

Dear Holy Trinity Migrant Team Familia,

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of the migrant team ministry at Holy Trinity. In June, 70+ gathered on the grounds of Visitation Preparatory School for a well-deserved fiesta. It was a wonderful afternoon. We are happy to provide an update to you on our families as we begin our new fiscal year at Holy Trinity. Thanks to your generosity our migrant familia has grown to 11 individuals/families from seven countries!

Bernadette & Marie were referred to us by their lawyers from the Georgetown Law Center right before the COVID shutdown. Bernadette was an advocate for human rights in her home country of Gabon - work that caused her to be persecuted and then flee to the US. When we first met Bernadette, she was in a temporary basement apartment, had lost her work and was struggling to get groceries and a birthday gift for her then 5-year-old (now 6) daughter Marie. In this past year, she has won her asylum case, moved into a beautiful apartment in Silver Spring close to jobs and transportation, and been the top student in her English classes. Marie is an amazing little girl with mastery of all her classes and now extremely excited to attend school in person.

Enrique and Yosselin fled the drug violence in Honduras in 2019 with their four boys. The family arrived at the Kino Border Initiative, having made their way through Guatemala and Mexico on foot and bus as part of the migrant caravan. COVID-19 has made their lives very uncertain. The team continues to provide support with housing, medical care, legal support through Just Neighbors, education support and food insecurity. The family is so excited each week to see the abundant groceries with milk, meat, fresh fruits, and vegetables and the occasional “goodie”. With help from the parishioner transport team, the boys took swimming lessons and summer enrichment classes. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Culotta-Norton, the boys are getting much needed dental care. (Most of our families have never had formal dental care.)

Etienne and Olga along with their 4 beautiful children have weathered this year of the pandemic quite well despite ongoing economic hardships. And there have been many angels at work. First, a nonprofit organization offered to send them a substantial rent subsidy for 6 months. Next, a generous Holy Trinity family gave the Mbalas their gently used car. With this car, Olga will be able to take her children to medical appointments, school, and other places without having to pack all of them up to ride the Alexandria City buses. Additionally, Holy Trinity’s parishioners and Catholic Charities have been donating nutritious food for the family on a weekly basis, so they do not have to wait in long food distribution lines where the quality and quantity of food are not consistent. And for their part Olga has done an incredible job of ensuring that their 3 older children Jolcy (age

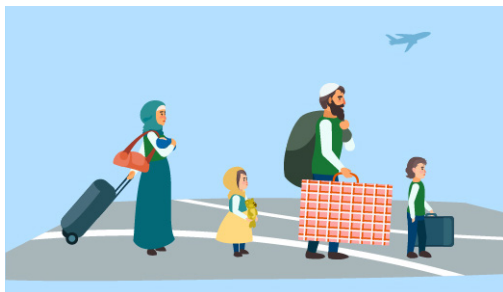


8), Christina (age 7), and Joldony (age 5) actively participated in “Zoom School,” while keeping toddler Blessing (who just turned 2) occupied. Olga has also reached the last level of the English as a Second Language program and is doing one-on-one conversational sessions on Zoom with a volunteer teacher. She is hoping to find a part time job in a grocery store or other retail establishment once the children are back in school this fall. Etienne, who was a criminal and civil rights lawyer in his home country, has been searching for better paying work over the past year.

Mario is a young man seeking asylum after fleeing Nicaragua. Mario is sponsored by a family at Holy Trinity, and his hearing date is scheduled for 2024. Our Migrant Fund supported Mario’s basic living (clothing, housing, food, transportation) and medical/dental care through May of 2020. Gainfully employed by a local tech company, Mario is thriving. He is an active member of the team, generously donating his time to counsel new members on the challenges and opportunities they face. Mario is an active member of Our Lady Queen of the Americas, often playing guitar at Mass. He is a volunteer at the Washington English Center which assists new immigrants in improving their English skills. Thanks to new parishioners, Ryan and Natalia, Mario is now the proud owner of a car.

Mario J is also a young man who fled Nicaragua after protesting the injustices of the current president. Representing himself, he won his asylum case after one year in US detention in June of this year. Hard working with boundless energy, Mario J has been working 6-7 days per week at a landscaping firm to pay off his debts in arriving here, as well as to save for the future. The team has helped Mario J with clothing and other basics as well as friendship and support. Mario J now has a steady job, a car and is working with a parishioner referred pro-bono lawyer to get in his green card application.

Mugahid joined the Migrant Team last November having been referred by the CAIR (Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights) Coalition. Mugahid fled Sudan in June 2019 after being targeted due to his participation in peaceful protests. His journey to safety took him to Egypt and Ecuador and then overland through Columbia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. Last Spring, after crossing into the US near Yuma, Arizona, Mugahid claimed asylum and was placed in the ICE detention center in Farmville, VA, where he contracted COVID. His dedicated CAIR lawyers were able to win his asylum case on October 15th, but Mugahid was left with no community. Fortunately, due



to the generosity of parishioners, Mugahid was moved out of the New York Avenue Shelter and into a temporary apartment in Georgetown. Due to the hard work of Mike Conway and the rest of Team Mugahid (Paul Shaya, Dennis McAuliffe, John Brain and Matt Hamilton), Mugahid now has a Social Security number, medical insurance (and the start of medical care for his teeth, knee damaged by prison guards) and food snaps (SNAP). Mugahid is now living and working in Adams Morgan, renting a room, and working part time at various local businesses.

Yanilson (Lino) is Garifuna, Afro-Indigenous descendants of shipwrecked Nigerian slaves who married Carib people on St. Vincent in the 1600s. Racial prejudice is strong in Honduras. The dark-skinned Garifuna children are segregated from the lighter skinned or “white” children in Honduran schools,

given fewer resources, and taunted and bullied by white children and teachers alike. For Lino, more bullying and abuse came in adolescence - identified female at birth, and now identifying as a transgender male. After years of abuse, Lino fled when thugs sent fire to his mother's house. Over the past year, the Migrant Team helped him obtain donated furniture, provided much-needed housewares, and continues to supply food. With help from Catholic Charities, Lino has a pro bono immigration attorney, a Social Security card, and an Employment Authorization Document, or work permit. Much still lies ahead for Lino—finding a job, learning English, gaining asylum—but he is optimistic.

Julien Patrick joined us in spring 2021. Formally in Catholic seminary, Julien Patrick had to flee his home country of Cameroon, making the treacherous journey from Ecuador by foot to the border. The MigrantTeam has connected him with housing, food, legal help, a pro-bono therapist (who is helping him with the difficult things he has seen and experienced) and various doctors. Julien Patrick's faith and positivity, despite his many hardships, have quickly endeared him to many in his new family here. He is very busy volunteering at Holy Trinity and Hope and a Home and is teaching French to children in Ecuador as a way of paying back those who helped him.

Hadia is the latest member of our familia. She is an extraordinary activist who has repeatedly advocated for women's rights and democracy in Afghanistan on television, podcasts, and online, including on BBC News and Twitter. She fled Afghanistan after months of death threats by the Taliban, who have killed members of her religious and ethnic minority family. Two of her friends — fellow young women's rights activists — were murdered in the last year and subsequently received posthumous awards from the US Secretary of State. Thanks to the support of parishioners and the Migrant Team, Hadia has short-term housing and is being connected with legal and healthcare resources.



In a meeting with AsylumWorks over the summer, we shared that this work happens because of the Holy Spirit and the generosity of this community. We want to acknowledge the generosity of Attache Corporate Housing, Dr. Robert Cheron, Ron Castaldi, Dr.Culotta-Norton, Dr Marc Connell - members of the parish who helped us address medical and housing needs. Many of you continue to donate groceries and clothing for our members or have recommitted to the “driving team.” We are grateful!

As we emerge from the restrictions and desolations of COVID, our families continue to struggle, but with hope.

In the words of our families: Gracias! Melesi! Shkran! Merci!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ashley Klick".

Ashley Klick
Pastoral Associate for Social Justice

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "for Rossomme".

Jeanne Rossomme
Parishioner Lead, HT Migrant Team