



Refugee Sponsorship Newsletter

If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 1 John 4:1

Resettlement to Canada

We were amazed at how quickly our applications for Syrians were processed by Canadian Immigration; interviewed and arriving in Canada, often within 8 weeks! This meant 25 Syrians received a warm welcome from their sponsors in British Columbia and Ontario during the first 3 months of 2016.

For most privately sponsored refugees the average processing time to arrive in Canada is 4 - 5 years. The recent arrival of Tezolo's family of 8, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo took 7 1/2 years! The word *wait* in the Bible describes an attitude, more than an activity, because to "wait on the Lord" is to trust Him. The waiting was difficult for the family and the sponsor but we are all very thankful for their safe arrival in British Columbia in February.

Sohaila and her family of 5 fled from Afghanistan in 1984 to Iran where they became Christians in 2006. Later in 2011 they fled again, this time to Turkey. Their application was submitted to the Ankara Visa office in August 2015 and thankfully they could arrive in British Columbia in only 8 months!

Sponsorship Update

Many churches are anxiously waiting for the arrival of their sponsored family. The quick processing times between Dec - Feb have changed! Since March 1, staffing levels at Immigration's Central Processing Office in Winnipeg and the Visa offices in Beirut, Amman and Ankara have returned to normal. Syrians now arrive on scheduled flights, not on government chartered planes.

The government is currently advising sponsor it may now take 6 - 9 months for Syrians and Iraqis to arrive.

To reduce backlogs in Visa offices, in 2012 the government began setting annual limits on the number of submissions it would accept. This quota is usually allocated to Sponsorship Agreement Holders in

November but as of April 5, City of Refuge has not received our 2016 allocated spaces.

We remain hopeful we will have sufficient number of spaces to submit applications for all churches interested in sponsoring a refugee this year.

We have been overwhelmed by the level of interest in sponsoring Christian refugees and are very thankful for a volunteer staff member assisting with some of the work.

Due to the largest refugee movement since World War 2, many churches are interested in sponsoring Syrian or Iraqi refugees. Applications for 94 Syrians/Iraqis were submitted as of March 31. A life changing opportunity for each of these people!

However there are many other persecuted Christian refugees; particularly Pakistanis in Thailand who are in an extremely vulnerable position. Thailand has not signed the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention which means it is free to deport any refugee who has overstayed their visitor visa. If deported, these Christian refugees will be targeted for further violence and death threats.

Profiles for Christian refugees in Africa, Asia and the Middle East are available upon request.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Romans 12:15

Thank You

You changed our life from worst to better, and given us hope again, especially our kids can now focus on their future. We are thankful to the Church for their help; they have become our dearest family. Every day we are praising God for our new life. Tanil & Suzie

Each of the recently arrived Syrians expressed the same thanks and praise to God for bringing them to Canada.

The Lord has Done Great Things . . .



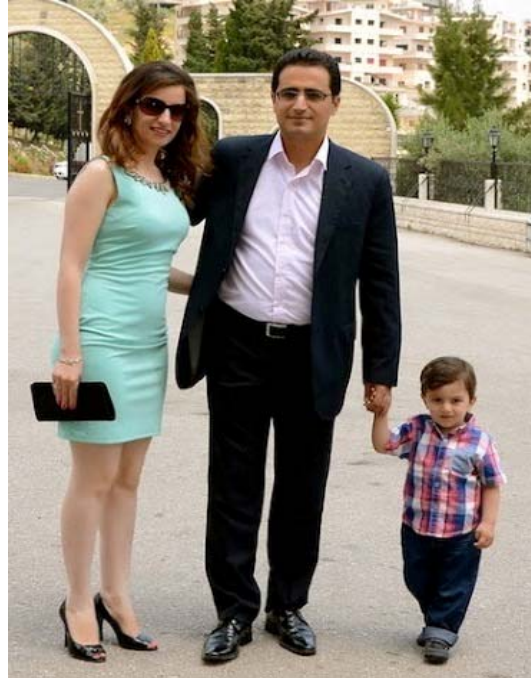
Tanil and family arrived in Ontario in February



Belal was reunited with family in Ontario in March



Mahmoud's family arrived in BC in February



David, Rasha and George arrived in British Columbia in January

Prayer Request

The Winter newsletter included the situation of a Pakistani family detained in Thailand's Immigration Detention Centre. Thankfully the mother and 2 very young children were released and the extended family of 8 have been sponsored by 2 neighbouring churches in Manitoba.

However the grandmother and 3 sons are still in detention. One son broke his collarbone shortly before his arrest. He now requires surgery because it is not healing well due to being forced to sit and sleep on bare concrete floors, in a very small cell.

Please pray for this family, for soften hearts at the Immigration Detention Centre and the UNHCR to allow the family to be released on bail.

They wrote, "We are able to survive this difficult time knowing you and others are praying for us. Jesus is our strength and we continue to ask His help every day."

Your Gifts Make a Difference!

Through your generous support refugees are finding hope and the help they need to rebuild their lives with dignity. Please make your cheques payable to Emmanuel Free Reformed Church writing City of Refuge in the memo line. Send to: James VanderZwan,

26829 33B Ave., Aldergrove, BC V4W 3G8

For more information, contact Heddie Driegen,
778 475 1151 or refugee.efrc@msn.com

City of Refuge - 2016/04/11 Updated Profiles # indicates recently added profiles

Syrian Refugees

#1998. Beirut (5) Bahiejeh is a 37 years old divorced mother with 2 sons ages 19 & 15 and an 18 year old daughter; they fled to Beirut in Oct 2013 to escape the bombing and kidnapping threats. They were members of the Assyrian Church in Syria but became Evangelical believers in Beirut and were referred by their Lebanese pastor. Bahiejeh has manicure and pedicure work experience.

#2006. Beirut (4) Jumaa is 42 and his wife is 36, they have 2 sons, 13 & 8 years old. They fled to Beirut in 2012 to escape the bombing in Aleppo. They are from an Islamic background but became believers and were baptised in Beirut. They faithfully and joyfully attend the Nazarene Evangelical Church, in spite of the hardships and loss of their families, who have cursed and threatened them. He is a tailor and she has worked as an elementary teacher.

#2010. Beirut (5) Sawsan is 30 and her husband is 34 and they have 12 year old twins, a daughter and a son as well as a 5 daughter. They fled in 2013 to escape the war. They were formerly Sunni but came to know the joy of serving the Lord through a local Christian organization "The Hope of the Nation" and were recently baptised. He is a professional machinist of jeans

#2011. Beirut (6) Nidal is 42 and his wife is 43, they have 2 sons, ages 15 & 11 and 2 daughters, ages 13 & 8. They came to Beirut in 2012 to escape the war. He had asked his parents questions about who Christ Isa was but was told not to blaspheme. In Beirut he was given a New Testament to read and upon reading John 11, God graciously opened his eyes to who Jesus is, the Son of God who came to save all those who would believe on Him. He is a professional painter and is sending his children to school.

Iraqi Refugees

#1972. Ankara (3) Zuhair age 50 and his wife Araksy age 44 with their son David age 19 fled to Turkey in Aug 2014 because the militias were forcing young boys to join or be killed and when he refused their house was bombed. Zuhair is a auto mechanic but is not allowed to work in Turkey. After depleting all their resources they are now living on money borrowed from relatives. They have Chaldean (Catholic) baptism certificate.

#1983. Ankara (4) Lenda (38) and husband(54) with their two daughters (ages 7 & 12) fled to Turkey in Sept 2015. In spite of threats from a terrorist group, Lenda had refused to spy on a person of interest to the group. Consequently she was sexually violated in front of her 7 year old daughter, who was so traumatised by what she saw that she has been unable to speak.

#1996. Beirut (1) Saadi is 52 years old, he fled to Lebanon in April 2014. He became a believer in Iraq and was persecuted for abandoning his Shiite background. He has a Technical diploma in Electricity. He attends Baptist Evangelical Church and is very involved in its outreach ministry. Referral received via MERF.

#2005. Beirut (3) Hasanain is 30 and his wife is 27, they have a 3 year old son. In March 2013 Hasanain when became a believer he lost his job and his family threatened to kill him and his wife. They fled to Beirut in Nov 2014 where they are members of the Nazarene Evangelical Church. He has a technical degree in electrical and she has a BS in Business Administration.

#2009. Beirut (1) Basheer is 37 and he first arrived in Lebanon in 2002 and became a believer and was baptised in 2005. He returned to Baghdad in 2008 to care for his sick mother. For the next 7 years he struggled to find security and freedom to worship in several cities in Iraq. Finally in 2015 he returned to Lebanon to escape the constant persecution and death threats. He lives in the Emmanuel Baptist Church in exchange for helping out, he cannot work or legally stay in Lebanon. He is a master tradesman in Aluminum/glass. referral received via MERF

Pakistani in Thailand - processed by Canadian Visa office in Singapore-

#1836. (4) Aqeel, wife and 2 children (12 & 15) fled in 2013. He worked with SIGHT International teaching children the Gospel along with ordinary education curriculum. As the popularity of his class grew the Muslim extremist ordered him to stop or 'face dangerous consequences'. Aqeel has a degree in Computer Science and certificate to teach ESL. His wife has a B.Ed and a Special Ed degree.

#1867 (4) Christopher, wife and two sons(10 & 12) fled in 2013. He worked for 20 years as an accountant at the Christian Technical Training Institute Gujranwala. In April 2011 someone burned pages from the Quran and a fundamentalist Muslim leader blamed Christopher's colleague at CTC and the colleague's son. Both men were arrested and their neighbourhood was filled with police and fundamentalist Muslims eager to wreck havoc, throwing stones and fire balls onto houses and churches. The police raided Christopher's home and arrested him along with three other colleagues. Christopher speaks Urdu, Punjabi and English.

#1896. (3) Raheel, wife and son(1). Raheel has some post secondary education and 6 years experience working as a receptionist at a Medical factory. Fanatical Muslim extremist began targeting Raheel after his brother and sister in law escaped to Thailand because she was accused of blasphemy. Raheel fled in August 2013. He speaks English. His brother has been sponsored by a church in BC.

#1923.(5) Asif and wife have 3 (9, 7, 2)daughters. Asif is an I.T. professional working with International Christian Non-Governmental Organization which protects the rights of Christians and other minorities in Pakistan. In 2008 he started receiving threatening phone calls, and in March he and his younger brother **Kashif** and brother in law **Faisal** were stopped in a routine police check post, beaten and taken to the police station for further severe torture over the next 3 weeks. In Feb 2013 Asif was again receiving threatening phone calls, he was physically threatened and warned that next time they would kill him and his entire family. The family fled in Nov 2013. He speaks English.

1935. (4) Kashif Asif's brother and sister in law with 2 (3,2) sons

1936.(1) Maream Asif's widowed mother and **1937. (1) Sumaira** sister of Asif

#1925.(2) Arshad and wife fled in July 2014. Arshad is a Pastor of Heavenly Church of Pakistan and secretary of Child Evangelism Fellowship of Pakistan Karachi. They were building a center to teach religious education to Christian children; this was opposed by some extremist who threatened them with death if they did not stop building. The family to move to another area of Pakistan because the police refused to offer protection. Arshad was again threatened by armed extremists who ordered him to stop his Christian religious activities or his family would be killed. A month later the family was again threatened and decided they would not be safe in Pakistan. They all speaking English.

#1926. (1) Stanley son of Arshad AND **#1927. (1) Bunita** daughter of Arshad

#1941a (2) Aneel and wife (total of 9 connected family members)

Aneel was Vice President of the Non Governmental Organization - Society of Legal Awareness and Equal Rights whose aim is to provide legal aid to people on the basis of equality. His son Imran has a Master is Computer Sciences and a Bsc in math and Physics and has worked as a teacher. The problems for this family started when SOLAER provided legal aid and protection to a Muslim girl who wanted to divorce her husband. After attending the court hearing, both Imran and his father in law Aneel were berated and beaten, both sustained minor injuries. After the next court date they were again attacked and later learned the husband had issued a Islamic Fatwa (death sentence) against Imran and Aneel which put their whole family in danger. They moved but within weeks they were located by their pursuers, attacked and badly beaten. They have been in Thailand since Oct2013. Imran & Aneel speaking English AND **#1940. (3) son Imran**, wife and son age 4 AND **#1941b (2) daughter Noveen** and her daughter age 3 AND **#1941c (1) daughter Anita** AND **#1941d (1) nephew Nafees** age 24.

#1947A (2) Anis and husband. Anis is a nurse and teacher and in Sept 2012 she was falsely accused of insulting Islam and their prophet. An Imam threatened that she and her family would be killed. The police were not willing to assist her, choosing to believe the accusations. The same evening many mullahs and Muslims came to her house to threaten that her daughter would be forced to marry a Muslim and they would be killed if they did not convert to Islam. They fled to her sister's house and later learned the Mullahs had destroyed their home.

#1947B (1) Maryam (1997-03-09) daughter of Anis

#1954. (5) Babar and his wife have 3 children(8,9 & 12). Babar is an Evangelical Pastor with a double Masters in Political Science and Divinity and his wife has a Masters in Education. Babar's younger brother is also a Pastor whose ministry of healing has changed many people's lives. Some Muslim also received healing and became Christians causing Muslim Extremists to become very angry. In August 2012 Babar's brother was attacked by Muslim clerics who intended to kill him. When this failed they issued a Fatwa against his brother and charged him with death. His brother escaped to Thailand on Sept 14 and on the 16th, the police and many Muslim clerics came to Babar's house demanding that he tell them where his brother was. Babar and his wife were beaten and narrowly escaped being killed, they fled to the home of relatives and learned from neighbours that their home had been damaged and all their possessions burned. They obtained visas and arrived in Thailand Nov 19/12. They both speaking English. A Canadian friend of the family is prepared to contribute monthly financial assistance if they are sponsored.

#1957. (5) Akram and his wife have 3 sons(23,21&15). Akram was a deacon and evangelist in his Pentecostal Church as well as a driver and electrician. In August 2012 the church arranged a seminar in tents and some Muslim men demanded that he shut down the sound system. The men shouted verbal abuse at him and the Christian religion. The next day he was stopped by 3 armed men who pointed a gun at him, beat him and told him that if his church had another program they would kill him and his whole family. He went to the police to report the incident but they refused to do anything. He hired a lawyer and a week later had his first hearing in front of a judge who ordered an investigation. This infuriated the Muslims who shouted in the streets "Akram committed blasphemy. Let's kill him. No trial, no court, no investigation." The family went into hiding because they knew the police would not protect them. They fled to Thailand in July 2013. They speaking English.

Other Nationalities

#1824. Abu Dhabi (5) Bisrat and his wife have 2 sons ages 7 and 3. His wife was detained and tortured by the military who had come looking for him. They fled from **Eritrea** to Yemen in 2011 to escape the life time requirement to serve in the military. She speaks English, they attend an Evangelical Church in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is currently at war with Yemen increasing the danger for this young family.

#1844. Singapore (4) Simon, wife and 2 teenage daughters (18 & 15) fled to Malaysia in March 2011. In **Iran** they had become interested in Christianity and in Kuala Lumpur they attended a church where they were baptized in Oct/11. Simon has a degree in Urban planning and taught at the University of Ashtian.

#1848. Nairobi (1) Laban is 32 years old. He was very young when his family fled the genocide in **Rwanda** in 1994. He has managed to obtain a Bachelors degree and has worked as IT support and computer maintenance. He speaks English and French and has been a member of a local Baptist Church in Kenya for the past 15 years. His brother attends Simon Fraser University in BC.

#1864. Singapore (4) Hamid and his wife are have 2 sons (27 & 24). Hamid's interest in Christianity was not tolerated in **Iran**. In 2008 to avoid prosecution, they fled to Malaysia. They were baptized in 2010 and are all active members of a local church. Hamid has a B.S in Industrial Administration and speaks English.

#1934. Nairobi (1) Desalegn is **Eritrean** in Ethiopia since 1998. With the financial support of his brother in the USA, Desalegn recently earned a Master's degree in Christian Leadership and a 2nd Master's degree in Counselling from Grace Graduate School in collaboration with Vision International University in the USA. As an evangelical Christian it would not be safe for him to return to Eritrea and he cannot remain in Ethiopia. Desalegn requires the use of crutches to walk due to a childhood accident. If sponsored, his brother would provide all the required financial support for his settlement.