

WELCOMING THE STRANGER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

SUNDAY CIRCLE at CHRIST CHURCH - 9/29/24

Imagine this:

A powerful ruler orders his military to kill every boy who is under two years old. A young woman who has just given birth, her husband and her new-born boy are warned about this – by strangers – and decide to flee hundreds of miles to another country where they stay for three years. Then they move again, hundreds of miles back to their home country, but not to their hometown where it is still unsafe and to which they never return.

This family suddenly became refugees fleeing to save the life of their child, and their own lives, becoming strangers in a strange land ... They clearly needed help. They surely had help. But from whom???

Some food for thought from our religious tradition:

- *“I was a stranger and you welcomed me... I will tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me...”* Matthew 25:35, 40
- *“And who is my neighbor?”* Luke 10:29 (Jesus’ response to this question is the parable of the Good Samaritan)
- *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Mark 12:31 (Jesus’ summary of the law, 2nd part)
- *“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”* (from the Episcopal Baptismal Covenant; Book of Common Prayer, p. 305)
- *“The challenge and opportunity – of finding common ground with our neighbor starts with us. This is not a time to wait for someone else to act. This one’s on us.”* Rev. Jan Naylor Cope, Canon, Washington National Cathedral (Sept 2024)
- *“Here I am, send me”.* Isaiah 6:8

Some questions to ponder:

- What does it mean to YOU to welcome the stranger?
- Why is welcoming the stranger “for the common good”? Is welcoming the stranger actually for the common good, or is it harmful to the common good?
- What does it mean for us at Christ Church to welcome the stranger?
- What does it mean for us at Christ Church to welcome the stranger who is Muslim, or whose immigration status is uncertain, or who does not speak English, or who needs significant assistance?
- Are some people not our neighbors?
- Where do we draw the line? Should we draw a line? How do we decide?

The Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry – giving help and hope to locally settled refugees, now for three years, with six congregations (Episcopal, Jewish, Quaker, Methodist, Lutheran), to five Afghan refugee families and expanding