

## RefugeeOne: A Ministry Partner of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod

*We are better together!*

### RefugeeOne's Mission

*Creating opportunity for refugees fleeing war, terror, and persecution to build new lives of safety, dignity, and self-reliance.*

Formed in 1982 by the Illinois Council of Churches, RefugeeOne has welcomed and served more than 20,000 refugees from across the globe. As Chicago's largest refugee resettlement agency, their primary focus is assisting these resilient individuals in becoming independent, self-supporting members of their new Chicagoland community.

Resettlement is often a long and difficult process. RefugeeOne's in-house holistic support for every arrival helps newcomers learn English, find jobs, succeed in school, overcome trauma, navigate healthcare and legal systems, and more! Check out their website [www.refugeone.org](http://www.refugeone.org) for specific details about their programs and services.

### Better Together

RefugeeOne's work is not done alone. It is through relationships, partnership and support from churches and faith communities that become a place of support for newcomers. From ensuring families receive a warm welcome at O'Hare, to providing mentorship as they adjust to life in Chicago, to donating apartment goods and financial support for initial expenses — communities of faith have a foundational history of serving refugees and are essential in keeping this important work going. You can learn more about such work that has been done together for many years in this [MCS video from 2024 synod](#) assembly.

While the most intensive support happens within the first 90 days of arrival, many of RefugeeOne's programs continue to serve people in the years that follow—finding job upgrades for those who have built experience, helping students through school transitions, continuing talk therapy, preparing for the citizenship exam, etc. This ensures newcomers can reach their full potential in their new home.

### RefugeeOne's Commitment and Work Remains

As of January 27, 2025, an executive order brought the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) to an abrupt halt. New arrivals have been suspended indefinitely, leaving thousands of refugees—including more than 10,000 previously approved for travel, many who were going to reunite with family—without a pathway to safety.

Additionally, funding for recent refugee arrivals already in the U.S was also suspended.

Federal funding for the 151 newest arrivals has been frozen and the 500+ refugees that had been welcomed in the last six months prior to the suspension of arrivals still rely on RefugeeOne's programs and services as the work toward self-sufficiency.

Despite the abrupt and significant changes, the work and the need to support these new neighbors continues. RefugeeOne will not walk away. They are committed to walking alongside our newest neighbors without disruption of services. Therefore, RefugeeOne is forced to use general funds to cover the cost for uninterrupted services for newcomer families.

## **Our Partnership and Commitment is Steadfast**

*Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. – 2 Corinthians 4:1*

Guided by our call to welcome the stranger the Metropolitan Chicago Synod (MCS) shares a mission with RefugeeOne of service to the world and to be a beacon of welcome and kindness for our newest neighbors.

With the unprecedented cut-off of federal funding, RefugeeOne is in need of relying on the generosity of private donors and supporters to continue to their critical work. Therefore, we partnered to launch a targeted fundraising initiative throughout all of our MCS congregations and worshiping communities: **90 K for 90 Days** [refugeeone.org/MCS-ELCA](http://refugeeone.org/MCS-ELCA)

**These funds raised will provide financial support to help with out-of-pocket costs for the newest arrivals who are still getting on their feet.** Like the Soulemane family of 3 from Central African Republic, the Jamay family of 6 from Syria, and the Andino Ramirez family of 4 from Nicaragua, just to name a few!

The good news is that we are already on our way! Thanks to the generosity of several congregations and individuals we have already received nearly \$20,000 toward this campaign before it officially launched!

Just imagine, our combined efforts and gifts of generosity at this critical moment will make such a direct impact: **\$90,000 raised will support at least 60 refugee families with \$1,500 rent and food subsidies that will offer immediate relief.**

**We ask you to prayerfully consider a gift.** Your community can make a gift as a whole—through budgeted support, special endowment funding, a special collection, etc.—or individuals in your community are invited to give as they're led. **Because this need is urgent in nature, we're asking for your commitment of giving by the end of March.**

If a financial gift is not a fit for your congregation, there are two other important ways you can support RefugeeOne's work. For more information about this please reach out to RefugeeOne's Board of Directors: Rev. Julie Gafe [julievgrafe@gmail.com](mailto:julievgrafe@gmail.com) or Rev. Kyle Severson [kseverson@stlukespr.org](mailto:kseverson@stlukespr.org)