

DIOCESAN REFUGEE PROGRAM - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In April 2021 Vestry approved 13 co-sponsorships for 40 people under the Diocesan Refugee Program. The Diocesan Refugee Program goes back to the mid 1990s before Bishop Bays retired. At that time Ralph Paragg was asked by Rev. Gary Paterson, All Saints, to serve as Refugee Coordinator on a temporary basis, as he was a Board Member of the Regina Open Door Society (RODS). Ralph retired from RODS in 2002, but continued to be active in refugee sponsorship through All Saints which remained the most active parish in refugee sponsorship in the Diocese until the current formation of Immanuel Parish.

In 2020 the Diocese of Qu'Appelle sponsored 77 persons with 34 families/individuals. The sponsorship of persons did not reach double figures until 2015 when 24 persons were sponsored. Until March 2019, sponsorships were done on a handshake with family co-sponsors agreeing to provide all settlement and financial support. In March 2019 Diocesan Council adopted the practice of the Archdiocese of Regina (Catholic) to require co-sponsors to deposit the estimated cost of the sponsorship with the Diocese and an admin fee of \$250 recommended by Canada Immigration. In 2020 the Diocese received \$8,500 in admin fees for 34 applications and \$520,000 to be held in trust and to be paid out in 12 monthly installments when the refugee(s) arrive in Regina and area. The advantage of the trust fund is that sheltered the Diocese from financial liability in case of a sponsorship breakdown.

In January 2021, All Saints Vestry approved six sponsorships for 20 people. We received 77 spaces from Canada Immigration and are on track to sponsor all 77 persons before December 2021. Currently the majority of sponsored persons are from East Africa, mainly Eritreans, and to a lesser extent Somalians, South Sudanese and recently Ethiopians. Other currently sponsored persons include some Syrians and Iranians out of Turkey.

Submitted by Ralph Paragg
Refugee Program Coordinator