INTERFAITH REFUGEE MINISTRY

Refugees. Who are they? Where are they from? Why are they here? How do they get here? Refugees are people. They are people who have lived through traumatic experiences of war or persecution and have survived to start a new life legally in a new country, America, that shines as a beacon of freedom and hope.

They are from many countries whose governments are repressive or who have actively persecuted those of different faiths, races, and ethnicities. Africa, Latin America, the Middle East are the major areas from which refuges flee for their lives, seeking peace and safety.

They are in eastern North Carolina because this area has been a welcoming one for 23 years with many churches, businesses and volunteers playing a vital part in saving lives and helping build new ones. Refugees are people. They work. They pay taxes. They send their children to school. They learn English. They buy houses. They buy cars. They become friends.

Throughout these years, Episcopal churches in our Diocese have played a vital role in welcoming these strangers and helping them become contributing members of their communities.

Services that IRM and churches provide include assistance with housing, clothing, food, and furnishings. IRM also enrolls adults in English classes, cultural orientation classes, and children in school. Our employment specialist finds jobs within an average of 65 days after arrival.

New Bern Statistics for 2015

- Arrivals – 167
- Nationalities – Afghanistan, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Colombia, Iraq, Somalia, Vietnam.
- Average Family size – 2.5
- Languages from Burma – Burmese, Falam Chin, Tedim Chin, Mizo Chin, Daae Chin, Matu Chin, Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen, Arkanese, Kayah.
- Other languages – Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Spanish, French, Lingala, Somali, Vietnamese.
- Education – varies from none to university degree
- Projected arrivals for 2016 – 200
- Refugees were resettled in New Bern, Greenville, Jacksonville and Morehead City.

The Wilmington sub-office is going strong with many churches and volunteers to help them in their mission.

Wilmington statistics for 2015

- Arrivals – 97
- Nationalities – Burma, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Colombia
- Languages – Burmese, Sgaw Karen, Chin
- Education – varies from none to university level
Projected arrivals for 2016 – 110

For the future:

The New Bern office is hoping to partner with Craven Community College in work force development and perhaps with Pamlico Community College in Human Services.

Partnership with Craven County schools will continue with after school programs and cultural enrichment for students and meetings for parents.

Cultural Orientation classes will continue with members of the general public coming to tell their stories, as well as having visits from police officers, a lawyer, and others who make up the typical American community.

OUR FIRST TASK
Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival. – Max Warren

For more information, please visit our web site (www.helpingrefugees.org) or Facebook pages.

Thank you for playing a vital role in this life-saving ministry.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Husson
Executive Director
Interfaith Refugee Ministry