

The story of Pakiza and Nafees, from their escape from Kabul to moving into their own home in Sacramento.

Trinity Cathedral members and friends working to resettle this sister and brother Afghan Refugees.

By Shireen Miles, Trinity Cathedral member

As Kabul was falling to the Taliban, Pakiza went to the airport with her parents and two younger brothers, having been promised a chance for her whole family to escape by her American colleagues at the US Embassy, where she had worked for several years screening visitors. Maneuvering multiple checkpoints on the way, the family arrived at the airport hours later, only to find themselves in the midst of chaos, oppressive heat, a teeming mass of desperate people and no clear way to board the airplane. Her mother's blood pressure spiked dangerously. She was frightened and begged to go home. Her husband agreed that was the best course of action, and one son said he would remain with them. The parents urged Pakiza and her brother, Nafees, to stay in the crowd, do their best to make their way to America and send for them later.

After miraculously making their way onto one of the last flights, Nafees and Pakiza spent most of last fall at a military base being vetted and assisted with their U.S. documentation. They were then assigned to a community in Indiana. However, because they already had a sister and brother-in-law in the Sacramento area, they decided to come here in February. With the support of their local family, the two were immediately able to find jobs in a printing firm here.

Nafees was a college student in Computer Science at American University in Kabul. Because Pakiza worked for the US government, she had been approved for a Special Interest Visa. She has an impressive background in customer service, compliance and security within the banking industry, and hopes to get back into that field. Trinity members are helping her with her resume and assisting her with networking. Both have good English skills.

For their first two months here, the sibling pair shared a tiny apartment with their sister and her family. They were finally able to move into their own apartment nearby on Saturday, April 23rd after a long wait caused by their lack of a credit rating. Trinity Cathedral members and friends helped fully furnish their apartment and wrote a letter to apartment management vouching for them.

Nafiza and her sister are applying to sponsor their parents and younger brother, who remain in Afghanistan. Their mother is a prominent women's rights activist and former women's advocate within the Education Ministry. She was attacked and injured by the Taliban at a protest and has received a threatening letter from them. With the help of Trinity members, who had been trained in the Humanitarian Parole process, the two completed and submitted the necessary paperwork for their mother to receive permission to travel to the US.

Pakiza also hopes to be reunited with her husband, who fled during the same time frame to Germany. They two were only married a few weeks prior to the fall of Kabul.

Resettlement News from around the Diocese

- St Mary's, Napa, Sponsor Circle application approved.
- Good Neighbor Team formed at Faith, Cameron Park
- Refugee Resettlement Teams organizing in Sonoma and Redding

Your help is needed - Contact Bob Wohlsen, Refugee Resettlement Team, Donor and Volunteer Coordinator to find out how: bob.wohlsen@gmail.com

Episcopal Diocese of Northern California
Commission for Intercultural Ministry
Refugee Resettlement Team
Lynn Zender, Chair