Dear Friends of Arrive Ministries,

In President Ronald Reagan’s farewell address to the nation 25+ years ago, he borrowed a line from Jesus, describing the United States as a “shining city on a hill.” He called our country a place for those fleeing loss, persecution and trauma, a place “teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace” whose “doors were open to anyone with the will and heart to get here.”

These words perhaps do not as accurately reflect the sentiment of some in our nation today, as our government has lowered the annual number of refugees who can come to the USA to a record low of 45,000 and has put further restrictions on which refugee families can be reunited with loved ones already here. Yet, these words should still ring true for followers of Jesus who have been commanded to “love the stranger” to “care for the widow, orphan and the prisoner” and to “do justice and walk humbly with our God.” This is especially salient as we consider the 22.7 million refugees around the global, 66.5 million displaced people, including 12 million Syrians, and 250,000 women and children (70% of the total) who were refugees and arrived in the U.S. since 2011 after rigorous security vetting (Source: US Department of State).

Today, Minnesota is 13th nationally for the number of refugees who call our state home, but is consistently ranked first or second in the number of refugees per capita (Source: Star Tribune, Sept. 2, 2016). Anyone living in the Twin Cities has experienced this significant population change as Burmese, Iraqis, Ethiopians, Nepalese, Somalis and Liberians now join our children in schools and shop where we shop. The changing demographics are also significantly felt in places like Willmar, St. Cloud, Moorhead, Faribault, Rochester and dozens of places in-between.

In the midst of the greatest displacement of people in the history of the world (surpassing even World War II), we are thrilled how Christ-followers and our local congregations are making an impact right here as they respond to those who on average have spent 17 years as refugees before coming to Minnesota.

Arrive Ministries believes that God has blessed us with a plethora of refugees and immigrants because he knows that his church is up to the task of loving and celebrating our new neighbors just as Christ accepted and loved us. As a result of the outpouring of volunteers, we have expanded our outreach to refugees who are already here, as we also continue to welcome new refugee arrivals through dozens of new teams and training activities with our Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT), Refugee Life Ministries (RLM) and New Neighbor outreaches.

As we approach Thanksgiving, and the Wonderful Season of All Seasons as we celebrate Christ’s advent, we are grateful for the many practical ways our friends are helping us to respond to the nations at our doorstep.

Yet, we need your help for this important work to continue and expand as we mobilize churches in the Twin Cities, as well as St. Cloud, Willmar, Rochester, Marshall, Worthington and Faribault. To support this strategic effort please visit arriveministries.org or send your generous gift using the enclosed envelope.

Thank you in advance for helping to shape the future as you stand with us and the refugees God is entrusting to us. I know that your involvement makes you feel good as you serve God and make a huge difference right here in Minnesota and beyond.

Many blessings,

Bob Oehrig
Executive Director

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- All gifts up to $75,000, received by December 31st for our RLM program, will be matched.
- Gifts for SALT, RAJO, Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Legal Services, up to $25,000, will also be matched.

Your support helps us to respond to the nations at our doorstep. Please visit ARRIVEMINISTRIES.ORG to donate today.
“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD.”
(LEV. 19:33-34)
Refugee Life Ministries (RLM):  
Through your support and prayers, in the past 12 months, three dozen churches have been trained and matched by us to come alongside a refugee family for at least one year, as they help them navigate their new lives in Minnesota.

Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT):  
Because of friends like you, since January, 80 new volunteers have joined several hundred others to do ESL and tutoring in the apartments of their Somali neighbors in more than 20 locations in the Twin Cities and a half dozen out-state cities. Learning English is a felt need and is a proven way to develop lasting friendships as we share our lives and Jesus.

Church Refugee Gardens:  
This year, because of your help, 1,998 refugee families had garden plots at Twin Cities area churches. Refugees, living in high density apartments, are growing culturally appropriate and nutritious food, are getting good exercise and the emotional benefit of physical labor, as they provide for themselves and their extended families. Churches are sharing the resource of land to those who might not quickly step into their churches, but are grateful to have a non-threatening place to connect cross-culturally.

Sports, Sewing & Baking Outreach:  
Still other churches, because of our help, have started basketball and soccer programs where their own youth and refugees are enjoying a shared passion. And other churches have quilting and sewing classes where women share practical skills as they also share their love of working with fabric.

Additionally several partner churches are offering citizenship classes for those who are preparing for naturalization exams, are providing help to those taking learner’s permit classes, and are serving as job mentors and bus orientation guides for others.
HOW ARE OUR VOLUNTEERS SERVING OUR NEW NEIGHBORS?

With friendship and a listening ear: When a refugee family was recently met at the airport with a colorful welcome banner brought by a church team of two dozen trained by Arrive Ministries at first they thought that a dignitary was being welcomed. When they found that they were the focus of attention, they declared “we have never been welcomed anywhere in our lives.” Clearly, when it is the church that welcomes the stranger, it is a powerful expression of the Gospel.

Several months ago, our Executive Director, Bob Oehrig, was at a gas station buying a cup of coffee and decided to buy coffee for the gentleman behind him in line. His reaction was to ask “you aren’t from around here, are you?” And then, for the next 30 minutes, he described the comments, stares and animosity he has experienced since he came to Minnesota 12 years ago as a refugee from East Africa. He thanked Bob for his kindness, for treating him as a human being. He then allowed Bob to pray for him and his family who are feeling afraid right now, unsure of their futures and concerned whether they will be able to be reunited with loved ones still residing in refugee camps overseas.

With patience: Many express impatience with the rate of assimilation, the speed of English learning and the cultural uniqueness of some of our new refugee neighbors. We are often slow to remember that every generation of immigrants has experienced these same assimilation struggles. For example, in 1890 there were over 1,000 German language newspapers being published in the United States, even though German immigration peaked two generations earlier in the 1840s and 1850s.

We are excited that many of our volunteers and church teams do not expect new immigrants and refugees to do things that our own ancestors had trouble doing. Current research indicates that immigrants and their children are actually assimilating faster into American society then in any previous generation, because of media, education, English Language Learning programs (Source: The Integration of Immigrants into American Society, 2015). In almost every immigration era, the first generation has trouble learning English. The second generation learns English at school. And the third generation has trouble communicating with grandma and grandma in their mother tongue.

With practical action: Most refugees arrive in Minnesota (more than 2,500 directly from overseas and a similar number from other states in 2016 alone) with little more than the clothes on their back and a few valued possessions. Churches have risen to the challenge to serve refugee families and address physical, social and spiritual needs.