The current global migration crisis is one of the largest human rights issues of our time. It not only affects governments and agencies, but United Methodist Churches as well as our local communities. Because mission and outreach are tenets of our Wesleyan heritage, it wasn’t long before we started receiving emails asking, “What can I do to help?”

The United Methodist Church is spending a great deal of time and resources addressing the migration crisis. And whether you know it or not, YOU are part of that work through apportionments and giving.

We hope the following information will be useful to congregations who want to explore becoming more engaged in addressing the refugee crisis. The United Methodist Church, through UMCOR, is also working hand-in-hand with partners such as the Church World Service to serve.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief [UMCOR] and the General Board of Global Ministries [GBGM] have a number of valuable resources online at umcmission.org. From there you can share videos, explore how you can be involved, and seek answers to common questions about the crisis.

Thomas Kemper, the head of GBGM, has also written a short article (included) which explores the reasons and ways that local UMCs can become involved. There is also information from the Church World Service who works with the issue of human migration.

Thank you for being willing to explore the ways you can help, and fulfilling our Wesleyan heritage as we open our doors and hearts to the stranger.

Rev. Matt Lacey, Director of Mission and Advocacy, North Alabama Conference
Rev. Russell Hestley, Advocacy Team Chair, North Alabama Conference
Migration as Blessing

Human migration is as old as human history,” states a resolution on “Global Migration and the Quest for Justice,” a resolution adopted by the 2016 legislating General Conference of The United Methodist Church (see p. 10).

A great deal of hardship results from being displaced by war, natural disaster, or political turmoil, or from a desire to improve economic or social conditions by relocating from one place to another. And never in human history has there been as many migrants as today.

To suggest that migration might be a blessing sounds somehow subversive. But even a quick glance at the historical record indicates positive results from the movement of people. Migration can be life-saving. Migration into Egypt in the book of Genesis saved the Hebrew tribes from starvation; migration out of Egypt under Moses led to the Promised Land.

Migration helped to spread the Christian gospel. Some of the original followers of Jesus, at least according to tradition, became migratory evangelists—St. Thomas to India and St. Mary to Egypt, and Acts chronicles the migratory mission trips of St. Paul. In fact, Acts seems to expect evangelism via migration. In chapter one, the disciples are told to be witnesses “to the ends of the earth.”

Mission by migration is part of our United Methodist heritage. The first Methodists in North America were migrants from Ireland and England. German immigrants to the young United States returned to my own homeland taking Methodism back with them—part of the Evangelical United Brethren history of our denomination. That migratory mission is why I am a United Methodist.

The process is still happening. As Professor Dana Robert of Boston University School of Theology has pointed out, with globalization, we now have “a matrix of movement in which mission is taking place.” (“Missions in a Matrix of Movement,” https://www.faithandleadership.com/multimedia/missions-matrix-movement.)

The origins of today’s Methodist movement in large parts of Southeast Asia lie with refugees who left the area after the Vietnam War, became United Methodists in the United States, and returned to their homelands as migrant missionaires. In the United States, missionaires from China and Brazil have come to serve migrant communities from their home countries. Ghanaian migrants are helping to transform and revitalize Methodist congregations in Italy and Germany, often in close cooperation with the Ghanaian Methodist Church.

Notably, in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf States, the only Christian a young Saudi may ever meet is a Filipino maid or other migrant domestic worker. Faith in Jesus Christ goes with these migrants and they witness as situations permit—mission through migration.

The church today has the responsibility of advocating for migrant welfare, reform of national and international migration systems, safe passage, and humane treatment of returnees. We must welcome strangers and work to unite families separated by migration policy.

We also should recognize and thank God for these opportunities for service and also for the blessings brought by mission through migration.

Thomas G. Kemper
General Secretary
General Board of Global Ministries
AN ORIENTATION GUIDE FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES
With new communities, new schools, and new jobs, refugees have places to go! Navigating a new city is a challenging, but essential skill. Provide *New City Packs* for arriving families including a map, calendar, wrist watch, umbrella, and funds for 2 weeks of bus tickets.

1. Contact CWS at irp@cwsglobal.org to let us know you are interested in making *New City Packs*. We'll match you with one of 33 cities across the country that need your packs. We'll also tell you the number of families they expect that year, so that you will have a goal number for *New City Packs* to collect!

2. Reach out to your faith community, friends, and family to start collecting the needed items. Ask donors to contribute $35 for bus tickets and $5 for shipping costs.

3. Create *New City Packs* by filling each bag with a watch, map, calendar, and umbrella. You may also choose to include a card of welcome. Please note, we are not able to accept incomplete packs.

4. Pack all *New City Packs* in shipping boxes. Clearly number all boxes, putting the check for bus ticket purchase in box #1.

5. Ship the boxes to the provided CWS affiliate office. We ask that you and your faith community or organization pay all shipping costs.

6. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt, as well as a note of thanks.

7. Refugees will start their new lives equipped with the tools they need to get from here to there!
Refugee families arrive with ample hope and determination, but little more material possessions than the clothes on their backs. Help one family start a new life in the US by collecting a welcome home kit. Staff and volunteers will unpack the boxes, set up the apartment, and the family will arrive to a home filled with your contribution of plates, pillows, and can openers!

1. Contact CWS at irp@cwsglobal.org to let us know you are starting a collection and for additional information.
2. Reach out to your faith community or friends and family to start collecting the below items. Consider asking donors to contribute $5-10 to shipping costs as well.
3. Pack all items in boxes. Clearly number all boxes, putting an inventory list and gift cards in box #1. Groups may also include a signed card of welcome in box #1.
4. Contact CWS for the address of the CWS affiliate office that is most in need of the welcome kit. Ship the boxes to the provided CWS affiliate office. We ask that you and your faith community pay all shipping costs.
UNHCR Identification and Referral
Refugees flee violence and persecution. They arrive in another country, residing in refugee camps or in urban environments. UNHCR determines the best durable solution for each refugee family, including possible resettlement to a third country like the United States. UNHCR will then submit referrals to the US for potential resettlement.

Refugee Processing Interviews
The US State Department contracts organizations to manage Resettlement Support Centers (RSC) around the world. These RSCs process refugee applications submitted by UNHCR. CWS currently operates the RSC Africa, which manages all resettlement applications in sub-Saharan Africa.

Refugee Adjudication Interviews
United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) officers travel throughout the world conducting interviews of refugee applicants. Once a file is prepared by an RSC, the USCIS officer will interview the refugees in person to approve or deny their application for resettlement based on US immigration law.

Cultural Orientation and Preparation for Travel
Refugees that are approved for admission to the US will receive a medical examination as well as cultural orientation classes. Refugees in some areas may also be eligible for ESL training and specialized cultural orientation classes.

Reception in the US and Introduction to Local Communities
Each refugee family that enters the US is pre-assigned a resettlement agency that will meet them at the airport. A resettlement agency caseworker will then bring the refugees to their new home that has been furnished with necessities prior to their arrival. Refugees will then work with their caseworker to find a job, learn English, and integrate into their local communities.

A REFUGEE’S JOURNEY TO AMERICA
Motivated by faith, Church World Service was born in 1946 as seventeen denominations came together to provide aid to war-torn Europe. They strove to alleviate hunger and poverty, and to promote peace and justice around the world. Churches throughout the United States provided food, clothes, and welcoming communities for refugees arriving with nothing but hope for a new life.

More than 65 years later CWS continues to embrace the challenge to assist and befriend refugees. Many flee their homes and countries amidst violence and persecution. Many have spent decades in extremely harsh conditions in a refugee camp. CWS aims to provide refugees, and other displaced persons, with a new home and an opportunity to start again.

CWS’ goal is to provide quality services guided by principles of human compassion and dignity. Working in partnership with local faith communities CWS provides clients with resources, referrals, education, and guidance to ensure their successful and self-sufficient lives in the US.

We offer a face-to-face and cross-cultural ministry opportunity for people of faith to exercise hospitality and welcome newcomers; helping to build more welcoming communities. Serving refugees and other newcomers helps faith communities live out their divine call for justice and mercy.

Put another way, forming relationships with refugees helps people of faith fulfill the one golden rule which we all hold dear across religious traditions: Treat others as you would wish to be treated.
ADVOCACY FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS

OUR VOICES

Advocacy is a critical part of building welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees. Through voicing our support we can help ensure the US government continues to assist refugees. There are also important policy changes that would modernize the refugee resettlement program and improve the lives of refugees near and far. Our voices are necessary to make these proposals a reality.

Most immigrants who come to the United States are fleeing political persecution, economic hardship, violence and/or extreme poverty. Today there are approximately 11 million undocumented people living in the United States. They are hard working community members residing with family, some of whom are US Citizens. Over the last two years more than 200,000 parents of U.S. Citizens have been deported and 2 million people have been deported in the last five years. Our voices are necessary to help keep families together.

SIMPLE STEPS IN ADVOCACY

There are simple ways to get involved and lift your voice to build welcoming communities.

1) Get educated on the issue, listen to the stories of impacted people, learn what is happening at the local, state and federal levels. Refugee Council USA, rcusa.org, is a good resource for this information.

2) Write a letter, email, call, or tweet at the decision makers that can influence the issue and encourage your colleagues to do the same. The CWS site, cwsglobal.org/speakout is a great resource for this.

BUILD A TEAM

Our advocacy and organizing efforts are much more effective when we work with a team, rather than in isolation. Anyone can start an advocacy team and CWS is here to help make that happen.

For more information on how to build an advocacy team and advance policy improvements for immigrants and refugees, contact us at immigration@cwsglobal.org

ADVOCATE