

NEWSLETTER

*"Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long."
(Psalm 25:5)*

The Place of
Refuge
www.placeofrefuge.net

Christmas 2025

December 25, 2025

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Christmas Blessings | POR

Often to those who do not understand, the way of truth in this world does not look like wisdom.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called:*

*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

At brunch this week as we met together as a staff at a local restaurant in North Philadelphia to enjoy a meal and celebrate the season, we set aside some time to reflect on the many things that came to pass this year in this precious ministry. Reciting the verse above, Pastor Centeno invited us to consider the names that Isaiah offered so long ago, and he asked us to speak about which one we hold most dear:

- Wonderful Counselor
- Mighty God
- Everlasting Father
- Prince of Peace

Turn-by-turn, as we described the place we set aside in our hearts for the name that we cherished most, it became clear that this was truly a sacred place for each of us.

In each testimony, needs that we first felt were answered with a skillfulness that defied all understanding, and the stories were truly beautiful to hear. With clear-hearted thanks, we described the measure of God's mercy in our lives—a realization of our own weakness, the fragile limits of our own abilities to evoke meaningful

changes, and a realization of his glorious grace and strength—taken in a single breath, the inspiration of all our work at REFUGE.



REFUGE Philly staff + friends at Christmas brunch at Tierra Columbiana,

Christ's power to raise our countenance, bestowing a peace that is greater than our present circumstances—it is something that can be hard for us to accept and hold, even in perfect stillness. Even so, "be still, and know" when it is taken not as a human word, but as it actually is: what a privilege it is to see God's good word *"at work in you who believe"* (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

A Year to Celebrate

So happy to celebrate many signs of encouragement this year despite many challenges:

- 135+ individuals and families received counseling services this year
- more than 65+ new cases started
- weekly scheduling that has now grown to more than 60+ visits per week
- successful licensing of three of our Master's level providers as licensed Associate Professional Counselors (APCs), with one more pending (!!)
- dozens of system improvements to expand capacity and reduce wait times for new requests
- the wonderful addition of a new full-time, licensed counselor just this month, Bridget Weaver, LPC from Cairn University
- ...and another consecutive year with top quality marks in all performance measures used by the City of Philadelphia to track the effectiveness its Medical Assistance provider network

Looking back, since we first completed our initial credentialing as a Philadelphia County Medical Assistance provider in 2009, we have now shared our counseling services with more than 1,042 individuals and families (equivalent to 0.83% of the population of our North Philadelphia census tract). For those who have walked closely with us all along, you know the incredible milestone that it is for us to have shared this deep and meaningful help with over 1,000 people. Moreover, it is amazing to think how many more it just might be, knowing that we are considering here each case as *one*. And by God's grace, we know what He will do with even one life redeemed.

May the wonderful truth of Christ's glory meet you where are: his counsel, his strength, our father, true peace. May all love and grace surround your tables this Christmas and throughout the year to come!!

Financial Updates & A Look at the Year Ahead

Over the past year, all along we have been bracing for the real, present, challenge that we see today (first announced in January of this year): the decision to pause performance incentives for the entirety of the Medical Assistance provider network this year.

Despite another outstanding, qualifying performance from our team of counselors and staff, we were told that the difficult decision was required to respond to unprecedented instabilities. With a modest annual budget of \$300,000, the combination of year-end awards (up to approximately \$45,000) that we have received in all consecutive years since 2017 can cover as much as 15% of our annual expenses—an enormous help to our entire operating year. In response, we have taken many steps to trim costs, improve efficiency, grow our services, and boost fundraising...but as many of you know, Refuge already operates on very lean margins, leaving very little that can be cut without diminishing the services themselves and taking on risk.

Prayerfully, as it stands we have made most of the necessary corrections to withstand this gap in funding for the time being. But without your support, clear difficulties loom on the path ahead.

Your assistance to help us overcome these present challenges by making a gift or a sustaining pledge before the end of this year—the blessing it would be to us cannot be overstated. These services are a meaningful help to many, many people. We could not do any of this without you, our supporters.

With all our heart, thank you for all your love and support!! May you find peace and glory everywhere you look today and in the year ahead! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!