

**OVERVIEW:**

I am writing to advise of the current status of the Parish's Refugee Sponsorship Committee.

The refugee crisis in the Middle East is very great. There are many people needing our help. Right now, we can only do a very small part in helping. We have chosen to bring a Christian family of up to four people. Other churches and other groups may choose to bring other refugees. Our choice to sponsor a Christian family is based upon the fact that Christians are being persecuted throughout the Middle East. They are currently at a high level of risk and there is not one country in the Middle East that will accept them. This alone should awaken our responsibility as a family of Christ, and our need to demonstrate that the family of Christ will be there for them.

At the moment, our connection to the Anglican Church is twofold: 1) to learn from them the process of sponsoring refugees, and, 2) to operate as a Constituent Group (CG) under the umbrella of the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) relationship that the Anglican Diocese has with the Federal Government. We are not a SAH, and we do not have the time or financial wherewithal to become one. So the Anglican Diocese is kindly allowing us to be a Constituent Group within their SAH. This relationship is governed by the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Anglican Diocese and our Diocese. With respect to the first item, two members of the Committee were sent as initial representatives to a training session put on by the Anglican Diocese in Victoria on November 14, 2015. Other members will attend various other training sessions as they occur.

To initiate and oversee the process of bringing a refugee family to this parish, a Refugee Sponsorship Committee has been established. The committee members were chosen based on their experience, competency, availability, willingness to serve, reliability and ability to work harmoniously towards our goal of bringing in a refugee family. They are members of the parish and not representatives of any group to which they may belong. Together they have extensive and related experience in the areas of law, government relations, finance, office procedures, teaching, medicine, and public relations.

I have confidence that the members of this committee have the qualifications and experience needed to discharge the significant responsibilities attendant upon sponsoring a refugee family. They, in turn, have assured me that they will be relying on the generous support and help from the members of our parish. Our committee cannot achieve success without the participation of the entire parish. This mission will include everyone in Ascension parish, and the committee will turn to the members and groups of the parish for help in related activities when the need arises. In addition, our efforts most likely will be combined with the efforts of Holy Family Notre Dame in Port Alberni.

As you are no doubt aware the situation of the refugees is critical and the Bishop has asked the parishes to move quickly in responding to the refugee crisis. Once the committee has commenced the formal process in keeping with the Bishop's directive, the Committee will approach parishioners seeking their support generally and specifically where needed.

This is a grand opportunity for us to make a difference in the lives of people who have no prospects and little hope. Please join me in embracing this project with your customary generosity of spirit and enthusiasm. Further information will be made available as events proceed.

May God bless our endeavor.

Rev. Karam Alraban