

MISSION CANADA CORNER



A TEACHING MOMENT TO
SHARE WITH CHILDREN

LET'S HELP . . .

Because we can. Because we must.

By Natalie Rogge

Have you seen another child in your class or perhaps at the playground and wondered if they were new to Canada? What made you think that? Maybe it was because they were playing alone and didn't have friends yet. Or they didn't speak English fluently, or maybe not at all.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada - our Fellowship of churches across Canada - sponsors refugee families from different parts of the world every year. We do so through an agreement we have with the Canadian government. We help because we care about people everywhere and want to help those who have experienced times of crisis, war or trauma in their lives. So many have been persecuted for their faith in Jesus. So, we reach out in love to sponsor families to come to Canada where they can start a new life in a peaceful location, away from war, devastation, and the troublesome times they experienced back home.

Our local churches sponsor individuals and families who have had to flee their homeland and find a temporary place of safety in another country. The unfortunate part is that when they flee, they often don't even have time to pack up any belongings to take with them. They need to leave quickly ... really quickly! For some people, their homes have been bombed. For others, their lives have been threatened. For all who are considered "refugees" they cannot return to their homeland for fear of further torture or even death. And when they flee, they cannot work, go to school, or receive adequate health care in the country they have fled to. This is because they are not citizens in that country - they are only there temporarily, seeking a safe place of refuge until they can find a country that will receive them as "sponsored" refugees. Life in those temporary places is very hard. Often food is scarce. The entire family is together in one or two rooms, eating, sleeping, and living in the same space.

As the PAOC, we have the privilege of helping refugee families by bringing them to Canada through Canada's "Private Sponsorship of Refugees" (PSR) program. Through volunteers in a local PAOC church, we form a resettlement team who will care for and provide necessities to help a family resettle within Canada once the government approves for them to do so. The church makes a 12-month commitment to do everything they can to help the family - from giving them a place to live when they arrive, to helping them find a permanent place to live, to signing children up for school, finding doctors and dentists, welcoming them into a church family, and helping them understand the English language. Those on the church resettlement team take the family to the grocery store to help them become familiar with buying groceries in Canada. PAOC churches help newcomer families understand their financial responsibility in the new country so they can pay rent, buy food, take public transportation, make purchases for things like school supplies or toiletries, and all the other necessities of life.

Helping refugees is such a wonderful and rewarding experience. Of course, we get to make new friends, but we also share God's love with others in practical ways as we open our hearts and homes to welcome them. For some who do not come from a place of Christian faith, we have the opportunity to invite them to church, give them a Bible, and pray and trust God together. And for some, we get to introduce them to Jesus!

The PAOC has been doing refugee resettlement work for almost 20 years. Our churches have sponsored well over 800 individuals since we began, and many of those sponsored have been children. This past year, we welcomed the arrival of six Afghani orphaned children – the Taliban had killed their father, and sadly, their mother died before they received the final approval to come to Canada. It was a very exciting day just before Christmas 2021 when they finally arrived in Ontario! Our refugee families come from countries like Ethiopia, Eritrea, Congo, Uganda, Greece, Syria, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and other parts of the globe. Their stories are private and must remain so. The details are often horrific.

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In August 2021, a great conflict arose in Afghanistan – a war. People were desperate to escape their homeland that was being overtaken by enemy forces. You may have even seen pictures on the news of people running for their lives, trying to get onto planes. We are working hard to sponsor Afghan families affected by the war. Several sponsored families presently live in a refugee camp in other countries – it is a very rough place for families. They need God’s protection and His favour to approve their applications quickly. These people have been tortured and persecuted for their faith. Some are pastors of churches – not known churches like you, and I would attend here in Canada, but “underground” churches where nobody really knows who the believers are or where they meet. So, they must quietly live their Christian faith for fear of being beaten, arrested, or killed. But they love Jesus and are committed to living for Him.

Will you pray with us for these families? Pray that their hope and faith remain strong. Pray for protection.

Would you consider raising money to help families resettle in Canada?

Lemonade stands and yard sales are great summertime ways to raise money to support the PAOC’s work in refugee resettlement.

Would you as a church consider getting involved in sponsoring a refugee family?

Why? Because we can show God’s love to those in need and help them in and through their difficult times. Because the opportunity is before us right now to welcome children and families into our community, our schools, and our church family.

Why? Because we can, and because we must.

You can donate at: <https://paoc.org/donate/canada-refugee-sponsorship-opportunity>

To find out more or get your church involved, email us at missioncanada@paoc.org.