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# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**FROM LAMENT TO ACTION: WHERE CAN THE REFUGEE FIND REFUGE? LINDA HARTKE, CEO OF LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES, BALTIMORE, MD, TO VISIT UPPER VALLEY**

**“Loss and grief, pain and shock, anger and helplessness.** These are all emotions that sweep over us as we see the pictures and hear the stories of the swelling refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe. And none has been more heart-wrenching than the image of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi’s body washing up on a beach in Turkey, his family having tried so desperately to reach safety as they fled horrific violence in Syria. A precious life lost that could have been saved.

“The biblical concept of ‘lament’— life-shattering sorrow--comes to my mind and weighs on my heart these days,” says Linda Hartke, CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services in Baltimore, MD. “Each of us is called to lift our head out of sorrow and weeping and ask, “What can I do to help refugees like Aylan and his family?”

Linda Hartke, CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, will be in Hanover, NH, September 25–27 to engage Upper Valley residents on the refugee crisis. With her decades of international human rights work and political expertise, Hartke offers a realistic and compassionate perspective on the present crisis as well as an overview of ongoing work with refugees in the U.S. In January, she visited the largest Syrian

refugee camp in Jordan and recently worked with the State Department to increase the number from 5000 to 10,000 Syrian refugees to be admitted to the U.S. for resettlement this coming year. LIRS is sponsoring a petition to increase that number to 60,000.

"The world is facing its greatest refugee crisis almost ever, and the U.S. response has not been generous and has not been leading the way as we always have as a nation," said Linda Hartke recently.

"My own sense is that's not out of a lack of willingness to receive refugees in local communities, it's not for lack of compassion and care and a sense of urgency in local communities, in churches, in school, in workplaces -- it's really due to a lack of political will," Hartke said. "That's what needs to change."

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services has, since the end of World War II, been an effective advocacy and resettlement agency both nationally and locally. "We are honored to be able to host Linda at this critical time," said the Reverend Michael Thomas, who shares the pastorate at Our Savior Lutheran Church & Campus Ministry in Hanover with his wife Susan. "This is one very necessary way to be God's hands in the world now. We hope we can join forces with others to move forward."

In addition to opportunities to meet Linda Hartke on the Dartmouth campus Friday, Lutherans in Hanover invite community members to the following public events being held at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 5 Summer St., Hanover:

#### **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26TH**

**4:00 p.m. "From Lament to Action: The Syrian Refugee Crisis".** A community conversation with Linda Hartke, CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. An overview of the current crisis driving millions of refugees from their homes and where these refugees go. How can we make a difference?

**7:00 p.m. "The Palestinian Violin Project"**.. A benefit concert on behalf of *Al Kamandjati*, a music school for Palestinian children in Ramallah, the West Bank, sponsored in cooperation with Hanover Friends Meeting and Dartmouth Students for Justice in Palestine. Performing are Michael Dabroski, violin, and Michael Arnowitz, piano. Dabroski will play a violin recently crafted in Ramallah by Shehada Shelalda, Palestine's only violin-maker. Almost every Palestinian family has members affected by the long-term and still ongoing refugee experience of displacement.

#### **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27TH**

**10:30 a.m., Refugee Sunday.** Linda Hartke will preach at the Refugee Sunday service at Our Savior.

**12:00-1:15 p.m. The Exodus of Central American Children and Families from Central America.** Last year, the number of children fleeing their homelands, alone, seeking safety in the US, came in to the public eye. Less well known is the

number of mothers making the same journey with their children. Why do they take such risks? What happens when they get to the US? Is it true that the US government is locking up mothers and children? What can we do?

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For interviews or for additional engagements, Linda Hartke is prepared to address the following topics:

### **From Lament to Action: The Syrian Refugee Crisis**

An overview of the current crisis driving millions of refugees from their homes, where do these refugees go, and how can we make a difference.

### **The Exodus of Central American Children and Families from Central America**

Last year, the number of children fleeing their homelands, alone, seeking safety in the US, came in to the public eye. Less well known is the number of mothers making the same journey with their children. Why do they take such risks? What happens when they get to the US? Is it true that the US government is locking up mothers and children? What can we do?

### **A Broken Immigration System: Can It Even Be Repaired?**

The US immigration system today is badly broken – hundreds of thousands of immigrants are incarcerated each year and deported, the immigration court system is overwhelmed, parents are separated from children, undocumented immigrants live in fear in the shadows, many Americans question the system and what should be done, and political candidates exploit fear and doubt for their own advantage. We will look at the current state of immigration reform and possible ways forward.

### **Lutherans Offering the Long Welcome to Newcomers**

For more than 75 years now, Lutherans have provided protection, support and welcome to people fleeing their homelands. How has this ministry developed? What has moved us by our faith to lean in to this ministry with generosity and passion? What role can people in local communities, campuses and congregations play?

### **Linda Hartke Biography**

Linda Hartke has led Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service as President and CEO since February 2010. Linda is driven by a deep commitment to ensuring migrants and refugees are protected, embraced, and empowered. She brings a wealth of leadership experience in faith-based advocacy and social ministry both in the U.S. and abroad. A member of Christ Lutheran Church in Baltimore, Maryland, Linda has also served on

national and regional boards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She currently serves on the Board of the Center for Migration Studies, a Roman Catholic think-tank. Linda's vision for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is to be a catalyst in creating communities of welcome where newcomers can thrive. Read her full bio at [LIRS.org](http://LIRS.org).

Photo also enclosed as separate attachment.

