

June 2023

The Almbied Family

An update from Refugee Ministry member Mallory Paul

I came to the refugee ministry through my sister's inspiration. Last summer she helped a young family get settled and I joined them on a visit to the Lincoln Park Zoo. That afternoon I knew God had laid the same desire on my heart, which led me to the Almbied family.

The Almbied family joined our parish community in February after a 10-year journey to America. From Syria originally, they fled for their families' safety and settled in Jordan while they worked on the long process of entering the US.

We met on a freezing evening in Rogers Park and even with language barriers there was an immediate connection based on gratitude. Abduljalil and Sawsan, the parents, have been married for several decades and have 5 kids together, Rasheed, Huda, Hamzah, Qamar and Abdulrahman.

I also met a new friend and fellow volunteer, Anna, that night and we've now jointly visited with the Almbied family several times over the last few months.

The first thing Abduljalil said to me was, "you are welcome." Which has stayed with me since. When I think about living out our Catholic faith – those are words to live by.

To the poor, the sick, the hungry: you are welcome.

To the depressed, the lonely, the sinners: you are welcome.

Being welcoming and giving of ourselves is what we're called to do, and I feel so grateful to have been given the chance to welcome the Almbieds to our country, our city, and our parish family.

During all our visits we've had to be patient with communication as we both worked through our language barrier, but what's amazing is how much you can say without words. From hugs and smiles to connecting about food and art. Huda, one of their daughters, is a wonderful artist and I was able to bring her some supplies to continue working on her craft. She also has an Instagram account where she posts her latest work.

My favorite experience we shared was taking the Almbieds to Party City to purchase decorations for Ramadan. They were so joyful and excited to be able to physically express their faith in their new home. I've loved experiencing and learning so much about their cultural, especially their sense of giving and cooking. Sawsan is a fabulous cook and made us a whole Syrian spread the first night we met.

Now that summer is finally here, we're excited to take them to the lake front path for walks and maybe a day at the beach.

It has been such a joy to get to know the Almbieds and welcome each other in friendship.