



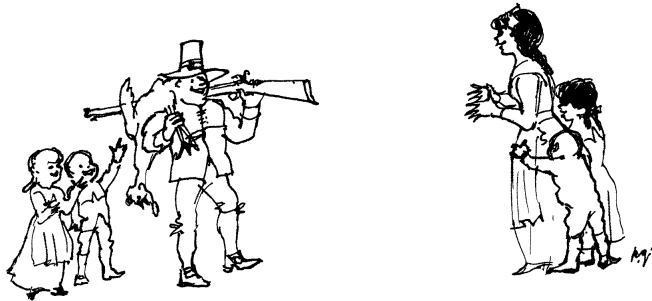
# The Carriage Stone

November 2015

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, N.Y. *The English Church*



## Thanksgiving Baskets



# ADVENT



“The Carriage Stone” is the Newsletter of  
**The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church**

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## **Ah, Sabbath!**

Hudson River Presbytery has begun a monthly “Pastors’ Sabbath” at Holmes Camp and Conference center. It’s 24 hours in the woods of Putnam County, a time for pastors to decompress and spend time with God. I went last week, and came back so refreshed.

Sabbath practice can be hard for all of us—we are all so busy. But there is a reason why it is one of the Ten Commandments; even God rested one day a week, and we are also to rest.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”(Exodus 20:8) Pastors are often reminded to take care of ourselves. And this pastor wants to remind YOU, my readers, to do the same thing.

- ❖ What brings you rest and refreshment?
- ❖ What do you do that makes you absolutely lose track of time, and be absorbed in the joy of the doing?
- ❖ What helps you to be the best person you can be?
- ❖ What makes you feel closer to God?

All of these are “Sabbath questions”, ways to build Sabbath rest into our lives, ways to be drawn closer to the joy who rejoices in our joys. I encourage each of you to carve out time in your lives to dis-engage from the everyday, that you may “practice Sabbath” and be refreshed, as was God.

(See Exodus 31: 17) If even God needs a break, some “down time” how much more do we, God’s creatures?

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.



## Mission Survey Results Are In!

From Laura Metallo-Bidon, Mission Chair

Your votes have been counted, and the results of our 2015-2016 Mission Survey are in! Here are some of the highlights:

- **Church World Service Refugee Re-Settlement Program in Jersey City, NJ**  
Will be the recipient of our local portion of the Peace & Global Witness Offering. You can read more about the work Church World Service is doing to address the ongoing refugee crisis in the article that is also included in this newsletter.
- **Helping Hands Safe Haven**  
You resoundingly indicated support for continuing to partner with Helping Hands to provide Safe Haven for our homeless neighbors this upcoming winter.

Other organizations you expressed interest in partnering with include:

- Soup Angels,
- Keep Rockland Beautiful Community Clean-Up
- Hi-Tor Animal Shelter
- Rockland Stronger Together Immigration Network.

You'll be hearing more about volunteer opportunities with these organizations in the weeks and months ahead. Thank you for voting, and letting your voice be heard!

## Thank You from Helping Hands

On Sunday, September 20, NHPC celebrated Mission Sunday, and awarded a "Faith in Action" award to our mission partner, Helping Hands Interfaith Coalition of Rockland County. We have received the following thank-you message from Raoul Cansino, the President and Founder of Helping Hands:

Many, many thanks to the congregation of New Hempstead Presbyterian Church for their honoring of Helping Hands and their generous gift of \$4,000 to sustain our mission of helping our neighbors find alternatives to life on the street.

Without the help of people like you, we couldn't have served the record numbers of men and women who came to Helping Hands last winter for help—186 homeless guests who found shelter in the Safe Haven (which provided 4,612 overnight stays) and hundreds more who came to the Thomas McCabe Outreach Center in Spring Valley for case management, clothing, laundry and showers during the day.

With the improving economy, we have been hoping that the number of people needing emergency shelter and assistance would diminish. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. The reason is simple—even if they are working, our guests don't earn enough to afford housing in Rockland County.

Jobs and housing are the twin solutions to ending homelessness in Rockland. Our guests are willing and able to work, and our long-term plan is to create affordable housing to help them regain their footing as productive citizens. Thank you for partnering in this mission.

Sincerely,

Raoul Cansino, President & Founder  
Helping Hands Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless



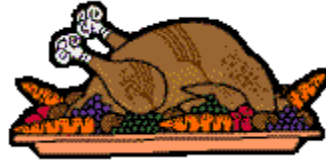
It is traditional at Thanksgiving to not only give thanks for all that we have been blessed with over the past year but to also share in that bounty with others less fortunate. Here at New Hempstead, that tradition manifests itself in the Thanksgiving Food Drive. This year the Youth Group will continue that tradition of providing Thanksgiving dinners with all the trimmings to families in Rockland County that are not as fortunate.

Attached here is your shopping list. Cut it out and hang it on your refrigerator. We ask you to contribute one of each item on the list (except for multiples of canned vegetables and soup). We ask that you put your purchases together in one or two paper shopping bags and bring them to church no later than Sunday, November 22. And we ask that you keep the turkey in your freezer and bring it on November 22.

If you would like to contribute but do not have the time to shop, consider donating cash and the Youth Group will do the shopping for you (we believe that \$40 is appropriate to cover an entire meal). We also ask that you put your name on the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Colonial Room, to help us organize ourselves. If you find that you cannot afford to contribute an entire Thanksgiving meal, we are happy to accept whatever you can contribute, either in terms of food or of money. Monetary contributions should be marked "Thanksgiving Baskets".

The issue of hunger in our society is with us, is not going away, and in some ways gets more severe each year. We were able to distribute 40 Thanksgiving dinners last year and we hope to do even more this year.

The Youth Group



### Recipe for a Happy Thanksgiving Meal:

- Turkey
- Stuffing mix
- Boxed potatoes
- Gravy
- Canned vegetables (2-4 cans)
- Canned sweet potatoes/yams
- Corn bread mix
- Cake/brownie mix
- Cake frosting
- Applesauce
- Canned cranberry sauce
- Soup (2 cans)
- Loaf of bread

Be sure to bring your "baskets" to church on Sun., Nov. 22 so that we can distribute them before Thanksgiving.

**THANK YOU!!!!!!**

## Holiday Boutique

It seems hard to believe, but once again it's almost time for our annual Holiday Boutique, which will be held in Murchison Hall on Saturday, December 5 from 10-3.

If you recall, in years past we have had many outside vendors selling all kinds of cosmetics, jewelry, woodcrafts, Christmas decorations and more. If you or someone you know might be interested in reserving a table, please contact the church office to complete a reservation form. The cost per 3' x 6' table is \$25.

Alternatively, if you wish to donate baked goodies or handicrafts to sell at the church table, we will be happy to have them. We'll have a sign-up sheet for volunteers to help set up on Friday evening (Dec 4), and for Saturday, to man the church table (which includes passing out cups of hot spiced cider), to serve the chili and soup for lunch, and clean up.

This event is a lot of fun, so let's spread the word!

## More about Church World Service Refugee Re-Settlement Program

*Church World Service Refugee Re-Settlement Program* works around the world, and locally in Jersey City, New Jersey, to provide assistance to men, women and children fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. We are proud to announce that the Church World Service office in Jersey City will be the recipient of our local portion of the Peace & Global Witness Offering.

The *New York Times* recently published an extensive article about Syrian refugees in Jersey City, which featured the work of Church World Service. An excerpt from that article is printed below. To read the full article, go to <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/nyregion/syrian-refugees-in-jersey-city>

## Syrian Refugees in Jersey City Are Among Few to Start New Life in U.S.

By **LIZ ROBBINS** OCT. 13, 2015  
originally published in *The New York Times*

JERSEY CITY — After four years of fleeing and 15 hours of flying, Hussam Al Roustom walked off the plane at Newark Liberty International Airport, only to feel as if he had stepped into an American movie.

“It was like an action film in the sense that this hero had lost everyone dear to him, and then he finds himself safe — but he has nothing else to lose,” Mr. Al Roustom said in Arabic, through an interpreter. “That’s how I felt.”

Mr. Al Roustom is a refugee from Syria. Since arriving in June, he, his wife, their 3-year-old daughter and their 7-year-old son have been living in an apartment atop the Kwick Discount Center grocery store in Jersey City. Their journey ended even as four million Syrians were still looking for a home, throwing Europe and the Middle East into a humanitarian crisis.



Hussam Al Roustom and his family at home in Jersey City. Originally from Syria, the family recently resettled from a refugee camp in Jordan. Credit Malin Fezehai for *The New York Times*

Mr. Al Roustom was one of only 1,682 Syrian refugees admitted to the United States since Oct. 1, 2014, and among 78 resettled in the New York metropolitan area.

Mr. Al Roustom, 36, first uprooted his life in 2011, when the Syrian civil war erupted in the city of [Homs](#). The supermarket he owned was ransacked, and one of his two homes was destroyed. His son, Wesam, who has autism and was frightened by the shelling, stopped speaking.

In March 2013, Mr. Al Roustom paid a smuggler to take him and his family through the desert, leaving them to hike over a mountain into Jordan. The police then took them to the [Zaatari](#) refugee camp, where he registered with the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#).

The United Nations' refugee agency determines if return is not possible because of past persecution or fear of persecution. If so, the agency refers the most vulnerable cases to the resettlement support center in that region.

As Mr. Al Roustom's application was being considered, he left the refugee camp after squalid conditions made his children constantly sick.

They moved in with relatives in Irbid, Jordan, while Mr. Al Roustom worked as a blacksmith.



Mahmoud Mahmoud, the director of Church World Service for Jersey City, with a checklist of services and needs of the new refugee arrivals. Credit Malin Fezehai for *The New York Times*

Since it is illegal for Syrians to work in Jordan, he was arrested, then sent with his family to another refugee camp for five months.

Once the United States government approved his application for refugee status, the Church World Service office in New Jersey — the newest of its 33 field offices — got to work. The office found him a three-bedroom apartment and furnished it with donations. On June 16, they picked up the family at the airport, spotting Mr. Al Roustom because he was wearing an International Organization for Migration refugee credential around his neck.

All that remains from the ruins of Mr. Al Roustom's life he keeps in a white plastic bag from the migration agency — his Syrian military identification, his United Nations papers, his travel records, his I-94 form admitting him to the country. The award-winning poems he wrote were destroyed in Syria.

The first job Church World Service found for him was, appropriately enough, at a moving company. Alex Minz, who owns White Glove Moving in Bayonne, N.J., said he liked to hire refugees because he, too, was one. He left the former Soviet Union for Israel as a teenager and then settled in the United States. "We see it as a holy thing," he said.

Because the hours were too unpredictable, Mr. Al Roustom found another job through a neighbor, baking pita overnight at Toufayan, an Armenian family company in Ridgefield, N.J.

Hoping to ease the transition for other Syrians, he has volunteered to move furniture into a new refugee family's apartment, and in August, he and his wife, Suha, hosted a welcome feast for the newest Syrian families in Jersey City.

"It's like taking someone from a very small, dark room to a very, very big world," Mr. Al Roustom said. "This is why I want to help others go through what I have gone through."

Mahmoud Mahmoud, the director for Church World Service in Jersey City, said that though Mr. Al Roustom's refugee application was

probably helped because of his son's special needs, he did not exploit that. "Through all his personal circumstances, every adversity he had to face, he has not let any single obstacle deter him from moving forward," Mr. Mahmoud said.

Mr. Al Roustom said sometimes refugees might come across as frustrated because they were overwhelmed.

"The C.W.S. is not a magic lamp," he said. "And Mahmoud is not the genie that would make your wishes his command. I tell people not to be scared and to have patience and to work hard. And perhaps rely on the support you're given, but not to overuse it and abuse it."

To dispel security concerns about the refugees, Mr. Mahmoud met with lawmakers in Washington recently — and took Mr. Al Roustom with him.

At a [hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee](#) about the security and the cost of the refugee program, Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, introduced Mr. Al Roustom to the panel. "He is not a terrorist, and he's not a fiscal drain on America," Mr. Durbin said. "We should be proud that our country has welcomed Mr. Al Roustom and his family. That is what our country's refugee settlement program is all about."



An Iraqi refugee family arriving at Newark Liberty International Airport.  
Credit Malin Fezehai for *The New York Times*

On the train home, Mr. Al Roustom received a joyous call from his wife. Mr. Mahmoud heard the conversation in Arabic:

"She said to Hussam: 'It's ironic to imagine that just a few months ago you were in a refugee camp. And now, you're inside the doors of the United States Congress.'"

Rasha Arabi contributed reporting.