

# Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania



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## MEDIA RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Note:** *The Executive Committee of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania has endorsed the following statement on the refugee crisis, and will recommend it to the full Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives at their regular meeting on December 9.*

### **Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania Responds to the Refugee Crisis in the Middle East and Europe**

*“Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.” – Matthew 2:13-15a*

As an infant, Jesus and his family fled their homeland in search of safety. Today, as we watch millions of people escaping war, persecution, and despair in the Middle East and Northern Africa, we recognize our Lord and Savior in their plight. Our faith compels us to meet human needs and to respond with compassion to those who suffer, regardless of their faith or background. As this greatest migration since the Second World War continues, Christians hear our responsibility in the words of the Law, which demands that “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Meeting the challenge of this current crisis will require interfaith cooperation and the united commitment of governments, nonprofit agencies, and faith communities. Though Southwest Pennsylvania is thousands of miles from Damascus, Mosul, Kabul, or Asmara, we acknowledge the role that our churches and our elected leaders can play, and we encourage them to respond.

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We urge our member congregations:

- To pray for the safety and well-being of all refugees and for an end to persecution and war.
- To contribute to agencies such as Catholic Relief Services, International Orthodox Christian Charities, Church World Service, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Episcopal Migration Ministries, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service that are providing direct support to refugees in the Middle East and Europe.
- To participate in the work of refugee resettlement agencies already at work in our region as they welcome refugees from many nations.

We urge our elected officials:

- To continue to expand the number of refugees accepted by the United States. While we are encouraged that the White House has promised to welcome 10,000 Syrians and a total of 85,000 refugees from all nations in the coming fiscal year, we join with many humanitarian organizations to recommend accepting at least 100,000 refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa, without reducing the number of refugees accepted from other parts of the world. We pledge to work with our member congregations and partner agencies to welcome an appropriate number of these refugees who can be successfully integrated into our communities. We pledge to assist these refugees with resources necessary for their successful resettlement, including housing, health care, employment, education, and citizenship, with consideration given to their specific religious needs.
- To support the Protecting Religious Minorities Persecuted by ISIS Act of 2015, which will offer expedited refugee services to those, including our fellow Christians, who are in special danger from the so-called Islamic State.
- To take steps to resolve ongoing conflicts, followed by economic re-development in the affected nations, in order to end the root causes of migration.

Through our collective work and witness, we pray that all of us will one day hear the words promised in Jesus' parable: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for ... I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:34-35).

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