

Sharing the Good News

from the pen of the Mission Interpreter



June 27, 2021, Volume 8

WANDERERS AND ALIENS: THEY ARE US

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Political and economic difficulties, wars and violence (and now, climate change), have always been the root causes of migration, immigration and displacement of people around the world. In the 18th and 19th centuries, large numbers of Europeans fled their homelands searching for economic security and freedom from both laws and traditions that kept them from prospering. They were welcomed in the western hemisphere, assimilated and prospered. Until the mid-1900's, northern European immigrants made up the largest portion of our ancestry in the Lutheran Church in Canada, the United States and in some South American countries.

Because of Hitler and World War II, the numbers of displaced people grew exponentially beginning in the 1930's. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (**LIRS**) was created in 1939 to address the issue, working primarily with finding homes for Lutherans because the largest number of displaced persons were of that denomination. When the war ended in 1945, thousands of German women and children whose husbands and fathers had been confiscated into the German army and had been killed or severely wounded, were suffering loss of home and means of support. **LIRS** came to the rescue, resettling many both in Europe and in the United States and Canada. That work went on for more than a decade. After that **LIRS** joined with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to assist all who needed help regardless of their nationality or religious preference. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, Pres. Gerald Ford made the courageous decision to promote resettlement of tens of thousands of Vietnamese people, and **LIRS**, working with the U.S. government, joined that effort. **LIRS** called on Lutheran Social Ministry organizations to assist, and that partnership has been a blessing because Lutheran Social Services works at local levels and are better equipped to explore which communities can best serve those being resettled.

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