Local Religious Leaders Offer Sanctuary To Syrian Refugees

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PITTSBURGH (KDKA) – An organization that represents thousands of congregations in the Pittsburgh area has come out in support of a proposal by Mayor Bill Peduto to bring Syrian refugees to the city.

Thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing from their country are a long way from Pittsburgh, but their plight is inspiring local religious leaders to offer them sanctuary in southwestern Pennsylvania.

“We feel that this is a problem that our Christian values compel us to respond to,” said Rev. Liddy Barlow, the executive minister of the Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania.

The association represents one million Christians from many denominations in ten counties. The council of bishops was moved by the sight of thousands of people fleeing to safety in the Middle East and Europe.
"We feel it’s enormously important for our churches to recognize the values of hospitality and service," Rev. Barlow said.

Mayor Bill Peduto was one of the first to suggest bringing Syrian refugees to Pittsburgh, calling it a world crisis.

"Aside from the humanitarian side, which all world religions know, we need to accept these refugees," Peduto said. "We have a situation that, if we don't do something, it's only going to escalate and get worse."

"We have wonderful refugee resettlement organizations who work here in our region, and they need partners," Rev. Barlow said. "They need congregations and individuals to help them."

But there’s concern that ISIS terrorists may get into the U.S. posing as refugees, especially since the Paris attacks. Congressman Tim Murphy has even introduced legislation.

"This legislation simply states that until the National Security Agency, Homeland Security, the FBI can give us assurances that someone is safe and secure, they’re not to be allowed over here," he said.

"If you listen to the stories of Christmas, again and again, the angels say do not be afraid," Rev. Barlow said. "And we feel that responding out of groundless fear is contrary to Christian values."

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Bob Allen joined the KDKA-TV team in January 2000 as a General Assignment reporter. Bob began his broadcasting career in 1979 at Beaver Falls radio station WBVP. From there, he went on to WKBN Radio in Youngstown. His first television job was also...

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