
REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island

At the time of the migration of Vietnamese refugees who became known as "the boat people", Anglican parishes across Canada undertook to sponsor families who could not otherwise have come into the Country. These sponsorships, on the one hand, were often a matter of life and death to the refugee family and on the other hand, were also instruments of growth and greater understanding of service toward others for the parishes involved.

The refugee crisis in recent years has become more and more severe as people from countries all around the world flee persecution because of their political or religious views, the color of their skin, or their participation in democratic movements in countries not as comfortable with pluralistic democracy. Many refugees look to Canada as a refuge, but too many apply for all to be admitted. Often, refugees in real physical danger (as opposed to "economic migrants", at home) are refused entry unless some group in Canada offers to sponsor them.

The Diocese of Nova Scotia has signed an agreement with the Canadian Government, which recognizes the Diocese and its parishes as an approved sponsoring agency. This means that red tape is kept to a minimum and much time can be saved. There are costs involved in sponsorship. The hosting group undertakes to set up the refugee family in appropriate housing, help get them established and support them until they get on their feet, or for up to a year. Clothing, furniture, toys and a place to live must be organized; money must be raised for groceries and other needs. Although the Government can provide language training which may be required, yet, a team of volunteer teachers and explicators of Canadian culture may need to be assembled. Job, or jobs, may be found for members of the family through contacts in and beyond the parish. The refugee family will need patience and a circle of friends, love and encouragement and not just to receive material provisions.

Most refugees are not Anglicans. The hosting parish needs to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of their new friends and, above all, to avoid any impression that assistance from us is dependent on conversion. Refugees tend to feel isolated and depressed, cut off from their culture and their roots; they would not come away from their country if they had any other choice, but they have no choice.

The Diocesan gives formal approval to the Government of any potential family for sponsorship, but the responsibility for research and choice rests with the parish.

The following organizations can give further advice or orientation to an interested parish, as well as putting before the parish a specific refugee case for consideration:

PWRDF representative for Nova Scotia: contact through the Diocesan Office or World Mission Unit of the Anglican Church: (The Unit maintains a refugee Section with a great deal of information available.)

600 Jarvis Street
Toronto, ON M4Y 2J6

Refugee Committee of the Diocese of Montreal:

Box 158, Station B
Montreal, Quebec H3B 3J5.

Mennonite Central Committee:

Overseas Service Office
134 Plaza Drive
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 5K9