



The Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron The Anglican Church of Canada

*"Building up the body of Christ and preparing God's people to live their Mission."
Huron Mission Statement*



The Right Reverend Robert F. Bennett
Bishop of Huron

September 2015

Dear Friends:

As I watch the news of the ever deteriorating situation in the country of Syria itself and in Europe as Syrian refugees attempt to move westward, I am filled with grief, compassion and anger. I also experience an overwhelming need to do something to help. As Christians, we cannot be still and voiceless in the face of such desperate need. Jesus calls to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger. To do any less is to ignore who we are called to be as the people of God. The question we each need to ask ourselves is not: "Should I help?" but "How can I help?"

Here are some ways in which individuals and communities can help:

Make plans to sponsor a refugee family. The Diocese of Huron and its parishes have a long history of sponsoring refugees. Several of our parishes have already begun to raise money and make plans in response to this crisis. Due to lack of government resources, there is already a large backlog in the refugee process. This means it will likely take, at best, several months until Syrian refugees could arrive in Canada. While frustrating in many ways, this does mean there is time to raise money and to plan. Parishes who may be unable to sponsor a family on their own are encouraged to work with other parishes, with other denominations and faith groups or with community groups.

Donate. For those individuals or parishes who cannot sponsor a family, you may wish to donate to a parish or community group that can. The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund works through local partners to assist those in refugee camps, refugees in transit and those who are internally displaced within Syria (approximately 8 million). Until December 31, 2015, the federal government will match donations made to PWRDF for Syrian Emergency Relief. Please go to www.pwrdf.org for more information.

Get involved politically. Any response to a major emergency situation is always most effective when governments, local communities and committed citizens work together. Our current federal election campaign is an important moment to engage political candidates and parties on what, if elected, they will do to assist refugees. An election guide has also been provided through our General Synod which includes a section on "Welcoming the Stranger" and suggests questions to ask political candidates regarding refugee rights in Canada. It may be found at <http://www.anglican.ca/publicwitness/election2015/resource/>

Huron Church House
190 Queen's Avenue, London, Ontario N6A 6H7
Phone: 519-434-6893 or 1-800-919-1115 (ON) Fax: 519-673-4151 E-mail: bishops@huron.anglican.ca

Be informed. The situations facing refugees, including those from Syria, are complicated. The questions involve not only the urgent need for humanitarian assistance, but also the complexities of international cooperation, peacekeeping, and the enormous challenges in resettlement. In addition, local and regional conditions frequently change and new emergencies emerge. Our faith and our common humanity impel each of us to do what we can to assist. But our efforts will be all the more effective, and enduring, if we are well informed.

Combat prejudices and fears. Major obstacles facing refugees as they seek protection and shelter involve apathy, indifference, apprehensions and prejudices in those countries where they seek refuge. When our hearts are fearful, our doors remain closed to those in need. God calls us to open our hearts and our homeland to those who need safety, protection and care.

Stay focused. There are some 13 million refugees now throughout the world, of whom four million are from Syria. The problems they face are immense, and their situations will not be easily or quickly resolved. All too often our society focuses only on what is in that day's headlines. Our efforts to work with refugees must be long-term if we wish to make a real difference in our world.

Pray. Pray for the refugees and their families. Pray that God will work in the hearts and minds of the leaders of our nations to bring resources to bear on this crisis. Pray for those who work with refugees here and abroad. Pray that each of us will respond to God's call to be an instrument of hope for the millions of refugees in our world.

Our Lord Jesus and his parents, Mary and Joseph, fled Bethlehem as refugees seeking safety. Millions in our world today must flee their homelands with only what they can carry as they seek a safe place to make a new life. We, who are so fortunate as to live in the safe and prosperous country that is Canada, must not fail to share our blessings with others. St. Teresa of Avila reminds us that:

*Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

May we always be Christ's hands, Christ's eyes and Christ's feet in our hurting world.

In Christian faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Reverend Robert F. Bennett
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