

Refugee and Immigrant Ministry (RIM) 2015 Report



Preamble (or How God Led Us Here)

Northminster's commitment to refugee and immigrant concerns began eight years ago with the establishment of the Middle Eastern Presbyterian Fellowship (MEPF) on the church's campus (2008). This vibrant Christian fellowship has welcomed brothers and sisters in Christ who have fled violence and persecution in the Middle East. This community also has reached out in Christ's love to Muslims and Yazidis who have found their way to the MEPF community.

In 2010, NPC's leaders were approached by African refugees and immigrants who were exploring the possibility of having an African worship service on NPC's campus. After several years of regular African worship services, training in the Reformed faith, Africans joining NPC as members, and planning for a fourth Sunday NPC worship service, NPC celebrated the beginning of the ARISE worship service in 2014. ARISE is now one of four Sunday morning worship services at NPC (actually five, if you count MEPF).

During the growth of African membership at NPC, a wide-variety of humanitarian needs emerged that were not being met by government or NGO-based refugee programs. Specifically, Africans seeking asylum in the United States, fleeing ethnic and political persecution, found themselves without housing, food, jobs, and other necessities for a new life in this country. Although the ARISE community ministered faithfully to those in need, often sacrificing money and personal space in already crowded apartments, their financial and human resources failed to meet many of their increasing needs.



As NPC's pastors and Session responded to emerging needs on a case-by-case basis to these new church members with unique needs, it became clear that a formal policy and structure to help our African sisters and brothers in Christ would enhance NPC's ministry. Family reunification occupied a significant amount of time and financial resources in 2012-2013. In the summer of 2014, three young women, a young man, and a baby, who had fled Burundi due to political and ethnic turmoil, found themselves in a difficult living situation in Tucson. They had no means of earning income and were hungry and essentially, homeless because they had not yet received their work permits as asylum seekers.

NPC mobilized its human and financial resources to establish and furnish the Samaritan Apartment, a 2 bedroom, 1 bath, rental apartment near the church campus and provided Albertson's grocery cards on a monthly basis. Later in 2014, NPC's Session approved the establishment of the Refugee and Immigrant Ministry (RIM) with the objective of:

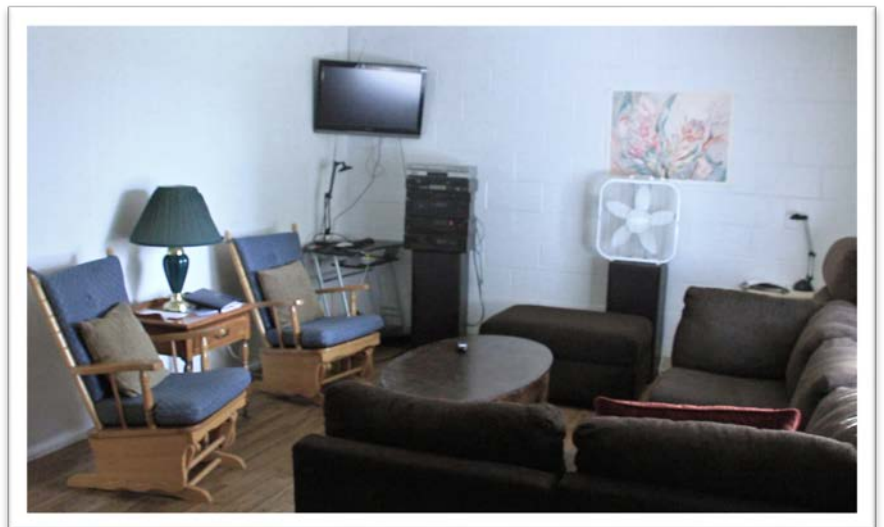
“... fully integrating Christian refugees and immigrants from anywhere in the world into the fellowship and mission of Northminster Presbyterian Church. Integration implies, given time, that RIM will “work itself out of a job” as NPC becomes a multi-cultural church of Jesus Christ.”

The RIM Team focuses on managing the Samaritan Apartment and the Sojourner Fund for the benefit of NPC members who are asylum seekers or refugees. Members of the RIM Team include past and current elders and other members of the congregation.

2015 Activities

The Samaritan Apartment

The four adults and baby, mentioned above, lived in the Samaritan Apartment for six months. During that time, they volunteered at the church and in the community, established proficiency in English, received their work permits, found jobs, saved for their own apartments, attended Pima Community College, earned drivers licenses, purchased cars, and paid for their



own car insurance. In early March 2015, they moved out of the Samaritan Apartment and began their independent lives in America. That same month, two young men, members of NPC, waiting for their work permits, moved into the Samaritan Apartment, starting their journey towards independent living. Another gentleman who is an asylum seeker and NPC member resided at the Samaritan Apartment from June – August, 2015 while waiting for his work permit. In September 2015, another young man moved into the apartment, waiting for his work permit and the ability to support himself. In February 2016, another NPC member and asylum seeker joined the other three residents at the apartment. RIM's expectation is that two of the four current residents will move out of the apartment in spring 2016. To date, the Samaritan Apartment has sheltered ten NPC members. All past residents, excluding the infant, are working one or more jobs and are supporting themselves and other NPC members.

NPC completely furnished the apartment with generous donations from its members and non-members, making the apartment a comfortable, secure place where the residents can begin to take steps to establish themselves in Tucson. RIM pays the monthly rent, provides grocery

cards, bus passes and other incidental expenses that assist the residents as they move towards independence.

The Sojourner Fund

The Sojourner Fund is designed to meet the legal and emergency living needs of asylum seekers, particularly those without work permits, and immigrants struggling to establish their lives as “sojourners” in a new land. Immigration attorney fees represent a significant part of this assistance. Funding is also provided for rent, food assistance, travel, health care, etc., on a case-by-case, short-term basis. The church’s Board of Deacons has been helpful in complementing the resources of The Sojourner Fund with their own resources when requests meet their mission and guidelines. As a representative sample of assistance, in 2015 The Sojourner Fund assisted with:

- The reunification of a family from Burundi
- Assisted with the legal costs of four asylum seekers and two refugees
- Assisted with rent and grocery cards to church members who are providing housing to church members who are not part of their family
- Grocery card support for members who are between jobs
- Cell phone assistance for asylum seekers who have a work permit and are trying to find a job

The RIM Resource Office

In July 2015, the RIM Resource Office was established on the church campus. The purpose of the office is to provide a location where asylum seekers, asylees, and refugees can meet with a RIM Team member or volunteer to discuss a wide variety of issues (health care, apartment billing resolution, transportation, etc.), as well as working on resume preparation and job interviewing skills. The Resource Office also has coordinated the donation of

household goods and furniture to the immigrant community. The office is open at least two, half-days a week and is equipped with two computers, a printer, and internet access.



The RIM Team

The RIM Team is made up of seven individuals (one pastor and six lay people) who meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and make decisions associated with RIM activities. In 2015, the RIM Team:

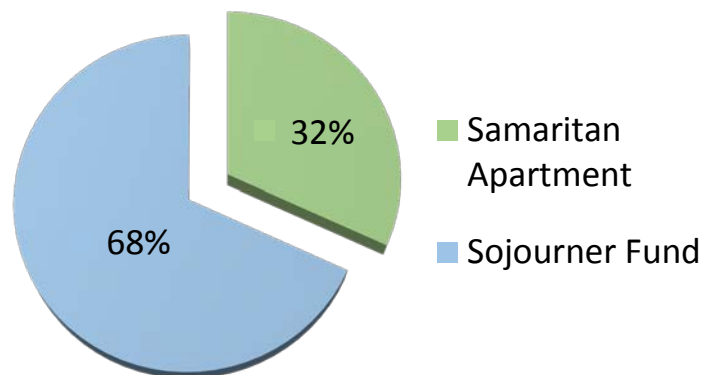
- Established procedures for managing the Samaritan Apartment

- Established procedures for funding requests submitted to RIM
- Established policies for funding for legal assistance
- Represented NPC at community-wide immigrant and refugee meetings
- Worked closely with the saints at Christ Church United Methodist Church who provide the initial assistance with asylum applications
- Inform the broader NPC community about the work of RIM via Moment for Missions, Mission Sunday and Advent Gift of the Heart presentations
- Conducted a two-hour listening session with leaders from the ARISE worship service
- Began compiling an Asylum Seeker Assistance Notebook
- Assisted with gathering information about educational opportunities (PCC, UA, ESL)
- Coordinated RIM fundraising activities. RIM receives no funds from NPC's operating budget therefore all financial resources must be raised from the additional giving of the congregation and the Tucson community. Specific fundraising activities in 2015 were:
 - Advent Gift of the Heart
 - African Greeting Card Sales
 - Winterhaven Parking Fundraiser

Financial Basics for 2015

Contributions	\$35,630.50
Expenses	\$38,697.34

Distribution of Expenses



Year End Fund Balances (December 31, 2015)

Samaritan Apartment Fund	\$6,173.25
Sojourner Fund	\$19,119.91

