

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION MINISTRIES REPORT

Report of REFUGEE WORK to Week of Compassion Board (for April –September, 2015)

from Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea



RIM's door is OPEN TO YOU!

In late March, Syria's conflict entered its fifth year, with over 4 million Syrian refugees currently in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt—and now throughout many nations of Europe. Additionally, nearly 8 million persons remain displaced within Syria. Most are mothers and children.

The U.N. is calling Syria the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. Yet, only 1,517 Syrians were resettled into the U.S. in 2015. Only 323 were resettled in 2014--and just 36 in 2013.

RIM leads Disciples efforts to increase numbers of refugees resettled into the U.S., to educate churches about Syrian and other refugees, and to engage congregations in local outreach to refugees.



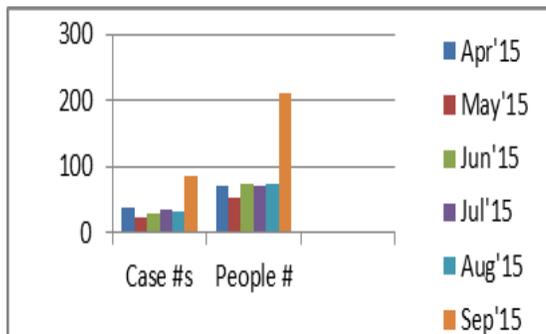
Disciples resettle approximately 8% of all refugees who enter through Church World Service!

Since the end of World War II, Disciples have resettled refugees in partnership with Church World Service & their 33 national refugee resettlement offices. (See locations on map.) Per US State Department regulations, churches within a 50 mile radius of an office can officially help sponsor a refugee family—but EVERY Disciples Church can help provide "Refugee Hospitality Kits" and other special needs!

Contact our Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, at: sstanley@dhm.disciples.org or 202-957-7826.

Disciples-Assigned Refuge Arrivals and Engagement Report thru Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

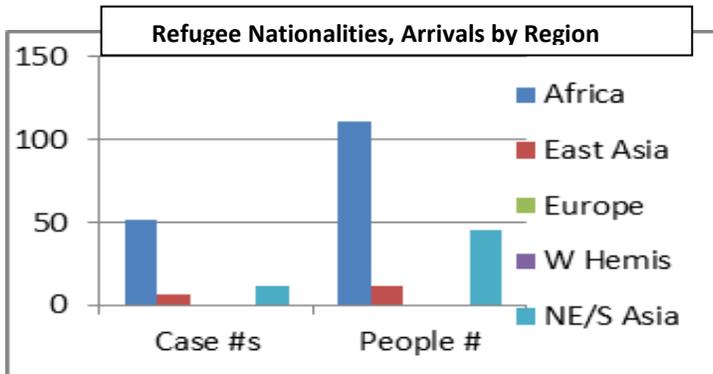
Case and Individual Numbers & Nationalities of Arrivals by Month for April 2015 thru September 2015



Total Arrivals: 247 Cases, 558 People

Highest Numbers of Refugees This Period Entered, in Order, Thru Offices in TX (72), IN (71), CA (56), NY (53), NE (41), KY (37), PA (33), AZ (30), IL (26), and NC (23)

Top Nationalities of Refugees for Disciples this period were from Burma (166), Congolese (70), Iraq (61), Bhutan (47), Somalia (43), Syria (35), Iran (34), Cuba (13), Afghanistan (9), and Russia (7)



RIM issued an Emergency Refugee Alert to congregations for July-Sept. to:

*Target areas of high anticipated refugee arrivals in the period

*Introduce new ways of sponsorship for churches within 50 miles of a resettlement office

*Invite outlying churches into vital support roles

*Prepare them for future potential Syrian arrivals

This alert, coupled with news of refugee needs, led to the highest involvement of churches in many years!

Areas of Highest
Refugee
Arrivals Included:

Harrisonburg & Richmond, VA.

Sacramento, CA.

Minneapolis, MN.

Portland, OR.

Dallas & Austin, TX.

Indianapolis, IN.

Omaha, NE.

Lancaster, PA.

Churches in these areas were encouraged to serve as **“WELCOME TEAMS”**; inviting them to:

Pick **3** for Refugees



As a “Welcome Team,” a church anticipates serving for only 3 months (to promote refugee self-sufficiency,) and selects at least 3 “hospitality tasks,” which may include: Meeting refugees at the airport, helping with rent, household items, groceries, or transportation, providing a

welcoming meal, preparing refugees for a job, teaching basic English or financial literacy, touring refugees in their neighborhood, or helping with medical appointments. This new model of church sponsorship is a historic change from the “sponsorship” model of the past, and was just developed in April in a partnership effort between RIM, Church World Service, and other refugee partners.

To re-invigorate church engagement, churches within high arrival areas and in outlying areas were invited to compile and deliver **REFUGEE HOSPITALITY KITS**; including:

BEDDING KITS



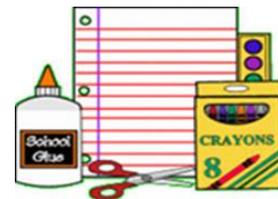
2 pillows
2 pillow cases
1 queen (other) sheet set
1 quilt/bedspread

BATH KITS



2 bath towels
2 hand towels
2 wash cloths
6 bars soap
2 toothbrushes & toothpaste

SCHOOL KITS



1 backpack, 2 notebooks
100 sheets paper
2 bottles glue
2 packages crayons
2 pair scissors
4 pencils, 4 pens

(Note: School kit items should be new. Bedding & bath towels may be gently used. Items above are appreciated as a part of suggested "kits" OR in bulk quantities.)

RIM has developed and is providing consistent education about entering refugees; including the Syrian crisis and its potential impact on refugee arrivals in the U.S.:



NY Times infographic shows cluster locations of small numbers of Syrian arrivals over last few years.

A large variety of Syrian refugee resources for education, consistent action alerts, worship, and advocacy/policy understandings, can be found at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/rim-resources/syrian-refugee-resources/>. Resources likewise help Disciples link the work of RIM with the responses to Syria by Week of Compassion, Global Ministries, and Family and Children’s Ministries.

Responses to outreach efforts have been vigorous and constant, from individual congregations and regions!:

Among the highest refugee arrival areas, already resettlement offices in 6 of 10 of these areas have been the beneficiaries of exciting REGIONAL OUTREACHES! These have included the offices in Harrisonburg & Richmond, VA., Sacramento, CA., Dallas & Fort Worth in Texas, Indianapolis, IN., and Lancaster, PA. Two additional regional events are planned for October and November, again in Lancaster, and in Kansas City and Nebraska. Regions engaged have included Virginia, Capital Area, Northern California, Indiana, and Southwest (Dallas and Fort Worth areas.) These outreaches have engaged more than 41 congregations. Additionally, individual churches and members from Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Southern California, Arkansas, Kansas, Ohio, and elsewhere have contributed to meeting refugee needs both near to them, and far away.

See pictures of the work of many Disciples, and hear just a few of their stories, below:



*Members of the First Christian Church of Fayetteville, in Northwest Arkansas (at left) gathered loads of items in late September to deliver over 6 hours to assist refugees through our Dallas CWS affiliate. They took time to make the delivery on their way to a Razorbacks game! Their pastor, Cheryl Sybrant, expressed: “Our volunteers had a great experience dropping off the refugee kits in Dallas....Thank you for your ministries and compassion and for giving us a hopeful outlet of response.” They covered their mission action in their September church newsletter.

*The picture at right shows representatives from over nine congregations in Dallas and Fort Worth who were to gather in early October to learn about how they can serve as “Welcome Teams” to the many refugees arriving into the TWO CWS partner offices in their area! In the picture, they are holding signs that say “DFW Welcomes Refugees”; and their picture has been posted on the AmericaWelcomes.us website, and is being shared with the President and Congress to show the hearts of churches to welcome additional refugees!



*At left is a Syrian family of NINE members, assigned for our Disciples care, and resettled into Lancaster, PA. Although Disciples have only ONE small congregation within the 50 mile radius of the office, churches from throughout the Christian Church Capital Area have gathered more than eight carloads of furniture and other items, and went to set up the apartment for the Syrian family pictured at left. See pictures from the churches below who helped the Syrian family, and who likewise made a separate trip of three more carloads of items to the Harrisonburg, VA. CWS office, as well! Items in Harrisonburg helped multiple

families from Iran, Iraq, and Myanmar. The group from three Capital Area churches also made a direct delivery and visit with a Columbian family of 7; including the two beautiful girls in the photo at far right, below!



*More than 8 Virginia Region Churches contributed multiple trips of items to both the Harrisonburg and Richmond, VA. offices. Women made hand tied quilts for Burmese, Bhutanese, and Congolese refugees in Richmond. District VII donated a special offering, churches from Lynchburg took multiple loads, and Bon Air Christian visited and supported a Congolese family (photo above)—even as they plan and gather additional items for a sponsorship in the coming year! Again and again, Richmond’s Case Worker (a previous refugee herself) wrote, “I again have more wonderful items from Disciples!” With the Congolese family gifts, she said, “Thank you for everything. Just I brought a lot of things to Congolese family and they are so happy.”

*Likewise in September, 9 churches from the Indiana region held a “Hospitality Day” in Indianapolis, where churches brought items to and re-connected with the Exodus Refugee Ministries CWS partner office there. The Disciples Center also got into the act and collected Refugee Hospitality Kits, as well (see above.) Multiple churches planned for future sponsorships with families—including SIX CONGOLESE families who are anticipated to enter beginning in October, who have LONG TERM MISSION CONNECTIONS WITH DISCIPLES. These families are the direct result of Disciples missions work in the DRC—and one is even the head of our Disciples church movement there! We should celebrate their arrivals in our next report period—and the Indiana Region is already preparing the ground to receive and celebrate this long term partnership!! Another Indiana congregation (Speedway Christian) has begun announcing special plans for their children’s “Noisy Offering” to be taken in November—where they are anticipating raising OVER \$1,000. The children themselves have decided to donate the offering this year to help refugees!!

*The many NAPAD church representatives who gathered for the Fall NAPAD Conference in Sacramento, CA. also brought items to give to refugees through our Sacramento CWS affiliate office, called “Open Doors.” Shirley Kinoshita tore up the Facebook pages with her posts to encourage NAPAD congregations to respond—and her urgings yielded great fruits of hospitality!!

****Due to special circumstances and the unprecedented scale of the Syrian humanitarian crisis, RIM continues to provide ongoing advocacy information for actions to increase reception and welcome of Syrian refugees.***

--Review how our Disciples leaders have joined in supporting refugees by reading Rev. Ron Degges’ statement, as President of Disciples Home Missions, here: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/RIM-Degges-Syrian-Refugee-Press-Conf.pdf>

--ALL faith leaders (clergy, board chairs and vice-chairs, organization leaders) are invited to SIGN ON to a letter to that urges welcome for Syrian refugees of all backgrounds. Read the letter, signed by our top Disciples leaders and a growing number of clergy from around the US here: <http://bit.ly/WelcomeAllRefugees>, and sign on here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PNbNKO3TV1ZcoaKhddNCV209kzGJvDs4yS11y5ODZw/viewform>

--Celebrate how your voices have already been heard to support Syrians, as many Disciples helped reach a goal of 100,000 signatures on a petition to President Obama during September! See the President’s response here: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/authorize-and-resettle-syrian-refugees-us>

--To guide your understandings for how to support, read RCUSA's wonderful refugee advocacy toolkit (developed also with faith partners) at: http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/pdfs/members/Local%20Congressional%20Visit%20Advocacy%20Toolkit_09.16.15.pdf

--Continue to read information regarding Syria through GlobalMinistries.org, and contact makarip@ucc.org for ongoing updates.

Additional Refugee Support and Interpretation with Congregations

- In April, RIM Director presented to a gathering of the Disciples Women of the Illinois-Wisconsin region regarding Syrian refugees. This presentation, and other related materials, are available upon request.
- RIM Director continues to strengthen partnerships with Disciples Women through shared human trafficking/labor abuse work, and unaccompanied children and mother refugee concerns and actions.
- Multiple "refugee encounter events" were offered at General Assembly last July to promote interest in refugee resettlement around the country. As Columbus is a site of one of our CWS resettlement offices; we offered "Bhutanese Nepali Dancing" as a part of our workshops, and connected CWS refugee office staff from Columbus, as well as a Disciples member of our CWS refugee office in Lexington, KY., with our General Assembly presentations, workshops, and booth.
- A "World Refugee Day Toolkit 2015" was shared to help congregations understand the need for refugee support through advocacy, and to encourage their honoring of refugees in their communities. It is available upon request, and is soon to be posted on the RIM website, ahead of the June 20th World Refugee Day.
- RIM Director continues to serve as Co-Chair of the CWS Immigration & Refugee Program Committee, and attended and presented by request at the national "CWS Member Meeting" in Washington, DC in April.
- Disciples from the Montagnard community continue to talk and strategize regularly with the RIM Director to track and advocate against human rights violations of community members within Central Vietnam and Cambodia. RIM is in the process of developing a "RIM Advisory Board," to support our ongoing work and further engage churches.
- RIM Director continues to support Southeast Asian refugee and new American communities by serving on the Board of SEARAC (Southeast Asian Resource Action Center).

Week of Compassion Refugee Emergency Assistance Provided through RIM



In partnership with Week of Compassion, RIM continues to provide emergency assistance to Disciples-assigned families through support of the Week of Compassion's "Compassion in Action" Fund. Requests are often received through CWS refugee affiliate offices for cases where refugee families face extreme and unmet family, health, and mental health needs. Funds are provided to Refugee & Immigration Ministries by Week of Compassion, and then are disbursed, if and as



emergency needs require, from the RIM office. All disbursements to families indicate the support is given in partnership with WOC. Assistance during our report period has included:

2015 April-September Refugee Assistance
for Emergency Grants

Date	Account	Reference	Debit Amount	Credit Amount	Balance
8/6/2015	200-800-800-8475	LFS (Lutheran) - Altaee, Raad (Iraqi) family housing		\$1,050.00	
8/6/2015	200-800-800-8475	RST - Ahlam, Idan (Iraqi) dental and rent/utilities		\$1,000.00	
8/6/2015	200-800-800-8475	CRIS - Farah, Rahma (Ethiopian) guardianship fees		\$115.00	
8/6/2015	200-800-800-8475	CRIS - Nge, Mi (Burmese Chin) guardianship fees		\$115.00	
7/7/2015	200-800-800-8475	David Cruz - Emergency Grant		\$1,200.00	
					\$3,480.00

- As seen in the above graph, funds of \$1,200 were again given in July (with check made to the landlord) to provide rental assistance for El Salvadoran man, woman and their three children, teenage brother, and a grandchild. The funds were sent in response to a request from an immigration lawyer in the Bay Area of California who works in partnership with the Oakland Peace Center and outreach of First Christian Church of Oakland. The family's husband/father had previously been deemed positive in a

credible fear interview, and had been granted Temporary Protected Status. It was subsequently revoked. The father has been granted a withholding of removal—and so remains temporarily united with his family.

- In August, two emergency grants were given to refugees affiliated with the Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS) of Columbus, Ohio. One case was Ethiopian, the other was Burmese. In both cases, funds were given to relatives to support required fees for their application for guardianship to continue to care for a distant relative whom they had taken into their households to provide care following a family tragedy experienced by the child. Both children had been taken care of by relatives for many years before “legal guardianship” was allowed.

- Funds of \$1,000 were sent to help with medical expenses for emergency surgery for an Iraqi refugee in Texas.

- An amount of \$1050 was sent likewise in August to partner with a Disciples congregation in Fort Collins, CO., who have helped to assist a large family in Denver, CO. Our CWS office in Denver unfortunately closed due to financial difficulties following the family’s arrival, and the CWS national NY office requested our ongoing care for the family as their case was transitioned to a Lutheran partner organization in the city.

- In addition to the above grants, RIM and WOC continue our unique partnership with First Christian Church of Lynchburg, and their outreach to Hawa Bakhteyari, a local young adult young Iraqi woman who came to the US seeking asylum status after fleeing persecution due to threats received after her father’s murder and her public support for the freedom of young girls to not be required to marry at age 12 or 13. Hawa received final notice that her asylee status was granted in late March, just before this report period. During the past six months, the church continued to provide support to Hawa as she awaited the granting of her work permit. The church donates these funds through WOC, and they are passed through RIM and paid out as necessary to support Hawa’s needs.



Hawa with members of 1st Christian Church (Lynchburg, VA.) and supporters.

Unaccompanied Minor Children Crisis Response

At least 40% of last year’s arrival numbers of unaccompanied minor children are expected to come in Spring/Summer of 2015 again.

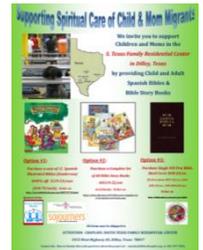
RIM continues to consistently partner and strategize with WOC regarding the ongoing unaccompanied children’s crisis. Sadly, root causes and violence continued to escalate during the period. RIM consistently partners with multiple faith communities to advocate for the protection of these migrants, and seeks constant opportunities to educate our Disciples congregations about root causes and current opportunities for actions to support them.

As a reminder: TOP STATES for FY2015 ARRIVALS RELEASED TO SPONSORS: include: CA., Texas, Florida, New York, MD., and Virginia. **TOP COUNTIES for FY2015 ARRIVALS RELEASED TO SPONSORS** include: Maricopa, AZ; Los Angeles, CA; Harris, TX; Miami Dade, FL; Palm Beach, FL; Prince George’s, MD; Suffolk, NY; Queens, NY; Montgomery, MD; Fairfax, VA.

*RIM continues to encourage churches and individuals to **GIVE TO WEEK OF COMPASSION, marked “Refugee Children Aid”** to help Disciples continue to reach out, and to access multiple resources about the crisis at: <https://www.discipleshomeemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/rim-resources/childrens-resources/>. (See “Arriving Children in Crisis”.) RIM’s “Top Ways” for churches and individuals to outreach to Central American child refugees continues to be updated in both general and geographically specific versions. This resource provides myriad opportunities for direct church engagement, and also provides links to partner national and global offices of the CC(DOC).*

- RIM likewise maintains its partnership with Disciples Women, to engage congregational groups in supporting the 15% of the children and mothers who are **NOT** released into the care of a sponsoring relative already living within the US. These children (and in some cases, mothers who accompany them) are placed, instead into ever-growing family detention centers. Increasingly, RIM continues to partner with other faith communities, and provides leadership in praying and advocating against this model of family detention. Family detention had disappeared from use by the US since 2009 when the “Hutto” family detention center in Texas was closed down due to human rights violations. Then in the summer of 2014, a family detention center was opened in Artesia, New Mexico--where Week of Compassion provided initial funds for Religious Services Materials; including Bibles, song books, and other worship items. The initial Artesia, NM center was closed in late 2014, and contracts were issued to private prison companies (Correctional Corporation of America and GEO) to run two family detention centers in Texas (in Dilley and in Karnes City). The Dilley Center is the largest, with a capacity of 2,400 mothers and children. In late April, Dilley completed its second phase of expansion and now houses more than 1,400 women and children (many of them transferred from the previous Artesia Center). The Karnes facility holds over 500 women and children as it continues to expand. Another family center is located in Berks, PA. with nearly 180 women and children.

- RIM, with WOC, continues to support a **BIBLES AND BIBLE STORY BOOKS PROJECT** to aid the mothers and children in Dilley. See the flyer online at: <https://www.discipleshomeissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Dilley-Spanish-Bibles-and-Books-KidsMoms-4815.pdf>. RIM also continues to support the **“ANGEL TO ANGEL” CARDS OF CARE PROJECT** for women and children in the detention centers. See here for more information on this exciting project for church connection: <https://www.discipleshomeissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Angel-to-Angel-Project-DISCIPLES-Call-for-Letters-EnglishFINAL4815.pdf>. A Spanish flyer is also available.



- RIM’s Director travelled to Dilley and Karnes City in April; leading a visit with the Chaplain and an interfaith prayer vigil at the Dilley Center which were sponsored and supported by Week of Compassion and Disciples Women. (See pictures of events and both centers below.) Disciples clergy from Austin and Phoenix participated, and many engaged in “solidarity prayers” and vigils throughout the country—including one at the Disciples Center, Indianapolis.



Dilley Meeting with Chaplain, April 22

Dilley Prayer Vigil Pictures, April 22, with Disciples Clergy from Austin, TX, & from AZ and DC



Angel to Angel Cards of Care Made by Disciples Women in the Great River Region for Dilley Moms and Kids in Detention

Pictures of the Dilley detention center (Dilley, TX), in late April following Phase 2 of Expansion. The facility is planned still to more than double in current size—to hold 2,400 moms and kids!

- RIM’s Director participated in San Antonio with the “Interfaith Welcome Coalition” of 50+ faith partners, which engages in ongoing hospitality, advocacy, and visitation/legal assistance for the mothers and children especially within the Karnes Center. They are expanding their work to link with women and children in Dilley. The group emerged in Fall of 2014, and are a wonderful model of partnership education and ministry outreach to assist the refugee families. (See pictures below.)



Leaders with the Interfaith Welcome Coalition in San Antonio, TX, prepare for upcoming actions to assist the welcome, legal, and visitation needs of migrant moms & kids in nearby centers.



Immigrant Detention Center in Karnes, Texas, run by GEO Prison Group

Transport Near Harlingen, Texas

- RIM remains interested to continue to work in partnership with our congregations and Week of Compassion to help meet critical and most often unmet legal assistance needs of the refugees. Most are deemed eligible for asylee status while in detention due to the persecution, human trafficking, and violence they have endured in their home countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. However, the bond amounts for the women and children to be released are set at amounts up between \$1,500 to \$12,000.

The RIM office continues to track the very small scale “in country” Central American Migrants (CAM) program established in Early 2015, targeted to assist up to 400 Central American migrants. Thus far, logistical requirements for in-country travel (i.e. requiring children to travel at great risks to their home capital cities four times), DNA testing requirements, and costs have been frequently prohibitive.

- Disciples will be invited to write Angel to Angel cards to migrant mothers and children in detention at General Assembly.

Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries Support



- RIM participates actively as our Disciples representative on the Board of SWGSM. In its April meeting in Los Fresnos, Texas, Director Feliberto Pereira reported especially about the growing number assistance with bus passes to join relatives in the US and other ministry needs.

Director Feliberto Pereira toured the Board around the US border with Matamoros, Mexico in April; showing the bus depot to which he is called to assist multiple times each week. (See pictures above.) He shared records of migrants, their cultures, and needs assisted week by week; at an average cost of \$225 per individual. Though most migrants assisted are currently Cuban, they likewise include El Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, Africans, and Mexicans.

- At the early October, 2015 meeting, Director Pereira again expressed great appreciation for the support of Week of Compassion grants which assist him in meeting critical refugee needs as above, and which also assist with the ongoing distribution of rice and beans throughout multiple border communities and projects.

Additional Special Partnerships with Week of Compassion



- RIM continues to appreciate the joy of partnering as often as possible to share in the interpretation of WOC’s work.
- In April, RIM partnered on a display table to mutually interpret the work of RIM and WOC at



Washington, DC’s annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days Conference. (See two right photos.)



Please contact the RIM Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, at sstanley@dhm.disciples.org or 202-957-7826 to engage together in advocacy priorities, call upon us to encourage your local immigration and refugee work, and come alone or with a group to join our ministries and visit our office in National City Christian Church, 5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, D.C. For legal immigration assistance, also contact Tana Liu-Beers, at: tana@dhm.disciples.org or at 317-289-1407.