

Welcoming the Stranger Amongst Us

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Preacher: Kinbrace Refugee Housing and Support

[0 : 00] Well, today you get four for the price of one. You've got a good ticket. And I'm Sheila. I am a volunteer. Am I a volunteer with Kinbrace?

Absolutely. Yeah, I'm a volunteer with Kinbrace that you're going to hear a little bit about. But, you know, the Bible is full of instructions about looking after our neighbor and welcoming the stranger within our gates.

But it never says how, you know. Love is a very fuzzy kind of instruction to get. But, and Jesus pointed out to us that love is not a warm, fuzzy feeling around the heart.

Love is doing something. And these people are all doing something. So what I want to do today is look at what happens when a refugee lands on our shores without anybody meeting him, without an organization right there with their hand out ready to help.

Yeah, it's a little baffling, isn't it? And with a heavily pregnant wife. So you're going to hear more about this because now he is actually at the point of wanting to be a volunteer himself.

[1 : 06] So let's meet these people. On my left is Lauren Belisky, who is the director of the Kinbrace Community Society, which not only welcomes refugees, they live with them.

One big family under two houses. Yes. And so he will tell us how that works after people get linked up with him. Jonathan Belis is the chairman of our welcome committee here in St. John's, which is kind of a subset of the missions group, isn't it?

Subset of the refugee committee is the welcome team. Okay, the welcome team. It's hard to keep all these. I know. Titles, titles. What can I say? An educator and also a chaplain at both colleges, isn't it, UBC and Simon Fraser?

I was, years ago. Oh, we're talking past. Oh, well, I'm glad nobody has to introduce me then. And Samil Rashid, who is the father of a little Canadian, who left Iraq in the Mosul area, wasn't it?

Really under a need to flee the country. Not too popular with ISIS. He was. And he has a background in sociology, which he is hoping one day to get back into.

[2 : 25] And in the meantime, he's studying some other things. So we're going to move from one stage of the process to another here. Does that make sense? Okay, we're all on the same page.

Did you want to show that first or last or in between? I'll show it first. Okay. I'll just do a little overview. Right. Well, what I asked Lauren to do was to sort of bring us up to speed on what Kin Race is doing now from its roots.

Because if ever there was an idea, man, this is it. This is him. Yeah. No, he really knows all aspects of the work.

You're backpedaling now. You're backpedaling now. I am. Yeah. Yeah. He really is talented in so many ways that he can put to use in this organization.

But we can start with him. And I want to know, because we are involved in this as well when you get through this, what is the importance of linking up with a Christian church in connection with your program?

[3 : 30] Because I know at the very outset it was Grandview Calvary, and they're still involved, aren't they? And now St. John's is as well. And this is a really neat melding of our purpose and implementing it.

So, Lauren, carry on. Sure. Thank you. Should I stand? Is that what people want? Sure. Okay. Thank you so much for your welcome here this morning. And thank you for the really integrated way that St. John's is welcoming refugees new to Canada.

It's a tremendous gift. And Jonathan has been our main link. But Sheila actually goes way back. You guys have such huge congregation. I actually knew people throughout the congregation who were interested, but none of you knew each other.

So it's nice to sort of come and help cinch it all together. And Jonathan has certainly done that. Kinbrace is a community that welcomes refugee claimants. A unique population of refugees that arrive in Canada each year.

Annually the largest number of refugees that arrive in Canada. But optically the most invisible refugee population arriving in Canada. I'm just going to show you a quick...

[4 : 42] Jonathan, I think your head is clear. Refugee claimants are people who arrive in Canada seeking refugee protection.

Otherwise known as asylum seekers in the big wide world. We don't usually use that language here in Canada. And I have a little infographic here that should help you to see this.

I call three pathways for refugees into Canada. In the top... Start at the bottom section there. You'll see government-assisted refugees.

This is all the good news we heard last year about the Canadian government reaching out to bring Syrian refugees to Canada. Historically Canada's government... Federal government makes an annual commitment to X number of refugees to bring them out of refugee camps to Canada.

Very powerful mechanism. And then we have something very unique to Canada called the Private Sponsorship Program. Bringing in what we call privately sponsored refugees.

[5 : 52] And I know this church is working on that right now. And Owen Underhill is kind of taking the lead on that. Canada's the only country in the world that does this.

Where citizens, you and I, through our institutions, can reach out and bring refugees to Canada. Very powerful mechanism to bring people free from the plight of the refugee experience. Both of those are what I call generous gestures.

That's our heart at work. The third way is through our asylum system. People we call refugee claimants who come into the country. They get here on their own.

So imagine if Canada was right next to Syria. Do you think people would come into Canada? They would. Like they have to Jordan and Lebanon by the millions. In the same way they come to Canada.

We're so far away that we actually just get a small dribble of the world's asylum people, asylum-seeking people. But the numbers are quite important to see. And I'll just express those here.

[6 : 54] So last year, government-assisted refugees, 20,000 were brought in by the Canadian government. If you were to look on a graph, this is a huge bubble increase over what's usually done.

This year their target is 7,500 approximately for government-assisted. Privately sponsored, again, a real increase, 15,000.

Usually it's down around 5,000 to 7,000. Last year, 22,000 people came to Canada's borders and said, I need help. I'm a refugee.

12,000 of those were given refugee protection. They were assessed by the Canadian government through a very complicated but important process that's administered by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

And 12,000 were given refugee protection. Here's one of them right here. So this is a generous gesture that Canada has. We have one of the best, what we call, inland refugee determination systems.

[7 : 55] It's complex. We have a whole program that tries to address that gap between the vulnerability of a refugee claim and the complexity of this system. We call it our access to refugee protection.

But those 12,000 will become permanent residents after a time and become Canadians. So that's just a quick picture for you to sort of understand where we fit.

Refugee claimants are responded to by the Canadian government actually out of obligation because we have an international commitment to people who cross a boundary seeking refugee protection. So we have a little community in East Vancouver.

Jonathan and many of you have visited. Some of you have. And our model really is welcoming people one-to-one. We help about 30 people a year with housing.

And then we help several thousands more across the country with our educational programs. I thought maybe what I'd do is just give a little window into our community.

[8 : 59] For those of you who were here two years ago, you saw this video. It still is very accurate to who we are. And then maybe before I play this, I will speak to your question, which is why is it important for churches to be involved?

And I think you and... Sorry, who introduced? Was that Kathy? Alexander. Yes, Alexander. spoke to it.

Somehow, I think in our Judeo-Christian DNA, mainly because the scripture speaks to it, the vulnerability of somebody who's on the move, pushed out of their home, is of utmost importance somehow to this God that we believe in.

And so from the earliest, through the Torah, the earliest scriptures, attentiveness to the stranger, the welcome of the foreigner, is really, really important. It's not just shaking their hand and saying welcome.

It goes so far as to say, treat them like a citizen, which is a powerful, powerful call for us. And if anything, in the world, our instincts are actually not to treat anybody like a citizen who's different from us.

[10 : 19] It's to push them out. And we're really seeing that played out on the world stage right now with our neighbor to the south. But my fear is it's actually in all of us, that we're tribal, we're suspicious, we all need a lot of interior, spiritual work.

So I think that's at the heart of really our call. And the stories in the Bible really are, most of them, stories of migration. And of course, if you were to label the refugee definition to the Christ child, every piece of that journey of that infant to Egypt is the story of a refugee.

And so it's part of our, the big story that we're part of. So we have a gift to be attentive to that at Kinbrace. And really, I was chatting earlier, the gift is ours, really.

The blessing becomes ours to welcome. And hopefully that benefits others. So I'll just show this. This will allow you to see Kinbrace, and then we'll move on. Okay. Okay.

Thank you.

[12 : 00] Thank you.

Our commitment to new refugees in Canada is to see them move into new communities of settlement, post-Cimbres, and really assist them in integrating into all the systems.

When I first came to Canada and we didn't know where to go, someone told us about Kimbris and we had no idea what Kimbris is. And we just thought that it would give us an apartment to live in and that's it.

But when we came, people were so much nicer than I expected. People who live here have faced a lot of trauma in the pre-migration process, meaning that they have sometimes faced war or displacement.

And then they come here and have to face post-migratory stresses of the bureaucratic system of applying for asylum. Mental well-being is so important for refugees and research shows that a community of support can make a huge difference.

[13 : 30] My mom was scared more than all of us because we didn't really realize what is happening. And we didn't feel that scared anymore because we knew that there are people out there who actually care about us.

And they don't care where you came from or what you look like. And we felt like it's almost like a cold mill. Lots of things grow here at Kimbris.

Gardens grow in the backyard every summer. And the noise level and energy grows as people come on Tuesday nights and eat dinner together. And relationships grow here in really meaningful ways.

And I've seen over the years friendships develop while people are cooking together in the kitchen, washing dishes after a meal, playing in the backyard with basketball hoop, jumping on the trampoline or being at games night.

And I've seen the way that these relationships carry and sustain people through incredibly difficult and stressful situations. What we're really interested in is welcoming people who are seeking refugee protection as though they're our brothers and sisters.

[14 : 34] Refugees really are the you and me of another place, forced to flee their homes due to fear of persecution. They're a family looking for a new home.

And we have the incredible opportunity to welcome and journey with them towards refugee protection and a new life in Canada. Canadians living with newcomer refugees side by side, learning from each other, teaching each other, listening to each other, and really developing long-lasting relationships that go on and on through the years of early settlement here in Canada.

Can't erase my time here has shown me that we all want to be known. We all seek to belong. And the community that's built here gives back it to people. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[16 : 23] Thank you. Thank you. to Kin Race if that is your interest, and finding out more about how you can help personally or with your money. Carry on. Thank you. So now I'm going to interview Jonathan, who I've come to get to know over the past year, and that's been a tremendous gift for me, and not just for me, but for many, many others who are living at Kin Race. So Jonathan, you are a retired English teacher, and I had an image of him kind of with his feet up, end of his career, smoking his pipe, blowing smoke rings. But now you're taking the lead of a fairly new and very engaged group of people with the Refugee Welcome team. And what's been that transition and that journey for you from retired professor to this new role?

The most common question people ask a newly retired person I have found is, oh, what are you going to do with yourself? That's never related to that question at all.

my question is, what am I not going to do? I couldn't sleep for two weeks after I retired, because I was so excited about all the things I could do, and the choices, and it was just a rush.

So I filled my life with things to do in the first three months. And meanwhile, I was thinking about the crisis, the great humanitarian crisis of our day, which is the refugee crisis.

And I am, one of the things I've done for years at St. John's, is to lead Bible studies. We have a home group in our home. And I'm in touch with the St. John's office regularly with regard to that.

[18 : 26] Lynn Ember is the connection at the moment. And I thought, what is the church doing? Fire off an email to Lanzig. What are we doing? Somehow it got forward to Dan. And I was called into the office, and Dan said, everybody's asking us the same thing. What can I do? What can the church do? What is the church going to do? What we need is a point person. Would you be that point person? So, oh my goodness. Anyway, I thought about that, and it fit. I just retired from 35 years of teaching post-secondary language preparation. My mission really was to refugees and immigrants in English language preparation for academic study. So it kind of fit. So I talked to Dan. Dan said, okay, you're going to need a couple of partners. There's two key partners you're going to need. One is Lauren at Kinbrace, and the other is

James at the Journey Home community. That's another sort of parallel community. So I sat down with them, and I decided we needed a group of people who identify themselves as wanting to reach out to refugees. And we called that the refugee welcome team of St. John's, and started to publicize that through the church bulletin and the website and things. And there are now 42 of us. Many of you are here. And so it's been a great journey. Maybe that answers the question. Yeah, thank you. And so in this past year, you've been walking with refugee families. Yes. And what's one story that you could tell us that speaks to a change that you've experienced within yourself, or somehow you, the way you've been transformed, if at all, through the experience?

As I thought about this question, which Lauren gave me a week ago, I thought about the best way to explain it to you is to look at this panel.

What's transformed me is a deepening and a broadening of my relationship to the St. John's community, represented by Sheila, and many of the other wonderful people in this room, who I've been in touch with and been friends with over the last year. It's been wonderfully transformational to become more deeply and broadly. I came to St. John's in 1979.

Wow. But this has been a real deepening. The wonderful experience of meeting Lauren and Tatum and all the staff there, and James and his people over at the Journey Home community has been very deepening. And then, of course, meeting Shamal and his wife, Shalnam, and their little girl, Alina, and other families like them, meeting them at Kinbrace and getting to become friends, it's been absolutely transformational.

[21 : 49] So, you asked for one short story. I'll tell you a very short story, which is transformational. For Lorraine and me, for Shalnam and Shamal, and for Ron and Sue Tucker, who are the parents of Jim Tucker, who many of you knew, and they had prepared a suite under their house, a beautiful one-bedroom suite, and wanted to rent to refugees. Couldn't find a small refugee family, and we're about to give up. When I asked for prayer and the Bible study where Jim was, about a home for this family, and before the prayer time was over, Jim was lit up like a light bulb, and he said, you know, you've got to call my parents. And by the end of that Monday evening, I'd spoken to Shamal and to Ron and Sue, and by that Wednesday following, we went over and picked up Shamal, Shalnam, and Alina in our car, and we went over to Ron and Sue's place, and we introduced them to each other. And I can't tell you who was happier, the Rashids or the

Tuckers, because they were both putting their hands in the air and saying things like, God brought us together. And it was transformational for Lorraine and me to be there in the room, for Ron and Sue to have this wonderful family join in their home, in their suite, their basement suite, and of course, this is a permanent home, semi-permanent home for Shamal, Shalnam, and Alina.

I'll never forget that day. It was wonderful. I guess you'll remember it too. Often when we head into something new, we have a set of expectations and sort of an idea of what it's going to look like. As you've been down this journey coordinating with all your parishioners here and working with families who are newcomers through the refugee portal, what's one thing that surprised you or maybe an unexpected element that you just didn't expect?

There were many, but one I think I would like to speak about has to do with you and the community that you head up. I worked with many community organizations and met lots of wonderful people over my years in Vancouver. But when I went to Kinbrace, there was something there.

There, as Lauren has explained, they're about welcome and treating people with respect. And that's for the purpose of welcoming refugees. But when I walked into that community, the same welcome surrounded me. And it was almost tangible. It was tangible.

[24 : 55] And to discover who these people are. The immense amount of lifetime commitment, study and preparation and qualifications and life experience and professional development and dedication and really it's been a stunning experience to meet these. This really unusual, I call them a gem of an organization community. So that was one thing that I thought it would be nice to work with another community group. Yeah, it would be nice. Well, nice is not an adequate word for what it's been. And of course, it's been a privilege to become friends with Lauren.

Great. Well, thank you. If you were to give one piece of sage wisdom out of your lifetime, but also this past year, to someone who's new joining your committee here, the Republican welcome team, what would be that little nugget of wisdom that you would share?

So many. Is that on your list of questions? I'm not sure. That's a trick question. Yeah, okay, I'm surprised.

I have great difficulty with ones. But okay, let me try. Let's just dive in here. In fact, the piece of wisdom is to get involved with refugees, I wasn't sure how it would all unfold myself. And I don't think anyone who volunteers to help newcomers knows exactly how things will unfold. But you, everyone has something to give. And it will be different from what other people give. Two things I would say about that in one is, if you are open to God's leading, and you pray, and then you go and meet people, it will become apparent to you how you can make a significant difference for the better in the lives of refugees. But the hidden piece of that is that it will help you at least as much as it helps anybody else. There you go. It will transform your own life. We think we're helping refugees, but actually, they're helping us a huge amount as well. That's great. Thank you, Jonathan. And thank you for all the time you've given over the past year as well. It's all been a gift to me. Really. So that's the end of your questions. Now I get to ask Shamal questions, and my electronic note cards here.

Shamal, can you describe for us what it was like for you and Shonam when you first arrived in Vancouver? Yeah, first of all, I want to say welcome everybody here. Thank you for this panel and opportunity for me talking about all challenges for refugees here. I hope I can't, like, explain about my experience here with my poor English. I'm sorry if something is not clear. First of all, I want to, like, introduce myself for you. I'm a Kurdish from Iraq, North Iraq. There's a city, I'm from the city's name Mosul.

[28 : 27] Yeah, I want to say, like, refugees, when they left their place to other place, I'm sure nobody likes to leave their homelands and families there. But, like, my family, in my experience in Iraq, we have five times displaced in our place to other place. And that's why we don't have, like, chance to get in settling in our homeland. Because there's many problems and war and situations always there. That's why we left country and to get save our lives. That's why we are here. And thank you for all Canadians. Thank you for Canadian government.

You are very kind people. We appreciate for that, for your support. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you. I came to Vancouver October 2015. When I arrived here, it's a different country, different language, different system, and I don't have any friends there, and family. No, I don't know anyone here.

And just came here. And then a lot of problems coming up because I have a really special problem. My wife, she was pregnant and very close to delivery. And we don't have place here.

I spent 22, 23 days without place in Vancouver. Always, I'm traveling. Because I don't know anyone. I don't know how getting help. It really was very difficult. Then I start process with the immigration and there's some other organizations in Vancouver. But, you know, organizations, there's not just have one people or one family. They have many refugees. And they can't, like, help them really properly. But that's why we don't, like, we have a, we need more helping from them. When we come here, like my experience, in 22 days spent without place and traveling in Vancouver. And even when I come, I don't know how to use bus and how to get in the places, the addresses they give me. Because I don't know Vancouver. And I don't have friends. And many refugees, when they come here, and they don't know language. And just they speak by mother language. And nobody, like, translate for them. And it's more difficult for them. I know a little bit English. It's helping, helped me to get support and helping and give questions to people. How to use bus and how to go into shopping and things like this.

I remember one day, they give me new address because always I'm traveling to different places in Vancouver.

[31 : 42] Sometimes to hopping house, sometimes to motels, sometimes to hotels. There's different places I go. Like, two, three days, one place, and again, other place. And with a pregnant wife. And nothing like, we have just, we have one box. Um, one day, like, this is my experience, like, to explain my challenge.

I go to new address. They give me just, I'm looking at the address and follow, going. And I get lost in Kokotla. I'm going there. And I'm walking. I follow maps. And then I get to forest and bridge there.

Say, what, where I am now? Yeah. Yeah. That, that's really very bad that time. And my wife, she's scared so much. And last night, and then we got some place and, like, restaurant and go there. They're helping us. Say, oh, you are in your wrong city. Should you back to Vancouver? This address in Vancouver.

Yeah. Then they call us, taxi, and we come back to Vancouver. Like, this is one, uh, challenges I had before when I arrived here. That's, like, uh, refugees, when they come here, really need people to show them.

And, uh, uh, all the service there is, uh, have for refugee to explain them. And they show them how getting, through going to getting these services out here.

[33 : 13] Wow. Thank you. Thank you. Then you were referred to Kinbrace. And you moved in there. Can you describe, what was that like, moving into Kinbrace? And, uh, how, how was Kinbrace helpful?

After, like, spent two days here with our place, then we got the chance to go and meeting Kinbrace people and Lauren there. And really was very, very great for us. And, like, we got our family here, Kinbrace. And that's why we are very lucky to get one room. There's one available in Kinbrace.

And they show us, even I don't want to see, just I want place to settling up. That's all. I don't, like, look, this is good room or not. But they have this. I don't want anything. Just I want settling one place and no moving around. Yeah. And I'm very happy to get this place in Kinbrace. And really, I have wonderful experience, great experience with these people in Kinbrace. There, when we go there, like, 80% of our challenges is done. Because they can be our family and our friends here. And they're helping us to doing all the paper workers in government. And they're showing us and they explain about all the services have here, like, for refugees when they come here. And that's, like, helping so much, so much. I'm very happy and thankful for Kinbrace always.

Wow. I believe the first person that you met from St. John's was Daphne Wilson. Isn't that right?

Yeah. I hope she was here. And so then you began to meet Daphne and a few other people from St. John's. And how was that for you? I mean, here, you come here, you have a Muslim background, and these Christian people start meeting you from a church. How was that experience for you?

[35 : 31] Yeah. When I accepted to Kinbrace, then we have every Tuesday, we have a dinner, and there's always people, new people coming, visiting, and make relationships and friends. Always we see new people in Kinbrace when, on Tuesday, they have dinner, and everybody can come.

And that time, and before I meet Daphne Wilson, she's coming with her daughter, and she's very kind of person. She's in this church. And she come, and she always continued visiting my wife, because my wife, when she had a baby delivered already. She needs a lot of help. And she always, she come, and talking with my wife, and practicing English with my wife, and that's very helpful. And then in Tuesday, I met Jonathan, and we know each other. We, he explained me about St. Johannes and they want to helping refugees, and I explained about my, uh, all experience, and here, and in Iraq. We're talking together, and we understanding each other, and, uh, I'm very happy he's, uh, he likes to helping us. Um, and he invites me, uh, to know more people in St. Johannes Church. And then we, we talking, like, how they can help me. And really, I'm very happy he's, uh, he's, uh, direct away he starts to get helping for me. He give, he asking me what you need, and how we can help you. And just, uh, because just we have one room, and I am,

I'm, I want to stay in Hubris more, but always coming new people. We have to leave. Uh, and I say, just, uh, for now, for the moment, I want to get, uh, a place for leave. And he say, we work on that. And then, uh, after a few weeks, he called me. That's a good news. We have, uh, we find a place for you. And then we go to play to this, uh, family, Tucker's family. They're a wonderful family. And they prepare streets for refugees. And what's, like, I get from Jonathan, the first help I get him from him. And then we got the streets from, uh, from this people, this family.

And we're starting new life. And we're settling down. And then we got more help from St. Johann's church people. Um, always they coming, visiting us. And, uh, they, Jonathan, he find job for me, and which is very important. And I start, go work. And he settled, he continued, and helping me to get in, uh, English school. And I hope to get in more in future about study because he's, he's always available for me. That's, I appreciate it so much. Uh, for other families, I'm just, I'm talking by my experience. He helped other families also in Cambridge. Uh, that's a wonderful experience in my life. And about all the Christian people or church, uh, because I am living, the city is multi-religion, what's in Iraq. I have Christian friends. We have good relationships. Always, we're looking as a, we are a human, and we are a brother's and sister's here.

Well said, well said, well said. Thank you. Um, final question. Here we are a room full of people. We're from Vancouver, and we're all together in a Christian community. And we know this is a huge crisis, and there are thousands of people coming into Vancouver that are in similar situations to you. And, uh, um, can you give us some advice? How, how can we, um, what advice would you give us? How can we be more helpful? What, what, what's something that we should learn? And, um, we can do better as Christians wanting to welcome people. Already, you're doing great, great work. I got help, so much help from other people, like, Cullen, or, uh, Daphne Wilson, and Ray, and Jonathan, many, many people from this church helping my family. That's great. Everyone have, like, a different experience. Sometimes, people can't use this experience for helping other peoples. Uh, already, I'm very happy with, uh, this help I gotten from Jonathan of St. Johann's Church. My advice, just keep going and helping more, because especially, uh, mentality, psychology, refugees, when they come here, they feel very tired, and mentally very tired, as my, especially my family and my wife. And we got really good relation with Kim, uh, with, uh, Jonathan and St. Johann's Church. And that's very, very wonderful for us. I, we, we celebrate my daughter's birthday, and Cameline's home was very nice with St. Johann's people. That time, we are very happy. We're feeling my family here, my brother's sisters here. Like, we need this relation and visiting and friends together. That's wonderful. I'm just saying, like, keep going and helping.

[41 : 47] Thank you. Thank you. Well, thank you. That was a great, great answer. We like to have parties. That's what I'm saying. That's what I'm saying. Anglicans are really good at parties, and we're Anglicans.

True. True. We like to have more. Great. Thank you, Sheila. That's our interview part. Oh, great. Well, I had a two-fold goal in inviting these people today. And one was to hear the progress of somebody through our refugee system. And you have really explained that very well. I cannot imagine what it is like to get off a plane in a city where I don't know anybody with a language I hardly am familiar with. I think I would be standing on the floor saying, hell! You know, it's amazing. And you didn't even tell them about the time that you were referred to spending the night under a bridge with other homeless people. Can you imagine? Next to people shooting up and drinking alcohol and stuff like that. You must have been terrified. Anyway, we do appreciate you're giving us a really close look, Jamal. And you are not a refugee anymore. And you are not even, well, you are kind of, the dotted line that goes to St. John's, aren't you? I mean, we're not going to give up on you. And we hope you will not give up on us.

Because as Jonathan pointed out, this is a very much a two-way street. It's the feeling of doing something right that comes from an experience like this is really sometimes quite overwhelming.

I have to tell you something I noticed in my first contact with Ken Brace, like in the flesh. I had heard about it. My son was at one time chairman of the board and very much involved. And I really wish I had listened to him a little more closely and gotten involved a little bit sooner when I wasn't that old and crippled and couldn't do some of the things they need. But I was invited to a picnic in the backyard. And these two houses are joined together. And there are seven suites in all and they are different sizes. But in the picnic, they had entertainment from people that had come from somewhere in Central America. Remember that dance? Yeah.

And I was sitting with a group of people and sort of said, well, what is your connection with this place?

[44 : 17] And two of them were alumni of Ken Brace. And they said, we lived here at one time. And now, you know, each of them was in a different part of Greater Vancouver and working. And they had come back back because the alumni is active in what goes on there. How many places do you know like that?

And yes, and one was a lady who had a very bad medical diagnosis. And she said, I know I'm going to die here. And this is a better place for me to die. She was still getting treatment. But she, you know, to think about how that kind of extreme situation would be handled as a stranger in a foreign country. I cannot imagine what it's like to decide, I have to be a refugee, I have to leave this place. I cannot imagine what that feels like. But one of the things I would invite you to think about, Jonathan said to me when we were, I didn't know him before. If we hadn't arranged this panel, I wouldn't have met you at all. He said, it takes a village to raise a child. So how many people does it take to help a refugee family? There are about how many on your committee?

As of today, 42. 42. 42. Including Siol. And Siol. Yes. Well, he's an alumni. Here he goes. You're an alum. The second thing I attended at Kinbrace was a, do you call it a neighbor's dinner or something like that?

Becoming neighbors. Becoming neighbors. Becoming neighbors. So I got invited to this wonderful smells the minute I walked through the door. And somebody said, oh yeah, Mohammed is cooking tonight. It's going to be good.

It would have been a Tuesday night dinner then. Tuesday night. A Tuesday night, right. And I got to hold a baby, which is something that hardly ever happens to me. You know? And it just, I was, I was welcomed in the same way. Nobody knew me, but it was, it was a welcome that I received from them. So I would really encourage you to think about how can you relate to this program if it interests you at all and it ought to? How can you make a contribution? Is it one of the the places that will feed the needs in your life as well? And so that is one way that you can contribute.

[46 : 40] The other is that Kinbrace runs on things like grants and individual contributions. And you do know that your money is going to be well spent because you can actually go and see what this organization is doing if you respond to one of the invitations. Page six of today's bulletin will tell you how you can take a first step toward that. And now we'll give you a chance to ask questions and talk to these interesting people for the next 15 minutes. Who wants to go first? Yes, Pauline.

I have a real curiosity to know from the time you decided you were leaving your home country to the time of the time of the time of the time of the time of the time of the time of the time of leaving Iraq. Yeah. Briefly. Yes.

It's really very difficult, you know, I've never been outside. I never see airport before. When I start traveling. My wife too. And just like Joe, first time when I enter airport, I get a mistake.

Because I never went in airport. And just I get lined up with people for 10-15 minutes. And just somebody come ask me, where you go? I say, I go to Turkey. So could this go to south of Iraq?

You won't go to south of Iraq? I don't want to go to south of Iraq. Yeah. Yeah. Because this first time I've been in airport, I do as many mistakes and I don't know. Then I learn step by step. And my traveling, I have many difficult situations. When I go to Turkey, I got a problem in airport because they want me address. I don't have address to go. And they stop me there for half hour. And when I traveling to U.S. there's many problems that happen for me. It's really very, very difficult. I spent 55 days around in U.S. and there's without any hops again.

[48 : 59] Like more trouble I get in the U.S. And then when I come to Vancouver, when I go, first I go to immigration office, then they send, first time we go to hospital because my wife, she needs checkup. She's about eight and a half pregnant month. Very close to delivery. And we go to hospital checking up for my wife. Then they give me some, there's a social worker and they help me to get some organizations, which is, first one is Inland Refugees and SOS. There's another organization.

They very limited help because sometimes they don't have place and they don't have place available for new people. That's why we don't have place for 22 days. And we go there and they give us bus sticks.

And sometimes they don't have people to send us with us to show us how use this bus, how bus ticket, and how get the bus or train. But always when I go out, I show the address to people, which bus I can go, and they explain to me. And step by step, when I used to be here, I learn step by step.

You're all trying to visualize this experience. I think you are a brave man. John? I got an interesting question. I'm trying to keep up on world. So you're from Iraq or Iran?

Iraq. Oh, but I heard of Coptic Christians. Did you ever run into any Christians called Coptics in Iraq? No. The Coptic church? No. In Egypt.

[50 : 53] Egypt. In Egypt. Yeah. In Egypt, we have Orthodox and Catholic. Orthodox. Oh, I've seen you people from Iraq. Yeah. Yeah.

I know what that feels like, the trauma. My mom's family, they came from a Japanese internment camp, so they stayed in a house for a year. And my great grandmother, her Portuguese was good, her Cantonese was good, her English was poor. She'd come out of her room and have dinner with the family, go right up to her room, and she'd just stay that way. So there can be trauma in the roots in the family. But sometimes it comes up, and then it just comes up, and then it rolls off. You go for a nice long walk.

But for directions, just get print out of Google Maps when you're going to work. Oh my God. It's absolutely awesome.

It's a Google map. Great. It is, if you can speak. Yes. Yes. Question at the back. A couple of questions. For many of you, Tara. First off, uh...

Could you speak up a bit, please? Sorry. Financial support for Inbrace. Maybe you could just give us a little more information now. I found it very interesting that we supported another organization called Central City Mission for a while, and that's one of your supporters, I believe.

[52 : 10] So, just about, you know, financial support, because I imagine that your workload, unfortunately, is going to increase, given the situations that we're living with.

The second thing is actually longer-term support. You know, I have been down to Kimbrace, and I echo 100% everything positive that's been said about Kimbrace.

But the longer-term sort of settlement, I know this is more with the government-assisted refugees, has become an issue. But, um, uh, that seems to be, you know, it's great to have the welcome and so on, but you don't, you know, a year down the road, uh, you have people that have, uh, left relatives behind.

You have people who have had parents die, um, you know, and they've not been able to get back, uh, to their home countries to acknowledge, uh, those situations.

So, those are two, kind of two questions that you could provide some amplification for. Sure. Yeah, thank you for asking. Uh, in terms of financial support, we, we're actually starting a new program called the Kimbrace Companion Circle.

[53 : 33] And this is our, our, our regular giving, uh, circle, people who give monthly. Um, so I would encourage any of you who are interested, this, this would be a wonderful way to step into, um, contributing to the welcome of refugee claimants.

Um, that steady support, um, among others who have the same heart for it, uh, is a great gift. And the, the world of forced migration, forced displacement, it's very, very messy and very complicated.

And that, it doesn't stop when people arrive here. And so, I think a sustained, um, financial contribution over the long haul is, is the most effective way.

Because that allows an organization like Kimbrace and all of you to sort of just be there down the long journey. Which ties into your second question. Yeah, it is a long, it's a long settlement process.

I think Kimbrace's charism, our, our expertise is really at the very front end of the, the welcome to this particular population called refugee claimants.

[54 : 39] And, but because we make friendships and relationships and do welcome people like family, those relationships go on and on. And, and, uh, we've, we've actually just started a new program.

And it's actually, the pilot has really been with you folks through Jonathan with a project we're now calling Beyond Refuge. People receive refugee protection like Shamal did within the first three months of being in the country.

But then there's a long journey of settling in and, and living into the fullness of permanent residence eventually and, and then citizenship.

Refugee claimants have a much longer duration before they become permanent residents. It can be from one to two years and even beyond that. And so they're in a very vulnerable space even up to that point.

Shamal is still not a permanent resident. He's still waiting. So he's got a work permit he must apply for that expires routinely. He's got, uh, nine in his social insurance number, which means temporary resident.

[55 : 43] He's legally here. He's protected by Canada. He has a permanent residence application in, but it's still a very vulnerable space. Call us convenient refugee. Convention refugee.

Convention. Convention. Yeah. So Beyond Refuge is, is, is a project that we're, we're, have been piloting with all of you. And we're trying to roll it out with other churches and other community groups.

And it really is, our, our tagline is walking with refugee families. And it's about that long-term kind of connection in communities beyond Vancouver, where most people settle.

Like, settling in Vancouver is actually the rarity. Most people are moving out to Surrey and Coquitlam and other places, even Maple Ridge. And we even had a housing offer in Mission, but that just felt too far for the family.

And they turned it down. But, um, it's, it's, it's still vulnerable. And I think the more we open our lives, we can't help everyone in every way, but at least just that openness to, to connecting, giving a phone call, posting an event.

[56 : 50] Um, whatever you have to give. Um, making pizza with the kids, as I know Colin is good at. Um. Can you pass those around?

Yes, well, we'll pass them around for sure. Well, why don't I just leave them right here, and then you guys can come and get them. And there's an annual, we have an annual report here from last year that could help flesh out a little bit more of our programs for you.

I have a question, Lauren. Um, you take people from wide and varied backgrounds.

And we know that not every person that comes here as a refugee is somebody that you want to live with. Some of them have had very, uh, different experiences in the countries that they've come from.

So, is there a kind of person that wouldn't fit in Kimbrace, and have you ever had one? I, I think the most tragic people we've met, and it's, I think, out of the 500 we've lived with over the years, I think maybe two are in this.

[57 : 57] But when, when you live in the, under the radar, when you've been pushed out of your country, but have no identity, no papers, no anything in the countries that you then subsequently move to, it's, it's easy to lose one's identity and lose a sense of community and a sense of self.

Oh, yeah. And so then addictions can come into that, play into that. And, uh, which is something we're not, uh, unaware of, the, the tragedy of addiction in a city like Vancouver.

Um, but that's probably been our, our roughest run is with people who, who have addictions. Um, because we're not, we're not really skilled to deal with that. Um, we have a whole other skill set.

Um, but no, 99.8% are, yeah, people who come from very diverse backgrounds, very diverse religious traditions.

One quick story, my colleague, Andrew, who was on the video here, a single mom from Mongolia got refugee protection, living at Kinbrace.

[59 : 09] Um, but was having a baby. And so Andrew took her to women's hospital. And she had all these, uh, sort of this paraphernalia with her that was really important during the birth of this child.

One of which was a, a little container of milk that Andrew had to go out, sort of while the birth was happening, and throw it into the air. It was a, it was a, a, a, sort of an indigenous spirituality from Mongolia.

Anyhow, so we got, we got some really interesting opportunities. Andrew didn't know what he was doing, but he was just following orders. When you retire, you can write that book.

But this is the gift of, of being together. It is, it is, it fits one of our core values called mutual transformation, where we all change through this journey of welcoming the stranger.

Yeah. Yeah. Anybody else have a comment? Oh, yes, there's one at the back. Outside of money, what would be the two things after that which the organization most is needed?

[60 : 14] That's a good question. I, I think people who have time to give and are willing to engage over a long period of time, six months, a year, preferably longer than that.

Tatum has been living in the community as a, essentially a volunteer for the past year and a half while doing her, um, master's at SFU. Tatum has been living in the community as a, and her presence takes a couple of months just to kind of settle in, figure out how things go, kind of imbibe the DNA.

Uh, but then her offer of welcome has been so incredible. And Jonathan's has been that way, and Callan's has been that way, and others of you, uh, just incredible.

And that, that is one of the strongest gifts, I think, that, that really supports us and supports especially the welcome of refugee claimants. What I would love, the other thing, our, our, our biggest capacity issue right now is people who are interested to help, but we don't have the capacity.

We don't, we don't have a volunteer coordinator. So if there's anybody here, or you know of anybody who's really skilled at working with people and has full-time time to give, we'll take you through a little application process.

[61 : 38] But it's, it's meeting, meeting the interest of Canadians. And all, all our organizations, if you phone the Welcome Center, Immigration Services Society, or Canada has a very, very responsive heart to refugees.

But these little organizations that assist don't have the capacity to engage all of that. And it's a real shame. So that's why I really like this model, actually, where we relate to Jonathan, and he relates to you.

And, and we transform the world of welcome for refugees that way. So this is one, one way through that as well. One last question?

Yeah. I believe the term is about three months that families stay with you. So when that three months is up, is it your responsibility to find somewhere for them to go?

Or do you have a network? Or how does that work? Yeah. Well, that, it's an increasing issue for us. In the old days, people moved out into the neighborhood.

[62 : 44] There was a lot of affordable apartment buildings. And we just kind of had this expanding village out of Kinbrace. Now with the housing, housing is our biggest barrier.

Finding affordable housing and just housing, period. So we've actually, we're working with the United Way to kind of try to crack this difficult and challenging thing. We've hired a person, what we call our community mobilizer.

And he's actually the one that's helping to lead our Beyond Refuge project. So we're sort of taking a multifaceted approach to helping people move out once they have their refugee protection.

One is working with groups like you. Jonathan, through his own network of prayer through your community, found an apartment for Shamal. Craigslist is another one.

Raul, who's working leading this project, he's making his own strategic connections to BC Housing, to landlords, to apartment owners, to real estate agents.

[63 : 43] Whoever can help us, one at a time, get some apartment somewhere. It's a lot of work. It really is a lot of work.

And, you know, people don't have credit history. So the big management companies, they'll say, well, fill in the application. But there's no credit history. So then you're immediately barred from taking a spot.

So it's really finding all the back doors into housing opportunities. And it takes a lot of energy compared to years gone by. Thanks. That's very helpful.

Well, I want to thank all of the people who took some time off this morning to come to my church. Well, you belong here anyway. But I have this feeling that these other two also belong here.

Isn't that about right, Shamal? Adjunct members. Adjunct members, yes, it is. Converts. Right. So next week we are going to hear about a refugee. His name is King David.

[64 : 44] Does anybody remember he was a refugee? Right. When King Saul was out for his blood. Yeah. So some experience, you're not going to concentrate on that, I'm sure, Harvey.

A reminder, he was a refugee. Yeah. He was. So let's just have a word of prayer as we close. Heavenly Father, it is good to be in this place and to feel your presence with us and also with our efforts to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Thank you for the wonderful people whose lives are enriched with this sort of experience. Thank you for getting us out of our cozy little St. John's shell into work that involves some risk-taking.

Thank you for being with us through this entire process. And we ask that you will continue to do that and that we will continue to do your will.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.