

Refugee Task Force Report to Fairmount Presbyterian Church Session, November 1, 2017

After several meetings with members of the task force and representatives from both Catholic Charities, Diocese of Cleveland, Migration and Refugee Services and United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants - Cleveland Field Office (USCRI), the Refugee Task Force recommends that Fairmount Presbyterian Church (FPC) continue its commitment to supporting international refugees through the following actions:

1. Commit to a partnership with either Catholic Charities or USCRI, partnering with the one that offers the most direct ministry opportunities aligned with services that FPC volunteers can provide and accomplish.

Rationale: Both organizations provide excellent training, support, and a variety of volunteer opportunities. We are currently researching to determine which one provides the most one-on-one opportunities for church members within within five miles of the church.

2. Educate the congregation on new refugee volunteer opportunities through our new mission partner.

Rationale: Both organizations offer a variety of volunteer commitments that can expand our congregation's involvement in this ministry. Those commitments include:

- Donating household goods
- Setting up a refugee rental unit for a family's arrival
- Greeting a family at the airport
- Mentoring a refugee family
- Tutoring English (supplementing formal instruction)
- Helping a refugee family financially

3. Re-train current volunteers who are active in refugee ministry through either Catholic Charities or USCRI

Rationale: While FPC Refugee Transition team members provided Assa Boudwin, the church's 2017 resident on-site refugee, faithful and generous support, we have more to learn from refugee agency professionals. We need to learn about what support FPC can offer to help Assa and other refugees. Help that is both effective and enhances the independence and confidence to Assa now and to future refugees.

4. Reaffirm our commitment to Assa Boudwin, ensuring that he continues to receive the support he needs to gain independence.

Rationale: Our work with Assa is simply not done, and we must continue to honor our commitment to him and enable him to become truly self-sufficient.

5. Re-direct the church apartment from refugee housing to other uses.

Rationale: Given our recent experience with Assa Boudwin, using the church apartment for refugee housing did not prove to be good preparation for a refugee to become independent. Nor did it enable Assa to make the necessary connections with the larger refugee community, to gain self-sufficiency faster, and receive the kind of support needed from a faith community like ours. We learned an important lesson: enabling a refugee will not empower a refugee. Currently most refugee apartments and single home rental communities and support services are located downtown or on the West Side. Until a larger refugee population develops on the East Side of Cleveland, the church apartment is too isolated to be effective.

That being said, the church apartment is an asset that should be used to support FPC ministries. The church could lease the apartment to an outside tenant or an FPC employee. The resulting rental revenues could be directed to the refugee ministries of the church.

FPC's Administrative Council will continue to explore alternative uses to benefit the church and its many ministries.