

Dear neighbor,

We are almost all a nation of immigrants. As [LSS of Minnesota](#) celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, we remember the enormous wave of immigration at the end of the 19th Century and beginning of the 20th that built the State of Minnesota, our churches and communities, and Lutheran Social Service of MN.

After World War II, that first wave of immigrants turned to welcome new waves of "displaced people" from Europe. Our congregations welcomed refugees from Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War, as Minnesota gathered the largest settlement of Hmong people in America.

In recent years, civil wars in Somalia, Liberia, and Burma caused refugees from those countries to immigrate to the welcoming State of Minnesota. Now many of our new neighbors are of the Muslim faith.

While tensions between Christians, Jews, and Muslims have been a reality throughout history, since 9/11 and American deployments in the Middle East, the American popular press has been filled with news of the "war on terror" with negative characterizations of Muslim people. Though devout Muslims have tried to counter the media with reminders that Islam is a religion of devotion to God and peace among neighbors, those voices are sometimes hard to hear.

Minnesotans will certainly welcome more Muslims to our communities. At LSS we are offering a resource to our churches, and anyone else who would like to use it, to help learn the basic tenets of Islam and understand our new neighbors.

We are grateful to Dr. Todd Green, Associate Professor of Religion at Luther College, who has offered insight from his extensive writing on Islam as a starting point for discussion. Many thanks to several faculty members from Luther Seminary, and Yusuf Abdi of LSS Refugee Resettlement, who added their responses and study questions for what promises to be a rich, seven-session introduction to Islam.

I am also deeply grateful to Imam Hassan Mohamud of the Da'Wah Center in Saint Paul, who not only reviewed the study for an accurate reflection of Islam, but also plans to use it to distinguish the Islam of the Qu'ran from the Islam of the media in his own community of faith.

Our intention is simply that this resource will open doors, minds, and hearts and dispel stereotypes and myths about Muslim neighbors just enough to start more conversations. I am touched by the stories of Minnesotans who are inviting Muslim imams into dialogue, accepting the invitation to participate in iftar dinners during Ramadan, and hosting community multicultural celebrations.



This study is [available for download](#) along with a [fact sheet](#). They are free to use and copy without copyright restriction. We would be glad to answer any questions that arise about refugees and resettlement.

LSS staff and volunteers are always available to preach or speak in your congregation or community group. Please let us know how else we might be helpful by contacting congregations@lssmn.org.

Jodi Harpstead, CEO
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota