

MISSION MOMENT: AFGHAN REFUGEE RESPONSE

In the fall of 2021, as the government of Afghanistan collapsed and families were rapidly evacuated, Week of Compassion reaffirmed refugee response as an ongoing priority and employed increased resources, including the Afghan Welcome congregational grants, to support local churches.

Dozens of congregations, across multiple regions of the Disciples church, helped Afghan families to establish a new life in an entirely new place under deeply stressful circumstances. Out of the desperation and disconnect of this crisis, opportunity and community thrived. At every step, Disciples saw hope **RISE UP ANEW**.

With the news that hundreds of families would be arriving in [Bowling Green, Kentucky, First Christian Church](#) got to work. Thanks to their connection to the International Center, and a community partnership with the Islamic Center, collaboration was natural.

Everything really just fell into place. ... Our plan was to support one family through the 3 month process by providing rent, furnishings, food, and any other necessary items. But, instead we became a community partner on call whenever needs arose. FCC also has a supplemental community grocery store ... to offer foods they would want and need. + Rev. Kyle McDougall, Associate Minister

Once a house is secured, it still needs absolutely everything to turn it into a home. [Heart of the Rockies Christian Church in Fort Collins, Colorado](#), connected with their friends at Plymouth Congregational UCC to co-sponsor a family.

Our first task was to furnish the apartment, and helped by the generosity of a local Realtor, we quickly gathered all the furniture and household items (including bicycles, freezer, washer/dryer, etc) ... We are also helping the family with financial literacy, paying bills, and budgeting, and enjoying the libraries, museums and parks. + Sue Anderson, Outreach team

So much of a daily routine could be taken for granted, but as families resettle, every single step requires assistance. [St Andrew Christian Church in Olathe, Kansas](#), has made themselves available.

After the logistics of legal paperwork, healthcare, and identification cards, we were able to purchase a used car



with the Week of Compassion grant to give them the ability to get to work, run errands, and get around town without needing rides. ... The kids love being in school. Moving to a new country is very difficult with language and culture differences, but hospitality helps this transition go much smoother. + Dr. Chris Wilson, Senior Minister

Sometimes, new families are able to find considerable support, but then an unexpected need arises or a resource runs out. [First Christian Church of Falls Church, Virginia](#), knew they could help.

For some families the welcome assistance provided by the government had ended so we were able to assist with rent. Another family had a delay in receiving SNAP benefits, and we were able to fill the gap with a grocery gift card. The third family arrived in need of household goods. In partnership with a neighboring Islamic Center, we provided furniture and gift cards for the family to begin their new life in the US. + Rev. Steve Moore, Senior Minister

[South Elkhorn Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky](#), surpassed their own fundraising goals to purchase a vehicle for the family they were caring for, and the church committed to doing more.

We have been able to use the Week of Compassion grant we received to assist this family longer than anticipated. We are now looking at establishing an ongoing refugee program through our Outreach Committee. + Barb Ellerbrook, Chair, Outreach Committee

Week of Compassion empowers congregations to participate at every level of refugee response: answering start-up questions, connecting with local resettlement offices, preparing for future needs, reconnecting previously experienced churches, and engaging ecumenical and interfaith partnerships, focused on empowering new neighbors to **RISE UP ANEW**, together.

