

Status Report - January 2016

Greetings to all and welcome to many new addressees who have joined the Refugee Working Group,

(This email has been sent via "Bcc," as a privacy consideration.)

As special note:

WE WILL BE MAKING PRELIMINARY "ASSIGNMENTS" TO OUR WORK GROUP ON JANUARY 22ND. PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR PREFERENCE(S) as soon as reasonably possible, using the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FIIm05y0i9DyAfB3aCXmg9UbdphCGMkXHJeES3TBuCgE/viewform?c=0&w=1&usp=mail_form_link

STATUS REPORT:

1/ Many in our community are embracing the idea of resettling refugees, ascertained both from the large number individuals "registering strong interests in helping and the recent Lexington, Virginia City Government's letter (copy attached), unanimously signed by the Mayor and all members of council, proclaiming support City support of efforts in support of welcoming refugees.

2/ Subsequent to our 12/16/2016 meeting (please see attachment), numerous additional individuals have indicated strong interests in joining our team and helping bringing our number to over 280 (with some of these individuals representing their entire congregation, not counted in the 280). Several have filled out our Volunteer Form indicating their areas of interest. To remind: the Volunteer Form may be accessed at:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FIIm05y0i9DyAfB3aCXmg9UbdphCGMkXHJeES3TBuCgE/viewform?c=0&w=1&usp=mail_form_link

3/ In only our fifth month of organization, on the initiative of our own Fr. David Cox, we were favored by Jan-Erik Jones leader of 9 LDS congregations asking to be included on the RWG Team, bringing our total of separate Christian denominations to over 14 and separate congregations to well over 22 – truly an

ecumenical grouping. On the Inter-Faith level, we have a total of four faiths represented (Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, Christian).

4/ I received a call from one of our team members (Elizabeth Sauder) that she arranged for good furniture to be donated for three refugee families, each with (presumably) three children, volunteers to pick up and transport the collection to a storage place (again, donated at no charge) that is dry and secure. In the meantime, we are directing offers of clothing to agencies that can put such assets into immediate use.

5/ We have a leadership team (Anne Hansen, Irene Condie, Becky Edmondson, Amy DeHart, Pastor Bill Klein, Jerry Nay – Fr. Tom Crittenden will be out of town) meeting scheduled for Jan 22nd for the purpose of conducting a critique of our 12/16/2015 meeting, to evaluate the Volunteer Forms and to assign volunteers into Work Groups as indicated on said forms. Our hope is to then designate our four/five leaders to oversee and coordinate Work Groups (attempting to divide the workload equitably). The major groups we have established are: Outreach Committee [OC] Anne Hansen (conducting mass meetings, public briefings, etc.); Administrative Committee [AC] Becky Edmondson (see next paragraph); Volunteer Data [VD] Amy DeHart (collecting and collating information from our Volunteer Forms, etc.); Resettlement Activities [RA] Irene Condie (preparations for maintaining housing and living arrangements); Fiscal Affairs [FA] TBD (policy on raising and accounting for funds, etc.); Review Committee [RC] Jerry Nay (please see paragraph #9, “*THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM*”).

6/ Jerry met with Becky Edmondson. Becky has volunteered to take on our administrative duties (overseeing our Web Site working with Sharon Massie at RELee Church, maintaining our Distribution List, informing Work Group leaders of their initial assignments, preparing correspondence on RWG letterhead). Becky has suggested that we consider public school buildings as a more ‘neutral’ venue for our ‘mass’ meeting (she will check on the availability of Maury River Middle School). As a further supportive note, Kendal Retirement Center (a Quaker lead organization located in Rockbridge County) has offered the pro bono use of their meeting room(s) if needed – a further expression of the ecumenical outreach of this undertaking.

7/ We received a very nice word of encouragement from Allison Duvall, Manager for Church Relations, Episcopal Migration Ministries, NYC in response to our sharing a copy of “RWG Meeting Notes 12 16 15 with her. Her guidance from a National perspective has been, and shall be, valuable. Allison has invited me to keep in touch, which we did earlier this week.

8/ We have made application for a start-up grant from the addressee of this Report for initial administrative necessities and refugee support items (letterhead stationery, postage, venue fees and refreshments for mass meetings, procurement of initial items for resettlement opportunities, etc.).

9/ “*THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM*” continues to be the National conversation alleging that groups of refugees are imbedded with terrorists. We have formed a “Review” Committee to address this issue. One of our strategies is to ask for the advice of friends known to us who have served in Homeland Security, CIA, FBI and local law enforcement, referring to this strategy, upfront, as we deal with the public, i.e., that we are taking the issue of security VERY seriously and will do all we can to understand the rigorous national process as it is applied to the refugees who may settle here”

10/ We invite your questions and/or suggestion at:

RefugeeWorkingGroup@releechurch.org