

World Refugee Day

June 20 is World Refugee Day. Canadian Baptists celebrate this day on either June 20th or June 27th.

On June 15, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) released their end of year (2009) UNHCR Global Trends Report which tells us this story:

- 43.3 million forcibly displaced people, which is 2 times the number counted in 2006.
- These 43.3 million people includes known refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons
- The number of people able to voluntarily return home during 2009, usually 1 million per year, was only a quarter of that!
- There are 15.2 million are known refugees
- 5.5 million of known refugees have lived in protracted refugee situations for more than 5 years.



Leviticus 19:34 says "When an alien (refugee) lives with you in your land do not mistreat them" and Matthew 25:40 says "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

What can we celebrate as Canadian Baptists of Western Canada?

Canadian Baptists have been involved in refugee sponsorship for the last 30 years, a commitment that the Government recognized with a special award last fall. [Click here to view the article on this award.](#) Since 2006, we have welcomed 6 groups of refugees totaling 19 people. We currently have 15 active cases involving 6 churches. (Wait times can currently be up to 6 years although the government is working to reduce them.)

We can also celebrate the ministry of the Kinbrace Community (Salsbury Community Society & Grandview Calvary Baptist Church) in Vancouver, BC.

On Sunday, June 20 World Refugee Day they held an event entitled Restoring HOPE, Honouring HOME to mark the opening of one of their homes just newly renovated. They can now house 5 individual claimants and 2 claimant families as part of their community. Kinbrace provides not only housing, but support and advocacy for these newly-arrived claimants. Moreover they offer "orientation" to these and other displaced people consisting of accompaniment, advocacy, holistic life rhythms, spiritual care and friendship while seeking to establish a community of trust, so essential to those who have come as refugees or refugee claimants.

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Immediate Needs

The Burmese Karen who came from camps in Thailand are now looking to bring over some of the more than 100,000 refugees still left in the camps.

The UNHCR has asked Canada to help resettle the Iraqis coming through Damascus as quickly as possible so there is a special push for these people, many of whom are Christians.

The Canadian Government has just increased the annual target for Privately Sponsored Refugees to 5,500 although that cannot be accomplished unless more staff is placed in the Visa Offices and unless we have churches ready to sponsor.

Many refugee claimants find their way to Canada on their own. They are here legally and can legally apply for permanent residence. This is a difficult process especially if English or French is not their language. Often they have survived unspeakable trauma just to get here. These refugees need friendship, orientation and English language lessons – all of which can easily be provided by Canadian Baptist churches with a heart for this ministry.

Please prayerfully consider how your church can help refugees in need. Contact Larry or Lynn Pearce at [403.816.8250](tel:403.816.8250) or lpearce@cbwc.ca so we can initiate a conversation about the process -- or join us at the Refugee Workshop on July 3 at the Gathering in Vancouver, BC.

Good sites to visit to learn more:

- www.unhcr.org look for the UNHCR report or click on TELLING THE HUMAN STORY. Check out World Refugee Day 2010, posters, video clips, etc
- www.refugeehighway.net for their Refugee Map, Biblical Resources and their article on The Refugee Church
- www.rstp.ca for lots of sponsoring information. As your SAH reps we have a password for other more specific information.