



American Baptist Churches of New York State

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WELCOMING THE STRANGER AMONG US

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. (Deuteronomy 10:17-20)

May 2023

Dear Partners in Ministry,

We recently shared with you through several documents entitled “WELCOMING THE STRANGER AMONG US” the biblical *mandate* of welcoming the refugees coming to our land.

We are encouraging our churches to prayerfully consider coming alongside an agency that is the initial sponsor of a refugee family and partnering with that agency in caring for a family.

The Region will provide a \$2275.00 grant to the first 10 churches who apply and are partnering with a refugee-sponsoring agency in their part of the State. To obtain a grant form, contact Jim Kelsey at jkelsey@abc-nys.org or 315.863.7336 or go to <https://www.abc-nys.org/welcoming-the-stranger-among-us.html>

We are providing an annotated bibliography to assist you in this endeavor. You can find it at <https://www.abc-nys.org/welcoming-the-stranger-among-us.html> We want to provide some more specific information about how your congregation might work with a refugee family in a responsible way.

We want to clarify one item. If you work with a sponsoring agency, you will need to refrain from proselytizing the refugees with whom you work. They may be Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist, for example.

Let us define some terms:

Sponsoring Agency: A regional agency takes responsibility for initially sponsoring a single refugee or a refugee family. These people are entering our country through official channels.

Co-Sponsor: Your congregation will partner with a sponsoring agency to care for a particular family. Different agencies call this relationship different things. You may hear “Circle of Care” to describe this. You may hear “Support Team” to indicate a group that commits to less than a full co-sponsorship.

“As American Baptists of New York State, we will embrace God’s future with these core operational values: honesty, connectedness and hope. We will uphold our operational values in every aspect of our common ministry.”

What will be expected of me? Below is a sample list of what *might* be asked of you. It is only an example. Each sponsoring agency has its own list. You may be able to work with an agency to provide a portion of their list:

Welcome Home: Assist in setting up an apartment for a refugee individual or family.

Rental Assistance: Make a financial contribution to assist with housing.

Furnishings and Supplies: Collect furniture, household, hygiene, and cleaning items.

Seasonal Clothing: Provide coats and boots for each member of the family.

Stock the Pantry: Purchase culturally appropriate groceries.

Arrival: Pick up the individual or family from the airport.

Welcome Meal: Sponsor a culturally appropriate meal for the new individual or family's arrival.

Health: Accompany the individual or family to medical appointments.

Conversation: Assist in developing English skills.

Financial Education: Facilitate financial education.

Job Development: Collaborate with the employment team to prepare families/individuals for employment.

Transportation Assistance: Arrange transportation of individuals or families in partnership with the sponsoring agency.

Community Guide: Help families/individuals learn more about their community.

Applications: Assist the individual or family in applying for their social security number and benefits such as food stamps.

School: Help children register for school.

Selective Service: Assist in completing selective service registration.

Cultural Orientation: Work with the sponsoring agency to provide cultural orientation to all adults in the family.

How do I find a sponsoring agency? Below is a list of sponsoring agencies we have contacted with whom you can partner

Utica area: The Center

Contact Miguel Rascos at 646.954.1463 or migueld@thecenter.org

Syracuse area: Interfaith Works of CNY

Contact Rhonda Butler at 315.449.3552 Ext. 127 (office) or 315.278.211 (cell) or rbutler@ifwcny.org

Buffalo area: Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie Counties

Contact Dasha at dvaluy@jfs.wny.org or 716.261.8969.

Rochester area: Catholic Charities

Contact Christina Krewsen at 585.684.0162 or Christina.krewsen@fcscharities.org

Albany area: We are not at this point aware of an agency in Albany that is doing initial sponsorship of refugees that is looking to work with co-sponsors. There are, however, many agencies in the Albany metro area who are working with refugees in varying stages of their journey of integration into the community. You can find many of these agencies at

https://www.healthycapitaldistrict.org/content/sites/hcdi/SDOH_Resource_Guide/Refugee-Services-Resource-Guide.pdf

To look for an additional agencies, you can go to <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/providers/>.

Be clear about what you are wanting to do. Agencies work with refugees all along the journey, from first arrival through citizenship and beyond.

If there is no agency in your area listed, contact the Region office at jkelsey@abc-nys.org, and we will work with you to find a local partner.

A little taste of the work

If you want a sense of the people with whom you will be working, go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bEK6gytwec> and <https://www.interfaithworkscny.org/programs/cna/>

Feel free to contact Jim Kelsey at jkelsey@abc-nys.org or 315.863.7336 for further guidance.