



Worlds Away

August 25, 2021

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The stories coming out of Afghanistan are heartbreaking. The withdrawal of US troops has been in the works for years – many would say, long overdue. The aggressive and fast takeover by the Taliban, however, has required an urgent recovery of troops and civilians from many nations. Afghanis who do not wish to live under Taliban rule are finding extraordinary means to flee their home country. As is the case with refugees from Syria, South Sudan, and other countries embroiled in conflict, any place is safer than home.

Displaced Afghanis are already being resettled worlds away, geographically, linguistically, and culturally. Some have arrived in Wisconsin, and I am grateful for all of you who are reaching out to learn how to help.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is active and partnering with advocacy and refugee assistance groups. You can learn not only how to help, but also gain an understanding of the process and the situation on their dedicated [web page](#).

Locally, we are fortunate to be in relationship with many organizations that specialize in refugee resettlement. Here are a few shared by the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee:

Direct Resettlement Relief Agencies in Wisconsin

Lutheran Social Services: <https://www.lsswis.org/service/refugee-resettlement/>

Jewish Social Services of Madison: <https://jssmadison.org/services/immigration/refugee/>

Catholic Charities Diocese of LaCrosse: <https://cclse.org/afghanistan-refugee-assistance/>

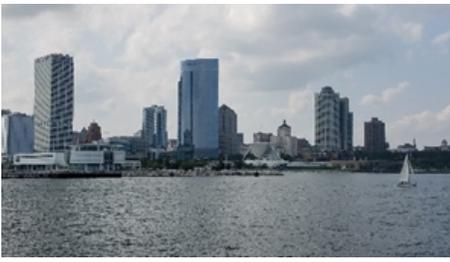
WI State Refugee Bureau: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/refugeeresettlement>

The Wisconsin Council of Churches has also developed a [webpage](#) with ideas on how you can help.

As Christians who are striving to live into our Matthew 25 vision, we ask the question with even greater urgency in this moment, “Lord, when did we see you a stranger and welcome you?” The answer confronts us in the images of Afghanis who have fled their country without possessions and without knowing where they will be resettled.

Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, a Presbyterian hymn-writer and the parish associate at First Presbyterian Union Church in Owego, New York, has written new lyrics to an old hymn for the people of Afghanistan. The hymn, “We Pray for Afghanistan’s People Today” is set to “CRADLE SONG,” the tune for “Away in a Manger.” The lyrics for this familiar tune follow below, lifting up our concern and joining us in a spirit of compassion. Winfrey Gillette has granted permission for free use of the hymn, including in online worship services.

For the people snared in this crisis, may we sing and speak our prayers without ceasing.



We Pray for Afghanistan's People Today

CRADLE SONG 11.11.11.11 ("Away in a Manger")

We pray for Afghanistan's people today:
for those who are fleeing — who know they can't stay,
for those who face terror by day and by night,
for those who can't leave and whose dreams can't take flight.

We pray for the people who fear what's in store,
for dreamers and poets who grieve a closed door.
for those who are hiding so no one will see
the people they are — or who they hope to be.

We pray for girls facing a world they don't know,
who still long to read and to learn and to grow.
We pray for young women who live with the fear
their bodies, their voices, may soon disappear.

We pray for young children whose first lullabies
were bombs and explosions and wounded ones' cries—
and for those who served there, who see how it ends,
who ponder their service, who grieve for lost friends.

We weep for the places where war leads to war.
We pray for your hand there to heal and restore!
Bless all who seek justice and peace as your way.
We pray for Afghanistan's people today.

Tune: William James Kirkpatrick, 1895

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