



## Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Siblings in Christ of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod,

For many of us, 2022 represented a moment of hope. After the darkness and isolation of the pandemic, life has begun to return to normal – offering new opportunities for connection and renewed commitment to serving our neighbor.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has embraced this moment; in the past year, we have grown exponentially in both size and scale, expanding our capacity to welcome immigrants and refugees.

With the help of people of faith and communities like yours, we were able to...

- help **16,690 children** reunify with their families or find safe, loving foster homes
- resettle nearly **12,000 Afghans** forced to flee after Afghanistan fell under Taliban control
- welcome **3,169 refugees** from countries across the world
- assist **18,262 people** seeking safety from Central America and beyond

We continue to expand our slate of innovative programming to move beyond traditional resettlement into an empowered living experience that promotes not just surviving, but thriving.

That work reaches, too, into our media and advocacy footprint. You may have seen LIRS President and CEO Krish O'Mara Vignarajah on national news programs like *PBS Newshour*, *MSNBC*, *NPR*, the *BBC*, and others, advocating on behalf of our immigrant and refugee neighbors from Ukraine to Venezuela.

### **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

It remains a priority of ours in 2023 to combat the divisive, xenophobic rhetoric surrounding immigration and instead promote kindness, compassion, and inherent human dignity. We invite you to join us in that work! This year, we will continue to offer opportunities to get involved in the work of welcome, including:

- advocating alongside LIRS and our newest neighbors in celebration of [World Refugee Day](#) on June 20<sup>th</sup>,
- sharing notes of welcome with children and families impacted by immigration detention through LIRS' [Hope for the Holidays™ program](#) each fall (in 2022, over 2,500 Christmas Cards came from Minnesota!),
- and equipping leaders and faith communities to create more just and welcoming communities through the [LIRS Ambassador Network](#) and [EMMAUS Network for Congregations](#) throughout the year.

Together, we can realize Jesus's ministry of compassion and welcome. We're so grateful for the powerful and impactful support of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, and we look forward to working alongside you in the coming year.

In peace,

Chelsey Johnson, LIRS Mobilization and Faith Relations