

**MARANATHA CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP**

January 2008 BULLETIN

Jeremiah 22:3 This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right.
Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed.

Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, under the leadership of Council and the Refugee Committee has embarked on a ministry to refugees from around the world. Why? - in response to a great and urgent need and in obedience to Jesus. Of all the solutions to war and persecution that are pursued by nations, governments and peoples, refugee sponsorship is one that the Maranatha Congregation has decided to act out.

Together, we have welcomed Thaw Say and her family into Canada. We rejoice with her that they have arrived safely, that they are learning to benefit from the blessings we have in Canada, and that the health of her son Yaw Eh Doh is improving under the care of Edmonton doctors. It is also a joy for the congregation to welcome a larger Karen community to our fellowship, and to receive their support in the sponsorship of Thaw Say. You may also be interested to hear that the Refugee Committee has also already filed a sponsorship application in October 2006 for a family from Sudan that is living under threat and without citizenship in Damascus, Syria. Please join us in praying for their safety as they wait possibly for another 2 years, and that they receive a fair and positive interview.

Looking beyond our most recent and exciting experiences in Edmonton, around the world, there are many different groups of people who have been forced to leave their country. These people for many different reasons, but most prominently for reasons of war and persecution, have fled their land and their homes, carrying with them very little or nothing at all. These people are Refugees. Canada is the only country that allows sponsorship capabilities by private organizations. Maranatha CRC is able to play such a major role in this because it has been granted a sponsorship agreement through denominational church organizations.

Ezekiel 34:27-28 *"They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them. ²⁸ They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid".*

In sponsoring a refugee family, the members of the church commit to provide full support to the family for one year. With Thaw Say, we have learned very quickly what that entails. During that year, language barriers have to be overcome, social support to access necessary services will be given, and monetary support will be provided. We have worked together in many different ways to welcome the family: access to education, work, healthcare, leisure and miscellaneous services, English language training, becoming a part of the community and church group. We have been providing food, housing and other expenses for living, until the family is self-supporting (up to a year).

We in the Refugee Committee have tended to look at the two commitments – TIME and MONEY – separately. Early on, we successfully raised approximately \$10,000 in donations and pledges to add to the approximately \$2,000 already in the fund. With this as 'seed money', we were confident to proceed with two sponsorship applications, and we then turned our attention to the TIME commitment.

We have prayed for and planned for this challenge of the TIME and helping hands of ourselves and the congregation. Without really knowing firsthand what the challenges would be and how with the congregation we would meet them, we have formerly considered TIME to be the major challenge facing Maranatha in Refugee sponsorship. Now, however, the whole congregation is aware of how we at Maranatha have been made through the grace of God, VERY READY for that challenge. With the ready, willing and amazingly qualified service that has welled up in response to the arrival of Thaw Say and the emergence of the Karen community, we are now certain that in terms of service and readiness to devote time to helping newcomers to Canada, Maranatha is ready. We see further confirmation in the Vision Statement of Maranatha.

The Refugee Committee seeks the help of the congregation in securing the necessary financial support to move forward with more sponsorship applications, in order to bring more families from danger to safety and to a more promising future in Canada.

Understanding Challenge – It is Financial

In very simple terms, living in Edmonton is not cheap. See below for a typical monthly budget. In the case of Thaw Say's family, we are fortunate that the government, in a special cost-sharing plan, will provide financial support for the last 9 months of the 1 year sponsorship – we are responsible only for the first 3 months. The Togo case and most others will be a full year. The budget below is adequate for a family of 3-4.

Initial costs, setup a household and down-payment
\$2,000

Monthly Costs

Rent	\$1,100	62%
Food	\$400	23%
Other	\$250	15%
Total	\$1,750	100%

3 Months (Thaw Say's Case) \$7,250
12 Months (Togo Case) \$23,000

Before we prepare to meet this challenge, which we believe is not so great that it cannot be met, the Committee asks the congregation to understand that in order to financially support the quantity of people that Maranatha is capable of serving through caring and teaching, we must generate funds and/or savings in the magnitude of tens of thousands of dollars. This is not necessarily all at once, but will be required over the course of as many years as we remain committed to this ministry in the manner of our current approach.

Meeting the Challenge I – Prepare

Please join the committee in prayer for this ministry and for its support. Without the Lord's continual blessing, we as the people of a church are powerless, but in prayer we can align ourselves with His will and go forward with confidence and in humility, having placed it in His hands. Pray for persecuted Christians, for those who have been abandoned to refugee camps and for the families that we have applied for sponsorship with. Pray for support of the Refugee Ministry in Maranatha and that we may remain dedicated, financially and spiritually, to this calling. Finally, following prayer and planning, review your priorities before God and assess your resources. Ask: "With what God has placed in my hands, according to the ways the ministry can be supported as described below, in what way am I able offer support?"

Meeting the Challenge II – Reach Out

In the initial pledge campaign back in 2005 (this mini-campaign only extended to the Deacons, the Refugee Committee and some acquaintances), 20% of the money received came from acquaintances who do not attend Maranatha CRC. We even received money from friends in Ontario. We believe that an even greater portion can be drawn from outside the circle of our congregation, and that this should be seriously pursued for the following reasons:

- (1) Refugee Sponsorship is exciting, concrete and very interesting to share with friends from other Christian and Non-Christian circles. It is something that Maranatha is excited about, and we sometimes consider ourselves a not-to-easily-excited bunch – imagine how your friends and co-workers might respond!
- (2) Both for ourselves and for those we know, the commitment of time on the part of Maranatha is easily recognizable. Donating funds is the easiest way for others to become involved. Invite friends who have pledged to visit our church for a morning service in order to meet some Karen or Sudanese families and for us to have another opportunity to thank them for their involvement.
- (3) Think of family, friends who attend churches that do not have a refugee program of their own (many other denominations have no history of involvement in refugee sponsorship and would be interested to learn about it, and some CRC churches have wanted to start up a refugee program but have

been unable to), co-workers. Think of people whose walk-a-thons and pledge drives you regularly support. Think of friends and family you keep in contact with who live in other cities, provinces, countries.

- (4) The committee has special information bulletins for Christian or Non-Christian acquaintances, briefly outlining the aims of the Refugee Ministry of Maranatha CRC.
- (5) Tax-deductible receipts will be produced through the normal channels for all donors. We suggest that you submit their contact information with a cheque to Maranatha CRC ear-marked (in the memo) for the Refugee Committee. Tax money back is now 50%!

Encourage your friends, family and co-workers to consider pledging a yearly amount (pledge forms are available from the committee). With yearly pledges, the committee will be better able to manage a steady program of sponsorships. Also, be straightforward with your friends about the amount of money we need, per the budgets described above. Be sensitive to their situations, but in many cases that sensitivity must be to someone immensely blessed financially - that person might have an intense need to unload some money! Seriously, though, where appropriate be **BOLD**. Donations of \$500, \$1,000 or \$2,000 or sizeable pledges (see form at the end of this document) over the course of several years may indeed be legitimate suggestions for some of your friends.

We have prepared a letters describing the program and requesting support – one geared towards your Christian friends and one intended more for you not-yet-Christian friends. There is a copy of each attached to this document, and more copies are available on our church website, or can be electronically emailed to you. These letters are an excellent way to get the conversation started. Be prepared! – your friends might also want to know how they can help out with their time as well (English tutoring, hosting a family outing with a Karen family, job search etc.).

Meeting the Challenge III – A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned

- a) RENT/HOUSING – This is the largest expense, over 60% of all costs. The housing market is crazy, and the rental market is also rising. Creative solutions are welcome, because in this category, any saving is a big saving. Think not only of your own situation, but also of friends and relatives in the Edmonton area. Basement Suite -, Basement rooms not currently in use - Rental properties – Interested in a new investment you might like to make in real estate and make available for low-cost rent - Moving from your home to a smaller home and not really needing to sell the old place yet . Someone might be willing to help improve/modify a space to make it suitable for a family. If you have resources, or know someone who has, then talk about with someone on the Refugee Committee.
- b) CLOTHING/FURNITURE/GOODS – No need to discuss this, we are doing this on a large scale with the Karen community – keep up the good work.
- c) INVITE A NEW FAMILY FOR A MEAL – This won't really save you money, but it will save the family's food budget a little bit. You yourself will have a chance to learn about Burma, Sudan or another faraway place, help someone learn a little English and get to know a newer member of Maranatha.
- d) EMPLOYMENT – Helping the family find good employment helps in so many ways. Employment for the refugee is an opportunity to grow socially, to develop independence, and to learn English. Employment also provides the family with income, of course, and eases the financial burden on the refugee fund, thereby freeing up resources for more sponsorships.

Meeting the Challenge IV – Your Pledges and Donations

Alongside the Maranatha Church Budget and amongst the many special causes you support, we ask you to prayerfully consider what portion of the talents that God has blessed you with that you can put towards Refugee Sponsorship. Remember that our overall financial challenge is in the tens of thousands of the size of the financial challenge and that the number of families we sponsor will, over the years, be either limited or propelled by the amount of money raised. Remember also that with the changes to taxation this year, 50 cents of every donated dollar will come back to you. As noted above with regard to pledges from friends, we also encourage you to consider committing a yearly amount and communicating this yearly pledge to the committee. Pledge forms are available from the committee – long-term pledges allow you to utilize saving disciplines and allow the committee to make long-term plans based on steadier budgets.

Conclusion on Fundraising

The Refugee Committee has decided limit our fund-raising efforts mainly to this letter to the congregation. We will rather concentrate on the core of our mandate – to sponsor refugee families according to the resources we as a church have. As always, we welcome all comments, questions, curiosity and help.

Our belief is that in accordance with God's will, Maranatha is eager to undertake this work and this challenge. We have seen in the past that when a need is recognized, Maranatha comes forward. Moreover, we know that many among us have been blessed over the last number of years so that we are more able than ever to come forward with support, and that each member will give in accordance with what has been entrusted him.

Above all, as a church we trust that this ministry is an important part of the advancement of God's kingdom.

Thank-you for your support and prayers for refugees around the world.

The Refugee Committee

Harm Vriend, Joseph Grootenboer (Chair, Treasurer), Jonathan Pelster, Judy Stork and Wilbert Flinterman.

Maranatha Refugee Fund Pledge Form

Our household pledges donate the following amounts of money as show below:

One-time Donation \$ __, ____.00 → __ Quarter 20__

\$ __, ____.00 → 1st Quarter 2008 \$ __, ____.00 → 1st Quarter 2009

\$ __, ____.00 → 2nd Quarter 2008 \$ __, ____.00 → 2nd Quarter 2009

\$ __, ____.00 → 3rd Quarter 2008 \$ __, ____.00 → 3rd Quarter 2009

\$ __, ____.00 → 4th Quarter 2008 \$ __, ____.00 → 4th Quarter 2009

\$ __, ____.00 → 1st Quarter 2010 \$ __, ____.00 → 1st Quarter 2011

\$ __, ____.00 → 2nd Quarter 2010 \$ __, ____.00 → 2nd Quarter 2011

\$ __, ____.00 → 3rd Quarter 2010 \$ __, ____.00 → 3rd Quarter 2011

\$ __, ____.00 → 4th Quarter 2010 \$ __, ____.00 → 4th Quarter 2011

Name

Date

Thank-you: Your long-term pledge enables the committee to more accurately and confidently plan the sponsorship of Refugees, especially because while some applications can be received within a few months of the application, others can be expected to arrive between 2 and 4 years of the application, if the application is approved.

Please submit your pledge to Joseph Grootenboer (President/Treasurer of the Refugee Committee). Your pledge will remain confidential and only the amount pledged will be used by the committee, apart from your identity, to forecast cash flow. A reminder of your pledge will be provided to you if the time of your commitment has passed and the amount is yet to remit.
