

Tikkun Olam

By Ellen Kaufmann
Refugee Support Project

Our congregation at Temple Israel has, with Rabbi Andrea's leadership, come together as the vibrant "Center of Jewish Life in Franklin County." No easy task, creating a unified group from our varied perspectives. After all, we know about the man on a desert island with two synagogues. Asked, "Why?" He replied, "The other is the one I refuse to go to." But our community seems to be diverse as well as unified.

As we emerge from a few years of building a stronger culture at Temple Israel, can we now turn some of our focus beyond our own needs? This means that while strongly opposing the recent anti-Semitic voices, we rise above them.

There are millions of people suffering and dying from overwhelming tragedies every single day around the world. As Phyllis and Archie Nahman have said, "How can we, as Jews, stand by and watch as these people are suffering without doing all we can to help." Those are our Jewish values.

Syria is one of the many places being ravaged. The UN states that today Syria has the largest number of refugees in the world. 2/3 of their population of 20 million people are displaced. Their tragedy is overwhelming.

Members of our Refugee Support Project are working with the Franklin County Interfaith Council on a campaign to support NuDay Syria. NuDay Syria is an excellent, effective organization that is able to send large shipping containers with desperately needed items through Turkey into Northern Syria. Our connection to NuDay began when some of us heard its founder, Nadia Alawa speak. She founded the organization in 2011. We visited the warehouse in Nashua N.H. where volunteers sort & pack donated supplies. She is very grateful for our Interfaith Council Campaign to assist her organization. We are grateful to have found an organization of this caliber that we can help.

During the Holocaust, there were a certain number of non-Jews referred to as the "Righteous Christians." They were the ones who saw the plight of the Jews and would not collaborate, would not turn away. Many of them risked their lives to save one or a few Jewish people. Schindler's List tells the story of one of those people who saved many. Now we, as Jews, have an opportunity to do the right thing. We are not placing ourselves in danger. We are fortunate to have a way to offer help to those who have nothing. Like the Jews of Europe, most of the Syrian people were living perfectly normal, productive lives before the war began. Then everything changed. Every day innocent families are forced to flee with nothing as bombs are destroying towns & cities & killing thousands of civilians including whole families. Those who survive end up in makeshift refugee camps where food, medicine and other supplies are desperately needed.

This is an opportunity to step out of our own lives, to "walk in another person's shoes," imagining for just an instant what that might be like. This is an opportunity to participate in the spirit of Tikkun Olam, "Repair the world."

Each 40 ft. container of supplies costs \$5800 to send. We welcome your support. Checks can be made out to Temple Israel with "Syria" in the memo line. We thank you so much.

*Cynicism is obedience
Action is the antidote to despair*

Questions?

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