



Changing lives

One family at a time.

As we seek to be a church that fulfills the calling of Christ, we take seriously the call for us to love others as ourselves, and to change the world through our involvement in it.

While we often talk about missions as something we are sent to participate in, opportunities to impact our world are also right at our door. We can barely begin to grasp the challenges and hardships faced by refugee families in places like Lebanon. Fleeing to protect your family is something we have only seen in movies. Wondering where your next meal is going to come from, is only an exercise we've been encouraged to imagine in a Bible Study. But for many it is a daily reality.

What it would be like for us to participate in giving a family the chance for a new beginning? The scriptures speak to us about true religion as caring for orphans and widows.

Through a partnership with our denomination, this opportunity now stands before us. The chance for us to come alongside a family just like ours; to sponsor them, to care for them, to give them a helping hand, and to show them the real and practical love of Jesus.

THE FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES FROM SYRIA

There are over 5 million refugees and internally displaced persons from Syria and Iraq, and many have now been living like this for over two years, with no end in sight to the conflict. Lebanon currently has over 1.4 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees, in a country with a population of just 4 million. CBM's partner in Lebanon, the Lebanese Baptist Society is currently ministering to 20,000 refugees in Lebanon and also facilitating assistance to another 20,000 displaced people in Syria through local churches. Many refugees have serious doubts they will ever be able to safely return to their homes, especially those who fear continued persecution for their faith.



WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH?

Our denomination is one of 90 Sponsorship Agreement Holders in Canada. This means that they have been approved and given permission to sponsor refugees by the government. Once a church decides it would like to sponsor someone to come to Canada, it fills out an application for CIC which is endorsed by our Sponsorship Agreement holder. The local church agrees to cover its part of the cost of sponsoring a family. As families or individuals pass through the refugee system and are approved to come, their profiles are made available to Sponsorship Agreement Holders. (In our case, the CBWC.) These profiles are then passed along to prospective sponsors (churches) to see if there is a suitable fit. These profiles give practical information about a family, and their circumstances. Once there is a good fit, the SAH informs CIC and the process officially begins.

COMMON QUESTIONS

How much opportunity for contact and relationship will the local church have?

When a family arrives in Canada, usually they come knowing no one. They are looking for assistance and want to find a place to belong. Often, they want to build relationship and appreciate connection to local families and the church. Most families will need lots of practical help. Everything from help finding a place to live, to rides to appointments, to someone showing them how things work at the grocery store could be part of this process. Imagine coming to a place where you are beginning from nothing!

Will those we sponsor be Christians?

The profiles that a sponsoring church reviews do give background information including the religious affiliation of a family. It is up to the local church to decide what kind of family they wish to support. However, should we discriminate when it comes to helping a family displacement and hardship in another part of the world? Should we be taking Christians out of a part of the world that desperately needs them? Our first call, is to love all people as we love ourselves, and out of our deep love of God.

What will happen after our year of official sponsorship is over?

Hopefully relationships will have been built that last a life time. Refugees are generally very grateful for the help and support that they have received. If they have been supported and cared for well, a bond exists that carries on, even after the financial support is over. The door also then opens to help someone else.

A NEW WAY TO SPONSOR REFUGEES - Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR)

- BVOR is a cost-sharing arrangement between Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) and private sponsors, meaning CIC will provide 6 months of income support to refugees sponsored under this program while the sponsor, in this case a CBWC church, covers the cost of the other 6 months.
- Refugees selected under this initiative have already met eligibility and admissibility criteria, making them travel-ready. However, they must be matched with a sponsor before they can travel to Canada.
- The two big advantages of the BVOR method of sponsorship are:
- **Speed** – Making a life-changing difference for refugees can start almost immediately. Travel-ready refugees may arrive in Canada in as little as 1-4 months – in contrast to normal private sponsorship where the sponsorship process can take 2-6 years before sponsored refugees arrive in Canada.
- **Savings** – Because of 50-50 cost-sharing with the federal government, it costs sponsors half the amount of typical private sponsorships. For example, to sponsor a family of 4 might normally cost \$27,000 (according to the CIC website); under BVOR, this cost could be reduced to \$13,500 to sponsors while the government pays the rest. (Please note that this is a guideline and costs will differ by city and region. The government will define its contribution, not write a blank cheque for half of all costs incurred.)