



OCEANSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Statement of Support for Refugees

We as a church fully support the welcoming of and care for refugees coming to Canada and our local area. This stance is firmly grounded in the biblical story.

The Bible is a story of refugees, of people chosen by God who were forced to leave their homeland. Jacob fled his native land (Genesis 27); Joseph was a victim of human trafficking and his family became economic refugees (Genesis 37, 45); the Israelites were oppressed in a foreign country and Moses sought asylum in a foreign nation (Exodus 1-2); Ruth immigrated to keep her family together; David was a political refugee; the Israelites were again exiled and deported from their homeland; and on the list could go.

God continually reminds the Israelites of this part of their history and admonishes them to welcome the stranger and the displaced because they themselves were once strangers in a foreign land. But no piece of evidence for God's preference for refugees is stronger than the fact that Jesus himself was a refugee. Born into an oppressive empire, he was forced as a child to flee to a foreign country (Egypt) in order to escape being murdered until it was safe to return home (Matthew 2:13-18).

Jesus then spent most of his life and ministry befriending outsiders, foreigners, and others who made religious and political leaders nervous and uncomfortable. In Matthew 25, Jesus strongly identifies himself with people like refugees when he says that when we welcome the outsider it is as if we are welcoming him: "I was a stranger and you invited me in" (v. 35). In fact, Jesus said that to reject outsiders is to reject him (v. 45).

God came to the world in the form of a refugee. Although we at times may feel overwhelmed by the great need before us and what to do about it, as Christians we believe the right posture is one of open arms to all who are in need of refuge and safety and love, whether near or far away. For as we welcome them, it is as if we are welcoming Christ himself.

Ways We Can Help

We are currently a small church that just went through a leadership transition. The administrative challenges and financial responsibilities (about \$40,000 to bring a family here) limit our ability at this time to sponsor a family ourselves. Due to those and other factors, we believe the most effective way we can currently help is by partnering with organizations and initiatives that are already engaged in the process of bringing refugees here and supporting them in their continued settlement.

Therefore, we as a church support, are partnering with, and/or encourage involvement with the initiatives below. Please prayerfully consider how you might be involved, whether financially or by volunteering in some way. Thank you for your participation!

1. Working with our Pentecostal (PAOC) family of churches

Our national fellowship of churches has been working diligently on the refugee crisis and on relocating families to Canada. Here are a few ways we can be involved.

Helping Local Churches

The PAOC is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with the Canadian government which allows local PAOC churches to act as Constituent Groups in sponsoring refugee families. To support these local churches in assisting refugees, go to <https://paoc.org/donate/canada-refugee-sponsorship-opportunities>.

We are specifically familiar with the work of one our churches in North Vancouver. You can read their story and donate here: <http://canyonheightschurch.ca/syria/>.

ERDO

Our humanitarian organization, ERDO, is on the ground helping Syrian refugees throughout the Middle East by providing emergency food and other assistance.

You can give and find out more information at <http://www.erdo.ca/crisis-response-syria>.

Hope For Syria

This organization is bringing hope for a new future to university-aged refugees affected by the crisis. More info at <https://paoc.org/donate/hopeforsyria>.

2. Working with local churches and organizations here in the Oceanside region

Our church and its pastors work closely with the local ministerial association on partnering together in ecumenical initiatives. Together, we have agreed to the following statement:

"We endorse, support, and recommend to our congregations and parishes the work of local churches, municipalities, or other local organizations in raising funds and gathering other forms of support to help sponsor refugees from the current crisis in Syria."

As such, we encourage the work of the following organizations.

Qualicum Refugee Support Group (QRSG)

Local residents from the town of Qualicum Beach are working on bringing a refugee family to Qualicum. You can express your interest in helping by emailing qualicumrsg@telus.net or calling 250-974-7031 or by downloading this [Questionnaire Form](#).

Qualicum Community Baptist Church

This church is partnering with a local couple in sponsoring two refugees from Eritrea. Call 250-752-9123 for more information.

Catholic Church of the Ascension

Although they have met their fundraising goal for sponsoring a family, you can visit <http://www.ascensionparish.org/refugee.html> for more info and other ways to help.