

## **NoVA Cluster teleconference notes**

*2017-03-07 at 7:30pm*

*by Annie Simpson*

The call was attended by members from Sterling, Bull Run, Shenandoah/Blue Ridge, Mt Vernon, Reston, and Fairfax congregations and facilitated by Rev Meagan Foley.

Each congregation was asked to respond to three questions, and these were the replies on behalf of UUCR:

- 1) Our role in responding to current events: Meet in community to attempt to find sanctuary from an increasingly imperialistic and hateful society. Discuss how to achieve effective peaceful civil disobedience. Where hate is becoming more common and even socially accepted, how can we promote love?
- 2) We are currently focusing on: acceptance of sexuality/gender differences and immigrants/refugees. We are also currently exploring our sanctuary options, but do not have the facilities to host anyone.
- 3) We are currently not focusing on: Minister not personally focusing on climate change, but we do have a green sanctuary committee. No one has recently been active in gun control.

The most discussed issue by other congregations was refugees/sanctuary.

Additional UUA resources are available for the following topics (through Rev Foley), if we are interested: refugees, sanctuary, keeping our 501(c)3 status even as we are politically active.

Rev Megan Foley said she has collected all of our congregation social justice contacts, and will be contacting them directly as needed.

Representatives from Sterling and Fairfax distributed notes prior to the meeting on refugees, and spoke to the group at length about how to prepare a congregation to participate in a refugee resettlement project. In NoVA only the Lutherans and the Catholics are authorized to directly manage refugee resettlement. Refugees are generally legal; asylum seekers are dropins; immigrants can often be illegal.

Refugees generally have suffered great physical and psychological loss and financial hardship. Types of support for refugees varies, and there are 4 potential levels:

- 1) provide the following for a year: locating an apartment, furnishing, and covering rent/deposits. The rentals may also have an income and job requirement. Churches

may have to take over a lease, which is an uncomfortable situation. Also: stock the pantry for a month; provide a health advocate; language training; job training; provide clothing; provide transportation; help navigate a lot of application paperwork; coordinate after school care arrangements.

2) no rent, but everything else, for 6 months

3) provide transportation and several other things

4) fund raising only

If a congregation commits to levels 1 or 2, you will need at least 10-12 volunteers for a 6-12 month period. Refugees are not provided with a lot of government funds to resettle, so if adult family members do not quickly get a job, they depend entirely on charity.

The representative from Fairfax seemed quite concerned that the mother in the family they are sponsoring (which also has no other adult) may not get a job, and will become an overwhelming burden.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:45 pm.