

**UNITED WELCOME GROUP MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2015**

10:30 a.m.

Christ United, Lyn

Present: Rev. Wendy MacLean, Christ United Lyn
Rev. Kimberly Heath, Wall Street United
Rev. Heather Froats, St. John's United
Catherine Clow, Christ United
Grant Davy, Christ United
Fred Vickery, Christ United
Susan Malanka, St. John's United
Joan Tallon, St. John's United
David Bremner, Wall Street United
Diane Daub, Wall Street United
Eileen Doner, Wall Street United
Lynn Galvin, Wall Street United
Linda James, Wall Street United
Carolyn Matheson, Wall Street United
Bev Delaney
Joanne Fletcher

Opening Prayer by Rev. MacLean.

This meeting was arranged in consultation by the three clergy present. The purpose for the meeting is the potential sponsorship of refugees by the three churches as a whole. Those present are individuals interested in facilitating the process.

Sponsorship Overview

The United Church of Canada (UCC) overview of requirements and answers to frequently asked questions is attached.

Each church board is required to pass a motion to indicate that the congregation will be involved in refugee sponsorship and settlement. Rev. Heath stated that Wall Street United board has approved the sponsorship, in conjunction with Christ United and St. John's United, for 2 refugee families.

The Blended Visa Office Referred program (BVOR) has selected refugees travel ready, i.e. have had immigration checks. This is generally the fastest and least expensive way to sponsor as the government will pay up to six months income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program in months 2 through 7. The disadvantage to this process is there are virtually no Syrians on the BVOR list at this time (updated every 2 weeks); however, it is anticipated this will change within the coming weeks. Also, the BVOR list contains a significant number of single males, more so than families.

Another way to sponsor is by making a request to the government for a specific family. This process takes longer as the family may not be "travel ready," that is, still requires medical, criminal and security screening. With a named family, there is one full year of financial responsibility (approximately \$35,000 for a family of 5) or until the family is financially able to care for themselves.

Financial Obligations:

Reference attached UCC Refugees and Migration Frequently Asked Questions for details.

The City of Brockville is working on a capital campaign to raise funds to bring at least 10 families to Brockville and hopefully can access financial support through this fund. The City has set up an account for donations and will issue income tax receipts. The provincial government announced that \$8.5M will be available. More information on how the money will be distributed and under what criteria is not known at this time.

As United Church of Canada congregations, sponsoring a family is a legal contract; however, if we fail, it is the responsibility of the UCC, not the individual churches. The UCC must be advised of our plans and it is not clear at this time whether the UCC wants one lead church; however does require the approval of the three church boards.

It was recommended a separate bank account is established and tax receipts provided. It was noted that Presbytery has sponsored a family and John Clarke would be a resource for financial information. A financial coordinator, who will work with the City, is needed for this group and suggested Joanne Pearce be approached.

Rev. MacLean advised that Athens United would also like to be part of the process and have raised funds which can be used as seed money.

Family Selection:

Rev. Heath suggested sponsoring one family from the BVOR list and considers sponsoring another known family such as the friend of the local acting Imam, Ahmed. Mohammad Ayman, his wife and 2 children from Syria currently live in refugee camp Jordan. They also have an older daughter who is a defacto dependent because she is over the age of 18. The family has been approved as refugees by the UN but has not yet been cleared by Canada. Ahmed, a local business man, has pledged to provide a job and housing for one year to the Ayman family.

Round Table Comments:

- There is an advantage to sponsoring from the BVOR list and another individual family as they would not be arriving at the same time, with the Ayman family still requiring Canadian processing.
- Guidelines on processing and holding funds are needed, as well as the process to access funds from the City.
- It is assumed that the sponsorship group will be responsible to ensure housing is safe and adequate upon arrival to Brockville.
- As Brockville and the UCC is accepting of the LBGT community, (“This is what we say we are, show that this what we are”), sponsoring refugees because of their gender orientation may be of consideration, as well as single women who suffer much persecution.
- The Salvation Army has indicated they will provide clothing. (L. James to contact)

United Welcome Group Meeting,
October 22, 2015

- The City Steering Committee meets on November 2nd (David Bremner attends), with an open meeting on November 16th at 4:00 p.m . at the Fire Hall on Laurier Blvd.
- Christ Church is holding a Syrian Supper on November 28th to raise funds.
- Delta and Toledo United churches may also be interested in assisting with fundraising.

Requirements to Proceed:

1. **Group Name:** The name for this group shall be “United Welcome”
2. **Leadership:** Rev. Wendy MacLean and David Bremner agreed to co-chair this group.
3. **Secretary:** Diane Daub has agreed to provide secretarial services.
4. **Financial Coordinator:** WSUC will approach Joanne Pearce to determine her interest to volunteer as the financial coordinator for this group.
Action: Rev. Heath and Diane Daub
5. **Individual or small group to prepare forms:** Alex Heath has prepared initial work on the forms to sponsor Mr. Ayman and his family. It is noted the forms require great detail and care when completing.
Action: Joanne Fletcher to contact an individual within Presbytery.

Agreed to Action:

1. Pursue the sponsorship for Mr. Ayman and his family, including his 18 year old daughter.
2. Members review the BVOR list to select travel ready family or individual(s).

NEXT MEETING DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH , 10:30 a.m., Christ Church, Lyn.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Attachments to minutes:

- ✓ Member contact list
- ✓ Sponsorship Application Process Chart
- ✓ UCC Refugee and Migration Frequently Asked Questions
- ✓ Checklist
- ✓ BVOR Listing dated October 13th.