

Welcoming Refugees

Dearly beloved,

Grace be yours and peace.

“You shall treat the stranger who resides with you as one born among you. You shall love that one as yourself.” — Lev. 19: 34

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” — Heb. 13:2

For decades, Christian communities in Canada have responded with deep compassion and sponsored thousands of refugees from all corners of the world. Refugee resettlement has been our work over many generations. Today, a refugee crisis of immense and unprecedented dimension is unfolding. Millions of Syrians have been displaced. We are moved to tears and compelled to act.

As Christians, we are called to put our faith and hope into action and to meet the needs of the oppressed and vulnerable by reflecting our own experience of God’s love for us. God’s Word directs us into paths of hospitality and invites us to welcome the stranger. In God’s Word we find the source of our strength and a model for every action we undertake in God’s name.

We give thanks for the outpouring of love and support already shown by Canadians in the face of the Syrian refugee crisis. We are especially grateful for the efforts of the Christian community and of all who have turned their hand to the important work of resettling and supporting refugees.

We want to encourage new and continued resettlement efforts. Such efforts require commitments that extend over many months and even years. Where communities have the resources to sponsor refugees on their own, we offer our encouragement and thanks. Where communities have fewer resources, we ask them to invite their neighbours into partnership and to work together. To you, as well, we offer our encouragement and thanks.

While we are welcoming and caring for refugees, we must continue to be mindful of the reasons for their flight and the complexity of the conflicts from which they are seeking refuge. Military intervention alone will not bring peace. We commit to work with others and invite our

communities to contribute to a robust public witness. We continue to call on Canada to strengthen its diplomatic efforts to end the terrible conflict, to increase humanitarian assistance in the region, to help stop the flow of weapons, and to work to re-establish respect for human rights and the rule of law.¹

In the days to come, the Christmas story will begin to be told. Lest we forget, that story includes the journey of Jesus, Mary and Joseph into Egypt where they took refuge from those who would do them harm. As we recall the journey of the Holy Family, we invite our communities to participate in every aspect of refugee resettlement in reflection of their gifts and resources.

We invite our communities to welcome those who seek to make their home with us even as we would welcome Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Matthew 25: 31-46).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyson Barnett-Cowan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan
President

26 November 2015

¹ [Church leaders' letter to the Prime Minister on Canada's Military Mission in Iraq and Syria \(6 April 2015\)](#)