

The Hands and Feet of Christ

Students take action to help local refugees

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By: Becky St. Clair

According to [MercyCorps](#), as of December 2016 more than 11 million Syrians—half of the country’s pre-war population—have been killed or forced to leave their homes due to the [civil war](#) that continues to ravage the country and its people.

Though a controversial issue across the country, over 13,000 Syrian refugees have landed in the United States. Most arrived with only what they could carry (if that wasn’t lost along the journey), not able to speak English and with no promise of a job, shelter or food. The \$1,000 per person they are given when admitted to the U.S. is quickly used up as they attempt to clothe, feed and shelter their families.

“The Bible tells us to help those who need it,” says Hafiz Ally, a [seminary](#) student at Andrews University, and president of the Seminary Student Forum (SSF).

Each year, the SSF organizes a Week of Spiritual Emphasis for the seminary. Typically they find a guest speaker to present during the week and the services are much-enjoyed. This year, they have decided to do something different.

“As Christians we often focus on words to preach a sermon or works to teach a lesson,” says Ally. “While words have their place, we often neglect action. We forget how both are equally important.”

To this end, Ally and his SSF team have coordinated an optional day following the Week of Spiritual Emphasis that would include practical application of what is discussed in the days prior. On February 3, a group of around 35 volunteers, including translators, will head into Kalamazoo, Michigan, to minister to the Syrian refugees living there.

This isn't the first time the refugees will see Andrews representatives; last semester Ally and others spent time with the Syrian families, talking with them and learning of their needs.

“They are humble and grateful for every little bit they have been blessed with,” he says. “I did not hear one complaint, but as I conversed with them, needs arose.”

Ally explains that one of the young boys lost his suitcase on his way to the U.S. and had only the clothes on his back. They had been in the country for over two months. Another family, including a small child, had all been sleeping on beds infested with bed bugs. None of the families Ally spoke with had enough food for their families, nor were they prepared for a Michigan winter.

“These individuals are what most would consider successful proponents of their society, but with a blink of an eye it was all taken from them,” says Ally. “I believe it is our responsibility as Christians to help in the restoration of their dignity by extending the compassion of Christ.”

On Feb. 3, the SSF plans to be able to give each individual a winter coat, and provide canned food and grocery gift cards for each family. If enough funds are made available, they would like to replace furniture such as bed bug-infested beds.

Although they are currently at capacity for volunteers, they are still in need of donations, both of items and funds. To donate items, contact Ada Mendez at mendez@andrews.edu or 269-471-6941. To make a monetary donation, contact Ada Mendez or go to gofundme.com/restorenexdoor to make a donation online.

“This is a foreign land to these families, and we must do all we can to make them feel welcomed and at home,” Ally says. “We want to build a bridge by which a friendship can form. We must be the hands and feet of Christ.”

Donations Needed

- Money for rent and groceries
- Grocery store gift cards
- Diapers (size NB) for two infants
- Stacked washer/dryer unit
- Long dark winter coats
- Children's boots (size 13 boys and sizes 9 & 10 girls)
- Teenage clothes (pants and long-sleeved button-down shirts)
- Thermoses
- Canned foods, rice, pasta

Related Links

- [What's happening in Syria?](#)
- [What is a refugee?](#)
- [ADRA \(Adventist Development and Relief Agency\) in Syria](#)
- [How can I help?](#)
- [Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University](#)

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