



September 8, 2021

Dear Friends,

I have returned to Westminster after a six-week sabbatical and I want to thank you for the gift of time to rest, read and reflect. Also, many thanks to Sudie and Jill for their leadership while I was away. I hope you saw or listened to the sermons from the "I am" passages in the Gospel of John. They are available on our [website](#) and our [YouTube channel](#).

Now it's time for me to return to the routine of setting the alarm! Actually, I started back a week ago due to the crisis with Afghan refugees. As you know, when our troops withdrew from Afghanistan, it created a humanitarian disaster. Many Afghans who had supported the U.S. military or fought against the Taliban have been fleeing with their families for their lives. Tens of thousands have been flown to other countries. It is unclear how many will be resettled in the U.S., but the number is in the thousands.

Our Joint Mission Committee (comprised of those who serve on the Church in the World Committee and the Urban Mission Committee) held an emergency meeting on Tuesday, August 31 to discuss the unfolding situation and voted unanimously to ask our Session to support the resettlement of a family of Afghan refugees.

I'm very proud to say that last night (Tuesday) the members of our Session unanimously supported the following motion: **We wholeheartedly agree to welcome and support the resettlement and integration of an Afghan refugee family by partnering with multi-faith groups and congregations.** A couple of weeks ago, I reached out to Rabbi Michael Beals of Congregation Beth Shalom and leaders of the Islamic Society of Delaware and Tarbiyah School in Newark. All were excited to partner with us in "welcoming the stranger" (Matthew 25:35).

There are countless expenses involved in helping a family make a fresh start in a country half way around the world. Some of you had already expressed the desire to help financially if we took on this vital mission. Our Session also passed this motion: **To have a special offering to supplement our funding for refugee resettlement that will run from September 12 through October 3 (World Communion Sunday).** If you feel moved to support this vital effort, simply make a check payable to Westminster Presbyterian Church and write in the memo line: *Afghan refugees*. You may also give online through our website. Visit www.wpc.org and click on "Donate Now" at the top right hand corner of our homepage. Then, select "Disaster Relief" and put in the amount of your donation.

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I'm sure you understand this, but I want to emphasize that this special offering is over and above our giving to support our annual budget. In the coming weeks, we will be asked to make our financial pledge to the ministry and mission of Westminster in 2022.

Finally, I want to thank Mary Vane for spending many hours speaking with the folks at Jewish Family Services (the organization in Delaware responsible for refugee resettlement), contacting our senators, writing a grant proposal, providing background material on Afghan refugees, helping to line up housing, and more. We would not be in such a good position today without her efforts.

Currently, Afghan refugees are being held at U.S. military bases around the country as the vetting process proceeds. Once families are released, Delaware is slated to receive 10 families. At this time, we have no idea when a family will be assigned to us. It could be weeks or it could be only a matter of days. We simply do not know. But we are ready to welcome the stranger and to do what we can to heal their wounds and to help them make a new beginning in a new land. What a privilege it is to be a part of a congregation that constantly strives to faithfully follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

I hope you will be in the sanctuary or online this Sunday for worship. I really look forward to seeing you and reconnecting!

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg".

Gregory Knox Jones
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff