



# The Methodist Church

## Market Harborough Circuit

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Dear Churches Together Colleagues,

My apologies for not being at the Forum meeting – unfortunately it clashes with my Circuit local preachers' meeting. I write however, with some positive news on the matter of Syrian refugees.

I was delighted to be invited to a meeting of interested parties at the Council Offices a few weeks ago, where along with Maureen I was glad to represent the interests of CTH. At the meeting we informed that Market Harborough would indeed be taking in A FAMILY OF SYRIAN REFUGEES – a family of 6 people, with four children of varying ages, including a baby of around 6 months old. This has been arranged through a county-wide initiative, with a specially appointed co-ordinator employed to oversee the whole operation. I was impressed with this person, and very pleased to see that there was some 'joined-up thinking' at work!

We were joined by other interested community groups, including Home-Start, and the organisation started by local people: "Market Harborough Helping Refugees". The Council are going to keep us all fully informed on ways in which we can help, while also bearing in mind that this is JUST ONE FAMILY, and so we will not need massive collections of goods, no matter how generous the local 'goodwill' is! We don't want to overwhelm them with fourteen fridges and six dozen cakes on arrival!

The family are arriving on TUESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> September, and their 'settling in' will be fully managed by the Council, so as not to overwhelm them, once again. To reiterate: they DO seem to have considered their needs very carefully. After a while, representatives of CTH and others may be invited to come and meet them at an event arranged to aid their integration into the local community, and to help them meet some friendly faces. Over time, when the Council support naturally reduces, then there will be more need for pastoral support and advocacy, which I hope we might be well-placed to provide.

One of the major obstacles to successful integration will be LANGUAGE. And while the council will be employing interpreters for all official work with them, it would be incredibly useful at this stage to know whether any members of any of our churches can speak ARABIC.

Also, I was specifically asked to approach the Churches Together on the issue of future HOUSING. This family is hoped to be the first of a number of families to be re-settled in Harborough over the next 5 years. However, the Council are finding it *extremely difficult* in this area to find willing landlords who will entertain refugees and also do it for the rates of social rent demanded by the government. The co-ordinator would be particularly keen to speak to any Christian landlords in the areas who would be willing to lease property to them for perhaps less than the 'going rate' as an act of charity and goodwill. If church ministers and leaders are aware of any in their congregations, and are prepared to address this matter with their members, it would be an extremely generous undertaking but one which under God's calling is surely necessary in the present age.

My prayers are with you for your meeting.

Yours in Christ, *Andy Murphy*.