

Presidential Determination FY 2020 Webinar, September 30th, 2019.

Allison Duvall 0:10

Why do you support refugees?

Unknown Speaker 0:12

I support refugees because my family were refugees.

Unknown Speaker 0:15

I support refugees because we are all God's children and we all deserve a safe place to grow in God's love.

Unknown Speaker 0:21

I support refugees because God made us all in God's image.

Unknown Speaker 0:25

I support refugees because I'm a legal guardian of a minor asylum in Carol from Burundi.

Unknown Speaker 0:32

I support refugees because my Lord was a refugee,

Unknown Speaker 0:36

Because I welcome and I love my neighbor.

Kendall Martin 0:41

Hi, and welcome to Hometown, a podcast from Episcopal Migration Ministries. I'm Kendall Martin, we're coming to you today with an in between seasons episode. Today's episode is recording of a September 30th webinar we hosted with the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations, to give an update on the presidential determination for refugee admissions in 2020 and an executive order that would give states and localities the ability to block refugee resettlement. We also offer steps you can take today to advocate for refugee welcome. Thank you for listening.

Rebecca Blachley 1:14

Thank you so much for being here on this webinar hosted by the the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations and Episcopal Migration Ministries. I'm Rebecca Blachley and I'm the Director of the Office of Government Relations and I'm so pleased you're here with us today to learn about what you can do on refugee resettlement, and I'm also happy that my colleagues will be presenting and sharing with all of you today, I will turn it over to them to introduce themselves and we will get started.

Rushad Thomas 1:42

Hi, I'm Rushad Thomas. I am the Policy Advisor in the Office of Government Relations focusing on migration issues.

Kendall Martin 1:50

Hi, I'm Kendall Martin. I'm the Communications Manager for Episcopal Migration Ministries.

Allison Duvall 1:56

And I'm Allison Duvall, I'm the Manager for Church Relations and Engagement for Episcopal Migration Ministries. We'll get started with a word of prayer. The Lord be with you.

Allison Duvall 2:07

Let us pray.

Allison Duvall 2:09

It is in the shelter of each other that the people live. It is in the shadow of each other that the people live.

Allison Duvall 2:18

We know that sometimes we are alone. And sometimes we are in community.

Allison Duvall 2:25

Sometimes we are in shadow. And sometimes we are surrounded by shelter. Sometimes we feel like exiles in our land, in our languages and in our bodies. And sometimes we feel surrounded by welcome. As we seek to be human together, may we share the things that do not fade: generosity, truth telling, silence, respect, and love.

Allison Duvall 2:56

And may the power we share be for the good of all.

Allison Duvall 3:00

We honor God, the source of this rich life. And we honor each other story-full and lovely.

Allison Duvall 3:11

Whether in our shadow or in our shelter, may we live well and fully with each other.

Allison Duvall 3:19

Amen.

Kendall Martin 3:22

So for today's webinar, our agenda will start with updates. Rushad will cover what happened last week, and what the church has done in response, then we're going to offer some context with a brief overview of Episcopal Migration Ministries, an understanding of who refugees are and why they flee, why resettlement is the choice, and more information on the US refugee admissions program and EMM. And then we'll move into what you can do both with advocacy and involvement with EMM, and then we'll have a period of Q and A.

Rushad Thomas 3:53

Alright, everyone. Well, just to echo my colleagues, I'd just like to thank you all for taking time out of your day to join us for this webinar. We're very grateful for your support, your prayer,s and your advocacy on behalf of refugees. So, first of all, I'm like I said, I'm Rushad Thomas with the Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations. Out of the Office of Government Relations here in Washington, we help run the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which is all the supporters and faithful members of the church throughout the country who are engaged on public policy issues. And we try to keep you all abreast of what's going on here in Washington and ways that you can help support our work by advocating for the church's values with lawmakers. And here in OGR, we are, of course, the voice of the Episcopal Church in Washington DC, both on congressional issues with members of Congress, to the administration, but also to the policy community here in Washington, DC. And like I said, we advocate for the church's values here in Washington, and empower church members do the same through the Episcopal Public Policy Network.

Rushad Thomas 5:04

Alright, so now update on what happened last week. As you may know, the President issued the determination of refugee admissions for fiscal year 2020, which actually begins tomorrow, federal fiscal years, of course, are October 1 through September 30. And this is a determination that he's required to come to every year because of the law, federal law that establishes the refugee admissions program. And over the course of the last several years, with this administration having its perspective on migration issues, and refugees and immigration that it does, they have been slowly but surely chipping away at the US refugee admissions program. So the determination for last year, fiscal year 2019 was 30,000 refugees to be resettled. They almost met that as of last week. So it's around 29,000 refugees that have been admitted for this year, which was actually an increase over the previous year, they only admitted 22,000 refugees in the first full year of the Trump administration. But this new presidential determination that came out on Thursday is for 18,000 refugees in fiscal year 2020. That is a very low number, it's actually the lowest number per refugee target that the federal government has set in the entire 40 year history of the US refugee admissions program. And that comes off of last year's 30,000 target, which was then the lowest in history. So we're naturally very distressed and not happy about the the determination being so low.

Rushad Thomas 6:50

And then also, in addition to the presidential determination, the administration also issued an executive order that essentially allows states and localities to veto refugee resettlement in their jurisdiction. So let's say the state of Vermont decides that they don't want refugees in Vermont, the the state government could tell Washington that no, we don't want any refugees here, or concurrently, if if Windsor County, Vermont, for instance, I'm really big on Vermont, because I used to live and work up there. If Windsor County, Vermont decided that they didn't want refugees in Windsor County, then the federal government wouldn't be allowed to resettle refugees in that locality. And there's a lot of questions about how is this going to work who which, you know, organ of government in at these levels is going to have the final determining power to say whether or not a state could admit refugees, would it be just the governor? Would the state legislature have to pass a law that the governor signs? If the governor decides not to admit refugees, could the state legislature pass a law that overrides him? And then the same issue with localities--does that mean, it's the County Board of Commissioners or the county council or the, you know, the county executive in some places? I know, I live in Maryland and in Maryland, many of our counties have an executive. So it's like, it's a lot of there's a lot of questions about what this will mean. We obviously oppose it. We think that refugees are credit to every place that they are resettled, and our benefit to those communities. And we would never want to rob any community of the richness that refugees bring, just because the local politicians don't want them there.

Rushad Thomas 8:35

So in response to all of that, the Church, we've been actively engaged in, pushing back publicly on these issues, we issued a press release, through the Office of Public Affairs in New York, that went out to all the media throughout the country. We have been aggressive on social media, on Twitter, on Facebook, trying to get our message out on refugee resettlement and how much we support it. We've been reaching out to members of Congress, we've been doing this ongoing for the entire month leading up to the presidential determination, or at least since I got here, I'm sure work has been ongoing since before I got here, as well. But in the last month since I've been here, we've been very aggressive about reaching

out to members of Congress, particularly Republican members of Congress, and after the PD was announced, trying to get members of Congress to issue press statements opposing the new PD. And then also, most excitingly, in my opinion, the Presiding Bishop of the Church, Bishop Michael Curry, and an op ed, that was placed in Religion News Service, which is a wire service about religion. So that's essentially where we stand at this point, very distressed about the 18,000 number and the state and local executive order, but we will continue to advocate for an increase in refugee admissions and reversal of this executive order. Thank you very much.

Kendall Martin 10:03

Thank you so much, Rushad. So for those who might not be aware of Episcopal Migration Ministries is the refugee resettlement and welcome ministry of the Episcopal Church. We have been welcoming refugees since the 1930s when local parishes collected donations to provide steamship passage for those fleeing Nazi Europe. And it was in the 1980s that Episcopal Migration Ministries was formally established, and in partnership with a network of affiliate agencies, dioceses, churches, and volunteers, is today one of only nine national agencies through which all refugees enter the United States. We continue to build a network of welcome ministries through education, advocacy, and building on the strength that we know we have across the church. Today, the world is facing the largest forced displacement crisis in history. So to look at numbers: 70.8 million people have been forcibly displaced from their home and, of that number, 25.9 million are refugees. Another 41.3 are internally displaced and 3.5 million people are seeking asylum. The reasons someone would be forced to flee their home are called "push factors". Some examples are: someone has been jailed and tortured because of how they worship, a family is threatened with violence because of political comments a family member made, people around them are mysteriously disappearing, people face threats of a real of a real physical harm, persecution or death if they speak their ethnic language or practice their religion, adults are intentionally not given work opportunities, children are bullied at school or are not allowed to go to school because of their cultural background. Other larger forces and factors play into forced displacement, including climate change and its effects. That includes resource depletion, which drives conflict, and domestic- and gender-based violence. It's important to understand the difference between those factors which are related to migration, which is voluntary motivation, and those related to official refugees and asylum seeking status, which is fear of serious harm.

Kendall Martin 12:05

So under international law, a refugee is a person who has fled her his or her home country, has crossed an international border, and has been found to have a well founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, or membership in a particular social or political group, and their home country's government is unable or unwilling to provide them protection. Refugees receive official refugee status from the UN refugee agency UNHCR, or from a country in which they are seeking asylum. If a person fleeing persecution remains within the borders of his or her country of nationality, they are designated an internally displaced person. Asylum seekers are seeking refugee or protected status and protection due to persecution or a well founded fear of persecution in their home countries. In the United States, when an asylum seeker receives the protected status they are known as an asylee. In other words, the distinction between a refugee and an asylum seeker is their official legal status. Refugees have received refugee status, asylum seekers are seeking refugee protected status. Now once

refugees and asylum seekers have fled their homes, how do they find protection and long term stable solutions, where they can rebuild their lives in peace with legal status and pathways to permanent residence and citizenship? For refugees who have fled their homes and found initial asylum in a host country, for example, Syrian refugees in Turkey, there are three long term solutions to their situations. Voluntary repatriation: refugees may voluntarily go home when it is safe to do so. It is illegal to forcibly return someone to their home country when they continue to have a well founded fear of persecution there. This is known as the international legal principles of non-refoulement. Local integration: a host country may allow refugees to stay fully integrate, meaning they are granted most or all of the same rights as citizens including work authorization, access to education, etc. Resettlement is when it is not possible to return home, locally integrate into the country of first asylum, and when refugees are found to be particularly vulnerable. They may be referred to one of 27 resettlement countries for resettlement. Refugees in the United States have already received refugee status abroad and enter the country through what is known as the US refugee admissions program or refugee resettlement program. Refugees arriving to the US refugee admissions program have access to a number of federal, state, and local programs that support them in their first few months or years in the United States. By contrast, asylum seekers do not have access to any of these kinds of support until they receive official status as asylees. Over to you, Allison, for further explanation on US refugee resettlement.

Allison Duvall 14:55

Thank you so much Kendall. So every year, the United Nations refugee agency or UNHCR, as Kendall said, publishes two very important metrics. One is they publish the number of refugees globally, every year after the previous year has ended. That's in their global trends report. The other metric they publish annually is a look ahead to the next year for projected resettlement needs around the world. They create this number of projected need based on the number of refugees who fall into several eligibility categories, things like women and girls at risk, survivors of torture, family reunification (a family's been separated by conflict and they need to reunify). So refugees must fall into these eligibility categories in order to be referred by the UN to a resettlement country. That's where the projected number comes from. The US is one of only 23 countries that participate in the refugee resettlement program. These are countries like Great Britain, France, Australia, the US as I said. The reason that number of number resettled is so low in comparison to global need is because the 23 resettlement countries offer so few resettlement spots to refugees in need. The US used to be the global leader in refugee resettlement, and in the last several years, as you heard from Rushad, our resettlement refugee admissions number has dropped significantly, we are no longer the global leader.

Allison Duvall 16:30

What I want to do now is explain a little bit more about the US refugee admissions program, and hopes that you'll understand how Episcopal Migration Ministries functions as a resettlement agency. So first, and very importantly, as you heard the definitions from Kendall, about who is a refugee, it's important to remember that refugees are immigrants, but not all immigrants are refugees. And refugees represent just a small percentage of the total number of immigrants who come to the United States in any given year. For a refugee to be resettled, as I mentioned, they first must flee their home country and find initial asylum and protection in another country. And then if they're particularly vulnerable, they can be referred to a resettlement country for resettlement. If a country recognizes that the case fits their own

criteria for resettlement, then the refugees would go through a significant and strenuous vetting process prior to being resettled in that resettlement country. The US refugee security screening process is the most rigorous and lengthy of any security screening process for any category of entrance to the United States. It involves a 13 step process involving the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI, the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security. It can take up to two to three years, if not longer for an entire family to make it all the way through our security screening process. And there are multiple databases that biometric and biographical data is run through in the security screening process, recurring throughout the time before they come to the United States. Once a refugee has made it through our security screening process, and they are approved for admission through the US refugee admissions program, they will be assigned to one of the nine national agencies, we'll take a look at those agencies in just a moment. And prior to travel, refugees receive cultural orientation abroad, so they're ready for their initial first few days and months in the country. And they also receive a medical screening so that they're approved for travel.

Allison Duvall 18:48

These are the logos of the nine national resettlement agencies that Kendall mentioned earlier. As you look at them, you might notice that several are faith based. Six of the nine are faith based and traced their histories back to the 1930s and 40s, where the when the faith community came together to speak out, advocate for, and prepare to welcome refugees fleeing Nazi Europe. Each of the nine agencies has their own local network of resettlement partners, we call ours our local affiliates. Local affiliates are really where resettlement happens. Resettlement is based in community. So local offices, they meet refugees at the airport, they set up their apartments, they accompany them through their first few months in the United States, providing such things as housing allowance, food, taking children to enroll in school, taking folks to medical appointments, and all of that work, while it's done by a professional social service staff, that work is enriched by local churches, by local volunteers by people all across the country, who recognize that it's our time duty as people of faith and as Americans to welcome refugees to our communities. Azzam Tlas was a Syrian refugee resettled to this country, and I love what he says about his resettlement experience. "America is so different from Jordan, I can move forward with my life. We felt like a weight was lifted off of our shoulders. We felt like we were finally in a democratic country, a land of freedom. It's a beautiful country, a country that respects individuals. But there are a lot of things that are extremely different for us. But it's our second life. It's hard to believe that we survived."

Allison Duvall 20:48

Some quick facts about resettlement that you may not know: refugees resettled in the United States represent a very, very small fraction of the overall number refugees in the world. And if you look at the number resettled in 2018 it represented just 0.1% of the global number of refugees. It's very small. Refugees are invited to resettle here in the US only after a thorough vetting process which occurs prior to their arrival. Refugees resettled to the US are required to pay back a loan that purchased their travel that paid for their travel to come here. That program is called travel loan. Refugees are granted legal immigration status prior to their arrival here. They're eligible for legal permanent residency or their green cards after one year, and they're eligible for citizenship after five years. And importantly, refugees are members of our communities, their children go to our schools, they're our neighbors, they're our

coworkers, our fellow parishioners at church. Because the resettlement program is so focused on economic self sufficiency and early employment, refugees work. They pay taxes, they contribute, they revitalize communities, and they become vital members of our society.

Allison Duvall 22:15

Back in 1980, when the Refugee Act was passed, our annual ceiling was nearing 240,000. Today, as Rushad told us, the President has determined that next year the refugee admissions ceiling will be 18,000. It is so important to remember when looking at numbers in the abstract, that we're talking about people's lives. We're talking about parents and their children, about siblings, people who have fled unspeakable persecution to seek safety and freedom. So what does the US's lower refugee and missions number mean, for these people? It means more time separated from families. It means years of waiting. And as I told you, the criteria to be referred for resettlement means that you are particularly vulnerable. You are women and girls at risk, survivors of torture or violence, you are already vulnerable. The inability to resettle means that you are stuck in a precarious and potentially dangerous situation for many more years. There's also the years of waiting before a solution can be found before you can safely return home or integrate into the country that's providing you first asylum. It's years upon years of lost hope, of lost potential, of lost opportunity. The picture of the families you see on the screen is Afkab Muhammad Hussein and his wife and son. Afkab was resettled to Columbus, Ohio in 2015, by Episcopal Migration Ministries former resettlement partner, called Community Refugee and Immigration Service or CRIS in Ohio. He has been waiting for four years for his family to be able to join him. He was resettled on one case number but his wife and unborn son at the time were a different case number, so the cases were separated. He was here in 2015. And because of multiple refugee bans and lower refugee admissions numbers, his family is still separated. So just recently, he traveled back to Nairobi, Kenya, near where his wife and son are to meet his son for the first time.

Allison Duvall 24:36

So back in 2016, we were kind of at a high of a PD, a presidential determination, at 85,000. And now as Rushad told us, we're down to 18,000 and didn't quite hit 30,000 this past fiscal year, which ends today. Now, this has devastating impacts on refugees and their families. But it also has devastating impacts on the national infrastructure of the resettlement agencies, who have been building skill, staff talent, and expertise for 40 years. It's also dismantling that system that has made our country, up to this point, the global leader in how to do refugee resettlement and how to do it well. So hopefully, as you've learned, you've also been inspired to want to take action. So Rushad, I'm going to turn it over to you to give our audience some some tips on how they can help and stand with refugees today.

Rushad Thomas 25:35

Thank you, Allison, that was very sobering overview. But we are an Easter people and all we have is our song. So we will continue to press forward. And now I will go into some of the ways that you can get involved and things that you can do to make your voice heard on refugee resettlement. The first thing I would suggest that you do is stay informed about not only what our church teaches about refugees, and welcoming the stranger in general, the fact that the Lord was once a refugee, and we welcome refugees

because Christ had to flee with the Holy Family into Egypt. And all throughout Holy Scripture, God is called calls us to welcome the stranger, the alien who sojourns among you and to care for the least of these, as Christ calls us and the Church tries to live into that Gospel call. I would encourage you also to subscribe to our EPPN alerts, we will keep you up to date on all of the policy issues that are going on here in Washington and ways that you can share your opinions with your lawmakers on those issues, not just related to refugees and immigration, but all the wide range of issues that we cover as an office. I encourage you to follow us on social media on Facebook and Twitter, we keep our networks updated very much through that and share the items that we or retweet the items that we post on those platforms as well. I encourage you also to use your voice because you are Americans, you are constituents and lawmakers love to hear from you on your feelings about all these issues. And it's important to keep their feet to the fire and hold them to account to reflect your values as as their constituents. So you can send emails to your representatives and senators, we help you do that through our EPPN alerts, we make it very easy for you, you just put in your information and it generates an email that you sent to your senators, both your senators and your representative on the issue. Very user friendly so that anytime we send out an alert, we encourage you to take advantage of our action alerts.

Rushad Thomas 27:46

And then you can also participate in local and national advocacy. And advocacy is a is a broad array of array of things like it's not just talking to lawmakers, it's posting on social media, we encourage you to share our posts from EPPN, from EMM, about refugee resettlement, to educate the people in your networks about this important issue, we encourage you to do things like call into C-SPAN, they have open phones every day of the year, I encourage you to call it really early so that you can get heard and bring up refugee resettlement with them or your local radio stations, like your NPR station or talk radio or whatever it is in your community to share your feelings. And then also write letters letters to the editor in your local newspaper as well. We have talking points and and all kinds of fact sheets and Q&A and things that you can use to help craft great letters to the editor. Know that you have a voice and you can use that voice to further the values that you care about. And we're here to assist you in doing that in all the ways that you feel comfortable and that you want to do. And then last but not least, I'd like to end all advocacy talks with pray, hope, and take action. That's a twist on a quote from the Catholic saint Padre Pio who says pray, hope, and don't worry. So if we don't keep our hearts and our mindset on the Lord, all our work is in vain. So he's the one who gives us the strength and the power that we need to engage in our advocacy. He has no hands or feet on this earth, but ours. So in standing up for refugee brothers and sisters, you're standing up for Christ. Make sure that you always keep your hope in the Lord as well.

Allison Duvall 29:32

Thank you so much Rushad. It's so important that you remember that you have a voice you need to use your voice. And you can also be part of EMM, so Kendall over to you.

Kendall Martin 29:43

Thanks, Allison. Yes, we would just want to invite you to directly support the Ministry of Episcopal Migration Ministries and its life changing work, you can visit episcopalmigrationministries.org/gift, or you can text EMM to 41444 and no gift is too small.

Allison Duvall 30:00

We encourage you to join Partners in Welcome. Partners in Welcome is EMM's newest church engagement program. It is both an online learning community with e-courses, webinars, special small workshops, virtual workshops, and a host of other resources. We're also intentionally mapping all the immigration-related ministries across the Episcopal Church. It's not been done before, now's the time. So if you are involved in a ministry, Episcopal affiliated or part of the congregation or your diocese that should be on the map, please let us know. You can sign up for a free account to get into the password protected area of our website at episcopalmigrationministries.org/partnersinwelcome.

Kendall Martin 30:43

And we're excited to let you know that the Supporting Asylum Seekers: A Toolkit for Congregations will be coming out very soon. We hope and pray that this toolkit will empower you and your congregation to discern and live into the ministry of welcome to which you are uniquely called. And that it inspires you to continue building a relationship with EMM in the days, weeks and months ahead. If you have a ministry model to share or a story to tell, a case study to offer, or suggested edits or other items that should be included in future additions, once you've had a chance to review, we encourage you to let us know. Thank you.

Rushad Thomas 31:17

So next Wednesday, the ninth of October, I'm going to be presenting on a webinar called Entertaining Angels Unaware: a Migration Policy Update. So this will basically be a time where we can discuss the wide array of immigration and refugee related policy issues that are in the news throughout the country and that are prominent here on Capitol Hill and in Washington, DC. So everything from DACA to public charge to refugees and family separation, the border, the asylum process, all the Remain in Mexico policy and safe third country agreements, we're going to work out essentially on immigration policy. So I hope you will join us for that as well.

Kendall Martin 32:08

And one of our offerings through Partners in Welcome is a virtual book club. This will be our second reading since launching the book club. So we'd love for you to join us and read *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*. This virtual discussion group will happen on October 17 at 1pm. And a fun announcement is that we have been in conversation with the author of *The Ungrateful Refugee* and she's agreed to do a podcast with us, so you want to look out for that as well.

Allison Duvall 32:35

And finally, as I mentioned, when I introduce Partners in Welcome to you, part of Partners in Welcome are small virtual workshops where up to 12 participants gather with issue experts, practitioners, conversation facilitators to talk about a topic. We have one coming up on November 7, called What Now? Building Community Partnerships for a Changing Refugee Ministry. The two presenters that day are Louisa Merchant, who's the director of the All Saints' refugee ministry at All Saints in Atlanta, Georgia. And then the Reverend Twila Smith, who was formerly the founding director of the Refugee Community Center at Church of the Mediator and Allentown, Pennsylvania. They're inspirational speakers, they speak right to how important it is for us as members of the church, as people of faith to be taking considered action at this time, building up partnerships to welcome refugees, despite and in face of what's happening at the policy level. So please do join us. Limited number of participants for these workshops.

Kendall Martin 33:37

And now we're going to go into some Q&A. First question: are there ecumenical efforts, especially working with evangelical churches to make a faith based and biblically grounded case for welcoming the stranger into our midst?

Allison Duvall 33:51

I'll speak just briefly and then Rushad, you might want to talk about collaborations on the Hill. So one of the nine resettlement agencies is World Relief, which is the evangelical community's refugee resettlement agency. They are powerful, and they do a lot of important writing and speaking, they've published several books on why the evangelical community should be taking on welcome of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as a cornerstone of their faith, and Rushad, would you speak a little bit to the advocacy community around that issue?

Rushad Thomas 34:21

Sure. So here in Washington, we partner with a wide array of denominations and faith groups that are supportive of welcoming refugees, and that definitely includes evangelical churches. The National Association of Evangelicals is very active in refugee advocacy. World Relief is, as Allison mentioned, but also we have strong partnerships and relationships with the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, for instance. So there's a wide diversity in the advocacy community around refugees on this issue, and I'm very grateful that our evangelical brothers and sisters out there at the advocacy level have been very, very supportive of refugee resettlement. And just to point out a good a good example of this, the current chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which is a one of these advisory bodies is established by Congress to monitor international religious freedom is he's a man called Tony Perkins. He's an evangelical pastor from Louisiana. And he's the president of the Family Research Council, which is a very socially conservative evangelical policy think tank here in Washington, he issued a letter with the vice chair of the Commission, who is former Democratic first lady of West Virginia in support of refugee resettlement, they sent a letter to the administration saying how important refugee resettlement is to combating religious intolerance

internationally. So there's like, that's just one example. The evangelicals are very strong this and we are grateful for our collaborations with him.

Kendall Martin 35:57

Thank you, Rushad. This question is for you, Allison, does EMM have a speaker's bureau,

Allison Duvall 36:02

We do! On our website, and Kendall, you might be able to tell me where in the drop down menus this lives, but or might be on our community's education page, we have a place where you can request a speaker. We've done things where one of us will come to you. We've also gotten pretty good at doing virtual presentations, where we work with you on the tech, and then we just--beam us in. That's really nice for small churches who'd like to have a speak but might not have the budget to fly us in. And we also have a large number of friends and ambassadors across the country who are trained to speak for EMM. And so if they're close to you, that's a great way for us to connect you with one of them and they can come speak with you as well.

Kendall Martin 36:41

Next question, can congregations partner with EMM to bring a family to our community? And what is the process to get that rolling?

Allison Duvall 36:48

That's a good question. So with refugee resettlement when a refugee is resettled, a national agency like EMM assigns them to a local affiliate of ours based on the affiliate's capacity at that moment, to resettle, also the languages their staff speak, the number of jobs and housing availability. So we do a lot of work to figure out where people can resettle best. The numbers are devastatingly low, as you've heard throughout this webinar, so the likelihood that a refugee would be resettled at an affiliate near you, and you've been able to partner with the affiliate to welcome them--it's very low. Kendall spoke to, a few moments ago, our forthcoming Supporting Asylum Seekers: a Toolkit for Congregations. There are asylum seekers, both at the southern border, but also in immigration detention across the country, who are in need of sponsors, so they can be bonded out of detention, and then can seek asylum while not detained. So there are ways to be connected with us. And we're connected with many different organizations who are working on that work. And that's what the toolkit is there for. While refugees aren't being resettled in large numbers, which is devastating, there are people in need. And so we're trying to give you, local congregations, the tools that you need to take some steps forward if you feel called to this kind of ministry.

Rushad Thomas 38:02

I have just have a little bit from the legislative element to add to that. There are folks on the Hill, members of Congress working on legislation that might possibly allow private individuals or groups of people to resettle or to sponsor refugees in their communities. That's sort of you know, very, very preliminary at this point. There are some sticking points about who's going to cover health care, for instance, that are holding up the process on that bill. But that's something that we support as a church and would if we can work out the healthcare element, in particular, it would be great to have that as another pipeline or avenue for refugee resettlement. There are other countries that have private refugee resettlement, and it works very well, like Canada. But unlike the United States, Canada has a universal public health insurance system. So it makes that sort of thing a lot easier. But I'm sure that some some way, we'll figure out a way to make it work here in the United States as well. But please stay in contact with us for updates on that.

Kendall Martin 39:04

Thanks Rushad, Phyllis said, "I live in Guatemala, are children still being separated?"

Rushad Thomas 39:10

So as you all know very well, the Trump administration issued a zero tolerance policy that basically separated children from their parents, if they were coming to the United States as a family unit, put the parents in immigration detention and put the children under the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. And the administration stopped that last summer. They haven't reunited all of the children who were separated from their parents. And there's been a lot of litigation on that front as well over the last several months. So that policy is still it's on hold at the current moment. But not all the children have been reunited with their families. So that's basically where we stand with the family separation.

Kendall Martin 40:01

Thanks. And Allison, I believe this is in response to what you have previously answered. But the question was, do you look at affiliates all across the United States?

Allison Duvall 40:08

I'm going to suppose the meaning that, the questioners meaning. So we, EMM, work in a contractual arrangement with only 13 local affiliates in 11 states, in 11 dioceses. We do have ministry partners--in that national mapping work I talked about, we are mapping all Episcopal ministries with refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers all across the country. And these are just ministry partners. These are not folks with whom we have contractual arrangements to do any service provision, it is our attempt as a ministry of the churchwide body to learn what's happening on the ground so we can better tell the story of welcome in our church and also it would help Rushad, too, on the Hill to be able to tell stories about welcome to lawmakers. I don't know if that answers the question. But all that to say we have 13 affiliates with whom we have contractual relationships, and then we are mapping ministries across the country, in addition to that.

Kendall Martin 41:03

And have other major denominations, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, etc. made public statements on the most recent limitations? Would be helpful to have links to any statements comparable to Bishop Curry's.

Rushad Thomas 41:14

I'll take that one. Yes, all of the major denominations put out statements pushing back against the administration's determination this year. And all the denominations that were listed did, so the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, Lutheran Church, so yeah, they're they're all actually, the Catholic Church has an organization similar to EMM. It's one of the so it's one of the nine refugee resettlement agencies that federal government partners with and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does as well. There's a Jewish refugee resettlement agency called HIAS as well. So the church related, I think it's six of the nine resettlement agency partners are faith based. So the faith community has been very, very strong at the grass tops level, here in Washington standing in support of our refugee brothers and sisters, and they've all been very strong and bold in their statements against this move.

Kendall Martin 42:08

And why is the current PD set at its current number?

Rushad Thomas 42:12

That's a very good question. The administration's sort of talking point on this is that the officers or the government officials who screen refugees are also the same individuals who have to screen asylum seekers. And as a result of the asylum surge at the southern border, the administration wants to focus more on asylum seekers and not on refugees. We would counter that argument because the number of asylum seekers has been greatly reduced at the southern border. And the reason they've been reduced honestly is not something that we would support, the administration is essentially just been turning them back into Mexico, it's called it's there's a policy called Migration Protection Protocols, colloquially referred to as Remain in Mexico. So any person who either presents himself themselves at a port of entry and seeks asylum or crosses without authorization, and then goes to a federal law enforcement agent, and then tries to apply for asylum, the administration is now returning them to Mexico, which is a very bad policy from our perspective. But essentially, our argument is that the federal government can walk and chew gum at the same time. We have a we have a responsibility, both to the asylum seeking population and to refugees, to provide them all with due process, and to welcome them to our country if they're fleeing violence or persecution or the criteria for asylum seekers and refugees. And it is a dereliction of our values as a nation and of course, our values as as people of Christ to turn our backs on any of these populations. So that's the administration's line in a nutshell and the way we we push back on it.

Kendall Martin 44:06

Thank you, Rushad. And can we get a list of location and contacts of the affiliates? I can speak to EMM affiliates. If you go to our website, episcopalmigrationministries.org we have a link called Our Partners. And you can see all of our affiliate locations around the country. And each refugee agency has a website where they list out their affiliates. So last question, what role does Congress have in conferring with the administration to set the number to admit?

Rushad Thomas 44:37

That's a very good question. So under federal law, the administration must consult with Congress before they determine the annual refugee admissions target. That provision has been ignored by the Trump administration for the last couple of fiscal years, including this one. And the problem with that is it's really not enforceable. We would hope that Congress would assert itself as the article one branch of government and the branch of government that the Constitution empowers to regulate naturalization and immigration in this country. Under the Constitution, Congress has the power to decide all of these issues related to immigration. But the problem is getting them all to agree on something, getting them all to have the courage to stand up to the administration and assert themselves as a branch of government on this very important issue. And I think with refugees in particular, there is such a wide bipartisan consensus that refugee admissions is a good thing from across the political spectrum from the most liberal Democrats to the most conservative Republican, we work with a wide array of members on this issue. And people that you might not expect to be solid on refugees are very much so, it's just a matter of getting them to have confidence in their position as the article one branch of government and to stand up and make this issue a priority. So we're we work with them every day to try and give them the courage to do that.

Kendall Martin 46:21

Allison, would you like to take us to how to contact both EMM and OGR?

Allison Duvall 46:26

Sure, and I saw a few questions from folks about when the recording will be available and all the follow up materials. That will come to you, God willing, first thing tomorrow morning, and so please stay tuned. And any webinars that we host, if you register, you'll always get the follow up material. So even if you're not able to watch live, you can always get the follow up. So if you'd like to be in touch with Episcopal Migration Ministries or the Episcopal Public Policy Network, we are episcopalmigrationministries.org, on social media, we are @emmrefugees, and then the video of today today's webinar will be emailed to you. It will also be on our Vimeo channel that's vimeo.com/EMMrefugees. And then the Office of Government Relations is the body in our church that runs the Episcopal Public Policy Network that Rushad spoke to, and that is advocacy.episcopalchurch.org and the social media handle is @theEPPN. Thank you all so much for joining us today, for being such an attentive audience, and asking such great questions. God bless you all and thank you for your prayers, your support.

Kendall Martin 47:37

Thank you for tuning in today. We will continue to offer updates by way of our website at episcopalmigrationministries.org and our social media @emmrefugees. We have many upcoming events, webinars, virtual workshops, book club gatherings, and we'd love for you to join us. All of that information is on our website, blog, and social media. We welcome you to join in the work of welcome by making a donation to Episcopal Migration Ministries. No gift is too small and all are put to use to welcome our newest neighbors visit episcopalmigrationministries.org/give or text hometown to 91999. We invite you to share the message of welcome loudly and proudly purchase your very own EMM t-shirt or bag and join us in proclaiming that you support refugees and you stand with EMM. It's thanks to people like you that, even in the midst of grave challenges, we are standing strong, building our network of supporters, strengthening our organization and our partners, and continuing to proclaim boldly and without ceasing that we support refugees. Visit bit.ly/EMMfall2019 and order your very own EMM swag today. Thanks for joining us, listeners. Until next time, peace be with you and all those you consider home.