



Richardson and his family are members of the Presbyterian Church in Fairouzeh, Syria

REACHING OUT

The Outreach Foundation Newsletter • Fall 2021

FINANCIAL CRISIS IN LEBANON AND SYRIA

See inside for an opportunity to support our ministry partners
in Lebanon and Syria during this holiday season



Marilyn with Rev. Joseph Kassab, the Synod's General Secretary, based in Lebanon,
and Rev. Boutros Zaour, Moderator of the Synod, based in Syria

CONTEXT

Dear Partners in Christ's Mission,

You may sometimes wonder why "Lebanon" and "Syria" find a constant pairing in the work of The Outreach Foundation. These two countries are quite dissimilar in religious makeup and political structure. Geographically, Lebanon is smaller than Connecticut while Syria is about the same size as Washington State. Lebanon, as a state, is "new" as it was carved out of the territory of Syria in the aftermath of WWI and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire while the modern state of Syria traces its territorial history back to the 10th century BCE. But for *our* purposes, there is a singular unifying factor: the Church.

The National Evangelical [Presbyterian] Synod of Syria and Lebanon is the "umbrella" over the 40 congregations which define our family-by-faith in that region (split evenly between the two countries). The majority of The Outreach Foundation partnerships in Syria/Lebanon are under the Synod. Those that are not are actively under the Synod have some relationship to it. For instance, Linda, who runs Blessed School, is a graduate of the Synod's seminary; Walid, an elder from the Presbyterian Church in Homs, is the engineer renovating Home of Hope; Christine, principal of the Synod's large school, is a board member for Together for the Family.

What also unites both countries now is an economic crisis of epic proportion: Syria is haltingly recovering from 8 years of war, and Lebanon, on top of the pandemic, watched its port explode in August 2020 (leaving 300,000 homeless) and saw its ineffective government collapse, bringing with it a once stable and robust banking industry. For the middle-class families (like most of us) who comprise the Presbyterian congregations there, the financial realities of the resultant currency devaluations are staggering: the purchasing power of salaries is depleted by 75% in Syria and 90% in Lebanon.

With the holiday season fast approaching, we invite you – our faithful donors and supportive congregations – to give from your abundance to our partners who "lift high the cross" during these trying times in troubled places. And may Paul's words encourage our generosity: *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* [Galatians 6:10] The pages which follow highlight the depth and breadth of our partnerships in the region which your gifts to the Syria/Lebanon Appeal will sustain in the months ahead.

Joyfully,

Marilyn Borst

Associate Director for Partnership Development



Above: The parents of little Christian Khatouf bring their son forward for baptism in the Presbyterian Church of Nabek, Syria



Left: The Outreach Foundation board chair, Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, with the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Tripoli, Lebanon, Rev. Rola Sleiman. The Tripoli Church runs one of the Synod's four schools for refugee children

CONGREGATIONS

Rev. Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of the Synod, recently wrote to us: *We would never have imagined that a day would come when we would have to establish a relief program to provide the basics of food, medicine, and heating fuel for the families in and around our churches or be unable to provide decent salaries for our pastors and Christian School principals to prevent them from forced emigration, leaving their land and their church...*

Despite the enormous economic challenges facing the churches, flourishing ministries continue: Sunday School gatherings overflow with both children and youth, and women pack the sanctuaries midweek for Bible study and fellowship. In both Syria and Lebanon, the Synod and its congregations run highly respected schools which welcome children (over 10,000, total) of all faiths, and where many of the 1,000 employees are members of those churches. In Syria, the church in Homs runs an elder-care facility and, in Aleppo, a low-cost community clinic. In Lebanon, 4 of the congregations oversee 4 additional schools which shine the light of Christ into the lives of Syrian refugee children.

In 2022, the Synod hopes to continue a relief program for 1,350 of its poorest families and supplement the salaries of its 28 active pastors and the pensions of its 16 retired pastors.

Caring for the Vulnerable

In a time of economic crisis, the most fragile parts of the population are always hit the hardest. The Outreach Foundation partners with 7 small Christ-centered ministries in Lebanon which care for the most vulnerable.

Under the auspices of the Synod of Syria and Lebanon, **Hamlin Home** was founded over a hundred years ago as a sanatorium for those recovering from tuberculosis. One of the first nursing schools in Lebanon was opened on its grounds and during the Civil War (1975-90), it served as a hospital for those wounded in the brutal partisan battles – regardless of “whose side” you had been on. It now offers a haven for the elderly to live their last years in dignity and security, cared for by a loving staff.

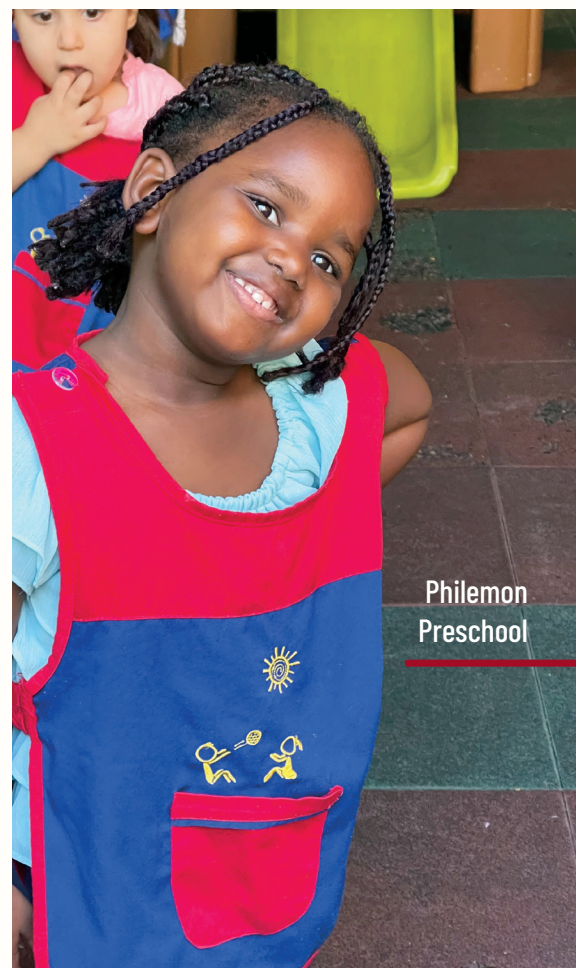
As Syrians began to flood into Lebanon to escape the war in their homeland, this small country of about 6 million was soon overwhelmed by 1.5 million refugees, of which 65% were school-aged children. Despite their small presence, the Synod of Syria and Lebanon reached out to care for these young victims of war and would soon open six **Refugee Schools** to serve them, offering “Hope and a Future” to those who had lost everything.

A Syrian refugee mother under the care of Together for the Family



In Beirut, three unique schools were created by a coalition of Christians to serve children at the margins of society: **Blessed School** gathers in children and young adults with autism whose complicated developmental challenges make them unsuitable for mainstreaming into other classrooms. **Home of Hope** is a haven for children who have been removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect. Some of them have been taken off the streets where they were being trafficked. **The Philemon Preschool Grow Project** was opened as a daycare center in an unused wing of the Armenian Home for the Elderly to provide a place where migrants (from places like Sudan and the Philippines) could leave their children (to thrive) while their parents found positions as domestic workers and day laborers.

Serving refugees who fled wars in both Iraq and Syria and came to Beirut seeking security and a better life, **Our Lady Dispensary** provides food parcels, trauma healing, and medical care for thousands of families in a poor suburb of the city. Many of them hope to immigrate to Europe or Australia, but the systems run slowly, often leaving these beleaguered families without resources to survive. The Beqaa Valley is Lebanon's rich agriculture area - and it also borders Syria. Not surprisingly, the majority of Syrian refugees found their way over the mountains to this place, and the fertile fields are now interspersed with vast "tent cities." **Together for the Family** began in nearby Zahle as a grassroots response to seeing so many broken spirits on the streets. While proclaiming Christ's love to those who had never encountered it, a baby-feeding outreach counsels young mothers and provides for the nutritional needs of fragile newborns, while job training for boys (carpentry) and girls (sewing and hairdressing) is transforming young lives.



Philemon
Preschool



One of
the Synod's
schools for
refugee
children



Above: Yousef Kashoo and Adon Namaan are both from Latakia, Syria. Recent graduates of NEST, they are now doing their fieldwork rotating amongst various congregations to fine-tune their ministerial skills while guided by seasoned pastors. Yousef is in Damascus and Adon in Homs.

Education

A small, Christian liberal arts college in the heart of Beirut, **Haigazian University** was founded by the Armenian Evangelical Church 63 years ago. It serves a diverse ethnic and religious community with a Christian perspective that is invitational but not proscriptive. It intentionally draws in students from lower economic communities and seeks to prepare them for careers that emphasize service, such as teaching and social work. **Near East School of Theology (NEST)** in Beirut prepares men and women for the work of ministry. By providing qualified candidates with the necessary theological knowledge, spiritual formation, pastoral training, educational skills, and leadership aptitude, NEST nurtures the faith of ministerial candidates and lay church members. While NEST's primary purpose is to train pastors and church workers, it is also concerned with continuing education for those in active service and with theological education of the laity.

Gifts to the Syria/Lebanon Emergency Appeal will allow The Outreach Foundation to meet the requests of our partners in the region, all of whom are struggling in the current economic crisis.



Make a gift by sending a check to The Outreach Foundation marked for Syria/Lebanon Partnership; making an online gift at

www.theoutreachfoundation.org

or scanning the QR code to make an instant gift.

Alternative Christmas Gifts

FOR OUR PARTNERS AROUND THE WORLD

As we celebrate the birth of God's greatest gift to us, please consider delighting your friends and family with a gift that supports one of the ministry opportunities listed below. We will send you a unique (blank) card that reflects the gift (along with a brief explanation of the gift to include with the card) that you may personalize and send to the person you would like to bless or to include in your own Christmas card.

Bibles for New Christians\$20

The Bible is a powerful tool in leading people to Christ and the foundation for growing in the faith for every Christian. But in many places, Bibles are not available or are too expensive to obtain. Your gift of \$20 can provide God's sacred word to someone in any of several strategic places including China, South Sudan, Mexico, and Egypt.

Supplies for Refugees' Newborn Babies\$80

Poor living conditions and the economic crisis in Lebanon have left refugees with newborn babies unable to obtain basic necessities. Through our partner in Lebanon, Together for the Family, your gift of \$80 provides formula, medicine, and diapers for a newborn baby for a month.

Build a Cistern in Mexico\$2,200

In this ministry led by Outreach partner Todd Luke, Mexican, mostly Indigenous, men and women work together to build family-owned cisterns for themselves and their neighbors to solve their clean water problem. We'd love for this ministry to be 100% self-sufficient, but each cistern costs \$2,200 while annual family incomes barely reach \$2,000 US dollars in this part of Mexico. A gift of any size will help our Mexican crew work with families to help them solve their water problem.



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*for a special offering
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encourage your
church to support
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Partnership.*