



Our Call to Support Refugees from Syria and the World

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations have supported refugee resettlement since the refugee crisis created by World War II. The 160th General Assembly (1948) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America stated, “The United States should pass legislation to bring in at least four hundred thousand displaced persons during the next four years. ... As they arrive, our church people should stand ready to open their homes and provide work for these unfortunate victims of war” (*Minutes*, PCUSA, 1948, Part I, p. 204). The people from the pews who approved that policy did so because knew that scripture calls us to shelter the homeless¹ and welcome the stranger.²

The call is no less necessary today. Nearly 60 million people are displaced by war and persecution; 30 million of those displaced are children.³ The crisis in Syria alone has displaced 11 million.⁴ Families are risking their lives and fleeing their homes to seek safety. They are spending months journeying, sleeping outside, paying smugglers for safe passage, and praying for a future for their families in a place that is safe from conflict.

They fear and flee many of the organizations that we also fear: ISIS, Boko Haram, Mara 18, Los Zetas. Right now governors are attempting to block the resettlement of Syrian refugees into their states because members of ISIS are sometimes Syrian. Ask yourself, should a victim’s shared nationality with perpetrators of violence exclude them from protection in this country?

Entering the U.S. as a refugee is not a quick or easy process. Refugees are the single-most scrutinized migrant group to enter the U.S. They undergo rigorous screening by multiple security agencies at multiple times during their pre-arrival processing.⁵ This process can take more than two years. Once they arrive in the United States, they continue to be screened every time they leave and reenter the country and when they apply for employment cards, green cards, or naturalization.

The risk is low and the humanitarian need is great. While, technically, governors cannot dictate where the federal government resettles refugees, the State Department only resettles refugees in areas where they know communities will thrive.⁶ Governors are saying for their states, “No room at this inn.” Now is the time for the faith community to speak up on behalf of refugees, from all countries. Do not let the noise of a fearful few drown out compassion, facts, and logic. Answer the call to act prayerfully and recommit as an individual, congregation, or mid council through co-sponsorship, volunteer hours, and donations through your local resettlement agencies.⁷ Then send or personally deliver a letter, like the one at pcusa.org/immigration, to your governor about the kind of society we should be. If you personally deliver your letter, please take photos and post on Facebook and Twitter using the hashtags **#ChooseWelcome** and **#RefugeesWelcome**. Share with us [@PCUSAImmigrant](https://www.facebook.com/PCUSAImmigrant) and at the Facebook page, [Presbyterians For Just Immigration](https://www.facebook.com/PresbyteriansForJustImmigration). *Thank you!*

¹ Isaiah 58:6–12

² Matthew 25:31–46

³ <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants <http://www.tinyurl.com/refugeesecurity>

⁶ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/11/18/indiana-bound-syrian-refugees-redirected-connecticut/75988858/>

⁷ Contact an agency near you to find out how: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/state-programs-annual-overview>