

Help for Syrian Refugees

Have you wondered what you can do to help in the relief efforts for the refugee crisis originating in Syria? Many larger organizations like the International Rescue Committee (www.rescue.org), Mercy Corps (www.mercycorps.org), Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org) and Samaritan's Purse (www.samaritanspurse.org) are well known and benefit from donations, but there are several other smaller organizations doing local hands-on-work worthy of our help as well. Public Radio International (PRI) has dug into the work thus far by a variety of small, lesser known organizations. Here are just six vetted by PRI:

1. Migrant Offshore Aid Station

This charity exists to save children like Aylan Kurdi, with a fleet of rescue boats patrolling the Mediterranean to save migrants lost at sea. www.moas.eu

2. Refugees Welcome

Dubbed as a kind of "Airbnb for refugees" this German nonprofit matches people with spare rooms with refugees in need of housing. www.refugees-welcome.net

3. The Worldwide Tribe in Calais

A group of social activists documenting stories in the Calais migrant camp, they also raise relief funds. www.facebook.com/theworldwidetribe

4. Small Projects Istanbul

Provides classes and cultural enrichment and scholarships to Syrian children in Turkey. www.gofundme.com/smallprojects

5. Karam Foundation

A U.S.-based charity that works in Turkey and is also focused on educational opportunities for Syrian children, currently raising funds to rebuild schools in Syria. www.karamfoundation.org

6. Hand in Hand for Syria

One of the few organizations that directly provides aid on the ground in Syria, including food, clothing, water, sanitation and crucial medical assistance to "help people to stay in Syria instead of fleeing to another country." www.justgiving.com/handinhandforsyria

For the bigger organizations, a useful tool to consider when evaluating them is their ranking on independent charity watchdog sites like Charity Watch or Charity Navigator which evaluate what percentage of donations go directly toward aid versus overhead, among other factors.

Information provided by
Public Radio International: www.pri.org/
Charity Watch: www.charitywatch.org
Charity Navigator: www.charitynavigator.org

Compiled by Sue Buratto

ACTIVE HOPE, How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy

Book by Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone (2012)

A book review by B. J. Schlachter

This is not a fantasy book whereby all ends well and the guys in the white hats rescue the fair maidens. No, we are living in chaotic, tragic times with the real possibility that the Earth and its inhabitants could suffer through irreversible destruction. Yet the authors inspire readers to value the interconnectedness of all life and choose to participate in a global movement called "The Great Turning" – turning away from the destructive industrial consumerism society to a more sustainable, equitable world. This book helps us identify and move away from personal limiting beliefs to being part of groups that embrace the joyful adventure of creative change. We are not alone in global transformation! It is happening now!

Fear and despair are overcome by individuals acting with compassion and focusing on the common good. *Active Hope* gives us responses and practices that are not easy answers; but offers hope to persons willing to look beyond their immediate struggles and challenges to open their hearts to sustainable living and better living conditions for all. Join in on "The Great Turning!" Millions of global citizens are!

Voice for Justice

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“What it means to be a Global Citizen”

Dictionary definitions for *Global* include worldwide, universal, inclusive; *Citizen* translates as resident, inhabitant, and voter. These ideas and my Catholic upbringing makes it seem natural, as an adult, to act as a global citizen wherever I am.

For me, being a global citizen is a journey of awareness and awakening - a process more than something to be finally attained. It probably began back in college when my social justice awareness was first being formed. Here at SJF, Sr. Mary VanGilder, IHM, broadened my understandings and helped me realize that each person can have an impact, even in little ways.

Some small ways that help me be a global citizen include: having a Russian pen pal (for over 30 years!); belonging to groups like Amnesty International and Women for Women International; buying hand-made or sustainably grown gifts offered at our own Alternative Giving Fair at SJF; writing letters in support of people in need in other states or countries; staying mindful of world events and being careful to avoid stereotypes of people who don't think or look or pray like me; and enjoying new acquaintances from a diverse clientele at my fitness center.

Having the mind of a global citizen strengthens my belief that war can never achieve peace and efforts to attain justice and basic rights for all peoples through every diplomatic or non-violent way is best for all. I frequently put myself in the place of those we read about who are victims of disasters and political unrest and this helps me realize that all people are just looking for a way to raise a family and have a secure life.

Think globally, yet act locally! I am a native Detroit, but have lived outside the city of my birth for 40 years now. However, I still have friends who live in the city, attend city events and support city churches and non-profit endeavors. They are helping to make a difference! Also, being a member of our Justice and Peace ministry as well as our women's ministry, PeaceXPeace, which enables me to learn so much about our global needs with people looking for ways to make a difference. It's a blessing to be on the road of global citizenship with so many of you!

Liz Loria



A Year of Encounter

Pope Francis' trip to the United States has left many of us excited, touched and maybe wondering: How do I/we fit into his vision of a world of solidarity, compassion and justice? The real danger is to do what the media does... we'll talk about it for a week and quickly forget about it. Yet, his trip as well as his message over the last two years is an invitation for us to create community, to fight exclusion and to meet our sisters and brothers wherever they are.

The community of St. John Fisher, under the leadership of the Justice and Peace ministry, is organizing a series of events, information sharing and small group discussions around the theme of "encounter". While more details will be announced to the community in the next few weeks, we want to share with you the outline of this program.

Pope Francis' message is before all a vision of a Church that is community for all – a Church where all are welcome, where nobody is excluded. And yet we, as a community and each one of us as individuals, live and participate in a system that creates exclusion, separation and inhibits community building. The purpose of the program will be to look at some systemic issues that create exclusion:

- The economic system which tends to create more and more separation between the "haves" and "have nots";

- Racism which permeates many aspects of our life and creates islands of poverty and isolation;
- A criminal justice system which looks at vengeance rather than justice and condemns too many to a life of hopelessness;
- An immigration system that condemns many in our country and in the world to a life of fear and separation.

It is easy to recognize the faults in the systems that create exclusion, it is more difficult to recognize and acknowledge that our own personal behaviors and attitudes contribute to it. Observing the systems that guide our common lives, we are called to judge them in light of the Gospel and to act according to the Gospel: it is the call to conversion that Pope Francis extends to all of us.

We hope the community of St. John Fisher will join in this endeavor. Together we can learn and be challenged in creating a world where all are part of the larger community and none will be excluded.

Jacques Pasquier

Access To Water is A Human Right!

We, the people of Michigan, enjoy the luxury of being surrounded by water. It is great to live in the "Great Lakes State," but that can blind us to the terrible plight of a majority of people in the world who have no access to clean water! Women throughout the world must walk miles each day with heavy containers just to have water for basic hygiene needs, cooking, and drinking. Be aware of their burdens.

Although we, as Michiganders, are embraced by the shores of the Great Lakes, some of us have no access to water because of city water turn-offs. Take a moment to imagine what a morning would be like without water-- no coffee, no shower, no toilet flushing, no water for food preparation, no way to brush your teeth. Not for just one or two days, but it goes on and on because your unpaid water bills have reached hundreds or thousands of dollars. These

are hardships faced daily by many here in Michigan whose water has been turned off! Special interests, political interests, and corporations would like to privatize the use of water that collectively belongs to all.

Global citizenship calls us to activism on behalf of all people and the limited resources of fresh water on this Earth. Start to take action by checking out www.oxfam.org or www.thirst-aid.org. Also take steps to conserve water by:

- using clothes washers and dishwashers only when they are full,
- limiting the time spent in the shower with water running,
- using a glass of water for brushing teeth rather than letting the tap run,
- limiting the watering of lawns to non-peak usage times,
- checking faucets, toilets, and sprinkling systems for leakage.

Millions of people die because of contaminated water and the spread of disease which accompanies poor hygienic conditions. We can each do our part to conserve precious water, pay close attention to legislation regarding access to clean, fresh water and work to support efforts to improve clean water delivery to those in dire need -- locally, nationally and globally.

Jeannie Daly

Global Witnessing

"You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it. ... Activism can be the journey rather than the arrival."

- Grace Lee Boggs, Chinese American woman, a world known Detroit-based activist, author and philosopher, died Oct. 5, 2015, at the age of 100. She was a community-builder, believing that by changing ourselves, together we will change the world.



"Connecting with Others"

"The most powerful agent of growth and transformation is something much more basic than any technique: a change of heart." *John Welwood*

At a conference I recently attended, one of the speakers, Sr. Simone Campbell from NETWORK, challenged us to recognize the hole in our society that she calls "the first world challenge." Too often, as Americans, we view ourselves as separate, protected, and entitled. She said that we need to touch the pain of the world around us and let our hearts be broken open by this pain. This creates a connection that gives hope to others that change can occur. She explained that, to keep her heart open, she tried to stay close to the worry about the needs of those she serves. In this way, she wasn't just focused on policy.

She described her own challenges in working in our nation's capital with politicians with widely divergent views. She challenged us to practice "radical acceptance." This means loving everyone including those who do not understand, accept, or agree with you and; at the same time, fighting for the vision that you want to see happen. The challenge is to do so not by "pushing back but by standing side by side" with them and working together. Pope Francis called it "open dialogue" in his recent address to the United States Congress.

After the conference, I received an e-mail which said in part, "We pray you continue to have your hearts be broken open to the beauty and pain around you. May you know that you are not alone in this journey, but the One Reality holds us; and we, in our humanness, hold each other." - Center for Action and Contemplation

Sylvia Graham