

RESPONSE TO SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

At the request of the Chair of the Congregational Board, the Outreach and Mission Coordinating Team met to discuss the ways in which we, as a people of faith in a nation of immigrants can respond to the Syrian refugee issue. Our discussion focused on four main categories: (1) Public Statement/Advocacy, (2) Contribution of Money, (3) Education, and (4) Hands on Outreach. Some action has been taken in each of those categories.

Public Statement/Advocacy. The team prepared a statement that it recommends be adopted by the Congregational Board. If adopted, it will be published in *The Christian*, posted on the church's Facebook page and the website. In addition, it may be circulated by members of the congregation to the media and elected officials.

Contribution of Money. The Grants and Special Offerings Ministry Team has designated the Week of Compassion as the recipient of the Christmas offering, with all donations to go toward the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

Education.

- Information accompanying Christmas Offering request, including letter, bulletin board and accompanying written information and video in parlor.
- Children's Sunday School focus on refugees in December and January.
- Program for February Elder/Deacon meeting focusing on process for vetting of potential refugees and what happens when they get here.

Hands-on Outreach. Continue our work with Della Lamb's resettlement program and look for other opportunities.

The team, along with other interested members of the congregation, will continue to look for additional ways to respond, such as an ongoing partnership with a Muslim congregation.

I'd like to close with a poem used by Martin Niemöller, the prominent Protestant pastor who spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. I think it is relevant to us today.

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they can for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was not one left to speak for me.

Report to Congregational Board, December 8, 2015.