

Introducing the Refugee Network of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley

The newly formed **Refugee Network of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley** can link interested individuals and congregations to the robust efforts already underway in our area. Contact person: Shelly Davies, Westminster, shellydavies72@gmail.com

Mission and Goals Statement:

Refugee Network of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley

As a follow-up to visits of a PCUSA International Peacemaker in 2023, we will join as congregations in the PMV, and through study, storytelling, and action, live into the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger in our midst, and hope to guide this ministry in the ways of the PCUSA Matthew 25 initiative.

We will offer education about immigration, immigrants, undocumented people, and refugees and the issues impacting these people today within the boundaries of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley. We will seek to form partnerships with organizations already active in this area so our work builds upon, rather than replicating, what is already being offered. It is our hope and confidence that these will inspire people to act for justice for those who are marginalized. These efforts will raise awareness and generate needed advocacy for many who are among the least of these Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25. We plan to work with PCUSA Mission Co-workers who have expertise to lend. Through our efforts, we hope to engender empathy so that people can grow in their capacity to see immigrants, undocumented people, and refugees as human, people who share in the common humanity God grants to us all.

As followers of Christ, inaction is not an option. Join us as we learn the personal stories of immigrants, undocumented people and refugees in the Miami Valley and become their advocates for justice.

Initial action plans:

- Join the Miami Valley Immigration Coalition, a coalition of faith communities and other organizations and individuals committed to immigrant justice, as one of its 15 partners. mvidayton.org
- Share information with our respective congregations via the print and electronic newsletters available and through the presbytery's *Constant Contact*
- Attend the next Miami Valley Community ID Program, January 11th at the downtown Dayton Metro Library from 9:30-11:00 a.m. to observe and learn from that program and from the organizations that set up tables with information to help the immigrants who attend. The program, sponsored by the Hall Hunger Initiative, helps people obtain a Community ID which helps them register their children for school, find housing, and apply for services available to them.
- Share this document from the Citizen Advocacy Association that explains the process by which newcomers to this country apply for legal residency and eventually citizenship. That link is here:

 [NLI - New Americans Presentation.pdf](#)

What can **I** do to help refugees and immigrants in the Miami Valley?

1. Visit the website mvidayton.org and learn about what is being done for refugees and immigrants in our area.
2. See where you might fit in. Most of the partner organizations have volunteer opportunities, from small to larger commitments.
3. Talk with other concerned members of your congregation to share what you have learned.
4. Find out what other churches in the presbytery are doing to help refugees and immigrants.
5. Invite a speaker from one of the MVIC partners to come to your church.
6. Participate in learning opportunities sponsored by the Refugee Network.
7. Go where you can meet immigrants. They are their best advocates.

For example: If you had attended the *World Refugee Day Celebration*, sponsored by Welcome Dayton and held at the Dayton Metro Library, June 22, 2024, in addition to enjoying international food and music, you would have:

- Heard June 22, 2024, declared “Catholic Social Services Day” by Mayor Jeffrey Mims, honoring the longstanding work that organization has been doing in helping refugees and immigrants in Dayton.
- Heard Rose Lokwang explain how she has gone from being a refugee from South Sudan seventeen years ago, to getting her GED, MA, and PhD, and is now an academic coach at Sinclair and the lead delegate for Ohio in the Refugee Congress that meets with Congressional representatives in Washington, DC.
- Heard a panel of four more recent refugees from Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Ukraine tell their stories and explain the *biggest challenges* they faced coming to the US (language barriers, finding a job, missing their families) and give *advice to other recent arrivals* (learn English, get a job, stay in school, mix with Americans, and don’t give up!).

We are called to welcome the strangers among us as our brothers and sisters. The blessings we offer will return to us many times over.