



October 6, 2017

Dear friends at St. John's,

I am grateful for many things in my life. I try to be mindful of the abundant blessings I enjoy: a loving family, a healthy body, deep friendships, and a faith community that sustains me.

St. John's Episcopal Church is my spiritual home. Over the past 20 years, I have had the opportunity to experience many meaningful moments and meet incredible people through our parish. I want to share one recent example of how involvement in St. John's has changed my life.

In December of 2015 as representatives of St. John's church, Sarah Kieffer and I attended a forum at our sister parish, St. James's in West Hartford Center. Chris George, executive director of IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services) provided a comprehensive and eloquent testimonial about refugee families and resettlement programs in Connecticut. Chris gave concrete examples of how we could help.



Lisa Mahoney

Fast forward to August 2016. Through the sponsorship efforts of volunteers from St. James's and St. John's, we welcomed a Syrian refugee family to West Hartford. I, along with a group of 8 to 10 people, agreed to tutor the Kattoubs in English as a Second Language (ESL) as a stepping stone to start their new life.

I met the Kattoub family (Anas, Arabia and their three adorable children: Hala, Aboudi and Jana) just one week after they arrived in West Hartford. Walking up the stairs to their apartment for our very first meeting, I was nervous! How was I going to connect with this family when I don't speak a word of Arabic? Would they be scared of me? Would I be able to communicate a proper, warm welcome?

My fear disappeared as the apartment door flew open and I was greeted by three small smiling faces. I was immediately charmed and at ease. All I can tell you is that God's grace was in that first meeting. In fact, I have felt God's presence since then in every experience I have had with the Kattoub family.

Our time together that started on a scorching summer Sunday moved into English lessons over Arabia's fabulous (and STRONG) Arabic coffee through the fall and early winter. This spring, driving the kids to soccer, I realized many American words and phrases have become second nature to the whole family. I marvel at the resilience of this family to leave all that they knew behind and to embrace a new life here. I'm also humbled by the dedication, love and tenacity of so many volunteers who have welcomed the Kattoub family to West Hartford and provided unconditional help.

St. John's has given me the opportunity to see God's work in the world today. That is something that I am most grateful for and one of the reasons why I make an annual gift to St. John's. Please join me in support of our parish and our ability to change lives, within St. John's and beyond.

Blessings,
Lisa Mahoney