



REACHING OUT

The Outreach Foundation Newsletter • Winter 2023

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2022: A Year of Blessings

I find the title of this newsletter article somewhat strange because I did not experience 2022 as a year of blessings as I lived through it. I was shocked by the war in Ukraine that began February 24, 2022. I was equally appalled as I arrived in Poland in March 2022 to witness 300,000 refugees (mainly children, women, and the elderly) arrive in Warsaw from Ukraine. Equally disturbing was a glimpse of 352,000 refugees in United Nations camps in Ethiopia, Africa. Finally, I looked in disbelief at the bread lines in Cuba and the scarcity of food in that country due in large part to United States sanctions. I would hardly characterize my observations of 2022 as a year of blessings.

Yet, preliminary financial reports indicate The Outreach Foundation had one of its best years. This year our donor base expanded by more than 30%. Our giving increased by nearly two million dollars. We expanded our ministry in Mexico, Ukraine, and Lithuania. We reached our goal of \$300,000 for the Aleppo Christian Center and are well on our way to funding a desperately needed playground in Latakia, Syria. We have much to be thankful for in 2022. Despite the troubles of the world, we were blessed to be a blessing to the world.



Outreach Board Chair Jack Baca (R) and Dr. Piotr Nowak, president of the College of Theology and Social Sciences in Poland

Our donors made this possible. Videos, social media, mission reports, and trip blogs conveyed the message, but our churches, individuals, and organizations made it happen. As Abraham was blessed by God to be a blessing to many nations, so have our donors been a blessing to many people throughout the world.

So, we say thank you!

2023 looks to be another challenging year. Our trip calendar is full. Our reporting will surely convey the needs of God's people around the globe. So, stay connected to us. Even better yet, travel with us. We hope to relay stories of God's work around the world that hopefully will prick the spirit, heart, and body of followers of Christ.

Once again thank you and I look forward to our ministry together in 2023.

Blessings!

Mark Mueller
Executive Director



Lois Andrews, Outreach trustee, visits Together for the Family in Lebanon



Mark makes new friends on a trip to Syria

For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink

With gratitude and thanksgiving, we share the good news that faithful donors have once again responded to great need. In December, we shared stories about food insecurity from partners in countries including Kenya, Syria, Cuba, Lebanon, and Mexico. War, drought, economic collapse, and a sharp increase in food prices are among the reasons many are experiencing severe food insecurity. But thankfully, Outreach donors and church partners, touched by this need, responded. To date, more than \$50,000 has been raised to help feed many. While we rejoice for this generosity and compassion, the need is ongoing in many areas of the world. We are grateful for your continued support.

Make a donation by sending a check to
The Outreach Foundation or visit our website
www.theoutreachfoundation.org to give online.

Presbyterian Church in East Africa food distribution in Kenya



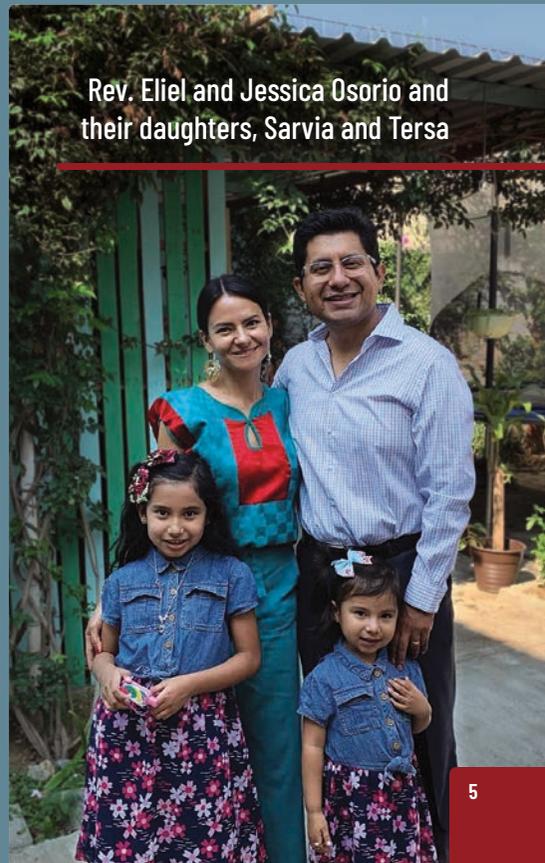
PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Hospital de la Fe Church

A recent church plant in Mexico, the Hospital de la Fe Church is located in the heart of Oaxaca de Juárez, Mexico. Pastor Eliel Osorio and his wife Jessica started Hospital de la Fe in March 2020 – right at the onset of the COVID pandemic. Undaunted, their first service was live-streamed from their backyard with six people attending in person – Pastor Eliel’s family and two neighbors. Since that humble beginning, Pastor Eliel and Jessica have persevered and grown Hospital de la Fe into a thriving congregation of over 100.

Hospital de la Fe means Hospital of Faith. Pastor Eliel and Jessica selected that name because they believe we are all broken and in need of the healing touch of Jesus. Focused on reaching the next generation for Christ, the congregation is reaching out via prayer walks and regular distributions of food. Pastor Eliel has been particularly effective in using social media to broadcast services and weekly Bible studies with more than 3,000 followers.

Through God’s grace, the dedication of Pastor Eliel and Jessica, and partnership with generous donors, the Hospital de la Fe Church continues to grow and flourish. Prayerfully consider partnering with this faithful flock as they share the Good News with brothers and sisters in Oaxaca.



A LEGACY OF LOVE FOR CUBA

This past December, I returned to Cuba (my 16th journey there) after a long absence. Cuba has been “hard pressed, but not crushed” by too many recent challenges: COVID, hurricanes, a lightning strike at a major power plant, and an almost total economic collapse (exacerbated by decades of the U.S. embargo). Our small team carried lots of supplies needed by our beloved partners: light bulbs, refurbished computers, medicines, towels, thumb drives...

But the most precious parcel I carried was an unexpected one: the ashes of a selfless, faithful, Presbyterian missionary who served in Cuba for over 50 years. Lois Kroehler dedicated a large portion of her life to teaching, both in a Presbyterian school in Cardenas before it was taken over by the government and at the seminary in Matanzas. Her passions included literacy training, music, and Spanish hymnody. She served as an elder in one of the churches there. When she retired to Bremerton, WA, she made her final wishes clear to her family: she wanted some of her ashes returned to Cuba to be a part of the place where her heart was held captive. It was my honor to see that accomplished.

Below: The Rev. Drs. Ofelia Ortega and Daniel Montoya, now in their 90s, worked closely with Lois and remember her with great love and respect



A beautiful committal service was presided over by the Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham in the Memorial Garden of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas where Carlos is the president. The leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Cuba gathered – many had known her personally. All of us there would come to know of her deep love for this land and its people. We sang a praise song she had written, and several people shared personal stories of her impact and commitment. We prayed and read Scripture and gave thanks to God for her life and her legacy. Holy ground, this...

Marilyn Borst

Associate Director for Partnership Development

Marilyn Borst with her precious parcel



Holy ground: the committal service at the seminary in Matanzas



A LIGHT IN THE TIME OF DARKNESS

On February 24, 2022, our eyes and ears were fixated on media reports about Russia's massive incursion into Ukraine. For our friends there, this was the latest evolution of a war that has been ongoing since 2014. What happened in February 2022, though, was beyond anything anyone could imagine, and it resulted in the displacement of nearly 13 million people in and out of Ukraine. Thanks be to God that relationships were already in place for us to provide a meaningful and substantial response *as soon as the plea for help came*.

Within one month, Executive Director Mark Mueller and I were on the ground in Warsaw, Poland, to see and hear for ourselves what was happening. It was humbling to meet people who have become fast friends through these months: people like Dr. Piotr Nowak and other staff of the College of Theology and Social Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. We were pleased to have dinner with a team of 15 exhausted women working with the Radooga ministry who had just fled Kyiv leaving husbands and sons behind. We brought back stories laced with fear, confusion, and hope that the war would finish in a month.

A year later, the war rages on with no end in sight. Stories have been tragic, and the harsh Ukrainian winter does not help. Temperatures range between 10–36 degrees Fahrenheit with plenty of snow. Energy has been scarce with power getting to most people only eight hours a day. Human trafficking of children and women fleeing Ukraine was rampant in the spring.

Our strategy has been to work closely with the church. Friends in Kyiv (Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary) and Lviv (the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and its charity) as well as Mission Eurasia and Radooga, who serve the needs of orphans and war-affected children, have been the focus of our support in Ukraine. City Church and LCC International University of



**Dr. Ivan Rusyn, president of the
Ukrainian Evangelical Theological
Seminary, and Tom Boone (R)**

Lithuania, the College of Theology and Social Sciences in Warsaw, Poland, and Campus Crusade of Romania have been delivering fantastic support in the Eastern European countries surrounding Ukraine.

As a result of your generosity, the witness of the church has been bold, courageous, and characterized by integrity. The church has become a true light in this time of darkness and has given birth to a spiritual revival throughout the region! Our friends tell us that because we have stood with them, people are able to see that it is not God causing this war. In fact, they see God is suffering with them just as Isaiah wrote,

*"In all their affliction he was afflicted,
and the angel of his presence saved them;
in his love and in his pity, he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them
all the days of old."*

Your generosity made this witness possible. Thank you!

Thomas Boone
Associate Director for Mission

We invite your continued support of these ministries
and their work being done in Christ's name.

Grace and Gratitude: The Church in Syria

The chaos and destruction of war are behind them, and the task of rebuilding and renewal is well underway with our Presbyterian family in Syria. Throughout it all, The Outreach Foundation, because of the prayers, presence, and gifts of our donors – churches and individuals alike – has accompanied them on their journey and helped to transform their ministry dreams into mission realities...

...as in Aleppo, where, on the bombed-out site of the old church, the Aleppo Christian Center is rising and will offer a unique and much-needed space for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue in the heart of the city. It will also provide an added venue for outreach for the congregation and a place where theological education can be nurtured.

...as in Latakia, where the 1,000-member Presbyterian congregation will finally have a playground and sports yard for the hundreds of children, youth, and young adults who attend the weekly gatherings at this flourishing ministry center.



Out of the rubble of war,
the Aleppo Christian Center rises



Above: Rev. Ibrahim with Tami, his wife, left and Julie Burgess center, a mission leader at West Hills Church in Omaha

The Rev. Ibrahim Nseir, who pastors the Aleppo Church, wrote to us not long ago. Rev. Nseir was recently chosen as the Moderator of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon to which his church and the one in Latakia belong. He writes:

We know it is the blessing of God to have you and your organization as full partners....as leaders we commit ourselves to God's will that He uses us as means for decreasing the suffering of our people and bringing heavenly hope into their lives.

...we give thanks to our God for you, and we appreciate you being with us in our ministry by helping us to overcome all the difficulties and obstacles...

We assure you that what you have done to support our ministries through previous years and nowadays will be planted in the minds and hearts of the coming generations.

We will continue to be with you as one body that will never cease proclaiming the Good News for the glory of our triune God...

Such grace...such gratitude!

Please continue to support the work and witness of our Presbyterian ministries in Syria.

GRATEFUL FOR CHURCH PARTNERS

South Highland VBS Aids Children in Ukraine

In June of 2022, South Highland Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL created our own Vacation Bible School called “God’s Gifts—Growing with the Fruit of the Spirit.” We used a garden theme with plants (including a “real” tree!) greenery, gardeners, and even bees. This was a terrific theme for all.

Each year during VBS, we collect a daily offering from the children. We like to have something visible and current for the children to understand what they are participating in. In 2022, we were seeing pictures nightly on television of Ukrainian children boarding trains, standing in lines, and staying in shelters.

Each day we would show a video and talk about the children in Ukraine and the kinds of things they were going through. We had a tall cylindrical tube with a flower “growing” out of it for our collection plate. Children would bring their money up for the offering. Seeing those little folks bringing zip-lock bags filled with change or tiny, folded bills being dug out of pockets was truly one of the highlights of each day. Parents reported their children were talking about the children of Ukraine, the things they needed, and asking for more money each night.





As our senior pastor and Outreach board member Ed Hurley stated, "South Highland has always stood alongside those who fight for freedom and equality. Our Vacation Bible School this past summer, after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, dedicated the children's offering, which came in abundantly, to the relief effort being provided through friends of The Outreach Foundation. We were thrilled to present a gift of \$500 from the children."

Katya O'Leary

Director of Children's Ministry
South Highland Presbyterian Church

Our staff members love to preach and teach and help congregations catch a vision for the amazing things that God is doing around the world. Contact us to schedule a visit!

ONLINE GIVING



If you noticed that things look a bit different, you're right! We have changed our online giving platform. You can now easily set up a recurring gift and you can also make your gift in memory or in honor of someone. For more information, go to www.theoutreachfoundation.org/online-giving.

Give smarter with a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) – Give directly from your IRA

Making a QCD is a great option since QCDs count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). Gifts can be made annually and can effectively lower your adjusted gross income and bring tax benefits. For more information, contact your personal tax advisor.

Contact Jenna Crunk at 615-778-8881 or
jenna@theoutreachfoundation.org for more information.
For updated stories and information, be sure to follow us on social media!



JOYFUL CELEBRATION

Two and a half hours east of Nairobi, Kenya, is the town of Sultan Hamud. It was here on Sunday, January 15th, 2023, where hundreds gathered to celebrate the completion and dedication of PCEA Maji Ya Uzima Church. It was a day full of joy, gratitude, and pride. Everything in the sanctuary, down to the offertory bags and tablecloths, was blessed and dedicated to God and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) by the Rt. Rev. Theft Mutahi, Moderator, PCEA 23rd General Assembly. The congregation and community responded with singing, poetry, and traditional Maasai dancing.

This church represents the 400th church constructed in partnership between PCEA and The Outreach Foundation and under the leadership of Outreach East Africa Mission Specialist Stu Ross. To paraphrase Rt. Rev. Mutahi, Outreach has been a friend to PCEA and worked with them for 25 years. While we celebrate the 400th church with PCEA, this is not the end. It is the start of another phase.

While preaching a beautiful sermon (in three languages no less!) about not forgetting God's blessings because it is easy to get used to them and take them for granted, the electricity to the sanctuary went out. Rev. Mutahi said it well, "but we have the power of the Lord, so we shall continue."

Jenna Crunk, CFO and COO
The Outreach Foundation



TRAVEL WITH OUTREACH IN 2023

We invite you to travel with The Outreach Foundation to spend time with our global partners – to encourage and be encouraged! Come with us to see how God is at work in the world.

Please visit our website for updated information. Stories from Outreach trips can also be found on the website and are especially helpful for new travelers!

CUBA
April 21 – 29

EGYPT
May 30 – June 9

Ministry Immersion Experience:
LIVERPOOL, UK
May 27 – June 3
June 23 – July 1

KENYA
COLLEGE TRIP
June 9 – 23

Faithful Women on the Road:
LEBANON
July 16 – 30

CHINA
July 20 – August 4

Iranian Diaspora in Europe:
AMSTERDAM /
GERMANY
August 27 – September 4

Ministry Immersion Experience:
TÜRKIYE (TURKEY)
October 2 – 7

HOLY LAND
October 9 – 23

TÜRKIYE (TURKEY)
October 9 – 18

IRAQ
November 6 – 20

With Presbyterian Education Board:
PAKISTAN
November 13 – 20

For more information about travel with The Outreach Foundation, contact carol@theoutreachfoundation.org.



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*“It is always a holy
experience to meet
brothers and sisters
in Christ from other
parts of the world. I’m
humbled and inspired
by their faith.”*

OUTREACH TRAVELER

Learn about travel
opportunities inside!