

Sunday, December 20, 2015

Announcement to the St. Andrew's Congregation **by Paul Harrison on behalf of the St. Andrew's Refugee Sponsorship Committee**

On behalf of your refugee committee, I want to give you an update on recent refugee developments.

Last Monday we attended a meeting with interested people at Knox. The outcome was that Knox would like to partner with us and to that end Rick has been invited to speak at Knox sometime in the New Year. This means that now we are partnered not just with First Baptist but also with fellow Presbyterians and together we ought to be able to sponsor a somewhat larger family, although that is yet to be determined.

On Tuesday night we returned to Knox for another meeting, this time with Rob Shropshire, the PWS &D refugee coordinator from Toronto. He is an amazing individual, very well equipped for his huge task and right of top of the latest developments. And this is not an easy task as the new government is overhauling some elements of its predecessor's refugee programme in an attempt to streamline the movement of Syrian refugees.

At the present time there are no new Syrian refugees on the approved Blended Visa/BVOR list and it won't be until probably sometime in January that new listings will be made available.

I managed to speak by phone with Rob on Thursday to get clarification of a few key points from his Tuesday night presentation. He told me that, yes, St. Andrew's is already on his refugee list and that he will be sending us the required application by email in a few days. This very calm man is literally run off his feet. So, as soon as the official forms arrive, we can begin to fill them out with all of the appropriate information. Once Rob receives our completed application he will enter it into his file and will inform us when a suitable family is available and when we agree to that family, he will add their name to the top of our completed application form. All of this takes approximately ONE to FOUR months so we cannot say at this point when our Blended Visa/BVOR family arrive here in Guelph. That's where we are at the moment. We will keep you all informed with what we are doing on your behalf. There is a system to follow and we will do just that.

Right now we need to proceed thoughtfully, patiently and prayerfully.

Thank you very much.