

Christ's Care FOR THE **PERSECUTED & DISPLACED**

mercy for the body and soul

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt.5:46-48).

Questions and Answers

Q: Is the LCMS advocating for bringing Muslim refugees into Europe and the U.S.?

A: The Synod is not advocating for bringing Muslim refugees into Europe or the U.S. LCMS mercy and human-care operations are a response to, not an endorsement of, the global refugee crisis, and our focus right now is coming alongside the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK), the LCMS partner church in Germany, to help provide not only for the immediate physical needs of the refugees, but also to provide for their spiritual care through the Gospel.

The current global refugee crisis has been thrust upon us by world events, as it comes after decades of conflict and economic strife throughout the Middle East, Africa and other regions of the world. As a result, international authorities and other influencers of global politics advocated for these population shifts, leaving some Western, developed nations struggling to accommodate nearly 60 million refugees, asylum-seekers and other immigrants around the globe. We are simply coming alongside at the request of our partners, as they extend Christ's mercy to alleviate suffering while proclaiming the Gospel of our Lord.

Q: How do we Christians balance showing Christ's love and compassion with the security issues of [potential] terrorists posing as refugees in order to infiltrate and invade Western Europe as well as the United States?

A: LCMS mercy and human-care operations for the refugees are currently focused on the SELK, our German partner church, and likely will extend to other international partner churches for what likely will be a long-term crisis. Assistance from the LCMS is channeled through local congregations of the SELK who have direct contact with individuals, families, asylum homes, etc., and who are working with them long-term both in mercy and in Gospel proclamation, bringing them to Word and Sacrament.

Given this crisis that has been thrust upon us by world events, we must rely on national and international authorities for vetting immigrants prior to refugees being granted asylum. Even so, once they are accepted to stay in Germany, for example, they are in a very restricted status. From there, many SELK churches assist individuals or families who:

- Were persecuted Christians in their homeland, and that is why they fled.
- Encountered Christianity in secret house churches, etc., in the countries they emigrated from and desire to learn more.
- Fled for other political reasons (most from Iran reportedly did NOT flee for economic reasons; some left behind very lucrative careers, etc.) and are looking for freedom.

What the SELK has done is catechize, baptize and teach, and paired those efforts with mercy-based human-care efforts, like meals, free German language classes, counseling, etc. As many refugees are given a minimal allowance from the German government, the SELK uses funds and donations to help refugees with their physical needs, purchase furniture, etc.

Q: Will LCMS families be given the opportunity to host refugees in their homes here in the U.S.?

A: The LCMS does not have a program for sponsoring refugee families. We refer cases to Baltimore-based Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, which has established a government-approved foster-family program. For more information, go to lirs.org/foster.

Q: Are there any short-term missionary or other volunteer opportunities for LCMS people to assist the SELK directly in Germany?

A: Not at this time. However, our Office of International Mission leaders are assessing the situation to determine potential missionary and volunteer opportunities.

Q: Are you planning to make some kind of bulletin insert or the like available so that our churches can share this information effectively with our people?

A: Yes, the downloadable bulletin insert and related resources are on our website:
lcms.org/socialissues/persecution

Q: Is the LCMS working with LIRS and LWR?

A: We are not connected to the refugee work of Lutheran World Relief at this time, and our relationship with, and support for, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services is limited. LIRS is not a Synod organization, not a Recognized Service Organization and is not officially tied to any church body.

Helpful media coverage links:

bigstory.ap.org/article/0550c14ba3024c06820218f79bc6cf07/berlin-church-muslim-refugees-converting-droves

blogs.lcms.org/2014/former-muslims-baptized

eurasiablog.lcms.org/homeless-pray-for-the-homeless