

# Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

## Neighbors in Need



When the coronavirus pandemic hit, LIRS knew we had to take action for the immigrant and refugee community.

Our New American family members were hit hard by COVID-19 and its effects; many lost their jobs in the service, hospitality, and production industries, while many more risked their lives on the front lines of healthcare and food production. Many of our immigrant brothers and sisters were excluded from government stimulus packages, while others were hesitant to get medical care for fear of retribution.

We established **Neighbors in Need** as an emergency fund to serve these critical needs. In just four months, we were able to provide \$342,000 of emergency financial assistance to 361 at-risk families who suffered illness, job loss, or other hardship due to the crisis.

One such family in Minnesota found themselves unable to afford rent after the father was laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The family of five had lived in the US for about eight months and were just starting to establish themselves. Despite several efforts to apply for unemployment insurance and grants, the family was unable to secure any other sources of income.

Their savings had dwindled to less than \$200 when they received news that the Neighbors in Need fund would pay for their next month of expenses. They were so grateful and relieved to learn that they would not have to choose between paying their bills and feeding their family.

Their story highlights the unique vulnerabilities that many refugees and immigrants face in this pandemic, particularly in light of limited and lacking federal aid, and underscores the essential role LIRS' Neighbors in Need fund plays in filling the gaps during this unprecedented moment in American history.

To learn more about the work of LIRS in this critical time, visit **LIRS.org**

### Questions for Reflection

*Read Matthew 25:34-40.*

**What parallels do you see between these passages and life around us today? How would you describe God's attitude toward migrants? How might your congregation be called to accompany our refugee and migrant neighbors?**