

Safe Harbors: a Ministry of Welcome on Cape Cod - Update

The Safe Harbors team of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Harwich is currently hosting a family seeking refuge in the US while their application for asylum is being considered. Members of St. Peter's congregation gathered information and collaborated with faith-based organizations including AAMPARO (ELCA) and Episcopal Migration Ministries at the border and nationally, to prayerfully consider becoming sponsors of a migrant family who does not have family in the US eligible to sponsor them. **Refugees** are vetted and approved for entry prior to arrival in the US where they are granted a work permit, SSN and supported by a number of government-supported refugee agencies. **Asylum seekers** apply either upon arrival at the border, or after crossing, and if felt to have a 'credible fear' case may apply for asylum and remain in the US while their case is being processed. Families have no income or work permit during the first 6-12 months of their process.

St Peter's will be financially responsible for their housing, accompaniment and other expenses for 1-2 years. They have raised enough funds for the first year and have secured a suitable 3-bedroom house for year-round rental. The family consists of a father, mother, and 2-year old who are seeking asylum from their native Cuba. They left Cuba three years ago and arrived here from a shelter in Texas in November, 2021. They will stay here until the processing of their case is completed through Immigration Court. The estimated cost to support a family while their case is processed is \$50,000 per year.

St. Peters' has assembled and oriented a volunteer team or "village" to provide support and accompaniment to the guest family, and looks forward to expanding the reach of this important ministry to other concerned individuals and faith communities. They especially need volunteers who are able to communicate in Spanish. They are currently working with other faith communities in Harwich, Brewster, Orleans, Chatham and Dennis.

Volunteers currently assist the family with grocery shopping, access to transportation, insurance, education, childcare, ESL and interpretation services, medical and mental health treatment, and legal support. More information and their mission statement can be found on the church's website: stpeterslutherancapecod.org. Please consider volunteering for or donating to Safe Harbors. I will announce the next volunteer training as soon as it is scheduled and you are able to sign up. You may also send a donation via the website.

Thank you.

Brooke Eaton-Skea, Safe Harbors Ministry of Welcome volunteer