

Arrive Ministries

A man with dark, curly hair and a mustache, wearing a light-colored striped button-down shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up. He is looking out of a window with sheer white curtains. The background is dark and out of focus.

2021 VOL. 2

2

Between Two Worlds

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Volunteers
Assist in
Evacuation
of Afghan
Friends

1515 East 66th Street
Richfield MN 55423

A Note of Gratitude

Mike Bergman
Executive Director



“God is at work bringing love and welcome to our refugee friends.”

One of the many Welcome Kits given for new refugees



7-year-old Luke raised money through a lemonade stand

We have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support.

The crisis in Afghanistan – which dominated the news back in August – has once again highlighted the plight of refugees and the very real dangers they face.

Your responses to our requests have been amazing! We've seen everything from kids hosting lemonade stands

all the way to churches and individuals buying homes to rent to refugees. In addition, hundreds of people have signed up to volunteer and even more have sent in financial contributions. Thank you!

As a team, we welcomed more refugees in September than at any other time this year, and expect dozens of Afghan arrivals plus a steady increase in other refugee resettlements as well. Our team is rejoicing in the privilege of serving more

new neighbors, even as we're being stretched in our work. We're grateful for a number of new staff members who are definitely learning on the job!

Your encouragement and support mean a great deal to us. As you'll read in the following pages, God is at work bringing love and welcome to our refugee friends.

Please pray that we would be fueled by the Holy Spirit and that God would receive the glory through our work.

Between Two Worlds



ON THE COVER: Sher Mohammed looking out his Bloomington apartment window; 5-year-old Maryam and Molly (above); 18-year-old Bashir and his father Sher Mohammed (below)



Through our Afghan Women's English tutoring program (AWELL), Molly built a friendship with Sher Mohammad, his wife Nilofar, and their children.

Sher Mohammad and his 13-year-old daughter were visiting family in Afghanistan during the Taliban takeover in August. His green card helped them escape, but his family wasn't completely relieved. Their concern for loved ones back home and angst over the future of their homeland are an ever-present worry.

Molly spent many days during the U.S. military's pullout from Afghanistan offering a comforting

presence to Nilofar and her family.

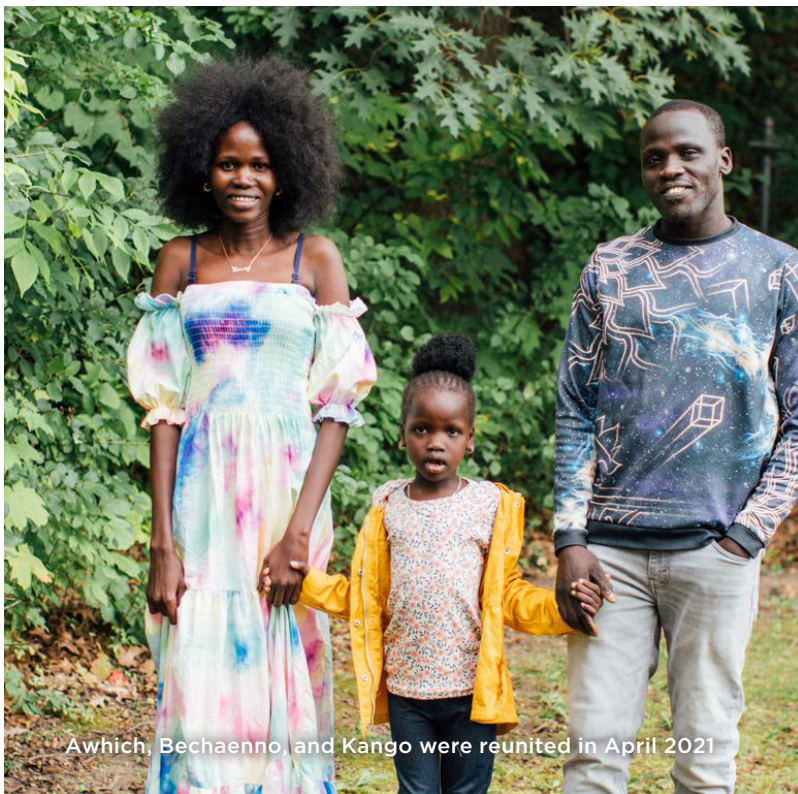
"I cry when I think of all they have sacrificed to be in America. It's really important that we welcome them," said Molly. This sentiment causes Nilofar to cry and Molly consoles her.

"I look forward to when Molly comes. I am happy I can learn English from my teachers, they are my friends," said Nilofar.

Molly and her co-tutor Flo have gotten to know three Afghan families who live in the same Bloomington apartment complex.

"They are very dear families who have opened up their homes, prayed with us, and welcomed us," said Molly.

Perseverance and Prayer



Awhich, Bechaenno, and Kango were reunited in April 2021

After Kango Ojha fell in love with Awhich and married in the church, they learned they were expecting a child. Soon after, they were informed that due to Kango's refugee status after fleeing Ethiopia, he had permission to move to the United States in 2015.

"My daughter, Bechaenno was born one month after I arrived in Minnesota. I had no choice as to the date of my flight, so I never got to meet her," said Kango.

He connected with Arrive Ministries' immigration department immediately after arriving in Minnesota to file documents needed to bring his family over. Unfortunately, Kango ran into four years' worth of unforeseen obstacles: a delay in getting his daughter's birth certificate, a government lock-down in Kenya, and a dangerous trip back to Kenya to obtain a recognized marriage certificate.

"When I went back to Nairobi in 2018, it was the first time I met my daughter as a two-year-old. It was so hard to leave them," said Kango.

Kango persisted in creating a life for himself in

Minnesota with the help of Arrive Ministries' employment and immigration staff, and a generous gift.

"After I was in a car accident, an immigration counselor told me to meet him at the DMV. When I got there a wonderful man gave me his minivan for free. I never expected it, I was ready to pay for the car," said Kango.

Kango was taken shopping by his employment counselor for new shoes, he was given new work clothes, and was even given two Bible reference books since he was unable to finish his studies at a Bible college in Kenya.

All the while, delays kept pushing his family reunion out. In 2020, Kango was told to expect flight arrangements for his family in March. Travel delays due to the global pandemic postponed their case another year.

Kango talked to his daughter on the phone every single day, and he and his wife agreed to pray and fast for God's intervention. Allegra, an Arrive Ministries immigration counselor regularly touched base with Kango.

"Allegra was persistent in asking about my family's case. She did a very good thing," said Kango.

Finally in April of 2021, Kango was able to joyfully receive his wife and 5-year-old daughter at the airport.

"At the airport, my daughter identified me as her father, and I was so happy," said Kango. "By the grace of God, I now have my family with me."

Immigration Legal Services in 2021

2,840

Hours spent meeting with clients via zoom or in-person

27

New citizens naturalized after filing through Arrive Ministries

104

Citizenship applications filed

81

Family Visas filed to reunify families



Assisting in the Evacuation of an Afghan Family

Good Neighbors from Emmanuel Covenant Church knit together a harrowing tale of survival as they assisted in the evacuation of refugee friends from Afghanistan.

Inspired last year by a sermon series about welcoming the stranger, Mark and Lori Hansen joined a Good Neighbor team that befriended the Nooris, an Afghan family of five.

In the spring of 2021, the Noori family returned to Afghanistan to visit Mohammad Noori's mom who was in poor health.

In early August, the Hansen family went to the airport to pick up the Noori family, but they never showed.

Their flights were rescheduled to the following month, as the chaos of a Taliban takeover was threatening any chance of escape. Mohammad, his pregnant wife Wahida, and three young kids under the age of six went into hiding. There were no answers of what to do or how Mohammad could get his family out of the country. He Facebook messaged Mark, in essence mobilizing the Hansens for the mission of their lives.

Mark filled out repatriation forms quickly, which were supposed to help the family get on a U.S. military flight out of Kabul. Mark and his wife Lori worked around the clock, texting their Arrive Ministries' coordinator, calling U.S. Senators' offices, and making helpful connections.

"Lori had a family friend, Steve, who is a retired Marine. Steve joined forces with a network of Marine veterans to help try to get those who had supported our military out of Afghanistan safely," said Mark.

"This group of Marines was really

focused on getting interpreters out, their motto is leave no Marine behind. They view these interpreters like they are Marines," said Lori.

For 10 days straight, the Hansens Facebook messaged Mohammad in the middle of the night, as he ducked in and out of unstable internet

cafes, with instructions from the team of Marines. All the while the Good Neighbor

team from Emmanuel Covenant Church covered the family in prayer.

"I don't think we have ever prayed more in our lives. That's all we could do," said Lori.

This young, scared family bravely attempted to get around Taliban check-points, patiently waited at the Ministry of the Interior for 24 hours without progress, and persistently attempted to enter different airport gates.

Finally, on August 25th, confirmation

was sent that the Nooris were inside the airport.

Then, a massive explosion happened at the Kabul airport.

Radio silence.

Mark and Lori had lost all communication with the Nooris for two days. Finally, Mark got a Facebook message from Mohammed with a photo of his kids saying "Mark, we are in Qatar."

When Steve saw the photographic proof of their successful mission, his

eyes went straight to the daughter.

"She was looking at her older brother like she couldn't possibly love anyone as much as him ever," said Steve. "And big brother looked like he was 6, going on 42."

Momentary relief. Yet their journey was far from over.

The Nooris' documents were lost in their checked bags. So, although they were able to fly

to Dulles Airport in Washington D.C., they were unable to get through TSA, or fly back to Minnesota.

Coincidentally, that was the day someone from Senator Amy Klobuchar's office returned their call for help. A staffer from Klobuchar's office went to Dulles Airport and escorted the family through security without documentation, so they could fly to Minnesota.

The Hansens, Steve the Marine, and Arrive Ministries staff met the Nooris at the airport for a midnight arrival.

With no family in Minnesota, the Hansens and the Good Neighbor

team stepped up as their friends, advocates, and in essence guardians.

Mark and Lori believe without the assistance of so many and persistent prayer, the Noori family wouldn't have made it out of Afghanistan.

"We were so blessed that so many people and Marines made amazing decisions that eventually led to them getting out," said Mark.

"I don't think we have ever prayed more in our lives."

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A Russian Interpreter & her English Tutor

Friends that are Family

such a friend of the family that I kept getting together with their family for social and family gatherings,” said Annice.

As the years went on, Victoria’s extended family became more like another family to Annice. Annice even traveled to Ukraine to visit Victoria’s brothers and stay with Victoria’s parents, who lived in Ukraine at the time.

“Vicky’s extended family are my Minnesota family,” said Annice, who grew-up in Ohio.

“I feel honored to know that if I need help with anything, anyone in her family will help me.”

“It has been a two-way, mutual relationship.

Annice became like a family member to us,” said Victoria. “We invite her to weddings, birthdays, baby showers. She sends birthday cards to my children.”

Now that Victoria has lived in Minnesota for over two decades, she wanted to give back to new refugees

by serving as a volunteer interpreter through the same organization that helped her find a job and a volunteer English tutor in 1997.

“I started from nothing, and now I am in a position to help others succeed in this country. It’s an amazing feeling to pay back, and it’s my turn to help,” said Victoria.

While telling this story to Arrive Ministries’ newest Russian refugee clients, Victoria urged the family to sign-up for Arrive Ministries’ friendship

program, so a group of Good Neighbors could walk alongside their family as they adjust to their new homeland.

“You never know?” Victoria urged, “You might just make life-long friends!”

“You never know?
You might just make
life-long friends.”

Recently, while one of our volunteer interpreters was translating for a newly-arrived Russian family, she told them of her arrival story.

Victoria came to Minnesota from Ukraine 23 years ago through Arrive Ministries, formerly called World Relief Minnesota. She and her brother were paired with a volunteer English tutor named Annice.

Their weekly English tutoring relationship quickly developed into a deeper friendship.

“When I got married, Annice attended my wedding, and when I had children, she visited my newborn babies,” said Victoria.

“The tutoring friendship evolved. I became



Victoria (far left), Victoria's siblings and friend (middle), Annice (far right), 1998



The Downer family celebrating the one year anniversary of their new neighbors arriving to the U.S.

Book Inspires Action

Good Neighbors to a Syrian family

After Naomi Downer read *After the Last Border* and attended our discussion with the author, Jessica Goudeau, her family was inspired by the Syrian and Karen refugee families featured in the book.

“Reading these stories about the challenges they faced, leaving everything they knew behind, including some of their family members, and having to relocate to a place they were completely unprepared for moved me to action,” said Naomi.

Jesus’ own words kept resonating in Naomi’s heart. “Jesus said ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’ I kept asking ‘How can I be more welcoming?’” explained Naomi.

Both Naomi and her husband had previously worked with refugees years earlier but hadn’t yet found a refugee ministry in their hometown of Rochester. After doing some research and talking with a friend, they learned of Arrive Ministries and contacted us to get involved in their city.

Amazingly, we were able to connect the Downer family to be Good Neighbors with a recently arrived Syrian family who moved to Rochester in the fall of 2020.

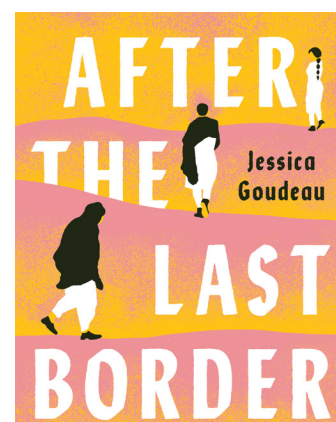
“We’re doing what we would want someone to do for us.”

For the past year, the Rochester family of four has taken the Syrian family of five on adventures to the zoo, parks, and library; while also helping with practical tasks like sorting through their mail and making medical appointments.

“We’re doing what we would want someone to do for us,” Naomi explains to her sons.

The Downers illustrate how education can lead to involvement; and how the body of Christ works together to meet real human needs and provide love in word and deed.

Watch our conversation
with the author of
After the Last Border at
[www.arriveministries.org/
the-story-of-refuge-resources](http://www.arriveministries.org/the-story-of-refuge-resources)



“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Matthew 25:35



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