



A Statement Regarding the Syrian Refugee Crisis from the Right Reverend Melissa Skelton, 9th Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster - September 8th, 2015

Again, we who live in privilege in the west have seen the horrifying results of civil wars in other parts of the world. The September 3rd, 2015, video and photographs from the Turkish beach saddened the entire world. The Kurdi family are in my daily prayers, as are all Syrian refugees and all others displaced by the horrors of war.

The Anglican Diocese of New Westminster is a Sponsorship (Refugee) Agreement Holder. Even prior to the worldwide coverage of the current situation, a number of parishes were in the process (and remain in that process) of sponsoring refugee families. On the day of the publication of the photos from the Turkish beach a parish in the diocese was notified that they had been approved to move forward with their sponsorship of an Iraqi refugee family who are scheduled to arrive in Canada, September 22.

It is parishes and groups of parishes working with the Diocesan Refugee Unit group and representatives of the diocesan legal team who sponsor refugees. The Chair of the Diocesan Refugee Unit, the Reverend Michael McGee has received numerous requests from individuals, and people representing parishes for information about refugee sponsorship. There has also been a marked increase in direct requests from refugees and refugee families through the diocesan website.

The diocesan legal team encourages parishes and interested parties to make all applications through the Diocesan Refugee Unit. The Reverend McGee can then make the connections as necessary with an available member of the legal team. This will help ensure that those who are applying have a clear understanding of the commitment involved in the process before they begin. I am optimistic that we in the Diocese of New Westminster will be able to help.

I am moved and heartened by the response of the parishes of our diocese to this crisis, as well as other civic and community leaders, including Vancouver's mayor, who has convened a Town Hall meeting tonight to discuss what the City of Vancouver can do to host refugees.

I hope you will join with me in prayer for everyone involved in this crisis and I encourage parishes to contact the Diocesan Refugee Unit Chair, the Reverend Michael McGee through the diocesan website at <http://vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/unit-groups/pages/refugee-unit>

*In Christ,
+ Melissa*