two vehicles, assuming that provides enough room for all members of a refugee family and their luggage. Ideally, there will be one translator for each vehicle containing a refugee so that a conversation on the ride home can take place.

2. What will the refugee know about a sponsor before arrival?

In our experience, the refugee will know nothing about the sponsorship group and may not even know the identity of the referral agency which has been assigned their case. Theoretically, the refugee will be assisted at the airport by a representative from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) but this has happened with us only in the case of our most recent arrival.

Although perhaps administratively challenging, it would be helpful for the sponsor and family to be introduced via email, written communication, or electronic media prior to their arrival.

3. How much luggage will an arriving refugee family be bringing with them?

In most cases, a refugee will have limited baggage (perhaps one large suitcase per person). But, in cases where a refugee family is coming from a refugee camp where they have been for some extended period of time, they may have a larger quantity... so it is better to plan for a larger number. Paradoxically, our most recent family brought several suitcases full of food!

4. What documents will the refugee family be bringing with them?

The most important document that a refugee should have when they arrive is a “*Document ID*” form provided by “The Transportation Company and Transportation Security Administration” and printed on a “United States Department of State” letterhead. This document includes a photograph and personal information about each person in the nuclear family who are arriving at the same time. It is important that this document be secured and copied by a sponsorship representative as soon as possible in the event of the subsequent loss of the original. Note that this document is should be stamped at the bottom and has an expiration date of one year following the date of issue.

Another document each refugee may have in their possession when they arrive is *an identification document issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross – Geneva (ICRC)* which includes a photograph and personal information. The purpose of this document is to “enable [the individual] to justify his presence at his present place of residence and to facilitate his immediate or subsequent return to his country of origin, or his emigration.” Thus, the document is no longer valid upon the refugee’s arrival in the United States but the document can be helpful in some situations as a second form of photo ID. This document also requests that it be returned immediately to the ICRC upon the refugee’s arrival in the United States... in the case

of our current refugee family, we have not done so and have received no follow up request or reprimand.

Prior to April 26, 2013, the most important document the refugee would have been given was the *I-94 Admission Record* form for each individual. Subsequent to that date, a refugee coming to the United States “is no longer required to be in possession of a preprinted Form I-94.” Now, however, that document must be downloaded as soon as possible following arrival (see the “Sourcing the I-94 Admission Record document” paragraph below in the “The Week after Arrival” section – G/1).

5. Bringing the family to their residence for the first time.

After welcoming the family to their new home, providing a tour of the property, explaining the operational procedures of the most important appliances, providing contact telephone numbers (including a neighbor’s and 911), and assuring that the family has been well fed and is aware of the food already stored in the residence, our practice has always been to say a quick good-bye and to plan for a follow up visit the next day. In the event that extended family members are among the welcoming party, our early departure also allows for a more intimate family reunion.

F. THE DAY AFTER ARRIVAL

1. Meeting with the family the day after their arrival.

The meeting on the day following the family’s arrival should be a relaxed conversation focused on answering any questions the family may have. We recommend that the sponsor be represented by no more than three individuals, not including a translator.

2. Language, vocational, health, and financial observations.

This first day should also be used to begin noting observations about the refugees’ language capabilities, their vocational prospects, their health status (including inoculations, dental, and mental health), and their financial status. These observations should be shared and discussed among the sponsorship committee as related decisions about each issue will need to be made within the first week or so.

3. The 2nd day visit by the referral agency.

A referral agency is required to perform certain activities under its contract with the U.S Department of State, two of which are the 2nd day and 30th day visits with the family. Depending on the referral agency and the experience of the agency representative, these visits can take a variety of forms and have a varying degree of effectiveness. We recommend that you speak with the agency representative prior to the meeting to clarify the respective roles of the sponsor and the referral agency and to prepare properly for this visit.

Documents that are typically reviewed and executed at this meeting by the refugee include a *Client Rights and Grievance Policy* document and a *Media Release* form. Documents completed and executed by the sponsor at this meeting (if not done previously) may include the *Co-Sponsor Commitment* form (VI. Organizational Material – F), a *Home Evaluation and Safety Checklist* (VI. Organizational Material – G), and a *Home Supply List* (VI. Organizational Material – H).

G. THE WEEK AFTER ARRIVAL

1. Sourcing the I-94 Admission Record document.

As noted above, the *I-94 Admission Record* document for each member of the family must now be downloaded from a dedicated U.S. government website at <http://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>. This is the most important document for an individual refugee as it is required for the issuance of a Social Security card, assures eligibility for public assistance, and allows for immediate employment.

2. Finding additional ID documents.

All ID documents brought by the refugee family should be reviewed, copied, and scanned (the latter is suggested so that the documents can be delivered electronically if necessary). Adding an additional form of identification can be very helpful and may be available in the form of a *community ID card*.

3. Applying for Social Security numbers.

Other than urgent medical needs, an application for Social Security numbers should be the top priority as that identification format is required for virtually all subsequent applications, including public assistance, health insurance, bank accounts, and residential leases. You should check with your local Social Security office concerning the need for an appointment, the documentation requirements, and whatever or not any children need to come to the office with their parents.

An alternative to a Social Security office visit is sometimes available via a *local community social services office* which may be able to expedite Social Security and other applications, thus avoiding visits to multiple agencies at least at the beginning of the process.

4. School registration.

If the family has school-age children, we recommend getting them into school as soon as possible. The registration process includes a school visit, a physical, and possible inoculations.

5. Evaluating clothing needs.

Early in our resettlement history, we would request clothing donations from the entire congregation prior to the arrival of the family, based on what we knew about the family size, genders, and ages. Unfortunately, that process invariably involved a tedious sorting process of a large volume of donated clothing... with most of it not being used in the end.

Now we simply wait for the family to arrive, check out what clothing they have, determine their needs and sizes, and then target specific families in the congregation who match up with their needs. Later trips to pre-owned clothing outlets for specific items also work well.

H. THE MONTH AFTER ARRIVAL

1. Introducing the refugee family to the sponsoring congregation.

This introduction can be a powerful moment for both the congregation and the family. To minimize the stress, we have usually done this at the beginning of the service and then left with the family. We were especially concerned about this in the case of our current Muslim family but we were relieved when they told us that they had “liked the music.”

2. Financial arrangements.

The initial meetings concerning finance can be overwhelming to a refugee, especially if they have limited education and experience with such matters. It’s pretty obvious that you should start with the basics but we would also suggest that the person handling this instruction be someone who has a good personal relationship with the refugee (and not necessarily with someone with extensive finance training).

You begin, of course, with a basic discussion of income and expenses, trying to explain where initial funds are coming from and projecting what the expenses will be.

The first funding source to be discussed is the *resettlement grant* provided by the U.S. Department of State through the respective referral agency. In our most recent experience, this grant was \$925 per person and, unlike the transportation loan (V. Getting Started – J/6), does not to be repaid. In our most recent case, the grant funds were paid to the sponsor by the referral agency in three stages, with approximately one third transferred immediately after the family’s arrival, one third following after one month later, and the final third coming three months after the arrival date. With the approval of both the family and the referral agency, the sponsor held these payments in a separate account and is dispersing these funds to the family in equal monthly amounts over the first twelve months. We have done this so that the family becomes used to seeing regular monthly income (even before employment income or public assistance begin) and starts to pay certain monthly expenses as soon as possible.

As the family is able, we have them assume more and more of the regular monthly expenses, including rent, utilities, and telephone service. In our relationship with the Seminary, we also established a rent payment that began at a very low level and then increases each quarter during the anticipated one year tenancy to a level approximating what the family’s rent will be upon their expected move to permanent housing in an affordable housing community in Princeton. The goal here is for the family to understand their income needs and to pursue employment opportunities that will meet those needs.

Setting up a checking account is an integral part of this process and should be done as soon as possible, with one possible reason for delay being not having the required number of personal IDs (V. Getting Started – G/2).

One additional issue is the refugee's occasional desire to send money to family or friends, usually when these people remain in a displaced or refugee situation. We try to discuss this issue in the context of the refugee's budget (sometimes even earmarking a specific amount each month for this purpose) but emergencies do happen and sponsor flexibility is important in this regard.

3. Applying for public assistance.

If the prospects for employment within the first six months after arrival are not good, then applications for public assistance, including cash support and food stamps, should be considered. Note, however, that the application process can be very time consuming, involving numerous office visits on the part of all adults, and it can take quite a while for payments to begin. Again, *a local community social service office* may be able to expedite this process.

4. Applying for health insurance.

Whether or not job prospects are positive, an application for health insurance (typically Medicaid) is recommended, again via a county agency or a local community social service office. Health insurance typically is not a benefit for entry-level jobs and, even if it is a benefit, there usually is a significant waiting period before it becomes effective.

5. Looking for jobs.

After assisting the refugee in reviewing their vocational background, discussing their realistic employment prospects, and preparing a resume, follow up with possible employers can begin and interviews scheduled. Finding a job for a refugee has taken us anywhere from two weeks to three months; in the case of our current disabled Syrian adult, it will by necessity take longer.

6. Physical and dental examinations.

Initial medical and dental examinations may be scheduled as needed with the service providers already identified. Separate *health assessment* visits will also be required for each adult and must be performed by a Certified Civil Surgeon identified by the responsible social service agency.

7. Reporting by a sponsor to a referral agency.

The primary report typically required of a sponsor by a referral agency (which, in turn, is audited by the U.S. Department of State) is a *Service Plan* (VI. Organizational Material – I/1-5) which includes Case Information, a Needs Assessment, an Employable Assessment, a Non-Employable Assessment, and an Action Plan. This plan includes 30, 60, 90, 120 and 180 day benchmarks and should be updated on a regular basis. If properly prepared and updated, this document can be a valuable tool in helping a sponsor develop and implement a coherent plan on behalf of the family.

8. The 30th day visit by the referral agency.

As noted previously, a referral agency is required to perform certain activities under its contract with the U.S Department of State, including a 30th day visit with the family and the sponsor. This meeting is intended for the referral agency to determine how the family is doing and to assure that the sponsor is performing all its required functions.

I. THE ROUTINE

1. Scheduling.

Depending on the number of required activities, a weekly schedule may be an important coordinating tool for an extended period of time, both for the family and the volunteers. In our current case, a weekly schedule will most likely be needed for at least a year.

Our schedule format is an Excel spreadsheet that includes the date, event, departure and appointment times, the name of the responsible coordinator, and the names of the translator and driver (if required). Two examples of this schedule are enclosed (VI. Organizational Material – C), the first a combined schedule showing the first two weeks following the family’s arrival and the second being later in the process and more representative of the weekly routine that has developed.

2. Weekly sponsor meetings.

With our most recent family, the meeting routine has evolved into a regular Saturday morning meeting with the adults during which we review the coming week’s schedule, pay the bills, update the budget, and discuss whatever questions the family might have. In terms of the schedule, our practice has been to have the refugee enter the events of the upcoming week in their own language on a large monthly calendar that is hung in the kitchen. Filling out checks, in turn, can be challenging, especially in the spelling of numeral words... so this ability needs to be a focus of ESL lessons.

One of the first English phrases the family learned was “time for business” which we use to disengage the children from the conversation. Although we used a translator for the entire meeting when we started, we now have the translator come closer to the end of the meeting so that the adults are encouraged to use their improving English language conversation skills.

3. English as a Second Language classes.

Given the very limited English ability of our current family when they arrived, we quickly put in place daily ESL classes for the adults with a volunteer coordinator and tutors. Classes initially were combined for both but have since been separated for the husband and wife. The classes for the blind husband evolved into a combination of informal activity guidance and vocabulary expansion.

4. Mobility and vocational training.

Due to the husband's disability, we have had to access resources that we have not had to use with past refugee families. Fortunately, the State of New Jersey offers remarkable services for blind individuals, including a five-month mobility and vocational training program which is now in process.

5. School for the children.

The family's four children have been graciously welcomed by the students and staff of the local elementary school, including caring teachers, a remarkably engaged ESL instructor, and a very attentive school nurse. An after-school homework program extends the children's return home each day until after 5pm.

J. THE LONGER TERM

1. Employment.

Ideally, after one year, the refugee has found a job that provides both income and benefits, especially health insurance.

2. Housing.

The move from temporary to permanent housing is a major step in the resettlement process, especially if it is accompanied by stable employment and adequate income resources.

3. Cultural adjustment.

In the case of the Syrian Muslim family that we are currently sponsoring, we have had to deal with both cultural and religious differences. Even something as simple as a daily greeting is complicated by the fact that a male volunteer may embrace and kiss the cheek of the refugee man but he may not touch the woman in anyway, even a handshake.

In terms of the family's Muslim faith, we have tried to honor their practices with the father regularly going to Friday Prayer and the children attending an Arabic and Islamic Studies program every Saturday afternoon.

We have also tried to avoid any appearance of evangelizing. The family has been in our church building on only two occasions since their arrival in May, 2016, once when we introduced them to the congregation shortly after their arrival and then for an adult education class where we hosted a conversation with the family (with the assistance of a translator and with questions previewed with the family beforehand). We also decided not to invite the children to attend a Summer Bible School even though there were some suggestions from our congregation to do so.

Even Halloween and the related selection of costumes were discussed at length with Superman and Minnie Mouse being approved but Harry Potter being rejected.

4. Mental health counseling.

As it's hard for us to imagine how people can cope with the typical refugee experience, we are constantly alert to any signs of frustration or depression in a refugee's behavior or appearance. We also try to stay in touch with the translators and ESL tutors concerning their observations and concerns, especially in the early months.

5. Driving instruction, licensing, and a vehicle.

New Jersey requires a new adult driver to pass a written test and then wait three months before taking the on road test. Ironically, the driver's manual is only in English while the written exam can be taken in several different languages, including Arabic. After passing the written test, the applicant is given a driver's permit which allows them to drive a car with an adult licensed driver in the vehicle.

After some exciting moments trying to teach earlier refugees how to drive, we have now begun to use a driving school for the first six hours of on road driving, especially for a refugee who has not driven before. In this most recent case, the challenge was to find a female, Arabic speaking, driving instructor which we finally were able to do with the assistance of our friends at the local mosque.

Following the driving school instruction, we have encouraged volunteer companion driving, i.e. having the refugee drive a car with a licensed adult driver also in the vehicle as noted above.

In turn, a vehicle has been donated by a member of our congregation with the title now transitionally in the name of the church. When our refugee has passed the on-road test, we will then transfer the title to them and procure auto liability insurance in their name.

6. Repaying the airfare loan.

Most refugee families incur an obligation to repay the International Organization for Migration (via the referral agency) the cost of their arrival airfare. In our most recent case, the family was required to sign a *Travel Loan Promissory Note* in the amount of \$5,546 (or \$924 per person), with a monthly payment of \$116.00 (beginning six months after arrival) and a term of 54 months. These parameters imply an approximate interest rate on the loan of 4.5% although that rate does not appear to be specified in the legal document.

7. After the I-94.

After the I-94 (Admission Record) comes a *Green Card (Permanent Residency)* and a family must apply for such status within one year after their arrival.

Each member of the family needs to have a physical performed by a Certified Civil Surgeon with a Green Card application to follow, ideally prepared by an immigration attorney. A Church World Service office may have a relationship with a partner clinic for such physicals while I am told that CWS has a staff attorney who can prepare the applications. Estimated costs are \$140 per person for the physicals and \$300 for the first application (and \$150 for others required by

related family members). If the children are under 14 years of age, then their parents may be able to apply on their behalf, thus possibly saving the cost of the children's applications.

Also be sure that the Green Cards are backdated (or "rolled back") to reflect the date of entry so that the waiting period for citizenship can be as short as possible.

K. THE GOALS

1. "Letting go."

"Letting go" must be a conscience and premeditated decision by the sponsor and its volunteers to begin to limit and then end the formalities of the process, i.e. regular meetings, accompanied shopping trips, the arrangement of appointments, and providing rides. We have found that different volunteers handle this process in different ways; some stay in regular touch with the family, others don't. But the relationship has to change... you can remain friends but you just have to leave the rest behind.

2. Financial independence.

The goal, of course, is for the family to be able to earn enough income to live comfortably. You may be surprised that many of the refugee families sponsored by our church continue to live in or near Princeton, some in local affordable housing communities but some have purchased their own homes here. It's not always easy but these families seem to be finding their way.

3. Educational opportunities for the children.

As we can all understand, the greatest aspiration of a refugee parent is that their children have a safe and rewarding future. Time and again, we have seen this as a refugee parent works tirelessly to put a child through college or a trade school. This is one more reason why we admire them so much.

4. Citizenship.

After receiving their Green Cards, the family may apply for *U.S. citizenship* as early as five years after their U.S. entry date, with an Early Application Rule moving up the earliest possible application date to 90 days prior to the fifth anniversary of entry.

As far as I know, all the refugees we have sponsored over the years have become very proud American citizens. For many of them, it's a way of saying "thank you" and honoring the country that has welcomed them. For my part, I see these wonderful friends as being, in many ways, the most authentic and most appreciative Americans of all.

Tom Charles
Co-Chair of the Refugee Resettlement Committee
Nassau Presbyterian Church - Princeton, New Jersey

Note: The commentary and recommendations in this guide represent the personal opinions of the author and have not been reviewed nor approved by the Session of Nassau Presbyterian Church. They also are not intended to be authoritative legal interpretations; proper legal counsel should be consulted concerning all related matters.

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ACTIVITY PRIORITY LIST			
DESCRIPTION	TYPE	PRIORIT Y	NOTES
clothing collection	clothing	1	
furniture	housing	1	
furniture pickup	transportation	1	
household items	housing	1	
key copy/distrib/rock	housing	1	
meeting - isocj	partnership	1	
meeting - pts	partnership	1	
utility accounts set up	housing	1	
vacation coverage	npc	1	
vetting process	npc	1	vetting approval list
airport pickup	transportation	2	
copies - I94/med/innoc	documentation	2	
cws home visit (2nd day)	cws	2	
cws home visit (30 day)	cws	2	
groceries	food	2	halal meat
visit - cousin	family	2	
1 - tanf application	assistance program	3	
2 - nj snap application	assistance program	3	aka food stamps
3 - medicaid application	assistance program	3	
4 - social security # applic	assistance program	3	
5 - sup sec income applic	assistance program	3	soc sec office ... aka ssi
care giver program	assistance program	3	
checking acct set up	financial	3	
cws doc prep	cws	3	
dental exams	health	3	
employment applic	financial	3	cash assistance income impact?
eye exam (husband)	health	3	
health assessments	health	3	
refugee grant disb	financial	3	
school enrollment	education	3	
school physicals	health	3	
affordable housing applic	housing	4	

car donation	transportation	4	
cell phone activation	communication	4	
computer installation	communication	4	
driving instruction	transportation	4	plus test and license
game purchase	entertainment	4	backgammon
hmo card receipt	health	4	
iphone service	communication	4	
budget report	financial	5	weekly
checking acct report	financial	5	weekly
cws grant report	financial	5	weekly
first families card report	assistance program	5	weekly
utility accounts transfer	housing	5	pseg/nj water/comcast
airfare reimbursement	financial	6	
inquiry responses	communication	6	
npc bulletin update	communication	6	

ACTIVITY DELEGATION LIST

Appliance/heating/air conditioning instructions ...

Assistance program applications ...

Childcare ...

Clothing ...

Computer and internet set up ...

Employment ...

English tutoring (adults) ...

Food purchase (and first meal preparation) ...

Furniture move-in ...

Furniture pick-up and delivery ...

Homework assistance ...

Household supplies and set-up ...

Housing ...

Kitchen set-up ...

Legal ...

Medical (overview) ...

Medical (adults) ...

Medical (pediatrician) ...

Medical (dentist) ...

Medical (vision) ...

NPC Senior Highs ...

Personal finances ...

Schedule coordination ...

School registration ...

Telephone purchase ...

Toys ...

Translators ...

Utilities set-up (electric/gas/water/cable) ...

Vision impaired services ...

DAY	DATE	EVENT	DEPART	TIME	COOR	ASST	TRANS	DRIVER	CHILD	NOTES
Sun	05/22/16	npc planning meeting		11:30 AM	xxx					chapel
Mon	05/23/16	pickup location confirm		10:00 AM	xxx					iom 973-877-0951
Mon	05/23/16	airport pickup	2:30 PM	3:45 PM	xxx		xxx	xxx		
Mon	05/23/16	dinner prep		6:00 PM		xxx				key!
Tues	05/24/16	overview meeting		11:00 AM	xxx		xxx			
Tues	05/24/16	cws home visit #1		12:30 PM	xxx	xxx	xxx			
Wed	05/25/16	social security office	7:15 AM	8:30 AM	xxx		xxx	xxx	?	parents only
Wed	05/25/16	esl/assessment intro		2:30 PM	xxx	xxx	?	?		at residence
Wed	05/25/16	iscj staff visit		6:00 PM	xxx					
Thur	05/26/16	princeton human serv	9:00 AM	9:30 AM	xxx	xxx	?	?		thru 2pm (?)
Thur	05/26/16	npc staff visit		6:00 PM	xxx		xxx			xxx
Fri	05/27/16	iscj prayer (?)								
Sun	05/29/16	npc intro (?)	9:15 AM	10:00 AM	xxx		xxx	?		
Sun	05/29/16	npc planning meeting		11:15 AM	xxx					chapel
Sun	05/29/16	cousin visit		1:00 PM						
Mon	05/30/16									memorial day
Tues	05/31/16									
Wed	06/01/16	school assessment		11:00 AM	xxx	xxx	xxx	?		location (?)
Thur	06/02/16	child physicals (?)			xxx		?	?		
Fri	06/03/16	school registration	9:45 AM	10:15 AM	xxx	xxx	xxx	?		
Sat	06/04/16									
Sun	06/05/16	npc planning meeting		11:15 AM	xxx					chapel
Mon	06/06/16	school start (?)			xxx					
Fri	06/17/16	cws home visit #2			xxx	xxx	?			

DAY	DATE	EVENT	DEPART	TIME	COOR	ASST	TRANS	DRI	VER	NOTES
Mon	09/26/16	school bus depart	7:40 AM	7:45 AM						
Mon	09/26/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx	tutor				at home
Mon	09/26/16	after school prog		3:00PM	xxx					at school
Mon	09/26/16	school bus return		5:30 PM						
Mon	09/26/16	iscj evening visit (?)								
Tues	09/27/16	school bus depart	7:40 AM	7:45 AM						
Tues	09/27/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx	tutor				at home
Tues	09/27/16	dentist	10:15 AM	11:00 AM	xxx			xxx		xxx with xxx
Tues	09/27/16	after school prog		3:00PM	xxx					at school
Tues	09/27/16	school bus return		5:30 PM						
Tues	09/27/16	npc evening visit (?)								
Wed	09/28/16	school bus depart	7:40 AM	7:45 AM						
Wed	09/28/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx		xxx			at home
Wed	09/28/16	driving instruction		10:45 AM	xxx	xxx				at home
Wed	09/28/16	medical appt	12:30 PM	1:15 PM	xxx			xxx		xxx
Wed	09/28/16	after school prog		3:00 PM	xxx					at school
Wed	09/28/16	school bus return		5:30 PM						
Wed	09/28/16	soccer practice	6:00 PM	6:30 PM	xxx			xxx		both boys
Wed	09/28/16	back to school mtg	6:00 PM	6:30 PM	xxx			xxx		xxx only
Wed	09/28/16	iscj evening visit (?)								
Thur	09/29/16	school bus depart	7:40 AM	7:45 AM						

Thur	09/29/16	garbage cans out		8:00 AM					
Thur	09/29/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx	tutor			at home
Thur	09/29/16	social sec meeting	?	?	xxx		?	xxx	xxx / disability application process
Thur	09/29/16	dentist	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	xxx		?	xxx	xxx + xxx + xxx with xxx (?)
Thur	09/29/16	after school prog		3:00 PM	xxx				at school
Thur	09/29/16	school bus return		5:30 PM					
Thur	09/29/16	npc evening visit (?)							
Fri	09/30/16	school bus depart	7:40 AM	7:45 AM					
Fri	09/30/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx	tutor			at home
Fri	09/30/16	iscj prayer	noon		xxx		iscj	xxx	
Fri	09/30/16	after school prog		3:00 PM	xxx				at school
Fri	09/30/16	school bus return		5:30 PM					
Sat	10/01/16	sponsor meeting		9:00 AM	xxx		?		translator at 9:30am
Sat	10/01/16	soccer game	10:45 AM	11:20 AM	xxx			?	both boys
Sat	10/01/16	npc evening visit (?)							
Sun	10/02/16	iscj visit (?)	?	?				iscj	
Mon	10/03/16	put out recycling		8:00 AM					every other monday
Wed	10/12/16	doctor appt	12:30 PM	1:30 PM	xxx		?	?	xxx / bms clinic
Fri	10/21/16	dentist	?	?	xxx		?	xxx	xxx / bms clinic
Tues	11/15/16	doctor appt	12:30 PM	1:30 PM	xxx		?	?	xxx / bms clinic
Tues	11/22/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx	tutor			LAST CLASS BEFORE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Wed	11/30/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx		xxx		FIRST CLASS AFTER THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Tues	12/13/16	esl adult class		9:30 AM	xxx	tutor			LAST CLASS IN 2016
Fri	12/23/16	dentist	8:45 AM	9:45 AM	xxx		?	?	xxx with xxx / cancel (?)

Media Guideline Questions			
	YES	NO	NOTES
GENERAL QUESTIONS:			
are there still family members in syria?	x		
MEDIA REFERENCE TO:			
name - family (xxx)		x	
name - family (xxx)		x	
name - adults - first	x		
name - children - first		x	
name - person identified as neighbor		x	
location - street address		x	
location - neighborhood		x	
location - princeton	x		
school name		x	
home city - damascus	x		
home town		x	
disability - blindness	x		
disability - cause	x		
PHOTOGRAPHS:			
front facial view		x	
rear back of head view	x		
residence (exterior)		x	
residence (interior)	x		

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU FOR POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION
Central Processing Facility

Case No:	Allocation Date:
Location:	Office:
Priority:	Case Size:
Denom:	UNHCR Case #:
Country/Date Fled:	Assurance Due Date:
Urgency:	Pool Type:
	Availability Status:

Name:	Sex:	Marital Status:	Alien No:
Date of Birth:	Religion:		Minor Code:
Country of Birth:	Ethnicity:	Rel PA:	Nationality:

General Health:	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Treatment</u>	<u>Urgency</u>
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Highest Education Level:	Degree:
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<u>Language (native marked with *)</u>	<u>Read Ability</u>	<u>Speak Ability</u>	<u>Write Ability</u>
--	---------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Employment/Occupation

Status of cross reference case: as of

Relation of PA to Cross Ref. Case:

Relation of Cross Ref. PA to PA of Main Case:

PA Name:

Notes:

Sponsoring Relative/U.S. Tie

Is PA willing to resettle with?

Preference Priority:

Name:

Home:

Current Address:

Work:

City, State, Zip:

Cell:

Email Address:

Relation to PA:



Co-sponsor Commitment Form

Local Resettlement Agency

Name: _____
 Staff Contact: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

Community Group

Type: _____
 Address: _____
 Contact Person: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

R&P Core Services Timeline

<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet at airport with interpretation and seasonally appropriate clothing	5/23/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation to decent, safe and sanitary housing	5/23/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat food plus food/food allowance equivalent to food stamps until receipt of food stamps	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Most, if not all, furnishings and supplies available upon arrival according to Home Supply List and Home & Safety Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide basic orientation regarding housing and personal safety matters, including emergency contacts and procedures	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate next day home visit with CWS CM (assess welfare, living conditions and current needs, and assist with basic needs)	5/24/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pocket money (if not provided on day 1)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide orientation to local community, such as laundromat, grocery store, police station, library, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate CWS intake interview to verify documentation and discuss roles and responsibilities of the affiliate, co-sponsors and refugees	5/31/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with application for food stamps	6/2/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with application for cash and medical assistance	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist clients with class A physical disorders to report to official public health area in the resettlement area and receive an appointment date	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with application for social security cards	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with enrollment in English language programs	6/7/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with enrollment in employment services	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with enrollment in other services (e.g., WIC, SSI) including signing up for utilities.	
	MG enrollment eligibility deadline (31 days)	6/22/2016
	120th Day	9/19/2016
	180th Day	11/18/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop service plan with client and CWS staff member	6/22/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist with meeting school enrollment requirements and register children for school	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure each client has a health assessment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate second home visit with CWS CM (assess welfare, living conditions, any current or expected needs, and assist with basic needs)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assistance with registering for selective service (age 18-26)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bring clients to CWS office to complete cultural orientation on all topics	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Initial evaluation for clients with class A mental disorder	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Follow up on health concerns with 4-6 week timeline on bio	6/20/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seasonal clothing required for work, school and every day use for all members of the family, including footwear and diapers	8/21/2016
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide cash and in-kind support to meet refugees' basic needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure appropriate and timely medical attention for acute health care needs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist to file change of address forms with U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Post Office for each address	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional home visit if client moves	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage and assist refugees as soon as possible to obtain or complete immunizations required for adjustment to LPR status	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation to job interviews and job training	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist clients to access appropriate providers of continued therapy or preventive treatment for health conditions affecting the public health	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist CWS with completing and filing Affidavits of Relationship	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure appropriate language interpretation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with CWS CM to complete R&P Period Report	9/4/2016

We enter into this work thoughtfully and prepared to perform the activities indicated above to the best of our ability. We understand that the local resettlement agency is ultimately responsible for the provision of all core resettlement services, and that this form is not a legally binding agreement. We have been trained in our role and know who to contact at the agency with questions or concerns.

Community Group Representative: _____ Date: _____

Local Agency Representative: _____ Date: _____

For Resettlement Office Use Only:

Principal Applicant: _____
 Overseas Case Number: _____
 Case Size: _____ Nationality: _____

- Community Group has received training on the resettlement process and their responsibilities for activities checked above
- Training materials can be furnished upon request



R&P HOME EVALUATION AND SAFETY CHECKLIST


PA Name:		Case #:	Home Safety Check Conducted by:	
Case Size:	DOA:	# of Occupants:	Date Home Safety Check Conducted:	
Address:			Temporary (T) or Permanent (P) Housing:	
Acceptability		Compliant	Follow up needed. See case notes	Date follow up completed/Initials
Housing is decent, safe and sanitary based on federal housing standards or local or state standards if they are higher.				
Both the housing site/complex and neighborhood appear safe				
Space				
Local minimum standard for habitable area requires a minimum of bedrooms/sleeping areas for the _____ people living here				
Safety				
All areas and components of the housing (interior and exterior) should be free of visible health and safety hazards and in good repair. Complete a thorough check of the house to ensure the following:				
There is no visible bare wiring				
There is no peeling or flaking interior paint or plaster				
There is no visible mold				
There are no detectable dangerous or unsanitary odors				
Emergency escape route(s) have been identified and are accessible				
Fire extinguishers can be easily located and are accessible where required				
All windows and outside doors have working locks				
Appropriate number of working smoke detectors; assure that it has working batteries				
Windows are in working order with no evidence of broken glass				
Heat, ventilation, lighting, and hot and cold running water are adequate				
Electrical fixtures are in good repair (check for light bulbs, check to see if the electricity works)				
Lead Safety Check				
Residence either built after 1978 or meets all lead safety requirements				
Appliances and Fixtures				
Kitchen: residence equipped with a stove, oven, and refrigerator in good repair				
Bathrooms: residence equipped with sink, flushing toilet, and shower or bath in good repair				
Garbage and Extermination				
Easily accessible storage or disposal facilities for garbage				
No evidence of current rodent or insect infestation				
Disability Accommodation				
In cases of refugees with disabilities, housing should be free of, or permit the removal of, architectural barriers and otherwise accommodate known disabilities, to the extent required by law.				
Identify disability:				
Affordability				
To the extent possible, the family should be able to assume payment of the rent at the end of the R&P period, based upon projected family income from all sources. The family should be left with sufficient resources for other essential expenses (food, transportation, utilities, etc.) after rent payments are made.				
Length of Lease Agreement:				
Monthly Rent: \$		Security Deposit: \$		Waived: Yes / No
Final Assessment/Comments:				
Based on the above findings on this date: I find this housing meets the basic minimum standards set forth in the Cooperative Agreement.				
Signature:		Print Name:		Date:





R&P HOME SUPPLY LIST

When completing this form list the specific quantities provided, as checkmarks or "enough" are *not* acceptable responses.

PA Name:		Case #:	List Completed by:	
Case Size:	DOA:	# of Occupants:	Date Completed:	
Address:			Temporary (T) or Permanent (P) Housing:	
Furniture		Quantity	Kitchen Items	Quantity
Mattress and box spring (only married couples or small children of same gender may be expected to share beds)			One place setting of tableware (fork, knife, spoon) per person	
Bed frame			One place setting of dishes (plate, bowl and cup) per person	
One set of drawers, shelves or other unit appropriate for storage of clothing per family			Pots and pans: at least one sauce pan, frying pan, and baking dish	
One couch or equivalent seating per family (in addition to kitchen chairs)			Mixing/serving bowls	
One lamp per room, unless installed lighting is present and adequate, and light bulbs as needed			One set of kitchen utensils (such as a spatula, wooden spoon, knife, serving utensils, etc.)	
Kitchen table (per case) and chair (per person)			Can opener	
Linens and Other Household Supplies			Toiletries (new)	
One bath towel per person			Toilet paper (list number of rolls)	
One set of sheets for each bed			Shampoo	
Blanket(s) for each bed as seasonally appropriate			Soap	
One pillow and pillowcase for each person			One toothbrush per person	
Alarm clock			Toothpaste	
Paper, pens and/or pencils (one set per case recommended)			Personal hygiene items as appropriate (such as deodorant, feminine hygiene products, and razors)	
Cleaning Supplies				
Dish soap			Two waste baskets	
Bathroom/kitchen cleanser			Trash bags (list number of boxes)	
Laundry detergent			Mop or broom	
Sponges or cleaning rags and/or paper towels				
Other Items and Food			Description	
<i>Appropriate seasonal clothing for work, school and everyday use: Clean clothing, in good condition, for all members of the family (including proper footwear)</i>				
<i>Baby items as needed: such as baby food, clothing, diapers, infant and children car seats, and cribs</i>				
<i>Food available on arrival: Culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat food, plus one day's worth of additional food supplies and staples (including baby food as needed)</i>				
<i>Food within one day of arrival: Food or food allowance at least equivalent to the food stamp allocation for that family unit and continued food assistance until receipt of food stamps or until individual/ family is able to provide food for himself, herself or themselves</i>				
PA Name:		Signature:		Date:
Case Manager Name:		Signature:		Date:
Interpreter Name:		Signature:		Date:


				TRI-AGENCY SERVICE PLAN		A		
				CASE INFORMATION				
PA Name:				Case Number :				
Current Address				Arrival Date				
Phone Number				30th Day				
E-mail				90th Day				
If Enrolled in MG								
MG Eligibility Date		# Enrolled		120th Day				
MG Enrollment Date		# of Employables		180th Day				
Monthly Income to Be Self-Sufficient - as Noted on MG Budget: \$								
Name (List PA first)		DOB	Alien Number	Social Security Number	Employable MG	R&P	Enrolled in MG	Minor Code (M2-M7)
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								

 WELCOMING REFUGEES <small>THROUGH ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP</small>							TRI-AGENCY SERVICE PLAN	B
							FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT*	
Identify family strengths and needs below for follow-up throughout R&P and MG. Insert rows as needed.								
Please provide follow-up in PART E - Family & Individual Action Plan.								
PA Name:	0		Case Number:	0		Assessment Date:		
Assessment (Agency Staff and Client Self-Assessment)								
Housing								
Food								
Clothing								
Transit								
Financial Literacy								
Childcare								
Family Wellness**								
Life Skills								
Other (describe)								

										TRI-AGENCY SERVICE PLAN		C	
NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR <u>EMPLOYABLE</u> INDIVIDUALS													
Please provide follow-up in PART E - Family & Individual Action Plan													
Client Name:						Case Number:		0		Assessment Date:			
I. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS					Y	N	Comments						
Primary Language <i>(please specify language)</i>													
Literate in primary language													
Other languages spoken <i>(please specify language(s))</i>													
English language level <i>(select level that applies)</i>					<input type="radio"/> None	<input type="radio"/> Basic	<input type="radio"/> Intermediate	<input type="radio"/> Advanced					
English language training needed													
II. HEALTH STATUS					Y	N	Comments						
Are you able to stand, bend, lift and have full use of hands?													
Do you have any vision or hearing problems?													
Do you have any other physical impediments that may affect employment?													
Are you on medication that may limit your employment?													
Do you have any medical/mental health needs that need to be addressed? (Are you sleeping well? Do you feel anxious? Do you feel safe?)													
III. CHILDCARE					Y	N	N/A	Comments					

Has children under one - there is a person designated for care														
Has adequate daycare (+1 years old to 4 years old)														
Has after-school care (kindergarten to 14 years old)														
IV. EDUCATION														
Name of School/University/Other				From	To	City/Country				Degree/Certificate/Qualification				
						Client Name:								
													C	
V. WORK HISTORY														
				Y	Comments									
Worked previously														
Never worked														
Student														
Job/Trade/Company				From	To	City/Country				Position & Responsibilities				
VI. JOB AVAILABILITY														
Answers/Comments														
Do you have any restrictions on the hours/days you can work? If yes, what are the restrictions?														

Do you have any religious restrictions that limit the kind of work you are willing and able to do?	
Are there any other issues or concerns that might limit the work you can do?	
What will you do to look for a job yourself? <i>(optional)</i>	
VII. PROFESSIONAL GOALS	Answers/Comments
What type of job/future would you like to have in five years?	
What type of job/career interests you this year?	
What other skills and experience do you have that will help you pursue these short and long-term goals?	

 WELCOMING REFUGEES THROUGH ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP										TRI- AGEN CY SERVI CE PLAN		D	
NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR <u>NON-EMPLOYABLE</u> INDIVIDUALS													
Please provide follow-up in PART E - Family & Individual Action Plan													
Client Name:						Case Number:		0		Assessment Date:			
I. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS				Y	N	Comments							
Primary Language <i>(please specify language)</i>													
Literate in primary language													
Other languages spoken <i>(please specify language(s))</i>													
English language level <i>(select level that applies)</i>					o No ne	o Basic	o Interme diate	o Advan ced					
English language training needed													
II. EDUCATION				Y	N	Comments							
Highest level of education <i>(please specify)</i>													
Education follow-up needed													
III. HEALTH STATUS				Y	N	Comments							
Do you have any vision or hearing problems?													
Do you have any medical/mental health needs that need to be addressed? (Alternate: Are you sleeping well? Do you feel anxious? Do you feel safe?)													

Are you on medication that may interfere with daily activities?														
IV. GOALS					Answers/Comments									
Do you have goals for your first year in the US?														
IV. REASON(S) THIS INDIVIDUAL IS NOT EMPLOYABLE*														
Physical/Mental health reasons	Care giver for a child under one	Care giver for a fully dependent person	65 years or older on arrival	Late stage pregnancy	Under 18 years old on arrival	Other <i>(please explain)</i>								

PA Name:	Signature:	Date:
Adult Client Name: <i>(Please indicate N/A, if not applicable)</i>	Signature:	Date:
Caseworker/Staff Name:	Signature:	Date:
Interpreter Name: <i>(Please indicate N/A, if not applicable)</i>	Signature:	Date:

VII. RESOURCES

- A. Cultural Orientation Research Center: Refugees from Syria – Nov. 2014
<http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/backgrounders>

- B. Church World Service: resettlement process
<http://cwsglobal.org/our-work/refugees-and-immigrants/welcoming-communities/welcoming-refugees/>

- C. Church World Service: refugee resettlement offices
<http://cwsglobal.org/our-work/refugees-and-immigrants/welcoming-communities/refugee-and-immigrant-offices/>

- D. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: First Steps [Tools]
<http://lirs.org/learn/>

- E. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: The Real Cost of Welcome [Report]
<http://lirs.org/learn/>

- F. Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services: Community Co-Sponsorship Program
<http://www.irisct.org/index.php/community-co-sponsorship/>

VIII. ARTICLES

- A. “The Hopes (Security) and Fears (Bears) of Syrian Refugees in New Jersey”
Deborah Amos – NPR – September 17, 2016

- B. “After Trump’s Election, Uncertainty for Syrian Refugees in the U.S.”
Deborah Amos – NPR – November 24, 2016

The Hopes (Security) And Fears (Bears) Of Syrian Refugees In New Jersey

Deborah Amos – NPR – September 17, 2016

On a bright spring afternoon this May, Tom Charles drove to Newark International Airport to pick up a family of Syrian refugees. Charles is an attorney and a bank consultant, devoted to data and details, but he had scant information on the family that would become part of his life for the next year.

He was also sure the Syrian family knew nothing about his team from Nassau Presbyterian Church, who would drive them from the airport to a donated house in Princeton, N.J.

"They know nothing about us. Nothing at all," said Charles, "They are arriving at the airport and they've only been told that someone will greet you."

When the Syrian family landed they were surprised to see a smiling group of strangers at the airport arrival hall with gifts for the four young children. The 10 suitcases that arrived along with the refugees surprised the church team.

"We had assumed they would have no luggage, or not much luggage, and I thought, what is all this stuff?" said Sue Jennings, a veteran of the Nassau Church's resettlement team.

"The suitcases were filled with food," she said. "So, that says something about the anxiety and uncertainty of coming here."

Across the country, private organizations, faith-based groups and individuals quietly have been working to ease the plight of Syrian refugees. More than 11,000 have arrived in the U.S. this year, fulfilling a pledge by the Obama administration. That figure far exceeds the number of Syrian refugees accepted during the previous four years of the Syrian war, and the White House is calling for a big bump in the overall number of refugees next year.

But the "surge" this year has overwhelmed official resettlement agencies, with the majority of Syrians landing in the past five months. These private groups are volunteers stepping in to offer services and resettlement support.

A Muslim Family In Church

A week after the awkward first meeting at the airport, the Syrian Muslim refugee family sat in the front pew of Nassau Presbyterian Church and marveled at the jubilant applause. The family is concerned about the safety of relatives still in Syria and asked NPR to use only their first names, Osama and Ghada.

"The father, Osama, a calm and resilient man, is blind, injured by a mortar attack while visiting his uncle's home in 2012," Charles said from the pulpit as he introduced the family.

"The mother, Ghada, is a gracious hostess, preparing coffee for all visitors," he continued as Ghada quietly wept at words she barely understood.

It had been a long journey for the family, who are among the nearly 5 million Syrians who have fled their homeland since the war began in 2011. They survived the war in Syria and had

struggled for three years as refugees in Jordan when they were notified by the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, that they had been accepted for resettlement in the U.S.

Nassau Presbyterian Church has a long history of supporting refugees, including Cubans, Vietnamese, Bosnians and Iraqis, said senior pastor David Davis.

"We've been in the refugee business for 50 years — it's been a family every five years," he said. "For us, it is acting and living out our faith."

The church sponsorship provides financial and practical support, including housing, school enrollment, language training and help in finding employment. In practice, it's more like an adoption — an intense relationship to integrate the outsiders.

But in the current political climate, when a majority of Americans oppose Syrian resettlement, it's a high-pressure good deed.

"It feels different to know that there are those in the community who think we are doing the wrong thing," said Davis. In a way it's a challenge to the majority of state governors, including New Jersey's Chris Christie, who want to block all Syrian refugees because they say some could be dangerous.

"To think that one Muslim family could be a threat is just irrational to me, given that the vetting process, the security clearances, are significant," he said. "I do think that if we had somehow been asked to support a Syrian Christian family, of which there are so few, the response would have been qualitatively different."

What's In The Woods?

"What is the word for 'bear?' " asked Ghada in an intense English language class in the dining room of the Startled, Beverly Leach, an experienced English teacher who leads the church-sponsored language team asked, "did you see a bear?"

The question was more than idle curiosity. It's a sign that for newly arrived refugees, America can be an alien place that doesn't look like the glimpses they've seen on social media or in the movies.

There are surprising fears, says Louisa Ajami, another member of the Nassau church team. Ajami is an Arabic speaker, and when she first was introduced to the family, Ghada asked if there were "dangerous creatures" in the woods.

"And I said, 'no, probably not,' and she still looked nervous, and I said, 'but there are bears' — and I probably shouldn't have said that," Ajami said.

Bears are not uncommon in this part of New Jersey, and the family heard about one that had been spotted nearby. The news was terrifying, especially for the kids. After years of war and chaos, they are still hyper-vigilant when it comes to threats, said Ajami.

"They are lost, they have no frame of reference. None whatsoever," she said. "They are learning it all anew on top of everything else they have to deal with."

Osama knows there's a political debate in this country over resettling Syrian refugees but he is not sure what it means. Supportive church members surround him. The local Muslim community has embraced his family. They openly observed their first Ramadan in America, fasting from

daylight to sundown, and joined more than a thousand America Muslims who ended the month of fasting with prayers and family picnics in a public park.

"I didn't expect minorities to have that much freedom," he says, "I expected them to pray, and then everybody needs to go home."

It's another lesson about America.

Lessons From An Earlier Refugee

The war has left its mark on the Syrian family, especially 35-year-old Osama. He is disabled after surviving a 2012 mortar blast that blinded him, scarred his face and broke most of his teeth. Sue Jennings, part of the Nassau Church team, gets him the medical attention he needs from a dentist who treats refugees for free.

"She certainly can give him a more beautiful smile," says Jennings. "She hopes to give him a full mouth of teeth."

The dentist, Jasminka Kopanya, knows what it's like to be torn from everything familiar, to feel lost and overwhelmed. She was a refugee from Bosnia two decades ago.

"We are not aware how much we don't know in the beginning," she says. Even now it is painful for her to recall that first harrowing year after landing in America with her husband and young children.

"It was tough, that time," she says.

The Nassau Church also sponsored [Jasmika], and she was able to restart her professional career with church support. She wants to assure Osama that he can make it, too, but there is no common language yet. Free care is the way she sends the message.

"It's a good feeling to help," she says. "I understand."

In the four months since the family arrived in Princeton, Osama has been learning how to use a white cane for the first time. He navigates short solo walks outside. He has been accepted into a program for the blind that offers vocational training.

The refugee family and their Nassau church sponsors have a comfortable routine. Tom Charles and Sue Jennings sit at the dining room table, and Ghada serves Arabic sweets and strong coffee, and insists Charles use his "special cup" that is larger than the others.

They were all strangers just a few months ago, meeting for the first time at an airport.

When the four Syrian kids burst through the door after school, they turn to Jennings to ask about a music program.

"Cello, in school," said the youngest boy, and Jennings beams. "Did you hear his English!"

The bigger challenges are ahead.

Can these Syrians find their way in the community when the church sponsorship ends after a year? For now Jennings, a new grandmother, admits she spends more time with the Syrian family than her own. She's organizing a trip to buy shoes for the children. She knows all of their shoe sizes.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/09/17/494069828/the-hopes-security-and-fears-bears-of-syrian-refugees-in-new-jersey>

After Trump's Election, Uncertainty For Syrian Refugees In The U.S.

Deborah Amos – NPR – November 24, 2016

Osama, a Syrian refugee who resettled five months ago in Princeton, N.J., did not sleep on election night after listening to the results.

"The whole world is affected by American elections," he said during an English lesson with his wife, Ghada, the next morning at their dining room table. The family, which still has relatives in Syria, has asked that it be identified by first names only.

Osama knows about American voters' divided response to Syrian refugees and President-elect Donald Trump's campaign promises to block Syrian refugees and send back those taken in by the U.S. But he isn't sure what to expect.

His confusion over what's ahead mirrors the concerns of many other refugee families amid post-election reports of hate crimes against minorities.

"If they bring us back, it's not a problem for us," Osama said, weighing the post-election possibility of a reversal of his U.S. resettlement and a return to a refugee camp in Jordan or even to Syria. His words seemed a bit of bravado amid the uncertainty.

Osama and his family have benefited so far from the generosity of Americans. His family's resettlement was made possible by the support of Princeton's Nassau Presbyterian Church, as well as community volunteers.

"Your situation is safe; you can stay here, no problem," Beverly Leach assures them. Leach heads a group of volunteer English-language instructors for this refugee couple.

But the Nassau church support group she is part of is anxious about implications for refugees after the election. The fearful calls and emails began coming in the day after the election, says senior pastor Dave Davis.

On the same day, Princeton's mayor, Liz Lempart, invited him and other faith leaders and community leaders to meet "to allay fears she was already hearing from immigrant communities," Davis says.

Davis' pastoral duties now include reassuring Osama's family members that their future is secure. But the future of the U.S. refugee resettlement program is now in doubt.

"That's more complicated, and probably that's where the fears really lie," he says.

The Obama administration, after admitting around 2,000 Syrian refugees during the first few years of the war, brought in around 12,000 this year.

The Nassau Presbyterian Church has a long history of supporting refugees, including Cubans, Vietnamese, Bosnians and Iraqis, says Davis. In the current political climate, when Americans are divided on Syrian resettlement, it has been a high-pressure good deed.

It's been almost six months since Osama's family was introduced to the congregation. At the end of October, he and Ghada were introduced again at an adult education class before the Sunday service.

The visual change in the couple since they first arrived in Princeton was striking. Osama, in a gray puffer jacket and jeans, had become more confident. Ghada wore a stylish knit dress; a colorful headscarf framed her soft, round face. She baked Syrian sweets to go with the coffee at the gathering.

"They are doing very well. Ghada wrote her first check yesterday, the date, the name and the amount," Tom Charles told the congregation.

Charles, who heads the church's resettlement committee, meets with the family each week to go over finances. Refugees admitted to the U.S. under the federal resettlement program are expected to start working within months after arrival and become self-sufficient as government benefits taper off.

Most refugees are already working at the five-month mark. But Osama was blinded and his face scarred in an artillery attack on his uncle's home in a Damascus suburb in 2012. His disability is a hurdle.

The October church meeting was Osama's way to connect with the wider congregation through an interpreter. "We had a normal life" in Syria, he told them. "I had a small factory." He provided for his family.

His ravaged face tells the story of war and loss. But his most powerful message was unexpected, delivered in the form of a joke.

"Osama, can you tell us about Tarzan's last words?" Charles deadpanned to an audience unsure of what to expect.

"Tarzan's last famous words were, 'Who put grease on the vines?'" Osama replied in Arabic.

The audience politely waited for the translation before exploding with laughter and applause.

With a simple joke, Osama made a larger point: I am not so different from you.

But American culture is very different from family expectations learned from movies and social media. Excitement was mixed with nerves around some Halloween traditions, as the holiday approached in late October.

"We just said, it's fun, it's about collecting candy and dressing up. I think it was pretty strange for them," says Sue Jennings, part of the Nassau church team. She delivered donated costumes, a dozen pumpkins and guidance on the unfamiliar holiday.

"A jack-o-lantern is a pumpkin with a face," she explained to the Syrian children at the kitchen table, elbow-deep in orange pumpkin goop.

They knew about pumpkins, an ingredient in a savory Syrian stew. Their father, following as best he could from his perch on the couch, asked, "Why is there an American holiday that wastes so much food?"

He had been particularly anxious about Halloween, concerned that it conflicted with his Muslim faith. But he got caught up in his children's excitement over the parade at school.

He couldn't see the costumes but insisted on approving the choices, banning anything scary, involving black magic or Harry Potter.

"Superman, good," he declared, and the Disney costumes also got his OK.

On Oct. 31, his four children walked the parade route with their elementary school classmates — now part of the community that welcomed their arrival, the new start made possible by generous church support. Ghada stood with the other elementary school parents and waved as the children walked by with their friends. She marveled at the school principal wearing battery-operated cat ears and a tail.

"A hundred percent different than Syria," she said. Then she walked into the school for the Halloween party.

http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/11/24/503146992/after-trumps-election-uncertainty-for-syrian-refugees-in-the-u-s?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=2051

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X. CONCLUSION

Imagine the social and political impact of a doubling of refugee sponsorships by faith communities across the country... please join us in this “doing” of the word and the telling of the true refugee story.

Tom Charles
Co-Chair of the Refugee Resettlement Committee
Nassau Presbyterian Church - Princeton, New Jersey

Note: The commentary and recommendations in this guide represent the personal opinions of the author and have not been reviewed nor approved by the Session of Nassau Presbyterian Church. They also are not intended to be authoritative legal interpretations; proper legal counsel should be consulted concerning all related matters.

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