

Living Out the Christian Faith

Reverend Dr. David A. Davis – Princeton Theological Seminary website – January 14, 2016

In response to the Syrian refugee crisis that has overwhelmed Europe in the fall of 2015 and the disturbing politicized fear-filled rhetoric of the public square in the United States, Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey, has joined forces with Princeton Theological Seminary and community partners to receive a Syrian family in 2016.

Nassau Presbyterian Church has been resettling refugees for more than fifty years. Families have arrived from Cuba (1964), Cambodia (1980), Vietnam (1984), Hungary (1989), Bosnia (1994, 1999), Sudan (2003), Burma (2006), and Iraq (2010). In each generation the ministry has been led, driven, and carried out by lay people rather than church staff.

To ensure that our resettlement efforts are successful, we provide support like inviting refugees to stay in a church member's home, and helping them build relationships and a support network.

We've joined forces with local organizations like the Jewish Center of Princeton. Individuals from outside the congregation have assisted with language education, local businesses have provided employment opportunities, Princeton Theological Seminary has provided temporary housing, and a local nonprofit organization has provided permanent housing.

The refugees' stories about being picked up at the airport, receiving a driver's license, or celebrating a child getting into college continue to inspire our efforts. We have celebrated refugees who went on to have careers in restaurant management, computer networking, dentistry, tailoring, library science, and teaching. Several local families have even joined our efforts to support families who were resettling.

Of course, Nassau Presbyterian Church is not alone in resettling refugees. The great cloud of witnesses includes many pastors and congregations who discovered that refugee resettlement ministry brings a community close to the heart of the gospel. By welcoming strangers (Matthew 25) and entertaining angels unawares (Hebrews 13), countless numbers have found themselves in the transforming presence of Christ himself. As the community of faith travels the road together, some might remember a sermon, a worship service, or a youth trip, but few will ever forget a few years spent with family from a far off land.

We look forward to the next chapter of what has become an essential part of a congregation and a community living out faith, honor, heritage, and giving glory to God.