

Halton religious groups join hands to sponsor Syrian refugees

By Nicholas Keung
TORONTO STAR

Christians, Jews and Muslims don't always share a common cause, especially in the Middle East.

But members of Maple Grove United Church and Shaarei Beth-El Synagogue in Oakville and Mississauga's Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) mosque have found friendship in their goal of serving humanity.

Together, the groups have launched a Syrian refugee sponsorship group called Abraham's Children Together — an allusion to the fact that all three religions are Abrahamic, considering Abraham a prophet — which is hoping to bring in a family of seven from Jordan for a new life in Canada.

Although the trio already had a working relationship through the Interfaith Council of Halton, they were brought together earlier this year by the Canadians in Support of Refugees in Dire Need, a grassroots Muslim organization formed in response to the refugee crisis in Europe.

"This is what organized religions can do," says Rev. Dr. Morar Murray-Hayes of Maple Grove. "We are all sisters and brothers in terms of our origins."

Maple Grove United Church's minister, Rev. Dr. Murray-Hayes liked the idea of Abrahamic religions bonding together in an act of generosity, especially for a family fleeing conflict.

"We felt that we could make a statement to the family leaving behind the conflicts and



Shaarei-Beth El Congregation of Halton Rabbi Stephen Wise sits in the synagogue. He has joined hands with other Halton-based religious groups to support Syrian refugees.
Cole Burston / Toronto Star

coming to our country, where all the Abrahamic religions bond together out of the act of love."

With previous refugee sponsorship experience, her group has helped the sponsorship application for the family in Jordan, which is

affiliated with a member of the ISNA mosque. Together, all three congregations help raise money, collect donations and secure volunteers to support the family upon arrival. While finding time to meet around each group's religious calendar can be a chal-

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