

Merry Christmas,

Welcome to World Relief Sacramento's final Prayer Partner newsletter of the year. This month I want to invite you to reflect on the notion of "home." Christmas is a time when many people long for home. According to AAA one-third of the nation—a staggering 112 million people—will be flying or driving to be home for Christmas this year. We want to be home.

The 1940's the song "I'll be Home for Christmas" by Bing Crosby was an instant hit during the war. The song is written from the perspective of a soldier stationed overseas during WWII writing a letter to his family. He tells his family he will be coming home and to prepare the holiday for him. He requests, "snow, mistletoe, and presents on the tree." This was the most requested song during Christmas shows by the U.S. soldiers and for good reason. As we all know, there is this deep desire inside all of us to be in a place where we can love and be loved. We want to "come home" because we want to return to a place of familiarity, love, acceptance and warmth.

Although not all of our refugee and immigrant families celebrate Christmas, they are all looking for "home". They are craving to find a place of acceptance, safety, security, warmth, and familiarity. Over the past month, with God's help, our office helping has been helping incoming refugees and immigrants find home in Sacramento. We want to invite you to thank God with us for the following ways he has worked through us:

- **Winter Youth Soccer Tournament:** On December 8, we hosted a Winter Soccer Tournament for 75 youth at the San Juan Soccer Club in Ranch Cordova. This event was a big win for our community and it brought together many different people. Here is one amazing story – one young refugee boy's mother recently went into cardiac arrest shortly after arrived in the U.S. She is still in the hospital. Her son, who has gone through a lot, was able to play, laugh, and have fun at the soccer tournament. As it turns out, he was crowned MVP of the game and carried off the field by his teammates! Praise God!
- **400 Afghans are Guests at the River City Mall Event:** On November 30 – December 1 through our invitations over 400 Afghans came to the River City Mall holiday event. They were honored guests who met the pastor of River City Church, enjoyed a free meal, and received \$50 gift cards each to purchase things they wanted. According to our staff who attended, this outpouring of love was well received by the Afghan community.
- **Better Than a Vacation:** One of our volunteers with a Good Neighbor Team recently had an all-inclusive vacation planned for the weekend that our client was scheduled to deliver her baby. This was a high-risk pregnancy and our Good Neighbor had been with her to every prenatal appointment. Our client told her that it felt like having her mother with her. The Good Neighbor cancelled her vacation plans and was there for the whole labor and delivery. As a display of gratitude, our client asked her to name their son an American name. She named the baby after her Good Neighbors' son! They also wanted her to give the baby a middle name, but she deferred back to them and said it should be a family name.

- **Above and Beyond:** Another one of our volunteers was originally matched as a Good Neighbor. His family match was with a single father, teenage daughter middle school aged son. This man would drive from Walnut Creek all the way to Sacramento just to meet with them. Even after his time as a Good Neighbor ended, he continued keeping up with the family. Recently he heard the daughter wanted to join soccer league but did not have enough funds to pay her way. So this man personally reached out to the “Book of Dreams” at the Sacramento Bee and got his story published with opportunity for readers to donate.

Good things are happening! We want to thank God for them and how he was sustained us in 2018. As we turn to the future, join us in boldly asking God for the following things:

- **Closing Offices:** The government has told the major refugee resettlement agencies, including World Relief that the United States would be accepting less refugees in the coming year. As a result, numerous offices are closing down. World Relief will be closing down resettlement for three offices. Our office in Sacramento, will not be affected and we are still expected a high number of arrivals in the coming year. However, please pray of all of those affected by this news and those in the World Relief family who will be out of work.
- **New Hires and Our Staff:** We have recently hired a new Employment Specialist named Audrey and promoted three other staff members within our office. We are very excited for these four individuals. Please pray they would thrive and enjoy their new positions.
- **English Class Signups:** Like all ESL programs, the signups of our ESL class go through ups and downs. Currently our enrollment is down, and we are working hard to recruit new women and men. Please pray that God would bring in new people eager to learn.
- **Our Immigration Legal Services:** Our ILS department just completed their first year and did a wonderful job. This humble and hardworking team is making a positive difference of hundreds of men, women, boys, and girls that need low-cost legal assistance. Pray for our ambitious plans to continue expanding our services as we help reunite families, guide people on their path to citizenship, and protect vulnerable communities through education and offering legal counsel and assistance that would otherwise be out of reach.
- **The Future Ahead:** This coming year, 2019, is going to be a great ride. We are working toward creating deeper programs and services to serve our newest neighbors more holistic ways. Pray for our planning and work with youth, women who are learning English and job skills. Also, lift up our developing partnerships with local churches and other non-profit organizations in Sacramento.

Thanks again for collaborating with us as we help others find home. This is a very noble task and one that follows the example of our welcoming God. During Christmas, we can remember that God sent Jesus to earth to help humanity find home. That is, God left home so that we could find home.

The Gospel of John 1 puts it this way,

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him, all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

Jesus left his home in heaven to become a human so that through his life, death, and resurrection he could offer us a way home. ***Through his work, he offers us the home we all long for – a place of love, acceptance, family, peace, joy, hope, healing, forgiveness, and eternal belonging. That is what inspires and motivates us to offer home to our newest neighbors.***

Thank you for your partnership in this holy endeavor. On behalf of our entire staff (see the picture attached) MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Warmly,

Brandon Hovey

