



Sheltering  
victims of the  
Middle East  
Earthquake

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# REACHING OUT

The Outreach Foundation Newsletter • Spring / Summer 2023

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# Perseverance

*...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*  
Matthew 28:20

We are not alone. In this very dark world, the promise of Jesus Christ remains. God is with us.

I cling to those words these days as I Zoom with friends in Kyiv, Ukraine, who are taking the Gospel to the unknown parts of the world as war rages around them. Our friends at the Ukraine Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kyiv live daily with anxiety and uncertainty, running to bunkers to avoid missiles from Russia. As I am writing this, last night a missile attack struck an apartment complex not far from the seminary in Kyiv, killing 23. Yet, the Ukrainians persevere.

God is with us as the church in Cuba continues the proclamation of the Gospel amid the devastating effects of sanctions. Food is scarce, and the economy is spiraling down. Yet, each Sunday the church gathers for worship in these troubled times to be a community of faith serving Jesus Christ.

Mark presents an award  
for Bible knowledge at  
Aleppo Church in Syria



God is with us, and we are not alone as thousands live in the open air in Türkiye (formerly known as Turkey) and Syria because of recent earthquakes in the region. The Synod of Syria and Lebanon is feeding and caring for thousands of people. The Presbyterian Church of Aleppo is serving more than 1,500 families. The Outreach Foundation has sent more than \$300,000 to partners in the region with more on the way.

Jesus is at work among us and in us to persevere despite our predicament. He is with us and calls us to respond.

Early on in my life, I struggled with this understanding of Christ being present with us. "What difference does it make?" I thought. Yet as years passed, I have come to realize that as Christ is present in/around us, He then works in/around us to bring about His will. God loves people, and God cares for His sheep. His will is that I might love God, love others, and be the hands and feet of Christ. So that is what I do. That is what we do. That is what The Outreach Foundation does. Through prayer and good deeds, we serve Christ and others as we await His second coming.

**Rev. Dr. Mark Mueller**  
Executive Director

**Contemplating photos  
documenting atrocities committed  
by the Russians in Bucha, Ukraine**

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# People of the Cross

On February 6, 2023, the world woke to the news of a devastating earthquake in Syria and Türkiye. We all watched reports from the field indicating the region was in dire need of help. The Outreach Foundation responded quickly (within 24 hours) by establishing the Middle East Earthquake Relief Appeal which has generated widespread support from our donor base.

One of our dear partners in the region, Rev. Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of the Synod of Syria and Lebanon wrote recently, "Tens of thousands of people are still living in the open. Those affected by the earthquake are left to God and God's people to support."

The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), which Joseph leads, spent the first months following the earthquake focusing on immediate relief work among the affected people by opening shelters and providing food, water, heat, clothes, mattresses, and blankets.



One woman spoke to the pastor of the church in Aleppo, Syria, Rev. Ibrahim Nessir, who helped coordinate earthquake efforts. The woman said, "You, the people of the cross, are compassionate with us more than our own community." The Presbyterian church of Aleppo is responding with love and help. The church reached out because this is what Jesus would do.

Through help with rent, NESSL now focuses on finding homes for those living in tents. The Synod has worked to repair houses damaged by the quake. They are trying to renovate churches to receive many of the poor without a place to live.

The drastic economic situation in Syria has created additional hardship. United States sanctions and the government's limited financial resources find 90% of the Syrian people in need. An average worker's salary is now less than 20 dollars a month. Yet the church remains resilient and committed to serving the people of God.

Please continue to support Middle East Earthquake Relief and help the people of Lebanon, Syria, and Türkiye.



## Joyful Partnership

Presbyterian Church in Mozambique and  
North Lake Presbyterian Church in Florida

The Tete Province of Mozambique has champion advocates in Berry and Elizabeth Long.\* They share a compelling vision for the Gospel impact in one of the most underserved regions of Africa through the Holistic Evangelism partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Mozambique. Berry and Elizabeth have made more than a dozen trips to Tete, where the partnership reflects the Spirit's blessing with new followers of Jesus, a training center for leaders, wells, schools, and health facilities.

The magnetic enthusiasm of Berry and Elizabeth caught the attention of our congregational leaders more than a decade ago. Since then, North Lake Presbyterian Church has been blessed to grow into this partnership. We have sent folks to Mozambique, supported and hosted faithful African leaders, drilled wells, and provided kits and training for traditional birthing assistants.

Recently North Lake cheered from afar the dedication of a new women's shelter and a staff kitchen in Madzimaera. These facilities were added to a health clinic and staff housing funded by a 2017 Christmas offering at



The joy of  
a new well

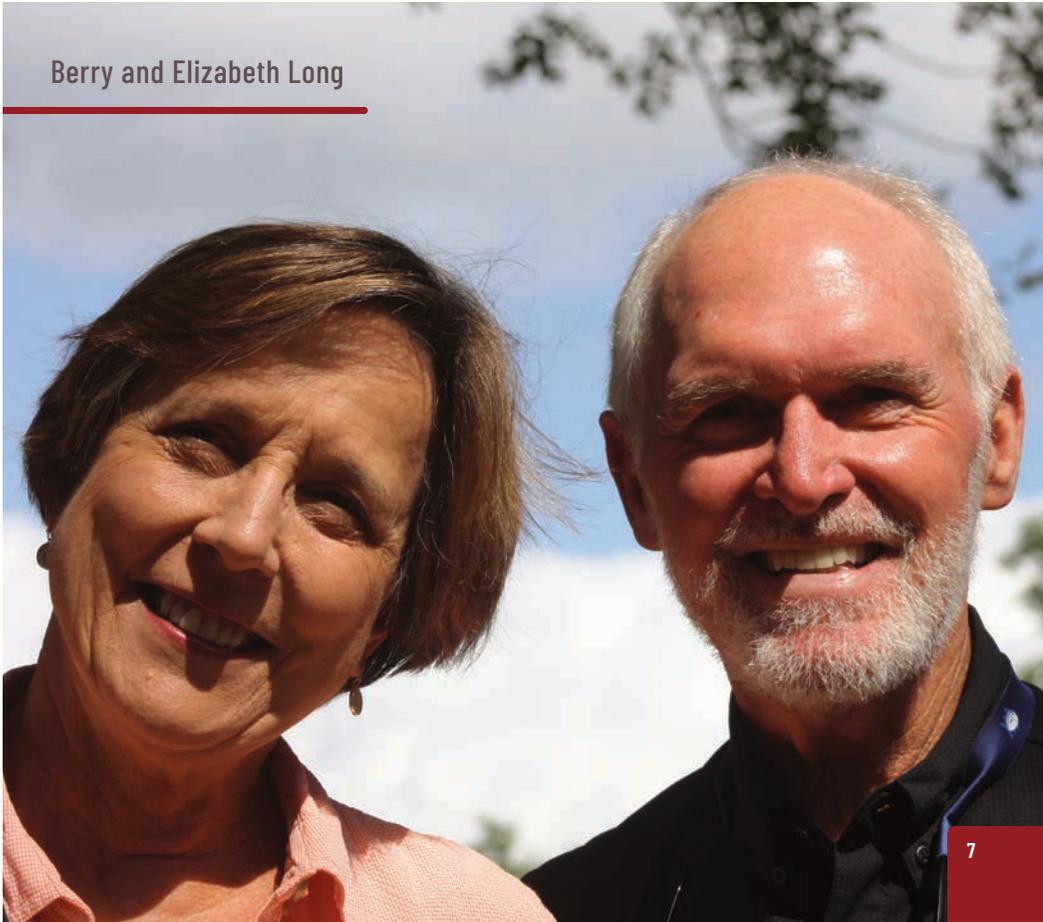
North Lake. In 2019, our team traveled with Berry and Elizabeth to worship there on Pentecost; following the service everyone walked through the village to the dedication of the new clinic. Within a few years, other partner churches combined to create "the Mayo of Madzimaera," a medical destination for the region. In the first two full years of operation, the clinic had more than 54,000 patient visits and nearly 1,700 newborns.

North Lake has joyfully observed the development of this site from an open grass field to a busy, compassionate witness for Jesus Christ. We are thrilled to see what God is doing in the Tete Province. We began our involvement because of an invitation from Berry and Elizabeth Long. Perhaps you would consider this YOUR invitation from them and from me!

**Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Hosmer**  
North Lake Presbyterian Church  
Lady Lake, FL

*\*Berry serves on the Board of Trustees for The Outreach Foundation. He and Elizabeth will be unable to travel to Mozambique this summer as she undergoes treatment for cancer. Please keep them in your prayers!*

Berry and Elizabeth Long



# OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS



# Covering Five Continents and Thirty-Three Countries

Syria



Africa



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# GRATEFUL FOR FAITHFUL DONORS

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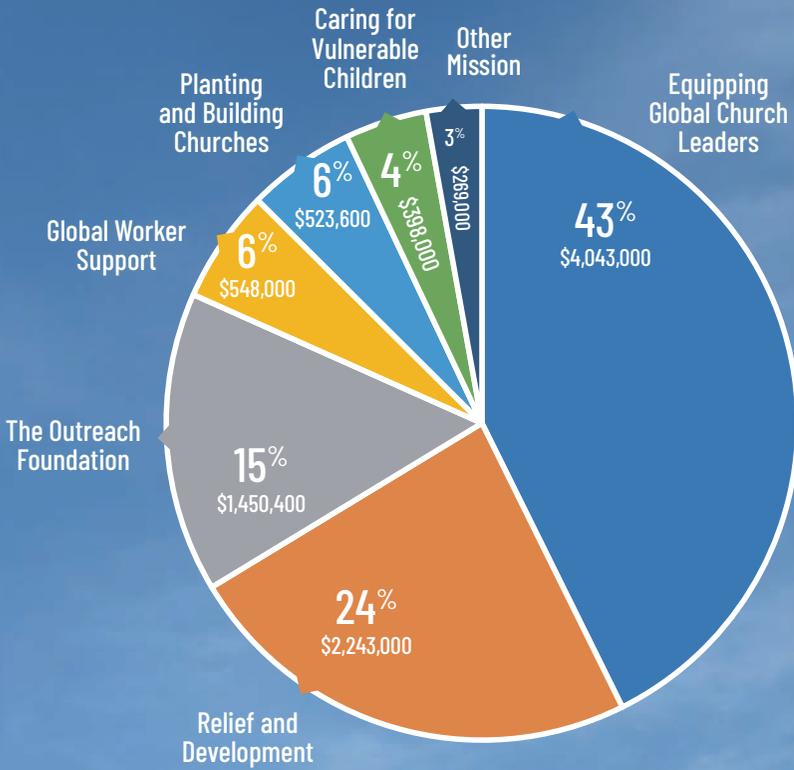
The Outreach Foundation was overwhelmingly blessed by the generosity of our faithful donors in 2022! Despite the economic downturn, 2022 saw an increase in giving, which in turn allowed us to send \$2.1 million dollars more to our partners around the world than in 2021. We are thankful for the generous spirit of our donors! Highlights of our 2022 financials are presented in the newsletter, with more detailed financial returns available on our website.

This past year also saw a transition to new accounting and database software. This allowed us the opportunity to reflect on the financial history of The Outreach Foundation. For instance, did you know 1,859 churches named “First Presbyterian Church” have partnered with Outreach over the years? Or, did you know that in the history of The Outreach Foundation, we have received over 105,600 gifts totaling more than \$191,500,000?

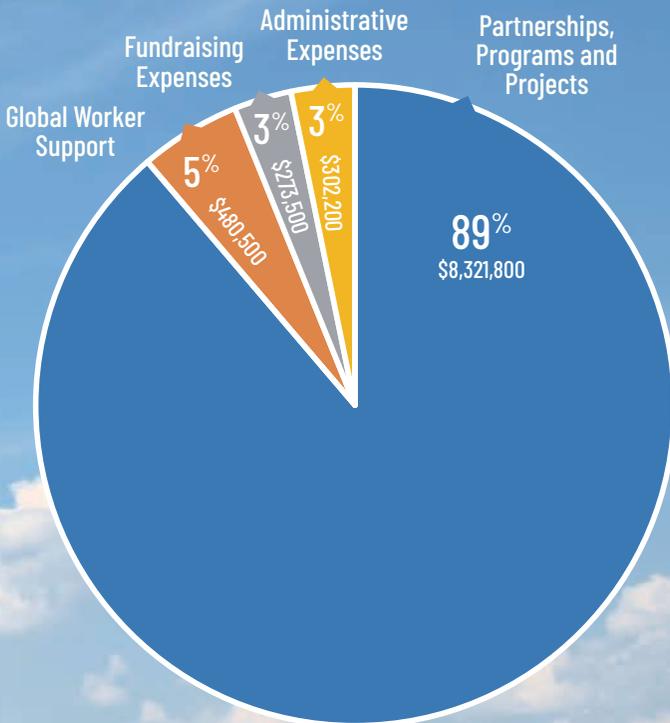
*We were astounded by the blessings Outreach has received  
and the lives that have been touched by this generosity.  
We are thankful to the Lord for blessing us in this ministry.*

**Jenna Crunk**  
CFO and COO

## 2022 CONTRIBUTIONS – \$9,475,000



## 2022 DISTRIBUTIONS – \$9,378,000



# Gifts from God

Outreach friend and partner Dr. Ivan Rusyn of the Ukraine Evangelical Theological Seminary (UETS) visited the U.S. several months ago. During the visit, Dr. Rusyn mentioned that Individual First Aid Kits (IFAKs) are the most requested items by Ukrainian soldiers. Soldiers who receive these kits have an increased survivability rate nearing 90% over those who do not have them. When the Outreach team visited Ukraine in March, they were able to bring more than 800 IFAKs to deliver to the soldiers. Thanks to Delta Airlines, the baggage fee was waived. Vasiliy, the war relief coordinator at UETS told us, "These are gifts from God." Indeed, they are gifts from God – each kit was purchased through donations sent to The Outreach Foundation for this purpose.

Each soldier wears their own IFAK and receives training on how to use the supplies. If a soldier is wounded, another soldier uses the kit to perform immediate triage before medics can carry the injured soldier off the front line.

Thank you for standing with the seminary as it seeks to provide relief to the soldiers protecting their country. This is just one of the many expressions of compassion that are making a difference to people there, showing that the Gospel is both relevant and abounding in mercy and love.

The Outreach Foundation continues to receive requests from UETS for IFAKs. Each new kit costs \$90. Please make your donations to The Outreach Foundation's Ukraine Relief fund. Also, continue to pray for the ministry of UETS staff and the many small church pastors bringing relief not only to their soldiers but to people living in war-affected neighborhoods. Their work is making a difference, but they need us to stand with them.

Soldiers' faces blurred for security purposes



Carol Dublin and Jill Gilbert in the Franklin, TN, Outreach office packing IFAKs and medical supplies for Ukraine





Board of Trustees

# Kingdom Work, Spirit Led, Partnership, Trust, Hope

These are just a few of the many words, ideas, and thoughts discussed at the spring meeting of The Outreach Foundation's Board of Trustees hosted by Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville, TN. With HOPE as the theme, 26 trustees from Montana to Florida gathered to work, pray, and discern. Important discussions included Outreach ministries and opportunities in several areas including Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Iranians in Diaspora.

For more than 40 years and through the guidance of many faithful trustees, Outreach has and will continue to *Engage Followers of Christ for His Work in the World*. Honored guests at this meeting included Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham, President Emeritus of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) and a pastor of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba for more than 35 years. He summed up the meeting quite well: "I don't know what the future holds, but I know Who holds the future." Thanks be to God!

Trustee  
Doug Nielson and  
Special Assistant  
to the CFO  
Linda Patrick



# PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

*"I, Peter, am an apostle on assignment by Jesus, the Messiah, writing to exiles scattered to the four winds, not one forgotten. ... May everything good from God be yours!" The Message*

## Rebuilding Hope among Refugees in Africa and POMC of the Synod of the Nile

Amid the horror of ongoing conflict in Sudan, Outreach partners in bordering countries are helping care for those displaced. The Outreach Foundation is honored to work with both the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council of the Synod of the Nile in Egypt (POMC) and Refugee Camps in Ethiopia to provide compassionate care for Sudanese refugees fleeing the war.

Outreach seeks to be a part of "everything good from God" for the exiled through its newly expanded Africa Refugees Program, now called "Rebuilding Hope among Refugees in Africa." These words from 1 Peter offer comfort and hope to millions of refugees in camps in Africa. The recent outbreak of violence in Sudan has led to the displacement of more than 150,000 people to neighboring countries. Most refugees are registered and put into camps to receive humanitarian assistance.

The mechanics of daily living in a refugee camp are a struggle for the most able-bodied, but it is especially difficult for children, the elderly, and the disabled. And it is most difficult for mothers with physical disabilities. Pastor John Jock, partner coordinator for refugees in six camps in Ethiopia, recently visited the Tierkidi Refugee Camp and tells of meeting two such women. One was a young, single mother with triplets. The second mother had only one leg. She had given birth to twins and was finding it very difficult to fetch water and feed herself and her babies. These situations were heartbreaking.

John Jock sought support for these women through a Sudanese Presbyterian women's group in Gallatin, TN, and The Outreach Foundation. They sent money to support these two mothers. When the mothers received it, they were so glad and joyful for the great love shown to them.



Ethiopia

Since then, John has visited them often and encouraged the refugee church community to help them heal from their trauma, raise their children, and cope with the situation in the camp. He wanted to share their story with you, the beloved partners of The Outreach Foundation and friends in Christ, to pray for these two mothers asking God to strengthen them and to take good care of them and their children.

On the northern border of Sudan, the POMC of the Synod of the Nile is also helping to alleviate the suffering of Sudanese refugees. Rev. Manassa Nesem, Executive Manager of the POMC, shared how Sudanese refugees are being aided by brothers and sisters in Egypt.

At the Egyptian border, massive numbers of refugees arrive daily. It often takes them three days to get there. Because the border personnel are not prepared to receive such large numbers, it takes more than 12 hours to complete entry procedures. When finished, the refugees must travel four hours by bus to reach the nearest Egyptian city, Aswan. The displaced people spend all these days in the open without water, food, or shelter. Since Egypt has no refugee camps, they are allowed to settle within its cities among its citizens.

**Accordingly, the POMC decided to take urgent measures including the following:**

- deliver food and supplies for the displaced at the borders, especially children and infants
- provide transportation from the border to Aswan and help them get settled
- send a support team to follow up, pray with them personally, and facilitate everything they need as much as possible

Please continue to pray for refugees everywhere as well as special partners helping them. Consider joining these partners with a gift to Rebuilding Hope among Refugees in Africa.

**Rev. Manassa Nesem**  
**Frank Dimmock**

Compiled by Elizabeth Carter





# Jesus Had Me In His Hands

**Visiting my ancestral homeland:  
Victor Petrenko reflects on his visit to Ukraine**

From March 19 – 26, a small team from The Outreach Foundation visited friends in Kyiv, Ukraine. Recently, we had the opportunity to hear from Victor Petrenko, whose wife Amy is an Outreach trustee, about this visit.

**Ukraine has a special place in your heart.  
Tell us about that and why you were motivated to join this team.**

*My parents are from near Donetsk, in Poltava and Novo Oleksandrivka. They came to the U.S. as immigrants out of World War II and told me many dark stories about life in Ukraine. My father has dementia and can't remember me but his anger flares up intensely whenever we discuss Ukraine. Even with all these stories, I was curious about how bad it really is in Ukraine today, about how the church is doing, and how people are living.*

**What were your thoughts on this visit in the days leading up to it? What were you praying about?**

*I opened myself to whatever God would have me see and to embrace whatever He opened. Jesus had me in His hands and that was enough.*

**Thinking about the various people you met, does anyone stand out to you? Tell us about her / him?**

*I saw the face of Jesus. I saw what it was like for Him to walk toward the cross, every day, knowing the fear of it, the uncertainty, and how tired He must have been. Jesus is the face of the displaced person wanting to help others and be resilient despite her own suffering. He is that older couple we met who had to carry their 90-year-old mother 12 miles in the snow. He's that pastor of a small church giving out of what little he and his wife have so others can eat.*



## The Outreach Foundation team in Kyiv visiting His Beatitude Epiphaniy Dumenko, Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine

### Other than that, what is another significant takeaway from this visit?

*People in Ukraine are fighting for their identity, culture, and freedom. Some of the people said to me, "Hey, we don't want to be Russians. God bless the Russians but please leave us alone."*

### What would you say about the church's faithful witness of the gospel during this time?

*The Christians we saw are everyday heroes in every sense that means. They are showing the best of what Christian sacrifice means. They are presenting "real" generosity and love with no sense of entitlement. They're tough people showing that faith is neither easy nor fragile.*

### What impact has this visit had on you?

*A couple of things. First, I'm hungry to help more. Second, we must get out of the boat and walk on water. If God tells us to go, then our only answer is "Yes, send me," and I need to trust Him with the rest.*

The Outreach Foundation continues to stand alongside the many small churches, their pastors, and the faithful witness several ministries are providing during this war. We are helping to bring together many different Christian traditions, which are shining Christ's light brightly. We update our Ukraine Appeal on our website monthly with fresh stories of what is happening in Ukraine. Please share these stories widely among those whom you know. Pastors, please use these stories in your messages. Pray for victory for Ukraine and give generously.

## ANNUAL APPEAL

It is a joy to connect brothers and sisters across the globe, nurturing relationships, and engaging followers of Christ for His work in the world. Gifts to the Annual Appeal facilitate this by supporting operations expenses including staff, technology, and office space. Look for the Annual Appeal to launch in August and prayerfully consider a gift to this important fund.



LEFT: Shapoor Ahmadi and Outreach staff  
RIGHT: Rev. Shawn Hevener and Rev. Mark Mueller baptizing Ahmed in Liverpool



## PARTNERS IN SALVATION

It was an honor to welcome Shapoor Ahmadi to the Outreach office in Franklin, TN, in May. Shapoor fled from Iran when he was 22 years old. He sought asylum in England and waited for two years for his case to be heard. He was provided a one-room apartment and 35 pounds (\$45/month for all living expenses). He could not work during this time. He knew no one and had to wait for his case to be processed. At the end of the two years, his case was denied.

Shapoor appealed and waited another two years. By the grace of God, his case was overturned. Shapoor is married now and serves as a phenomenal pastor to Iranian refugees in Liverpool, the port of entry for refugees in the U.K. He speaks fluent English and Farsi. He has started a church that is growing rapidly.

A team from The Outreach Foundation visited Liverpool in 2022. While there, team members baptized several refugees and heard many professions of faith. God is doing amazing work in Liverpool with Iranians in exile through Shapoor! More than 3,000 Muslims have come to Christ, thanks be to God!

## LET'S GO!

Travel with The Outreach Foundation to encourage — and be encouraged! Visit our website [www.theoutreachfoundation.org](http://www.theoutreachfoundation.org) for details and additional trips.

### TÜRKIYE (TURKEY)

October 9 – 18

### PAKISTAN

November 13 – 20



# Great Joy!

Great Commission Society members, Doug and Mary Lynne Nielson describe their lifelong journey with generosity as a Great Joy!

Doug and Mary Lynne have been married 27 years, and Doug, who serves as an Outreach trustee, reflects that Mary Lynne was the leader in this area in the early days of marriage, saying “God has given us a lot, so let’s be generous in our giving.”

Together Mary Lynne and Doug have volunteered with Young Life and have a wide appreciation for mission opportunities in the local church. While working for American Express, Doug traveled globally. As mission elders at Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Marietta, Georgia, Doug and Mary Lynne were exposed to global mission opportunities in Mexico, Egypt, Cuba, and Kenya. Now that they are retired, they are able to travel and serve together on the global mission field, allowing them to fulfill The Great Commission and share their time, talents, and treasure.

When it came time to update their will, the Nielsons decided to include The Outreach Foundation. Giving generously and serving together gives Doug and Mary Lynne great joy and satisfaction, knowing that all they have is a gift from God, and the blessings that have been heaped upon them are to be passed along in their lifetime and beyond.

The Outreach Foundation recognizes donors who inform us that they have included Outreach in their estate plans by including them as members of the Great Commission Society. If you would like to experience this Great Joy, please contact **Ralph Wheeler** at **615-778-8881** or [ralph@theoutreachfoundation.org](mailto:ralph@theoutreachfoundation.org).



Doug and Mary Lynne Nielson



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THEOUTREACHFOUNDATION.ORG

*“We saw Jesus in the  
ministries of churches  
and so many others  
as they serve in very  
difficult times.”*

DEENA CANDLER  
Outreach Trustee on a trip to Cuba