

# Practicing Hospitality: Practical Ways to Support Displaced People in Your Community



Photo by Teanna Sunberg



NAZARENE  
COMPASSIONATE  
MINISTRIES

*Remembering the call of Jesus in Matthew 25  
to meet Christ in the stranger and the person in need –  
‘for I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,  
I was naked and you gave me clothing,  
I was sick and you took care of me,  
I was in prison and you visited me.’*

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In light of increasing numbers of displaced people due to conflict, natural disasters and lack of access to basic human rights, this toolkit has been created to help churches think through appropriate church-based responses. In it you will find:

1. Practical ideas for responses
2. Guiding principles for churches to consider as they choose to engage

Please do not be overwhelmed by the details in this toolkit—no church needs to do everything; these are simply ideas to consider.

**For churches that are new to this issue, start small and focus on quality. If you can only make a difference for one person or one family, it is worth the investment.**

This document uses the term *‘displaced people’* which is inclusive of refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced People (IDPs), stateless people, and forced migrants. For legal purposes in most countries, it is important for these to be differentiated. In terms of churches responding to people in need, it may not be necessary to differentiate the category of displacement that an individual or family fall into. The ultimate criteria for churches to consider are the current vulnerability individuals or families are facing, regardless of their reasons for leaving their country of origin.

**This is about people.**

*To learn more about technical definitions, visit United Nations Refugee Agency at:  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)*

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# Low-Investment Responses

## MAPPING OF SERVICES

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It is vitally important to get an overview of the situation in your area and find out what key services are available for displaced people. Carry out a “mapping” exercise to find services already available to displaced people in your area.

### Agencies/organizations supporting displaced people

- Is there a refugee council or asylum seeker organization that you can receive advice from?
- List out their details—who are they, location, services available, and what times/days they’re open.
- Are there organizations providing legal advice to displaced people?

### Church activities (Nazarene and other) supporting displaced people

- What churches in your area are currently responding? Where are they located? What services do they provide? What times/days are they open?

### Government services/support systems for displaced people

- Does the government provide services to displaced people? If so, what kind of services? Do they receive housing or stipends? Where are these offices located and how do new people arriving in your country register and apply for support/asylum?
- Familiarize yourself with the legal framework your country has for dealing with refugees/asylum seekers. This information may be available online or at the social welfare or city council office.

### Other initiatives

- Communities of those living as refugees or seeking asylum are very innovative and resilient and often have their own networks and coping mechanisms for dealing with long-term displacement. It is important not to undermine the refugee/asylum seeker community’s ability to support each other.  
\* *Do not do things they are already doing for themselves.*

### IDEA:

Print information sheets/cards including some of the vital information from above to hand out to displaced people (places they can go for assistance/services, maps, phone numbers). Consider doing this in multiple languages. \**See example at end of document.*

### REMEMBER:

Allow this mapping exercise to guide your church’s choice of response—try not to duplicate what other people are doing, but direct people to existing services! Your church’s response should complement existing services or be based on any gaps that you identify and believe your church is well placed to fill.

## LANGUAGE CLASSES

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Offer free or low-cost language classes for displaced people.  
This could even be as simple as a few mornings or afternoons per week.

### Physical Resources

- Classes could be held in Sunday School rooms, church buildings or other facilities your church has links to, such as, local schools, community halls, etc.

### Human Resources

- Mobilize volunteers from within the church to teach or even facilitate basic conversation if no one has teaching experience
- Approach local schools asking teachers to offer volunteer hours
- Consider family classes and seek volunteers for classes where parents can bring their children

### Potential Costs

- If necessary, purchase some language curriculum and workbooks, or simple phrase books (or create your own)

## SAFE SPACES

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Offer free safe spaces for displaced people to come during daytime hours.  
As above, this could even be just a few well-publicized meetings per week.

### Physical Resources

- Church buildings or other facilities your church has links to, such as community halls/centers.

### Human Resources

- Mobilize volunteers from within in the church to facilitate the space. Have lots of extra volunteers in case of large numbers.

### Potential Activities

- Games and activities for children
- Simple tea, coffee or lunch times for families
- Space for parents to relax, talk, and receive support
- Day care for children

### Potential Costs

- Tea, coffee, snacks, and meals
- Games and equipment for children's activities
- Comfortable rooms for families to feel relaxed and safe

### REMEMBER:

Consider child protection issues carefully and abide by church/government-mandated standards. Do not invite unknown adults without children at the same time and location as children's groups.

# CITY ORIENTATIONS

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Offer orientations to help people understand the city or town where they're now living.

## IDEAS:

- Transport orientations (how to use buses, trains, etc.)
- Places to shop for food, clothes, etc.
- Places to rent rooms, flats, homes
- Directions to clinics/medical centers
- Schools for children
- Locations of civic buildings, like the City Hall, courthouse, and libraries
- Maps (including key services and locations)

## Physical Resources

- Potential use of church or members' vehicles to provide orientations

## Human Resources

- Mobilize volunteers who understand the city to give orientations.
- Look for someone who can offer translation services for orientations, as you will most likely need to consider a few different languages.

## REMEMBER:

Always have at least two adult volunteers provide accompaniment together—female volunteers with displaced women and male volunteers with displaced men.

# REFERRALS TO MEDICAL AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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Compile a list of doctors, community health workers, and counselors in your area who are taking referrals. As you come across individuals and families with urgent medical and/or psychological needs, be prepared to connect them with service providers.

## IDEAS:

- Create sheets/card with essential contact information for health service providers in your area.
- Consider offering to help with translation services.

# ACCOMPANIMENT AND ADVOCACY

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Consider how you can partner with people in your community by joining together for difficult tasks or using your position to amplify what they are saying.

## Accompany individuals and families as they go about difficult tasks, such as:

- Filling out forms and applications (medical, social welfare, asylum/refugee registration, etc.)
- Going to Government offices and organizations where they are applying for support
- Negotiating rental agreements with landlords
- Going to medical facilities

## Offer Translation

- Offer to help find translation assistance for any of the previously listed ideas
- Mobilize volunteers willing to be companions

## REMEMBER:

Always have at least two adult volunteers provide accompaniment together—female volunteers with displaced women and male volunteers with displaced men.

## Advocacy (Amplify Their Voices)

- Write to members of congress, city council, etc. about the church's care and concern for displaced people in your country/area
- Connect with other church networks to have a stronger voice (Evangelical Alliance, Evangelical Immigration Table, Churches Together, etc.)

## Raise Awareness

- Spread the word about issues displaced people are facing in your country or specific city.
- Host an awareness event on the issue in your church and consider inviting someone from a local refugee or asylum seeker council to come and speak to your congregation and local community.
- Consider talking about displacement and appropriate church responses in your house groups or weekly Bible studies.
- Consider the biblical and theological considerations for caring for the oppressed and the marginalized—and welcoming the stranger.

# Medium or High-Investment Responses

## SHELTER

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Providing a place of shelter in appropriate settings can be a significant way to serve. However, it should only be taken on as part of a careful, long-term strategic investment by the church.

### Options to consider for shelters

- Renting facilities for displaced people to stay temporarily
- Opening the church building itself for displaced people to sleep. In some cities, churches collaborate with each other and open their church 1-2 nights per week, ensuring that shelter is available every night of the week in one of the churches. These often include an evening meal and breakfast.
- Work alongside agencies that offer shelter. A great example is the Boaz Trust in the UK: [www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/7-accommodation](http://www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/7-accommodation)
- Opening church people's homes for displaced people to stay (low financial cost but higher investment in terms of time and energy)

### Potential Costs:

- Rent
- Beds, mattresses, bedding, towels
- Support for church families who are housing displaced people

### REMEMBER:

- Opening homes to people may contain risks and should be done with proper consideration. If in doubt, seek advice from people experienced in this level of care for displaced and vulnerable people.
- Ensure that men and women's sleeping spaces are separated and offer safety and privacy.

## FOOD DISTRIBUTION

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- Organize relief packages of food or other basic necessities to distribute to families in need
- Start a feeding program at your church

### REMEMBER:

- Food relief can create dependency, is expensive, and involves lots of logistical planning. It shouldn't be undertaken without careful consideration of these factors.
- It's important to do food distribution only when absolutely essential and families are unable to source food themselves.



# CONSIDERING PARTNERING

If your church does not have physical, financial and human resources to do some of the above activities, there is always room to partner with other agencies, organizations, and churches.

## Types of partnership include:

- Volunteering: Contact other agencies/organizations/churches and offer volunteer hours
- Fundraising: hold fund raising events for needs you are aware of. If you wish to give to other Nazarene response efforts through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, see the link on page 10

## Example Ministries at Nazarene Churches in the United States

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### Community Link—Grand Rapids International Fellowship, Grand Rapids, MI

[www.grifcommunitylink.org](http://www.grifcommunitylink.org)

Weekly English classes, including transportation and community events

### IC Compassion—in partnership with Greater Iowa City Church of the Nazarene, Iowa City, IA

[www.iccompassion.org](http://www.iccompassion.org)

Walk-in support, legal aid, workshops and training, groups for women, and more.

### Immigration Resource Center of San Gabriel Valley—Monrovia, CA

[www.ircsgv.org](http://www.ircsgv.org)

Legal help for those seeking help with immigration

### Rio Valley Church of the Nazarene—McAllen, TX

[www.rvcnaz.org](http://www.rvcnaz.org)

Active outreach across the US/Mexico Border

### Sewing With Purpose—Hillside Church of the Nazarene, Kent, WA

[www.hillsidechurchkent.com/ministries/missions](http://www.hillsidechurchkent.com/ministries/missions)

Weekly English classes through taught sewing lessons and mother/child classes

### Welcome Home—Tacoma, WA

[www.welcomehome.buzz](http://www.welcomehome.buzz)

Weekly English classes in apartment complexes around the area for those who can't travel

# Guiding Principles for Working with Displaced People

Working with and for displaced people is complex.  
Below are some things to consider as you begin your partnership.

## Wherever possible, involve people from the community of people who are displaced

Seek input in identifying needs, planning your church's response, and evaluating the effectiveness of your activities. The participation of displaced people in the planning, implementing, and evaluation of your work will not only enhance the quality of your response, but it empowers them. Displaced people should not only be recipients of assistance and services but also be active in the transformation of their own circumstances.

## Do what you can—every contribution helps

The inherent needs of displaced people—new countries, new laws, new language—are many, and the church's resources and influence are limited. Do not feel guilty when you say, 'This is all we are able to provide.' We will always face limitations.

- If the assistance you are offering is only temporary, make sure to communicate the time-frame of this assistance clearly. It is important to manage people's expectations carefully and not to raise unrealistic hopes.

## Start small

There is a temptation to "go big" when the needs are overwhelming. When starting out, begin small and focus on quality. Allow the size of the response to grow in relation to the church's ability to deliver the project with high quality.

## Prioritize the safety of women and children

Those who are vulnerable are also more at-risk. Safety should always be first priority.

- If working with children, ensure you have the same high child protection standards used for other church activities and that these are compliant with your country's expectations for Child Protection and Safeguarding.

*If you need resources to help ensure safety for children: [www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk)*

## Be sensitive

Strive for sensitivity when working with people from other faith groups. Do not make attendance of faith-based activities essential in order for people to receive support.

## Be inclusive

As a church, do what you can to "lower the fear" of refugees. Be a church that encourages inclusivity, love, and acceptance.

### Be sensitive to trauma

Recognize the extreme trauma of displaced people’s journey to your area and the violence they have fled and been exposed to over many years. This can have particular effects, including:

- Heightened nerves, short patience
- Alert and aggressive to threats or perceived threats
- Low appetite
- Lack of sleep and nightmares
- Tearful, hopeless, depressed, quiet

#### REMEMBER:

- Always be ready to refer people to specialists and/or seek advice. Compile a list of counselors or therapists to have on hand.
- Many displaced people arriving come from more conservative cultures in relation to gender roles. Separating men and women’s activities is wise. Avoid physical contact with people of the opposite sex, and do not be alone with people of the opposite sex.

## Further Tools

### General Resources

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The Boaz Trust—[www.boaztrust.org.uk](http://www.boaztrust.org.uk)

World Relief “Welcoming the Stranger”—[www.welcomingthestranger.com](http://www.welcomingthestranger.com)

UK Refugee Council Website—[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

UN Refugee Agency—[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

Forced Migration Review (articles on issues affecting displaced people)—  
[www.fmreview.org](http://www.fmreview.org)

“Disasters and the Local Church” – Handbook by Tearfund (free)—  
[https://learn.tearfund.org/themes/disasters/disasters\\_and\\_the\\_local\\_church](https://learn.tearfund.org/themes/disasters/disasters_and_the_local_church)

Free Resources for Child Protection/Safeguarding  
[www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk)

# Support Other Nazarene Responses

Support Nazarene churches as they respond to displaced people issues globally.

To give to the Global Refugee and Immigrant Fund, visit:

**NCM.org/refugees**

If you have more questions or would like to discuss working with displaced people, contact:

**INFO@NCM.ORG • (800) 310-6362**

## Example Information Sheet

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### Essential Information

#### Local Refugee Council

Address: XXXX

Phone: XXXX

Opening Hours: XXXX

#### Emergency Shelter

Address: XXXX

Phone: XXXX

Opening Hours: XXXX

#### Nearby Clinic

Address: XXXX

Phone: XXXX

Opening Hours: XXXX

#### Hospital for Emergencies

Address: XXXX

Phone: XXXX

Opening Hours: XXXX

#### Food Kitchen/Distribution Center

Phone: XXXX

Opening Hours: XXXX

### Weekly Activities at the Church of the Nazarene

Address: XXXX

Phone: XXXX

#### Basic Language Classes

Monday and Tuesday  
2pm - 4pm in the main church building

#### Free Coffee and Tea

Morning with children's activities and games (families only) in the main church building.

#### Sunday Worship Services

10:30 am in the Church

### Welcome



Church of the Nazarene  
in XXXX