

Moment for Mission, Opportunities for Outreach

Syrian Refugee Family Sponsorship Update

Following our November 22nd Congregational Meeting with Action Réfugiés Montréal Executive Director Paul Clarke (InsideOut, Fall, 2015), the Sponsorship Core Committee undertook the challenging task of identifying a family for resettlement. It was felt that, with the resources available in our church and as a congregation-wide undertaking, we could sponsor two related families. The decision was based solely on need and risk, and we felt that these families would benefit greatly by being sponsored by an organization with the resources of St Andrew and St Paul.

Meet the Zidan families, Syrian refugees who will be sponsored by The Church of St Andrew and St Paul

Hanan Zidan is married (she and her husband, Iyad, are in their 30s) and has three children, two girls, Hana and Lynne, ages 10 and 7, and a boy, Hassan, 3. Hassan has a handicap that impairs his speech and makes some movements difficult. Prior to the war, Hanan worked in a day care and her husband was custodian at a local school. They lived in Damascus but, when the war began, their neighbourhood became increasingly dangerous due to its proximity to illegal prisons run by the secret service. There were several bombings in the area and their children were deeply affected. They older children have frequent nightmares and day terrors, and Hassan has been unable to access proper medical care. They left Syria in June, 2015, and have been in Lebanon since. Refugees cannot work and the UN food and clothing program was cut some six months ago.

Fadia Zidan, Hanan's sister, is a single mother in her 30s with a daughter, Lujine, who is 15. Prior to the civil war she was living in the Bab Touma neighbourhood in the oldest part of Damascus with her sister, Badra. It was under heavy bombardment in 2012 and many buildings were being destroyed. The apartment where Fadia was living was hit by a bomb while they were there and some family members were injured. Her daughter fell into a depression and attempted suicide. Eventually, it was too



Parents Hanan and Iyad, and their three children Hana, Lynne and Hassan, hope to live in Montreal.

much to handle and they left Syria for Beirut in March, 2014, where she is unable to work, and the situation is very difficult due to the sheer number of Syrian refugees.

Hanan and Fadia have a sister, Salam who lives in Laval. She emigrated here some years ago, and has herself sponsored Badra and her 3 children aged 20, and 16 year old twins. They arrived this past December and are now living with Salam. It was she who asked ARM if they could find sponsors for other members of her family living in such difficult conditions in Beirut. Salam works in retail and is at the same time studying to become an accountant. In February three members of the Core Committee, Catherine Merklinger, Lucinda Lyman and Brian Merrett, along with Lauren Lallemand from ARM, spent a working evening with Salam and Badra and the children. All shared in a delicious Syrian meal and found it a joy to begin to get to know this warm and resilient family.

Core Committee member Ann Birks and her team is arranging a benefit concert (more below). Robert Bracewell and Brian have been active with pledges and donations, as well as

providing information for the necessary forms. Jane Bracewell, Thea and Lucinda are coordinating volunteer tasking and Catherine is coordinating household requirements and liaising with Salam Zidan. Rev. Jack Archibald provides key pastoral guidance at meetings and in correspondence. By the time you read this, official paperwork will have been completed and we will be making preparations for the arrival of three adults and four children. These preparations are, as was said recently by a member of our congregation, more difficult than people think! Many hands make light work and the Core Committee will be asking for the congregation's help in preparing to settle our families. We can expect that they will arrive in Montreal in mid to late summer, 2016.

The Church of St Andrew and St Paul would be responsible for all of the costs relating to sponsorship, which includes all the needs of the families for a year; the Church is the family's resource base as they work towards autonomy by the end of twelve months. Aside from raising the required funds (an initial target of \$30,000 was an adequate amount to settle four people but, because there are seven people, one of which has medical needs, the target has been set at \$50,000), there are multiple manpower tasks to be undertaken.

After finding, furnishing and equipping two apartments, and acquiring specific items of clothing, we will be among those meeting the families at the airport and transporting them to their new dwellings. We will help locate interpreters, apply for Social Insurance Numbers, select a family physician and dentist, and plan for possible medical emergencies. With Salam we will provide orientation regarding public transportation and banking services, and provide assistance in linking our families with community activities. Working with Salam we will enrol the children in school, make child care arrangements, register for child tax benefits, enrol the adults in language training and provide assistance in finding employment.

In upcoming Sunday bulletins, the Core Committee will be appealing for volunteer assistance from the congregation. Please join us in helping settle these two families!