



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
NEW JERSEY SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.
1930 Highway 33, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

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To the Editor:

As a New Jerseyan and a Lutheran bishop, I was deeply disappointed by Governor Christie's decision to ask the federal government not to send Syrian refugees to our state.

As we mourn for the lives lost in Paris, it is a time to be more mindful than ever of those who have suffered the senseless brutality and terror of ISIS for far too long. Ordinary Syrians have suffered persecution, first by their own government and now by a merciless terrorist organization. Imagine trying to raise your children in such an environment. Imagine trying to move them to safety, only to be told that you yourself were now considered suspect.

New Jersey has long welcomed refugees from a diversity of countries. Their presence has strengthened and enriched the fabric of our state. Over the years, Lutherans across this nation have welcomed more than a half million people fleeing violence and persecution, and they have become valued members of our community. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has been a highly respected part of our humanitarian and diplomatic response to global crises for decades. It is a secure, effective, public-private partnership that has proven effective at saving the lives of vulnerable people, integrating them in their new communities, and helping them thrive and give back to the United States. Thanks to a robust security screening process implemented by the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security and related entities, we have done so with confidence and with very positive results. It breaks my heart that we would abandon that proud tradition now, when the need is so great.

I have always been proud of my state for the warm welcome it gives to those seeking to rebuild their lives in safety and freedom. That is why Governor Christie's decision is so disappointing, and why I hope he will reverse his position immediately.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, Bishop
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