

RepairingTheBreach

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Heval Kelli, Demetrio Alvero, Allison Duvall, Larry Bartlett, Bishop Michael Curry

- A** Allison Duvall 00:00
Hello, thanks for attending today's webinar - Repairing the Breach: Building Beloved Community Through Welcome. We will go ahead and get started. We will open our time together with a prayer and I'll turn this over to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. Thank you, bishop.
- B** Bishop Michael Curry 02:29
Thank you, Allison. Let us pray. God of love and compassion. May we always recognize your spirit in the refugee family seeking safety from violence, in the migrant worker bringing food to our dinner tables, the asylum seekers seeking justice for their families. And the unaccompanied child traveling in a dangerous world. Give us hearts that break open whenever our brothers and sisters turn to us. Give us hearts that no longer turn deaf to the voices in times of need. Give us eyes to recognize a moment for grace instead of a threat. Give us voices that fail to remain silent, but which decide instead to advocate prophetically, lovingly. Give us hands that reach out and welcome but also work for a world of justice. Until all homelands are safe and secure. This we pray and ask in the name of your son Jesus. Amen.
- A** Allison Duvall 03:49

Amen. Thank you, Presiding Bishop. So our agenda for today's webinar. We'll begin with introductions of our panelists and also share a bit of information about Episcopal Migration Ministries. We'll then move into our panel discussion and during that time we do encourage you to ask questions in the Q & A box, which we will field at the end of today's conversation. At the end we'll also share with you ways you can be further engaged with EMM and access many of our resources and opportunities for connecting with our work locally across the country. Episcopal Migration Ministries is The Episcopal Church's refugee and migration ministry. You can learn about our work at our website www.episcopalmigrationministries.org as well as on our social media @emmrefugees and our Vimeo channel vimeo.com/emmrefugees. Our work at EMM includes welcoming refugees, ministering to those who have been harmed by immigrant detention, and welcoming and supporting asylum seekers. And to that end, we create many resources for local congregations, for dioceses, and for individuals all across the country. You can find these resources on our website, things such as our Hometown podcast, liturgical resources for different parts of the church year, you can join our Episcopal Asylum and Detention Ministry Network and so much more at www.episcopalmigrationministries.org. We invite you to join us throughout the month of June, we are celebrating World Refugee Day for the whole month. Today's panel discussion is just one of the many events that we are offering so that we can celebrate this important day together. So for the other events we're offering, please do visit www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/worldrefugeeday. We'd also very much encourage you to check out our Vigil of Prayer that we are going to be premiering on Facebook at 7pm on June 20, World Refugee Day, which is this upcoming Sunday. So with that, I'll ask our panelists to turn on their cameras and we will get going with today's conversation. I'm very happy to be able to introduce the esteemed panelists for today's conversation. First, The Most Reverend Michael Bruce Curry is the Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church. He serves as the Chief Pastor and as President and Chief Executive Officer of The Episcopal Church and is also the Chair of the Executive Council of the Church. Demetrio Alvero is presently the Director of Operations for Episcopal Migration Ministries. He has been with EMM since 2005, and has worked for over 40 years in refugee and migrant ministry and work. He's worked in various countries with the International Rescue Committee and the International Organization for Migration. We do hope that Dr. Heval Kelli will be able to join us today. So, I'll introduce him - he is a cardiologist so he may well be responding to an immediate need. Dr. Heval Kelli is a Syrian Kurdish born physician. He moved to the United States as a refugee two weeks after 9/11 and enrolled at Georgia State 10 months later as a freshman. He graduated Summa Cum Laude and was working as a dishwasher at the time. He was later accepted to Morehouse School of Medicine where he graduated Cum Laude. He finished his internal medicine residency with honorable distinction then completed his cardiology fellowship at Emory University. In 2020, Dr. Kelli also received the first Points of Light award after the passing of President George HW Bush. His remarkable journey and work

were praised by President Obama, President Carter and the United Nations Secretary General and he has been featured on national and international news including the Emory University Magazine, The Associated Press, Washington Post, New York Times, CNN, NPR, and more. So I hope you'll join me in hoping that Heval will make it to our conversation today. And then Larry Bartlett is a career member of the Senior Executive Service and has served since 2010 as the Director of the Refugee Admissions office of the US Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration, otherwise called PRM. During his tenure, the program has led the international community by resettling over 700,000 refugees for permanent resettlement to the United States. He's the recipient of the Warren Christopher Award for Outstanding Achievement in Global Affairs, and the Presidential Rank Award in the Senior Executive Service. I'm very happy at this time to turn it over to Larry to offer some opening remarks. Larry, over to you.



Larry Bartlett 08:32

Great, thank you, Allison, it's really a pleasure to be here today. First of all, it is always a great opportunity to really celebrate refugees around World Refugee Day. And it's an honor to be with The Episcopal Church on this occasion, particularly as it marks a renewed engagement on the part of the United States regarding refugee protection. The US has a long history of aiding vulnerable populations. And we're the largest single provider of humanitarian assistance worldwide to people in need, including refugees. In the last decade, the United States has provided nearly 70 billion in overseas in humanitarian assistance. And I would just note, that is taxpayer money. So that is the contributions of all of our citizens that are going to help these people in need. The United States works with a number of international and non governmental organizations to help those in need. Our assistance provides urgent life saving support, and reflects American values as an integral part of the US national security and foreign policy. By addressing humanitarian emergencies, United States seeks to reduce and decrease the destabilizing effects of crises for those who will not be able to return home or who continue to face persecution and countries the first asylum. The vital lifeline at the US refugee admissions program is being restored as a nation critical component of our full array of us global humanitarian leadership. As Secretary of State, Blinken has said, refugees are welcome in America. And resettlement reflects our values as a nation, and is one of the clearest examples of morality based foreign policy. Since 1980, the United States has welcomed more than 3.1 million refugees for permanent resettlement as part of a long standing nonpartisan tradition of generosity that saves lives, while also contributing to the vibrant fabric of communities across the United States. Refugees have made positive political, social, and economic contributions to the United States throughout our history. Recognizing these contributions, in line with President Biden's commitment to welcome greater numbers of refugees, the United States is rebuilding its refugee resettlement

program to restore this beacon of hope for those fleeing persecution. As you may know, the President established a new refugee admissions target of 65,000 this year, and our intention is to set a target of 125,000 refugee arrivals from around the world in fiscal year 2022. A resettlement program is once again open to the most vulnerable refugees in need of this lifeline around the world. And the United States is recommitting to treating all individuals applying for US refugee programs with dignity, and respect, and free from discrimination. Refugee resettlement would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our domestic resettlement partners, including the work of many of you here today. You are part of an invaluable lifeline for newly arrived refugees with critical resources like housing, clothing, cultural orientation, and job skills training. Seeing a welcoming face and a helping hand from the community can make all the difference when welcoming refugees to their new lives in America. We recognize that the last four years presented great challenges. And I can assure you that we are committed to working with our resettlement partners to address their needs. As we rebuild our refugee admissions program. We also recognize that resettlement would not be where it is today, if not the millions of Americans from local communities across the country that you engage with to welcome refugees. That is why a key part of our effort will include the expansion of community sponsorship programs, to increase and deepen local community involvement in resettlement. This approach will complement our current work with resettlement partners. Let me close by reiterating our firm belief which underpins our work, that refugees are an asset to their communities. Just like Dr. Kelli, who I hope has joined us today, who's an incredible example of this, bringing a diversity of thought and culture to their local communities, while contributing both to the well being of fellow community members, and to the local economy. These community partnerships are an indispensable piece of the resettlement infrastructure. And we greatly appreciate the work that you do every day to provide a welcoming home for all arriving refugees. So thank you, again, for including PRM in your World Refugee Day event. I look forward to hearing from many of you. I hope that you're all volunteering, and if not, we'll be happy to talk about that and help you find opportunities. We really encourage you to help us build stronger community support for refugees. And most of all, thank you to the local staff and the volunteers who provide the direct services to refugees and really help give them a strong foundation to success and integration in the US. Thank you.

A

Allison Duvall 14:02

Thank you so much, Larry. And perfect timing. Dr. Kelli has joined us. Heval, how are you? You're on mute, but it's so good to see you. We did introduce you and we're so glad that you're here with us today. I'm going to start the conversation with you, Dr. Kelly. It's been a few years since we saw each other in Atlanta, it's so good to have you with us. We know that relationships are a critical part of welcoming refugees and building community and

supporting successful integration for refugees into their new homes. So we're wondering if you could talk a little bit about your family's experience of resettlement and the folks you met along the way and the kind of welcome you experienced in Atlanta.

D

Dr. Heval Kelli 14:44

Yes, thank you so much for having me here. And I really truly appreciate the invitation. We are Kurdish from Syria and we left Syria in the 1990s because of oppression of the Kurds at that time. And you know we arrived in Germany in around 1996. I lived in refugee camps for years. But unfortunately, we couldn't stay in Germany because our asylum wasn't accepted. So we were forced to look for somewhere else. And eventually, we were accepted by the US. And then we arrived here, two weeks after 911 as a Muslim refugee family in the South, and Atlanta, Georgia. It was an interesting time. But I think that was a very good time for us to learn about the true character of this country. I think we arrived here on maybe Friday. And I think we didn't leave our house all weekend long, because we were afraid that we will be attacked, because of the stuff we're seeing on TV because my mom was wearing the hijab. And then Sunday mornings, you know, these people show up at our house and start knocking the door persistently. I thought first, it was the FBI or the CIA coming to check on us. And they were very persistent. And I told my mom, I think that you know, the CIA and bunch of the senior citizen, you know, they, they don't look like they're the one I see on TV. So they were a member of All Saints Episcopal Church, and they came to welcome my family coming to the United States of America. And that was a good turning point for us to feel comfortable. I mean, if you put in perspective, this is how we got to 911. Here is a refugee family as a Muslim from Syria, in the South welcomed by Christians, I mean just multiple level of things that is hard for someone to believe and understand. But it was true experience of us for them, you know, with people for me, like I said, and that was a major, huge difference in our family over the years here in this country.

A

Allison Duvall 16:47

Thank you so much. I'm going to turn it over now to Larry and, Larry, you mentioned this a bit in your opening remarks. But we at EMM are so excited about the increasing number of opportunities for local communities to be involved in the resettlement program and welcoming their new neighbors and integrating them into the fabric of their communities. Could you talk to us a little bit about what you hope to see in resettlement communities moving forward?

L

Larry Bartlett 17:14

Happy to do that. And Dr. Kelli just want to say that people with gray hair are not threatening. So I don't work for the FBI either. And we're really, really delighted that you are an American citizen and part of our our country. So in terms of, you know, working with communities, and really how how we can think improve that. One of our goals this year has been that refugees are resettled into communities that have the capacity, and the support mechanisms to really provide that anchor, you know, to provide that help. And at the community level, we kind of look at two different aspects. First is that the services and the support are available to the newly arrived refugees. And, you know, one of the critical aspects is that there's really close consultation and coordination with state and local partners. The volunteers and the refugee agency staff, but more in an extended partnership across the community, that, frankly, is really important to play this broader role to help refugees really move forward and to really thrive. So we really have been promoting, frankly, for many years. And we want to continue to promote that. Conversations at the local level include state officials, like state refugee coordinators, their state refugee health coordinators, elected officials of local government, schools, public health officials, public assistance, offices, employers, landlords. And so we really want to see all of all of these entities talking about refugee resettlement. Not just numbers and nationalities, but really kind of what the challenges are, and really how do we kind of overcome some of those challenges. And so, one of the ways that we're really looking at this year, and I talked about it before, is looking at co-sponsorship. And next year, what we're looking to do is just start a private sponsorship program. And it'll probably be rolled out sometime January, February, but we're looking to see how, you know, a private sponsor can help kind of add value to our system by really helping refugees beyond just a volunteer position. So we know local refugee service providers have partnered with volunteers and in groups, you know, again, faith based groups for many, many years, and we really want to just expand and kind of amplify how that works. So expanding co-sponsorship, expanding, truly private sponsorship, and then trying to really see how how I think that can benefit the broader program, whether somebody is sponsored or not, to make sure that refugees in communities to which they're resettled really understand and know what a refugee is. And I think as Dr. Kelli said, there's, there's sometimes suspicion on the refugee side. And we also know there's suspicion on the community side. So we really want to break down, I think, some of those knowledge gaps, so that we really make this kind of a human to human, person to person program. Thank you.

A

Allison Duvall 20:47

No, thank you so much. We want of course, more people reaching out and welcome as Dr. Kelli, his family experienced, and Demetrio, next question is for you. Over the last four years, we've seen a dramatic shift in resettlement numbers, a loss of the infrastructure that existed, and this need for those engaged in the work of welcome to reimagine how

we rebuild welcoming communities. And Mr. Bartlett has just spoken to that a bit. Could you share with us a bit about how Episcopal Migration Ministries weathered the storm of the last several years, and how we reimagined our work?

D

Demetrio Alvero 21:30

Thank you, Allison. I would say, you know, the last four years, we've had very low refugee placement activity. So we did what is traditionally not its focus areas of work keeping true to its mission, which is always to educate Episcopalians, and the general public about the dynamics of refugee resettlement, and engaging congregations to continue to speak and advocate for refugees, and to support the program where they are able, you know, EMM is one of the smaller national resettlement agencies. But we're not limited by our size to our own network sites. That's because, you know, we're part of a national church across the United States, of course, the Episcopal Church, is also international with other countries being part of the Episcopal Church. But for resettlement we are a national church. And even though we don't have a resettlement program in a particular city or town, we encourage congregations to donate goods or volunteer, wherever there's a resettlement program. And we'll refer them to other agencies, networks, that's part of our ministry, as one we have been called to do because through the lens of faith, we see refugees as not something other, but as sisters and brothers, and to expand that to accomplish the dignity we all have as human beings. One program that I'm pleased to say, again, that is not quite related to the topic that we're speaking of is our Neighbor to Neighbor program, which focuses on engaging and educating congregations to discern their role in how they wish to support asylum seekers. And although that's a different population, than the one we're discussing, as I've said, the lessons of practices that we are learning, with that program, we're applying as we begin to reach out in the coming months to congregations, and communities, and interfaith partners to support the sponsoring of refugee communities. So by continuing to do the work that we've always done, we have this synergy between one program and what we're wanting from that program, assisting us with the refugee program. And that I think, is something that we'll find very valuable as the year progresses. And one final word is how we got through this period is thanks to the leadership of The Episcopal Church, Bishop Michael, our Presiding Bishop, and Canon Chuck Robertson, the Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Ministry Beyond the Church. They've supported us by keeping EMM front and center to our governing bodies within the Episcopal Church, but also through various offices among the Episcopal Church, our development office, which does our fundraising, the Office of Government Relations, Global Partnerships, so forth. It's truly been a team effort that has kept us going. And that, to me, is one of the key aspects that I find that really kept as I said, kept us going. One aspect of that support has been the constant support of gifts from dioceses, to churches, to every ministry, even through the pandemic. You know, there was only a minuscule drop

off in gifts last year, and that during the pandemic, when compared to the year before, and of course, I've got to thank our interfaith partners, those denominations have supported our efforts. And what comes to mind immediately is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that continues to support us and the path of the ministry in welcoming refugees. So it's a number of factors that affect us doing and hope that will help us reimagine EMM going forward.

A

Allison Duvall 25:28

Thanks, Demetrio. And Presiding Bishop, I'd love to turn over to you now, one of the primary areas of focus for the ministry of the Episcopal Church since 2015, but certainly in the last several years has been the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation. And in the past several years, we've seen a rise in the United States of xenophobic rhetoric, we've seen a rise in white nativism. So we at EMM, and I think our colleagues across the resettlement world, do see those intersections between the work of racial reconciliation, healing and justice, and the work that we do to welcome new Americans to our communities every day. So I was hoping that you might speak a bit to the Episcopal Church's ministry priorities, and specifically to the work of racial reconciliation, and how you see that work intersecting with the work of EMM.

B

Bishop Michael Curry 26:18

Thank You. And it's a privilege to be with everyone today. You know the notion of whether it's white supremacy or the supremacy of anybody over anybody else, is contrary to core teachings of our faith as Christians as followers of Jesus of Nazareth. God is supreme, and no one else is period, exclamation point, end of comment, God is the only Supreme. Now, you know, you may say Diana Ross. And the Supremes might be another possibility. But God, you said, and so, if that is the case, then if God is the Father, creator of us, all, the source of all life, if you will, then that means we who are human beings are intrinsically brothers, sisters, siblings of each other, we are part of the same family. The Bible, this isn't a sermon, but the book of Genesis, God created all human beings in God's image and likeness. In Genesis one, there is no superiority or inferiority, in the disposition of that image. Every human being is created in the image of God equally. That means we are called upon to relate to each other as brothers and sisters. It doesn't matter what nationality we are, it doesn't matter what religion we are, it doesn't matter what our politics happens to be. It doesn't matter who our Mama was, who our Daddy was, it doesn't matter how much money we have, or how much money we don't have, there is a fundamental human equality and dignity that is built into us by virtue of God being the Creator, and not we ourselves. Having said all of that, that means that the core of our work as a church, following in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, who said, if you want to

know what the supreme law of God is, and what the highest end or goal of human beings is, it is to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor as yourself. That is God's supreme law. If that is the case, then to be welcoming of those who find themselves as refugees, asylum seekers, those who are seeking a home, that is a core vocation, it is there in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is there in the Christian New Testament. It is there in Islam, it is there. And I remember one day some years ago, when I was the Bishop of North Carolina, I went to see a local Congressman, about some immigration issues and resettlement issues here in North Carolina. This is about 10 or 15 years ago, and when I went in and made my case very briefly, I said, you know, this is ecumenical and interfaith, there is agreement on this between Jews, Christians, Muslims, there is agreement between Episcopalians and Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics on this. And he said, Yeah, I know the Southern Baptist were just here making the same point about an hour ago. I said, my brother, anytime the Episcopal Church and Southern Baptists are agreeing, everybody ought to pay attention. The reality this is deeply rooted in our religious convictions. It's deeply rooted in our human conviction. Dr. King taught us a long time ago, he said over and over, we will learn to live together as brothers and sisters or we will perish together as fools. That choice is ours, chaos or community, the work of racial justice and reconciliation, the work of bringing us together as as E Pluribus Unum as one nation, as one people from many diverse peoples, the work of helping us to be a world that is humane and just and compassionate, where nobody is compelled to be a refugee. Nobody is compelled to have to seek asylum. In a world where people can be safe at home, or wherever it is they are, and where America is a nation that welcomes folks, that is not just secular do good work. That is fundamental human work that has been built into our core and creation, by the God who said, Let there be something other than me. And the world came into being, God set the model, he made room for the other. And guess what? We are all the other. And if that's the model, we follow the God who says now, Love your neighbor as yourself.

A

Allison Duvall 30:42

Thank you, Presiding Bishop. And, Heval, I'm very excited to kind of bring you back into the conversation with this next question. We know that building relationships at the local level is the cornerstone of creating welcoming communities. And we see how those relationships are also important to the work of helping those who perhaps have been radicalized come back to deradicalized to be brought back into the fabric of community. And we know that a large part of your work, in addition to being a cardiologist has been to help those who are leaving radical movements come back into that fullness of community. Could you talk a little bit about that work? We'd love to hear.

D

Dr. Heval Kelli 31:22

So thank you, Bishop Curry for your insight. It's hard to come back after your amazing words. And, you know, and and make a statement because you pretty much covered the whole theme. But I think one thing I wanted to answer something besides the question is, you know, we talk all about how the American community can do for refugees and immigrants. But I think it's very important for refugee and immigrant to understand as part of my work is, it would not be there in you know, Nationality and Immigration Act of 1965, if it wasn't for the civil rights movement. And I think a lot of people forget that. So what have been going on with the African community, especially the last two years, it's very important for me to bring that to a lot of refugees, that we will not exist in this country if it wasn't for the struggle of the African American community. And I think that's important to highlight. So we feel obligated as refugees and immigrants to stand up with the community when there is oppression to and against them. So I just want to make sure and that was part of my work to actually maybe get involved. I was very fortunate to go to Morehouse Medical School, and be exposed to a lot of the history. And working in that community. I mean, realize about some of the issues, how to impact these communities. And I wanted to do something about especially during the Trump era, there was a lot of rise against immigration and refugee as well, you know, I can fix the heart, but I'm not sure if that fix the heart of the nation, and I'll start one place at a time. And I met a former neo-nazi who asked me, if I wanted to meet a KKK member in Georgia. I was like, Well, you know, I can handle a heart attack but don't you ever had handled that bad? Like, you know, I'm not sure. So we start talking on Facebook, The guy pretty much came from a very broken background, he was the story of that I see a lot of time in the hospital. He was a veteran who came from Iraq, you know, suffer for like a lot of like illness and you know, chronic pain and he got addicted. And it was live in a very poor community. And that's what the KKK took advantage of people like him and recruited him. And it clicked in my head that he actually found a space of comfort among those. It was really a very simple technique by the group to recruit him. Like, what about if we create a safe, comfortable environment for him to leave that space? So we start talking and you know, I told him, you want to come to have a Iftar break with us or you're fast, and he actually did come with his family. He asked me what to bring. I was like, No, being a KKK member, maybe like you shouldn't bring a brownie, or like, you know, white pudding, just maybe putting some banana putting something in the middle. So nobody's judging you for that. And he came, and he was welcomed by all these refugee and Muslim, nobody really cared. He was, you know, fully tattooed. And he did start realizing like, you know, these people I used to hate, they really did not hate me back. And I think, and him seeing the entity that he hated. It's hard to hate something, you know that well, so, and I think it clicked and based on that experience, you know, he left the group and start now becoming a voice for, you know, integration, and anti-hate movement. But you know, he, you know, being his friend, we were able to replace some of the relationship across the nation. And now he advises a lot

of people in the same position using a story. What honestly I did is the same thing with the Episcopal Church member that came to my house and welcomed me with the same concept. And I did the same thing. What I learned from that experience in 2001, provide the same welcoming experience for this guy who was now this American and I'm using my privilege as a new American to help him and make him feel welcome to this new society. So that's really what I say like, you know, nothing special I did. I just learned from what actually American that's for my family and implement their own level. And I think being a heart doctor helped you know, he, he kept asking for advice. And it is important because I, you know, I came from someone who's very professional, and I took that white coat off. I didn't approach him like, well, I'm smart, I know what I'm talking about. I came down to his level and start talking to him at his level. So I think that's important to keep in mind too, that you don't have to be right to convince someone. You just have to listen and welcome them.

A

Allison Duvall 35:31

Thank you, Dr. Kelli. I'm actually going to ask the next question back to you, Presiding Bishop, and I would be very happy for you to respond to them to other panelists as well. And the Episcopal Church really started its work in welcoming refugees at a time in history when there was a rise in fascism all over the world, and of course, especially in Europe, with the rise of the Nazi Party. So the reality that we're in today is not entirely dissimilar. There are elements in our political discourse that have echoes from the past in the present. So I'd love to have you speak about what the Episcopal Church witness is in this moment, when we see continued violence against communities of color, including immigrant and refugee communities. What is the Episcopal Church's witness in ministry in this time?

B

Bishop Michael Curry 36:23

Well, I mean, there are a number of levels or layers. I mean, for example, on one hand, one of the things I'm aware of, is that it really is important never to remain silent insofar as that is possible. Whenever...whenever bigotry raises its head, it doesn't go away. But it will mutate racism, bigotry, you name it, and all of its cousins. They don't just go away, they don't evaporate, but you can't just simply ignore them. And so wherever bigotry raises its head against any human child of God, of any human being. people of faith must speak up and stand in solidarity. I mean, that's one thing. On another level, there obviously, are policy implications and considerations. And so the church does participate in advocating not for our tax exempt status, but advocating for refugees and asylum seekers and that kind of thing, and continuing to do that. And it was a little bleak in the last few years. But we continued anyway. And you continue to do that, in season and out, as the Bible says.

And so there's that policy level, up, there's another level, I mean, there's multiple other levels. But there's another one in terms of helping faith communities participate, and refugee resettlement and Neighbor to Neighbor kinds of activities and things. Those help to create bridges between people, so that people who may be sitting in a church pew, who may be who could be persuaded by voices of negativity, begin to see another possibility that I think, is that the killer, or Larry, one of my forgotten, said, you know, it is hard to maintain a negative posture with somebody that you actually really do know, and who does know you. It makes...it makes bigotry tougher. Don't worry, human beings are capable of doing it sometimes anyway. But it makes it tougher. And so that person to person interaction and relationship actually does help to create, I call them structures of interpersonal space, that make for a better humanity. And that's really, that really does happen now. And so we've been trying to do that, across a whole host of whether it's about E Pluribus Unum people being in conversation in relationship with people who have different political views, with different religious views and tradition, different on and on and on and on and on. That's really important, because E Pluribus Unum really does depend on our capacity, not simply to engage democratic structures. It depends on our capacity to be committed to the well being and the welfare of each other. Cicero was the source of the Latin phrase, E Pluribus Unum from many one, which is the model of the United States. I mean, I didn't make that up. That's the founding fathers. It is the motto it's on. It's on the seal, the Great Seal from many diverse peoples one nation, and that saying comes from the writing of Cicero, who said, and I quote, when each person loves the other, as much as he loves himself, then E Pluribus Unum becomes possible. And so what Dr. Kelly was talking about with the klan brother. That is going to be the key because that person to person relationship eventually becomes the knitting that holds the social fabric together, and then the social compact, then democracy, then everything else can follow. If that person, the person thing isn't there, then Nazis can have a field day, then Klansmen can have a field day, then white supremacists can have a field day. But if it's there, we got a good shot.

A

Allison Duvall 40:31

Thank you. Over to you, Mr. Bartlett. And as we start to see increased refugee admissions numbers and a shift in the pandemic reality that we've all been living in the past year, how do you want to see community members stepping up to welcome their newest neighbors?

L

Larry Bartlett 40:51

I could give a short answer to this. But I think after listening to Dr. Kelli and, and the Reverend, I have to try to give a little bit of a sermon as well, because I'm really inspired. Because the short answer is, of course, with open arms. Right. But I think both the

Reverend and Dr. Kelli have talked about kind of the mistrust, the misunderstanding, the lack of understanding that people have for one another. And, and, you know, it's I think both spoke, I think really eloquently about the value of individual connections to break down these barriers of misunderstanding. And I wanted to give a couple examples that I've seen over my kind of 10 years or so in the business. And one was a particularly kind of difficult forum that I went out to in Idaho, where there was a small group, it turned out to be a very small group of people who really objected to resettlement in their community. And the local community college was actually the resettlement affiliate. So they were actually providing the services to incoming refugees. And so went out to a forum, which ended up probably having almost 1000 people in an auditorium. And all but 20 of them really supported refugees. And because of the kind of animus that this small group had kind of stoked in a community, what happened was, it really drove people to come out and stand up for refugees. In drove the community members, people from Idaho, pretty conservative place in southern Idaho, to come out and say, No, these people are our neighbors. These people work alongside of us, these, you know, these people's children go to school with our children, they're our friends. And you know, we don't reject them. And they're not scary. And a couple people came up to me afterwards, which was really heartening couple of refugees who had actually been resettled for, I think, more than five years, I think they were American citizens, citizens by then, and they said, you know, we just wanted to blend in and kind of be invisible because we really didn't want to stand out here. But now we realize it's actually important for us to speak out because people don't see us as if as a former refugee, but it's important for us to be identified as such, so that we can help the newcomers coming in to have this same kind of positive experience. So instead of just totally melting in and melting away, it was important for people to really show no, I was a refugee like Dr. Kelli, I was a refugee. I mean, it's amazing. He is a heart surgeon, but it doesn't matter. He was a refugee. Now he's a member of our community. And, you know, that's what it's all about. It's about these individual connections. You know, the, the power, I think, of the faith based group is enormous. And I think as Demetrio said that, you know, whether or not there's an affiliate in the, in the local community, you know, the fact that there's a church or a synagogue, or a mosque, they can really kind of amplify this message. Because, again, as Dr. Curry said, you know, all faiths have the same understanding that, that we help the other and, and maybe the last thing I would say is that as, as I've gone around the country and trying to, I think, dispel, I hope, some of the false attitudes about refugees. One of the places that I've looked to are the employment community employers themselves and I've done a number of roundtables with employers, and meatpackers are famous for employing refugees, but the hotel industry... there's, there's many kind of entry level jobs that refugees unfortunately take early on as they grow their own credentials. But when you talk to employers, they love refugees, because refugees are hard working, they're committed, sometimes more so than other people they're able to hire. And so when I do roundtables with employers, I always try to have

some kind of a local official in the room, maybe a staffer from the Senate or the House member who covers that district, to just to listen, just to listen, kind of as a third party, how employers view refugees, because for me to come out as an advocate, or perhaps for you to go out as an advocate is one thing, but just to hear an employer wax on and on about how amazing refugees are as people, and then understand what employers are sometimes doing to really help refugees as well by providing English language, other types of kind of employment opportunities and growth potential, it just, it just helps you understand, you know, we're all in this together. And we can and we can do this. It's not, it's not hard. But it's, but it is, as people have said, it's part of our DNA is part of our values as a country. And we can, I think, showcase those values to others, and really promote this, this amazing program. Sorry, it wasn't a great, great sermon, Dr. Curry, but someday.

B

Bishop Michael Curry 46:32

I thought it was a great sermon. Let me tell you preach. Amen, brother.

A

Allison Duvall 46:36

Amen. Amen. Well, I'm going to conclude the formal panel discussion with a question for you, Demetrio. But I'd also invite our audience members, please go ahead, start typing your questions into the q&a box if you haven't already, so, Demetrio, over to you. The Episcopal Church has taken a strong stance through General Convention resolutions, and for those who may not know, General Convention is the governing body of the Episcopal Church. So we've taken a strong stance through resolutions to support pathways to protection for all people who have been displaced. Can you speak to how the Episcopal Church through the work of EMM is expanding to reach out and also support and lift up asylum seekers and those who are detained?

D

Demetrio Alvero 47:20

Thank you, I will say before I answer your questions, though, I do want to make one final point about the EMM resettlement program before we move on to that subject. And I just want to point out that EMM is about to reach an important milestone in its history. Sometime this year, we're going to cross the 100,000 resettled refugees mark. And that represents families and individuals whose lives have been changed, and opportunities open for them to live in a safe and free society. But it also represents communities that have been transformed and have really benefited from the refugees that have come into the communities. I know that there are communities we've heard from local officials say that, you know, it's revitalize certain parts of downtown in certain communities. I know in upstate New York, we've heard that from the local mayor. And so, you know, this program

has really been something that is one of the most successful programs I think the government has ever achieved, you know, with, as Larry mentioned, over 3 million refugees resettled communities revitalized through the program. And the impact it's made not only on the refugees, but on the communities themselves for the better. And, you know, the program is, as Larry knows, is multifaceted, intricate, made up of various organizations, both domestic and overseas. And although we're small pieces of the puzzle, the impact matters. And I think those of us that have played a small part in in the process to make it happen, we feel that impact, we feel that change. But to get back to your question, as you mentioned, the governing bodies of the Episcopal Church have over decades passed any number of resolutions regarding refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons, and other at risk migrants since our ministry was established 40 years ago. And in fact, the last General Convention, there was passed a resolution titled Principles to Guide Responses to Human Migration, which set out I think, a very clear direction for our church. And in response to that resolution, you have this focus recently on the border issues, in addition to the Neighbor to Neighbor program that I touched upon briefly earlier, I think it's important that EMM and the Diocese of West Texas will jointly host a border summit that will gather dioceses along the border, sister dioceses on the Mexican side for an exchange of information and programs, and how to respond to the continuing situation along our border. In fact, just today, I was on a call with our Interfaith Partners, both the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops to talk about, you know, our faith response to the situation at the border and how we could work more closely together. And it's something that our little working group is going to continue to work on how best we can lift up the situation that's happening with asylum seekers. And we've also taken very operational steps such as assisting in Texas with a case management program to support asylum seekers, something that we hope to expand, because we see that when we provide some level of assistance to asylum seekers, they, they tend to, in general, attend their hearings, and have better outcomes. But those hearings do occur. So it's an area that we're looking to expand. And we've tentatively just started a pilot in our office in one of our affiliate offices in Texas, and we're seeking to expand to other parts of the country. And that's one of the things that we're doing, again, to try to respond to the resolution that we're going to try to act upon as we try to meet the church's goals set for us by our General Convention.

A

Allison Duvall 51:41

Thank you, Demetrio. And we're now going to hop into questions from audience members. So thank you members of the audience who've submitted your questions, we'll try to get to as many as we can. So the first question I'm gonna direct to, to you, Mr. Bartlett? Um, could you speak a bit about the difference between the private program private sponsorship that you mentioned, and the current system that we have in the United

States?



Larry Bartlett 52:05

Sure. So the current system we have, which would, frankly, is amazing, and has worked well, for many, many years, utilize those affiliates. And so EMM is one of our nine funded national partners, that operates a number of affiliates around the country, um, as do the other eight. And, you know, it's really kind of a professionalized refugee service delivery system, if you will. And so that's the current model. What we're trying to do, there's two different things approaches we're taking one is we're trying to expand the use of sponsors within the affiliate regime. And so again, just every affiliate, I can tell you, every single affiliate uses volunteers. But we, but we're looking to try to promote, even sign up co-sponsorship models there. I know there are some affiliates with the EMM that do this where there might be a church, for example, that basically takes over most of the service provisions for a refugee. And the affiliate, the EMM affiliate basically monitors the church to make sure that they're providing the services, but they actually put the responsibility in the church. But the thing that the Biden administration wants us to do, which we will, is to set up a truly private sponsorship program. So under that type of model, when a refugee arrives in the US, they wouldn't go directly to a, for example, an EMM affiliate, they would go to another location where, let's say it could be a church group has agreed to sponsor the refugee and provide initial services. So there'll be a lot of responsibility, frankly, on that local group, to, first of all understand what is needed to have the skills to be able to deliver those services. Some of the services will continue to be provided through federal funding, you know, food eligibility for food stamps, things like that. But some of the counseling support, some of the other kind of grounded support, finding the initial apartment, all of those things will be put on a community group in that scenario. So it'll be a big responsibility where we're going to start small, with a pilot and test the concept. There's other countries have done this very successfully, some at very large scale like Canada. But we also know that there's a lot of responsibilities to make sure that the refugees still receives the same essential services. We don't want this to be some kind of a second rate system and has to really mirror I think, the professionalism that we that we currently have.



Allison Duvall 54:46

Thank you so much. And this next question, I'm going to kind of modify a bit because I want to bring in you Dr. Kelli, and you Presiding Bishop, and this question comes from someone who is the new Welcoming Officer for the Convocation of Episcopal Churches. And we should just mention the resettlement system in Europe and various European countries is very different than ours. And in some places these kind of private sponsorship

opportunities that Mr. Bartlett spoke to are existent. And so in the Convocation of Churches in Europe, our parishes are very active on charitable outreach, and they're all celebrating World Refugee Day this year. They now want to train parishioners as welcomers going beyond charitable partners, and greeters, we want diverse newcomers to be fully included as future leaders in our churches and our communities. So the question is, are there models or resources within the Episcopal Church for us to create communities of radical welcome? And while Dr. Kelli, you might not have the answer for the Episcopal Church context, I know that in Atlanta, kind of the larger metro area, there's the city of Clarkson, one of the most diverse cities in the entire country. So I'd love to hear you speak about the kind of models where you've experienced welcome and integration working well. And then Presiding Bishop to speak to the Episcopal Church context.

D

Dr. Heval Kelli 56:04

Yeah, I think this is a great question. And I lived as a refugee in Germany. In the time, there were not many refugees in the 1990s until 2001. And I lived in the United States and my experience as refugees were unique to many others. I felt like the problem is, what I experienced in Germany was refugee were treated as the victims arriving to a country. We had very few Germans visiting our home. And the only reason to visit our house either dropped us old clothes or brought washing machine. The Americans did the opposite here which made me feel as a person. So for the sixth year in Germany, I'm just, I don't think there needs to be actually a very specific model to actually welcome refugees radically, you could just treat them as your friends and cousin visiting the town. And when a friend comes in town, you don't give them old clothes, you take them out to a restaurant and take to the movie theater. I mean, it's a very simple concept. And I think that gets forgotten that a lot of refugee when they're resettled losing the home, they lose a lot of these activity because of funding and don't understand the country. And I can tell you that one of my most memorable experiences, Lord of the Rings, we came here in September, and in December, one of the member of All Saints Episcopal Church, she came to our house and said let's go take a trip. And she took me to watch Lord of the Rings, the first part. And for three hours, I was watching the movie, I really felt as a person again, because in Germany, nobody took us to the movie theater. First of all, as a refugee and asylum, you can work so the money you get from the German government is just enough to eat. So we were just eating, sleeping, and be happy to be there. But the Americans did something beyond which actually welcomed us as their friends and took us to movie theater and eating out at Chick Fil A, and what I'm saying is like it was more beyond just here as a victim given used clothes. And I think we forget that when we deal refugees, these are just human, just like your cousins and friends coming from neighboring town. And you don't need a specific model to teach you how to do that. I think if you could start on this thing, I mean, I'm still remembering 20 years ago, the experience that member had on me, it

made me feel welcome and made me feel human again, that this person actually think of me like that. I could remind me of the experience in Syria, what I had as a regular person to go into the movie theaters in Syria. So I think that's an important thing to keep in mind that, again, I'm a Muslim, but I studied the Bible. The Bible has no models. What are the statistics and data? The Bible is just stories of human interactions. And I think people forget that, that the purpose why Jesus and everyone was written stories, so people can realize that actually is very possible to that an individual level.

B

Bishop Michael Curry 58:47

Yeah, I think the doctor has actually described the model. Now, how do you help? What are some resources for helping people to do what the folk in Atlanta did? Take somebody to Lord of the Rings. In other words, people are more than just victims of something. They're human beings. I mean, what do human beings need to thrive and prosper and to be human? Well, you need more than food, you do need food, but you need more than that. And so what are those things? I think some resources that are helpful Demetrio mentioned earlier. Neighbor to Neighbor as a program that EMM already has, it's in place. And it's available to lead a small community in the direction of how do you provide a welcome? Very practically, I mean, how do you do it very practically? So that's a resource. It's free. It's already online. Well, you got to get in touch with EMM, to get it to happen right there. There's training that's available. Right now. The other is the toolkit that does have resources for congregations that want to be involved in supporting asylum seekers in particular, again, the same kind of model. So we actually have hands on resources that are available to you from Episcopal Migration Ministries. If you just go to the website of the Episcopal Church, go to Episcopal Migration Ministries, you'll be able to find these resources. Allison and Kendall keep a great page, it's easy to find. I mean, if I can find it, trust me, anybody can find it. It's easy to find. Those resources are available to you to do the kind of thing that the doctor was just talking about, so that people are people and really welcomed as people in the most holistic way possible.

A

Allison Duvall 1:00:36

Thank you both. I'm going to ask the next question to you, Demetrio. And you mentioned earlier our inter religious interfaith relationships that help support the work of EMM, wondering if you could say a bit more about the support we've received from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints?

D

Demetrio Alvero 1:00:53

Well, they've been for the last five years, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

have been very active, working not only with EMM, but with all the resettlement agencies and supporting refugee resettlement. And there, they've been receptive to every request we've made of them, every program that we ask them to fund, they supported us. Their gifts have increased and increased and increased. And it's just been marvelous to work with them. In fact, they're supporting our Neighbor to Neighbor program. They they've been supporting, they'll be supporting a resettlement program with I don't want to give the money because it's not official yet, until they'll be issued a press release with with all the gifts, but I will say that they will be supporting our resettlement program with substantial funding. And it's just, they're just one of several inter denominations that are supporting us. I can say that many churches, many vestries, our Office of Development is every year as I mentioned earlier, we get gifts from our churches, and even though we had last year's pandemic, small little drop off, not drop off at all, which speaks to the support that we have among Episcopalians to keep this ministry going.

A

Allison Duvall 1:02:28

Thanks, Demetrio. And I'm going to kind of weave two questions together. And I'm actually going to toss this to you Mr. Bartlett, and there are some questions that concern local and state level political leader opposition to resettlement. Questions about how can we continue to serve and welcome when we're in a space where there is political opposition. Also, an anecdote about a staff member from a resettlement agency approaching local political leaders, and that approach backfiring, I think that the intention was to generate support, and it ended up kind of leading in the opposite direction. So I'd love for you to kind of speak from your wisdom and longevity in this work. How can local community members who want to welcome participate in this work? How can they work in those kinds of circumstances and atmospheres?

L

Larry Bartlett 1:03:19

Thank you. I am looking at the chat. I actually want to answer more questions than that. And I may take a stab at one if you don't mind. But I'll try first these two. So first of all, there are a couple things. Maybe the reference, I think people may be familiar with the last administration put out an executive order, which basically required states and local state and local officials to opt in to refugee resettlement. And it was rightly very controversial. I'm a civil servant. I can't give my own personal opinion about some of these things. But I will say it was interesting. It was eventually stayed by the courts. And then there was actually a final court ruling that it was unconstitutional. So the good news is the federal government has the ability to place refugees anywhere without state and local consent, and that has now been decided by the courts. But what happened in the meantime before the courts intervened, and I think it was maybe a two month period was

that just about every state in the Union opted in. One state opted out, that was Texas was not unexpected. Georgia, neither opted in or out. Some of the states were silent, but I want to say we have maybe 40ish states that that all opted in and at the local level. Every single community who replied opted in. So, to me, I'm not saying that everybody understands this program, and politically supports it, because I know that's not true. But what we saw, and I think, and I understood later that there was quite a bit of local activism happening and at the national level around this executive order to really make sure that that elected leaders opted in. And it seemed to me that must have been pretty effective, because people did. Now, you know, again, I, I'm not naive, I know that this is a huge political issue. And there's going to be a divide, I think, for some people, that will be hard to bridge. But I again, you know, I think what Dr. Kelli said earlier was, you know, this people to people aspect is so important. And it's why when, like approaching a local leader, an official one on one, I've had my own encounters which didn't go too well. But when you do it in a context with refugees, and you can see, I mean, I've been out to see some of the facilities that Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has in Salt Lake City, where they have refugees working half a day. And then they're providing English language and other types of instruction for half a day, when you go to see a place like that, or I toured LL Bean up in Maine. And if you can bring a local official with you, if you can actually get them to, you know, be open enough to actually do that kind of a visit and just see how refugees are contributing. And, you know, thriving, and moving off of some kind of support. I mean, there's this whole I think mystique and misinformation that refugees are a drain on our economy. And study after study has shown, in fact, it's the opposite. Refugees are huge contributors to our economy. And they're huge contributors to our country. I mean, that's even better. But if you want to measure, you know, economic output, paying taxes, you know, being solid citizens, you want to look at arrest records, any of those things that all came up in Idaho, and the kinds of statistics that the local leaders in Idaho had provided was overwhelmingly positive. So I think if again, I'm not saying you can get everybody to listen, but I think the more you can show, not just as an advocate, but alongside an employer, alongside somebody who might have a different attitude or be seen as having a different attitude. I think the better off you are. But I wanted to say, Allison, if you don't mind, there's one question I want to answer because it talked about if you're a small congregation, in an area that doesn't have refugees, and you don't see any coming, how can you participate. And one thing I would say is that through the co-sponsorship model, we are going to be opening up resettlement opportunities within 100 miles of current affiliates. And so and frankly, we could go a little bit further, we can do some kind of a waiver if we need to. So there might be an opportunity to partner with some affiliate and it might not be EMM, who might be in your neighborhood, so to speak. And, sponsor refugees. So I would encourage you probably to reach back through Demetrio to, you know, explain where you are and what it is you would like to do. And there might be an opportunity, I think at a national level, but then

we can all provide some help, so that you can provide help as well. Thank you.

D

Demetrio Alvero 1:09:06

Referring congregations to, you know, to other resettlement agencies, something that I refer to Allison and Allison does a great job in connecting them either to, if they're close to one of our sites, we'd certainly do it on one of our sites. But if it's another national resettlement network, they certainly are put in touch with them. And certainly, they can benefit from the volunteers and the local gifts that they give. That's something that Allison does for us at EMM.

A

Allison Duvall 1:09:36

Thanks. And thanks, Larry, for taking that question because I was going to ask it next. So you read my mind. That's great. So I'll move on to another question. I want to ask this to you, Dr. Kelli. Thank you for this great presentation. My question is as we engage new and settled Americans in welcoming, how can we balance without burdening the newcomers?

D

Dr. Heval Kelli 1:09:58

Oh, yes, it does. Good question. I think it depends on like where they're from and understanding what, you know, what kind of issue they've been through. I think there is not like, really, you know, refugees are not also equally, like coming from the same background. Some refugees are here for certain reason. I think just being familiar with the background and understanding the reason why even this country might help you how much you should be dedicated to serve this refugee. And I think that it's important also understand the backgrounds, you know, the educational level, because you could tailor... I remember the experience, when we were in Germany, this couple brought us a vacuum cleaner and start teaching my mom how to use a vacuum cleaner. And she was like, do German not know how to use a vacuum cleaner? Like is that something that I have to teach someone? Her point was like that, they assume that my mom come from background never seen a vacuum cleaner, and if that experience really made her feel very uncomfortable, you know, besides anything you could have said to her. So I think it's important understanding the educational background and where they come from, and tailor your help toward that too, because not every refugee is the same in every background. And it's all depending where they come from during that time. But I think it's very hard to overburden the refugee because they are coming to this country, really, without any friends and family. And keep in mind, they don't know anybody most of time. So I think, you know, I wouldn't be very much of overburden sometime I think a lot of refugees actually under served more than overserved and I think you know I always tell

the only disadvantage working with refugees, you're gonna gain weight. So we just better cooks and we provide a lot of food our people come to health so you better get it, you know, a membership and gym. And you know, what, I get some new clothes, I promise you that. So that's the only disadvantage that you probably have working refugees.

L Larry Bartlett 1:11:52

Allison, I want to ask Dr. Kelli a follow up question to that. So is it possible to love a refugee too much if you're hostin a family? Because one of the principles of our program is self sufficiency, right? We want refugees to be able to, as we've all said, they're human beings stand on their own feet, you know, contribute. But is it possible to love somebody too much for too long?

D Dr. Heval Kelli 1:12:24

No, that's actually a very great question. Yes, true, I think that goal should be as like you treat your family members and friends, you know, you don't want to be helping them all the time that they become dependent on you, you want to help them just enough for them to be independent. And, you know, I think one of the main focus is like, again, if you have a family member, you want them to get a good job, not just a job, you want to have, like, make sure they get some kind of education, if they're willing to do something that is very important. But you're right, a lot of refugee could be also loved so much that they're not going to move independently. And there's a fine line that you want to help because it just gets to this country, and it turns survive. And at the same time, you as someone who's a citizen in this country understand the tools and resources available. So, you know, for us, I think one of the member of the All Saints Episcopal Church name is Barbara Thompson, she kept telling us, it will be fine, Trust me after one year in America is very tough the first year but in a year or two you will be learning the English and independent to find better job. And she was writing, her telling us that really made us believe in that concept. I think you bring up a great point. And you know, it's hard. It's a hard thing to deal with when you are dealing with a refugee who just came to this country and find the balance what helping them versus, you know, make sure they advance over time.

D Demetrio Alvero 1:13:47

Just to follow up, it's one of the things we caution our co-sponsors is, you know, when support becomes after a year or two years, okay, now it's time to move over to friendship and back off after a while because it's something we really speak to our our congregations about. Because there's that, embrace it, sometimes they don't want to let go.

A

Allison Duvall 1:14:14

Thank you. And thanks, Larry for asking that follow up to Dr. Kelli. I wanted to invite all of you panelists if you'd like to offer any concluding remarks, anything that you'd like to say that hasn't already been covered, and then I'll take us to closing today's webinar. So Demetrio, if you want to go first if you have any closing remarks to offer, and then we'll kind of go round robin.

D

Demetrio Alvero 1:14:34

Yeah, thank you, Allison. Well, you know, we're now in the process of building back the program and we hope to build it back stronger and better. And in the coming months, we'll be working very diligently to work with our congregations and with our interfaith partners to build back this program. And I think we're good. We've developed good plans. And I am hopeful that with the help of Larry and his team and all the other interagency partners, we will see a slow increase in arrivals. And building back means building back the relationships in those communities that Larry mentioned, because with low placement arrivals, what we saw was that a lot of that networking that was done diminished or was lost. And now we've got to have our affiliates and our congregations sort of reconnect and build those community networks so that when refugees do come, there will be that welcome. And it's something that we're going to be working on, we have developed plans, and we're gonna have more webinars with our affiliates and with our congregations to try to develop that. That networking as we move forward.

A

Allison Duvall 1:16:00

Any of the other panelists, if you have any concluding remarks to offer, please feel free to unmute.

L

Larry Bartlett 1:16:06

I want to go before Dr. Kelli and the Reverend because I know that they are hard acts to follow. But I want to thank the Episcopal Church, first of all, and all the congregants we talked a little bit before other people joined..all the people in the pews who really support this program, and you know, people do it for a wide variety of reasons. I think all of us do it because we're human beings, and we know that refugees need us, and they need our country. This is who we are as a country, this is frankly, how we came about. We're a country of immigrants and refugees ourselves. And we shouldn't forget that for a minute. And, you know, I wake up I, I've been doing this for now more than 20 years. And I wake up thinking, you know, what if I was a refugee, you know, what would I have? Would I have

the ability to find safety and protection and to leave my house and everything I know about my culture and move somewhere? And to start over, and starting over is so hard. But I think it's what we as Americans kind of owe others. And, you know, hope that we're never in that situation. But in the meantime, we can really provide that, that opportunity for people to rebuild their lives to join our country. And to bring the richness of their own culture into our country, right, we're not asking people to, to forget who they were but but to bring that richness into our fabric. And it's one of the things that really makes me proud to work in this business. And I thank all of you in advance for everything you'll do over the next few years to help us rebuild this program.

D

Dr. Heval Kelli 1:18:07

I just want to just use my time really, truly thank Episcopal Church. And, you know, we do believe in this country that if you work hard and you're very smart, you become successful. That's I think true until you have a good foundation and guidance and the success for my family. If it wasn't for the Episcopal Church and the members helping us out in the beginning, I don't think I would have become a cardiologist. I don't think my brother would have become a surgeon. I just don't think that would have been possible for us to achieve what we achieve if it wasn't for the help of just average American coming to our home and guiding us. So our success really is largely to Episcopal Church and truly like me, I'll be thankful when Allison asked me, do you want to speak? I was like, of course. I was like, I don't even think about my schedule. I just hold my hand and block my time. I mean, that's the least I could do for the Episcopal Church. So I really appreciate you guys effort and you know, thank you Bishop Curry for all your statements. Every time we know when the Trump administration trying to lower the ceiling, I was reading your statement saying that we need to welcome all refugees. So it means a lot to us just seeing people so supporting us. And thank you everyone.

B

Bishop Michael Curry 1:19:19

I don't have anything to add except to say thank you to both Larry and Dr. Kelli for who they are and what they represent. I'm so grateful that we have civil servants, government servants, like you, brother Burnett, we really thank God for you and all the people like you. It matters and I'm 68 years old, so I'm glad to know I've got another cardiologist whose name I've got him and glad to know that. And to Demetrio and Alison, and Kendall, and the whole EMM team. You all are remarkable. You have been faithful in hard times and in good times, and well done good and faithful servants, and to all the folks who are watching this, who are part of the EMM world. We need you to be evangelists for this work, to go out and spread the good word and invite others to participate in it. Because the truth is welcoming the stranger, whether refugee, asylum seeker, immigrant in any way,

shape, manner or form. Moses said it in the Torah, it's there in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus said it in the New Testament. It is in the Quran. It is in all of the sacred books of the world's major religions like that. Oh, I don't know if you saw the movie *The Color Purple*, kind of based on Alice Walker's book. But there's that gospel song that was sung near the end of the movie that said, God is trying to tell you something. When all the religions of the world are saying the same thing, welcome the stranger, God is trying to tell us something. And this is something we can all do. So thank you. Amen.

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Allison Duvall 1:21:18

I'm somewhat regretful that I have to offer the closing words. I would wish that we could have ended there. Thank you, panelists, so much for your time today. This has been truly meaningful and such an important part of our celebration of World Refugee Day this whole month. So just as a reminder to our audience members, we will be sending you an email with the on demand video of this webinar, as well as some follow up resources. So please do look for those. Also, we hope that you listen to the panelists and their encouragement to all of you to get involved. Please do share the recording of today's conversation far and wide. Please join us in advocating for the refugee resettlement program and for protections for those who are seeking safety. Visit www.episcopalchurch.org/ogr. That's where you can see our Church's Ministry of Advocacy. You can serve, you can learn how to get involved locally, email us at emmwebinars@episcopalchurch.org. Kendall and I will field those questions and connect you to local opportunities to welcome your newest neighbors. And also you can give to support the work of EMM, you can give by visiting www.episcopalmigrationministries.org. You can text EMM to 41444. You can also mail a check to DFMS-Protestant Episcopal Church US P.O. Box 958983 St. Louis, MO 63195-8983 (Include Episcopal Migration Ministries in the memo line.). And if you have any questions or need assistance, please contact our colleagues and friends and the Episcopal Church's Office of Development at 212-716-6271. So I want to thank our panelists again for their time, their wisdom, their encouragement to all of us. Thank you audience members for attending today's webinar, and we look forward to having you with us again at the next webinar. Thank you all. Have a wonderful rest of your day and goodbye.