



**UNITED WELCOME
MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 11, 2016**

10:30 a.m.

Christ Church, Lyn

Present were: Rev. Wendy MacLean (Chair), Diane Daub (Secretary), Eileen Doner, John Hanson, Paula McCammon, Randy Vatcher, Carolyn Matheson, Linda James, Rev. Heather Froats, Bev Delaney, Joan Tallon, Catherine Clow.

Regrets: Rev. Kimberly Heath, David Bremner, Dave Matheson, Harvey Loyst.

The meeting was **called to order** by the chair at 10:30 a.m.

1.0 Opening Prayer -

Rev. Wendy McLean opened the meeting with a quote from UCC study on Islam on Muslim Christian relations, followed by prayer.

2.0 Additions to Agenda -

#5.2 Government Sponsored Refugees -Rev Wendy.

3.0 Refugee Assistance Committee Brockville and Area Update -

In the absence of Rev. Heath, Diane read her prepared report. The following were noted:

- Marion Dalley from the Volunteer Centre has joined the group to help groups such as ours to acquire and use volunteers.
- The website is being launched, www.refugeesforbrockville.
- The Fundraising Committee, chaired by Bruce Wylie is being launched.
- The group is looking into bringing Government Sponsored refugees to Brockville. Ahmad is making major inroads and has spoken directly to families housed in an Ottawa hotel to encourage them to come to Brockville. Four large families (up to 10 people each) are interested and the group is trying to find adequate housing for them.
- It is our understanding that the Government will continue to fully fund these families if they relocate to Brockville and would require the support of groups such as United Welcome to become familiar with Brockville/Canadian living.
- The book, "The Newcomers Welcome Kit" contains a listing of services, schools and social agencies in Brockville and is an invaluable resource. Dave Bremner has a copy.

**3.1 Presentation by Barbara Helms, Executive Director,
Dar-ul-Ihsan Centre for Islamic Education, Cornwall, ON**

Members who attended the presentation reported it was easy to follow, interesting and informative. She has been a Muslim for a long time, married a Muslim and raised her children Muslim. She reminded the audience that negativity is not acceptable to mainstream Muslim community who seek peace, wholeness and balance.

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3.2 100 Arabic Phrases -

Ahmad is teaching a course on 100 Arabic Phrases, a beginner level Arabic words and phrases on Wednesday evenings beginning at 6:30 p.m. Because of the number of people interested in the course, it will now be held at the First Baptist Church. Contact brandy@brockvillelibrary.ca to register.

Group members who attended the initial class reported it was interesting, fun and helpful. Ahmad is reassuring about trying to pronounce the words.

Rev. Wendy has attended local Friday prayers and described the setting, stating she was warmly welcomed. If anyone is interested in attending, contact Ahmad at ahmad.khadra@gmail.com.

4.0 Update on Action Items:

4.1 Status on Sponsorship -

Since last fall, no update BVOR list has been received. (This may be due to the change in sponsorship process by the Liberal Government.) Paperwork has been submitted to the UCC Sponsorship Agreement Holder.

The Al Sarakby family is registered on the refugee list; however may locate elsewhere if the opportunity arises.

4.1.1 Housing -

Living arrangements are not yet in place and upon notification/acceptance of a family this will be put in place. Mary Mansworth and Sue Steele are the City housing coordinators and have a listing of available housing.

It was noted that families appear to be larger than anticipated (8 to 10 members) and therefore it is difficult to find housing for them in Brockville. Although we can accept a family on short notice, the family may not arrive for 6 to 8 weeks thereafter.

4.2 Promotion with Community -

Doug Mather, in consultation with WSUC webmaster, is in the process to develop a website for this group on the Wall Street Church server.

It was questioned whether United Welcome should have a Facebook page and agreed the City's Facebook page is adequate.

4.2.1 Letterhead -

Diane presented a draft template letterhead which was approved and will be sent to members. Mallorytown and Lansdowne churches will be added as contacts once approval is received.

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4.3 Collection of Items -

Linda reported the response has been excellent, with many items now available. Still needed are dressers and small inexpensive household items. Two hide-a-beds have been donated which will be a good resource for larger families.

Three occasional living room chairs donated require cleaning and payment for this was discussed (\$40/chair). It was agreed a donation specifically for this purpose is requested via a notice in each church bulletin.

Action: Linda will prepare the wording and Diane will send to each church contact.

Seaway Treasurers has offered a 25% discount to refugees and has given Linda a discount on the purchase of tables. The Salvation Army has also donated items which were selected by Linda referencing the list of still needed.

Randy Vatcher offered his truck to collect large items.

A letter has been sent to Leon's Furniture requesting the donation of a frame for a queen-sized bed; however, no response has been received to date.

A letter has been provided to a local dentist requesting donation of services for the initial checkup and emergency services; however, no response has been received to date. It was noted the local Dental Association is involved via the City to provide volunteer dental services. The Healthy Smiles program is available to children.

4.4 Speaker from SLC -

Due to the availability of information sessions by the City, it was agreed to use these resources and remove this item from the agenda. The school board also has many support groups for immigrants who provide a wide range of information, services, and agencies available.

4.5 Financial Update - \$7,813 @ Feb 10th in the UW account.

4.6 Volunteer Recruitment -

Eileen has been in contact with Marion Dalley, City Volunteer Coordinator. Currently nine people have indicated their willingness to volunteer. Eileen has prepared a "Volunteer Opportunities" sign-up sheet which defines the various areas where volunteers are needed. All volunteers require a police check and there is a \$10 fee by the Brockville Police; however, there is no charge with the OPP. It is recommended volunteers (a) obtain a new check and (b) arrange to have one completed now.

It was suggested an orientation binder is prepared for the family. It was noted one may already be available, or in the process of compilation, by the City.

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There was discussion on putting in place such matters as obtaining a doctor prior to the family's arrival. It would be beneficial to receive information from a group that has already received a family to determine the process and timing they used to ensure all services required are in place.

**Action: Rev. Wendy to contact Pastor Jack, Bethel Christian Reform Church.
Barb Delaney will look into the registration process for a clinic/doctor.**

5.0 Other Information:

5.1 Round Table Report on Events -

Diane clarified that proceeds for the Brockville Concert Band event on February 14th at Wall Street Church are not for the refugee fund. However, proceeds from the Philip Yancey presentation in October will be given to the UW refugee fund. Tickets on sale now at WSUC church office.

5.2 Government Sponsored Refugees -

Rev. Wendy proposed accepting a Government Sponsored family, currently living in a hotel in Ottawa awaiting settlement, so that we do not lose the current energy and momentum. These families are already funded and it would be our responsibility to secure housing and essentials for daily living.

By a show of hands it was agreed to pursue a Government sponsored Family.

Action: Randy Vatcher, Linda James and Rev. Wendy agreed to accompany Ahmad to Ottawa to meet a potential family. (David Bremner, Harvey Loyst and Doug Mather may also be interested).

Diane will contact Pastor Kim to obtain a contact name in Ottawa.

**6.0 Next meeting date: Thursday, March 10th at 10:30 a.m. or
Possibly Feb 25th at the call of the chair**

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m. with a closing prayer.

Diane Daub,
Secretary

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