

Moving forward with refugee support

On Feb. 2, a group of concerned folks met at St. Paul's United Church to discuss what can be done to help Syrian families fleeing their homeland for safety. Overall the conversation was positive, but many valid concerns were raised: aren't there lots of people in our own community who need help, and how can you bring someone to an area that is so economically depressed?

This public meeting was facilitated by myself, Rev. Lynn Watson, and Bancroft Councillor Bill Kilpatrick. I began my part of the presentation by quoting the words of Jesus as cited in Matthew 25:35: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' As a Christian I heard these words as a directive, and not just a suggestion. Bill shared his experience of reading the 1983 book, *One Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*.

In February, at their annual congregational meetings, both Carlow United Church in Boulter, and St. Paul's United Church in Bancroft voted to offer support to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. This motion included the proviso that monies raised be matched dollar-for-dollar to local relief initiatives.

We can make this a place of flourishing and blessing for everybody: jobs with a living wage, homes that are sanctuaries, liberation from addictions, health and wholeness for everybody. And we can be a place of welcome to the stranger!

There will be a meeting on Wednesday, March 9 at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's United Church in Bancroft to take the next steps. All are welcome.

Submitted by Rev. Lynn Watson