

Welcoming our Global Neighbors with the Love of Christ

At the Refugee and Immigrant Network (RAIN), we see an incredible opportunity to engage our Alliance churches to join us in strategically welcoming, building relationships, and sharing the gospel with refugees and immigrants.

Matthew 25:35 "...I was a stranger and you welcomed me."



A VISION FULFILLED

Eleven years ago, a Congolese woman had a vision. This woman had been forced to flee her home country due to war and violence and had taken temporary refuge in Mozambique with her husband and children. Her family didn't know what the future would hold or where they would be able to make a permanent home. One day while she was praying, God gave the woman a vision. In the vision, she saw herself standing inside of a very large church building. The church building was filled with people who were speaking the English language. And the woman saw herself being commissioned as a leader in this church and saw God using her to heal people and share His message of hope.

When she finished praying, she wrote down the details of the vision in a journal. It seemed confusing – she was living in Africa, she had never seen a church like the one in her dream, and she did not speak the English language. What could this mean?

We welcomed Adela and her family to Salem as refugees four years ago. Adela's deep love for Jesus and ministry gifting was evident from day one. She has a passion for prayer and helped us to start the International Prayer Gathering. She has disciplined us and many others to grow in prayer, love for the Scriptures, and listening to God. She has led us in healing prayer and we have seen God heal many people in our community. She has reached out to her American neighbors to build friendships with them, care for them, pray for them, and share Jesus with them. She has spoken prophetic and challenging words to the Church in America – calling us to repentance from our idols, and to a renewed commitment and passion to make Christ the central focus of our lives.

Salem Alliance Church was recently able to bring Adela on board in an official part-time staff role to work as a pastoral leader for the International Prayer Gathering ministry. One month ago, Adela stood on the stage of the large sanctuary of Salem Alliance Church in a room of English speakers (socially distanced and masked) and was commissioned as a Pastor of Multicultural Ministries. As she shared her story with the Salem Alliance staff team, she held up the journal from eleven years ago and with tears, read the entry of the vision God had given her – which was being fulfilled in that very moment.

By Doug & Anya Holcomb, Pastors of Refugee Ministries at Salem Alliance Church

Syrian Refugees

For the past few months, once a week (unless prevented by Covid) we have been privileged to help tutor three Kurdish refugee women from Syria study for their citizenship test. In addition, one of these same ladies' husbands is studying with two men from our church on Sunday evening for the same citizenship test. What a great opportunity this has given us to serve some of the refugees in our area in a practical way in order to build relationships with them. It has been a joy to get to know them and to be able to share with them about our country. It has also opened a door for us to help them understand some about our Christian faith. Their hearts are open and their smiles tell the story – they are happy to be in our country and are glad to make new friends. We thank God for this opportunity to serve Him in this way.

**Irma Chon, Pastoral Family and Outreach
Cornerstone Christian Fellowship**



COVID-19 AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

While COVID-19 was raising havoc world-wide and across the nation, the impact on ESL has been more positive than negative in two main aspects. The first way our current crisis has impacted ESL ministries is on a local church level. On the negative side, last March nearly all ESL programs in America either shut down or switched to Zoom. While it is true that face-to-face or even mask-to-mask classes on site are much preferred, Zoom is certainly far better than nothing. When Cross-Point Alliance ESL in Akron, Ohio went on-line, we, unfortunately, lost a few students, but we also picked up some from outside the local area! We now have students living in South Korea, Japan, and even China! God has also brought us Muslim students from Morocco, Turkey, and Uzbekistan who are hearing Bible verses weekly. ESL teachers supplement lessons with Bible stories, testimonies, or illustrations. Recently, I have enjoyed having lunch with some of the husbands and look forward to sharing the Good News with them also. One traditional Islamic family with their three-year-old, came to our home to walk through our Christmas Winter Wonderland light display complete with 3' tall Nativity figures. A recent lunch with this husband ended up at our church because the restaurant did not provide seating. Not surprisingly, this was the first Christian church he had ever been in and we had an amazing conversation about "services." In the end, he asked me if a link to our Sunday morning live stream was on our church website. If COVID-19 had not occurred, we would have never connected with this dear family and nor had the privilege of sharing Jesus with them. Second, COVID-19 has increased the potential for churches to reach immigrant's needs through ESL. Great Commission ESL was established to equip local churches to launch academically sound, evangelistically focused, and sustainable ESL Ministries across the U.S. The number of workshops conducted pre-COVID was limited to 15-20 annually. However, in May 2020 we made the decision to develop our ESL Workshop 2.0 on the Zoom platform. The Zoom Workshop will allow us to reach far more churches at a lower cost, increasing the number of refugees and immigrants touched by the Good News of Jesus. The immigrant's most significant needs are being met through ESL; English proficiencies, friendship, and cultural understanding. The enemy intended to use COVID-19 for harm, but God intended it for good ... to the saving of many lives (Gen. 50:20). Only history will record how many lives were brought into the Kingdom of light by teaching ESL over Zoom!

Bruce Lyman, Pastor of International Ministries Director and Founder of Great Commission ESL

RAIN NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2021

We hope this e-newsletter can serve as a tool for us to share stories, celebrate & inspire one another, as well as communicate opportunities to collaborate, share resources, and pray for each other.



Please join us for the RAIN Training and Networking Luncheon at COUNCIL on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, from 12 - 1:30 p.m. for only \$25. If you haven't registered to attend COUNCIL, click on the link below and follow the prompts. If you have already registered, pull up your confirmation email, click edit attendance and add the lunch to your registration. We look forward to seeing you!

CULTURALLY INFORMED COVID-19 CARE: DRIVEN BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST



Allegheny Center Alliance Church (ACAC) and EMBRACE Network of the Greater Pittsburgh, PA has demonstrated the love of Christ by developing culturally-informed methods of educating and assisting ethnic minority, refugee, and immigrant communities in methods of mitigating Covid19. ACAC was the first church in the region to offer community-wide Covid-19 self-swab tests via drive-through venues. ACAC and EMBRACE continue to promote Covid-19 testing, education, and PPE distribution to medically vulnerable and non-English speaking communities throughout the pandemic. We have partnered with public entities and community organizations to educate over 900 people from various ethnic minority and refugee/immigrant groups including African Americans, Bhutanese, Burundians, Congolese, Latinx groups, Somalians/Somali-Bantu, Syrians, Uzbeks, West African groups. We continue to be blessed and encouraged in sharing Christ's love and ours for our global neighbors believing Him for the nations.

Cathy Sigmund, Ph.D., CWM, Chaplain/Director Refugee/Immigrant Ministry, Allegheny Center Alliance Church, Pittsburgh, PA