

## Excerpted from the Summerlea United Church Annual Report 2015

In September 2015 the Summerlea Executive Board first articulated some thoughts about sponsoring a refugee family from Syria. At their meeting later in September, the Outreach Committee accepted the challenge to do the necessary research.

Then, throughout October, members of the Outreach Committee attended various meetings concerning refugee sponsorship, and at one of these meetings – organized by Action Refugee Montréal (ARM) – we were approached by several other West Island congregations interested in sharing some responsibilities for sponsorship.

In November the Summerlea Congregational Board voted on a proposal from Outreach that Summerlea partner with 2 other congregations (**Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation** and **Merging Waters [Pastoral Charge]** – consisting of Beaurepaire United and Union church) to sponsor a refugee family. Since it has significant assets, Summerlea was to be the lead signatory, and was mandated to use ARM as the sponsoring agency. The Board agreed to provide \$10,000 from the trustee funds to help the raising of the \$34,000 required to provide for a family of 6 for one year.

In early December Scott Patton preached a sermon on refugees. Following the service a full Congregational Board meeting was convened at which a resolution was passed unanimously approving an addition to the Summerlea mission statement: ***“Our faithful action as part of our outreach work, will include the support of Refugees in our community as they seek to establish new lives in Canada”.***

Throughout December and into January several meetings have been held. There are now two groups: the WIRN, or West Island Refugee Network including any groups interested in sharing resources, and the SRSC or Summerlea Refugee Sponsorship Coalition<sup>1</sup>: comprised of the three congregations directly involved with sponsoring one family. Sheila Laursen from the LUUC agreed to be the chairperson of the SRSC...

A memorandum of understanding has been written outlining the collective responsibilities of our 3 congregations to conform to United Church standards for sponsorship of refugees. ARM are currently overwhelmed with sponsorship applications, but in late February hope to be able to help us find a family. Meantime members of SRSC are busy soliciting pledges for both financial and social support of our family. So far about \$24,000 has been [given or] promised...

---

<sup>1</sup> SRSC then later became the Summerlea Refugee **Support** Coalition