

St. Mark Lutheran Church
Migrant Ministries Committee
Meeting Minutes
3/20/24

Attendees: Carl Anderson, Cindy Ashton, George Elder, Pat Gerber, Marilyn Gosell (guest), Linda Olson (co-chair), Diane Quast, Nancy Snell (guest), Jeannie Weber, Les Weber

Linda called the meeting to order. Cindy agreed to take meeting minutes.

The opening prayer was led by Pat Gerber.

Minutes from our last meeting (20 March 2024) were conditionally accepted in order to include edits provided by Mike Haase.

The focus of the meeting was to review our proposal and prioritize recommendations to St. Mark council for consideration of housing migrants in the currently vacant parsonage.

We discussed some differences between asylum seekers and refugees, noting that the needs of asylum seekers are often greater than refugees because they have fewer resources to support them. There has been a large influx of asylum seekers in the Chicago area who have an immediate need for safe housing. While there are some negative perceptions about asylum seekers, these individuals are not criminals and legally in the US; they have left their country seeking protection from persecution and are waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.

The committee agreed that our preference is to house a family, rather than unrelated individuals, ideally comprised of a married couple with children. We determined our priority for housing guests would be in the following order: asylum seeker families identified from the Sanctuary Working Group, refugee families, recommendations from Exodus World Service, Refugee One and lastly, young men moving out of Viator House. Pat Gerber made a motion to adopt this priority list; Diane Quast seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The selection of guests that we would house in the parsonage would depend on availability of people who would be a good fit for St. Mark, in particular, housing needs for about six months. Their needs and details about what resources St. Mark would be expected to provide, such as language skills, transportation, assistance with food, medical issues, schooling, etc, will depend on the specific circumstances of the family we support. We anticipate that the family will have an assigned case manager to provide direction for legal and other services toward the asylum path, as well as provide oversight of the family housed by St. Mark.

The proposal was reviewed with suggestions for several revisions. Linda discussed a revised cost estimate of \$6400 for the entire six months and stated that a dedicated fund created by Nancy Hundley already contains \$3500. Several people commented that they have been contacted by individuals who are willing to contribute funds once the decision to house a family has been finalized. It was suggested that besides soliciting St. Mark members, other congregations in the area could be contacted for contributions, especially those churches who we are already communicating with.

We discussed next steps in submitting the proposal to the church council. Nancy Snell suggested holding a meeting with interested council and committee members to share information and answer questions. Linda will revise the proposal and circulate to the committee

for review, then send to council. Then a joint meeting with council and committee members will be scheduled.

Following this discussion, the committee amended the previous motion listing priority order for type of family to support, and we agreed to focus on an asylum-seeking family only, and revise the proposal accordingly. This amendment was passed.

The work of this committee is concluded. It is recognized that there will be many details to be identified and resolved should this proposal be accepted. The importance of having a point person was noted.

Pat Gerber said a closing prayer.