



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN



Girls reading. (Photo by the late Rev. Kelly Allen)

**The Heart of Mission**

June 15, 2021

This coming Sunday, June 20, is World Refugee Day. First Presbyterian Church Champaign supports a variety of mission agencies, partners and coworkers, whose arms reach out to welcome the refugee in our midst and those far away. We support The Refugee Center which helps immigrants and refugees here in Champaign Urbana settle and find a footing. We supported the coming together of mission and social agencies into shared space with The Refugee Center such as the Immigrant Services of Champaign Urbana. We support world mission partners like Frontera de Cristo and even our world mission coworkers in Africa and South Asia who in turn support root spiritual needs with communities that feed the refugees plight. Our local agencies like CU at Home and Salt and Light often find themselves assisting refugees who are seeking safety and find themselves wanting. How hard it is to be in a country, regardless of the country, when you don't speak the language and you have no resources. World Refugee Day is a time to ponder the interdependence of the world. Just read through our list of mission agencies at the bottom of this newsletter and you will see a thread in each one that weaves us together. I decided that it would be useful to reprint for you the World Refugee Reflection from the PC(USA) Mission Yearbook found online. May it enrich your week as you consider the Christ in our neighbor.

Peace,  
Rev. Rachel Matthews, Mission Coordinator

**(<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/june-20-2021/>)**

*For two decades, June 20th's designation as "World Refugee Day" has drawn global attention to both the plight of refugees living on the edge of survival and their strength and courage. It is also a day to remember the promise made by 146 countries, including the U.S., to provide safe haven and long-term recovery to those forced to flee their homelands.*

*One of the lectionary readings for today is the story of David and Goliath from 1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23) 32-49. It occurred to me recently that this story is a good metaphor for the U.S. asylum system, with David as an individual asylum seeker and Goliath as the U.S. immigration system.*

*Like David, many refugees are ordinary people who stand up for themselves and the rights of others. They must summon enormous courage and rely on their faith in a loving and just God to deliver them. When they arrive at an international border, they must muster the courage once again to tell their refugee story to the "powers that be" in hopes that they will not be sent back. Whether at the U.S. border or waiting in a refugee camp in Kenya, refugees must overcome impossible odds for their survival.*

*Presbyterian Disaster Assistance partners with churches and organizations on the ground to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and forcibly displaced people. On this World Refugee Day, we lift up situations where PDA is currently active through our PC(USA) partners:*

- *The people of Syria after 10 years of war*
- *Cameroon, particularly the conflict with the Anglophone regions*
- *The Tigray Region of Ethiopia*
- *The Gedo Region of Somalia*
- *Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador*
- *The Mexico border with the U.S.*

*In the U.S., we acknowledge and give thanks for San Fernando Valley Refugee Children's Center; the Interfaith Welcome Coalition; Angry Tias and Abuelas; Cazenovia Welcomes Refugees; Home for Refugees; El Shaddai Vision Church; the Presbyteries of the Pacific, San Gabriel and Riverside; Church World Service; and the hundreds of PC(USA) congregations for their ministries of welcome and accompaniment.*

*An intercessory prayer, other worship resources and World Refugee Day materials can be found at [pcusa.org/refugee](https://pcusa.org/refugee).*

*Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylum, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance*

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, June 20, 2021, the Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)**

**First Reading** [1 Samuel 17:\(1a, 4-11, 19-23\) 32-49](#)

**Or alternate First Reading** [1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 10-16](#)

**Psalm** [9:9-20](#)

**Or alternate Psalm** [Psalm 133](#)

**Second Reading** [2 Corinthians 6:1-13](#)

**Gospel** [Mark 4:35-41](#)

**Let us join in prayer for:**

**PC(USA) Agencies' Staff**

[Robyn McEvilla](#), Administrative Services Group (A Corp)

[John McFayden](#), Board of Pensions

**Let us pray:**

*The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble.*

*And those who know your name put their trust in you,  
for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. (Psalm 9:9-10)*

*Today we pray for all those who have been forced to leave their homes, their homelands and all they hold dear that you may grant them safe passage, wisdom and courage. And we pray for host communities around the world to have open hearts and eyes to see God's servants in the faces of those seeking refuge. In the name of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.*



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**Local Addendum:**

**CU at Home UPDATE – You may have read this in the News-Gazette but it is helpful to know that CU at Home keeps us informed of their practice. Please pray for them to find new staff to hire.**

June 11, 2021

Good afternoon friend!

*I wanted update you on the progress we have made here at C-U at Home over the past few weeks. While there is still progress to be made, I am extremely proud of the hard work that our staff has put in over this past month!*

Severe staffing shortages, especially in our overnight shelter, have forced us to operate at a reduced capacity at the emergency shelters and street outreach and reduced hours at our daytime drop-in center this past month. We have continued operations in other areas of the ministry, including our transitional housing program, as usual.

I've been involved in conversations where I've heard folks mention a "total shutdown" of services since early May, so I want to emphasize that while we have had to reduce capacity in some areas, the ministry has not been "shut down" for the past few weeks.

When we made the decision to reduce services last month, we set a VERY tentative date for returning to full operations on June 14th. While we have made immense progress towards our goals, hiring continues to be a slow process. We have expanded our job boards, increased the hourly wage and salaries of open positions, extended into more digital marketing opportunities, and even recently connected with several Deans at the University of Illinois to share employment opportunities and hire quality employees. Suffice it to say we are leaving no stone unturned relating to finding applicants!

Sadly, upon call back of several of the applicants, many do not have voicemails set up, others do not return phone calls, and some even have been scheduled for an interview and then not shown up. We are continuing to schedule interviews as we look to fill our available daytime and overnight positions. I am confident we will be able to reopen for full operation in the very near future, but unfortunately not on June 14th.

During this past month, we have not only focused much attention on hiring, but also have been working in a number of areas to improve the quality of our services:

- visiting shelters around the state and improving our security measures
- updating policies and procedures in all areas of ministry (especially our shelters)
- refurbishing both the men's shelter and Phoenix drop-in center space
- creating a separate space for both the men's shelter and drop-in center
- adding bunk beds to the men's shelter, a Resource Center to our Phoenix Center, and a multitude of other ministry updates.

Every action we take is laser focused on providing a more effective and safe array of services to meet the needs of our friends on the street in response to feedback we have received from them. We also will continue to make hiring of staff our highest priority!

I close with a few thoughts. First, "Thank YOU!" for your prayers, notes of encouragement and kindness, and continued support. We couldn't navigate this difficult time without YOU! Secondly, even though hiring has been a frustratingly slow process, I am THRILLED about the progress we've made in other areas! There is a forward momentum within these walls that invigorates my soul as we look to come back even stronger than before! Finally, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [rob@cuathome.us](mailto:rob@cuathome.us) with any questions that you may have. I'd be happy to share more information with you!

Thank you for your support and passion for those without an address! We will continue our commitment to those most vulnerable members of our community and our goal to "come back stronger" than ever!"

C-U at Home Board of Directors and Staff

**We want to keep our mission partners in our prayers. Listen for God's call to you in their ministry.**

**Our PC(USA) Mission CoWorkers:**

Mark Adams and Miriam Maidonado Escobar (Mexico)

Farsijanna Adeney-Risakotta (Indonesia)

Jeff and Christi Boyd (Central Africa)

Bob and Kristi Rice (South Sudan)

**Our regional and global mission partners:**

Kemmerer Village (and Camp Carew)  
Lifeline Pilots  
Marion Medical Mission  
Mission Aviation Fellowship  
Opportunity International  
Friends of Presbyterian Education Board in Pakistan Presbyterian Cuba Partnership  
Special Offerings of the PC(USA)  
Theological Education Fund  
Young Adult Volunteers

**Here in Champaign – Urbana:**

CU at Home  
CANAAN S.A.F.E. HOUSE  
CANTEEN RUN  
COURAGE CONNECTION  
DREAAM  
eEMPTY TOMB, INC  
FAITH IN ACTION  
JESUS IS THE WAY PRISON MINISTRY  
THE REFUGEE CENTER  
RESTORATION URBAN MINISTRY  
SALT & LIGHT

**Here at First Presbyterian Church**

FPCC Amateur Preachers  
FPCC Environmental Committee working with Faith in Place  
FPCC Presbyterian Women  
FPCC ESL  
FPCC Children, Youth and Families  
FPCC Mission Possible/Go and Serve  
FPCC Mission Team, World Mission and Community Mission Deacons



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