

# REACHING OUT

The Outreach Foundation Newsletter • Spring/Summer 2020

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# CERTAINTIES IN UNCERTAIN DAYS

## *A Reflection from Rob Weingartner*

**The challenge of facing COVID-19** has introduced us all to a new level of uncertainty. It is heightened for me by my decision to retire after eighteen years with The Outreach Foundation. I'll conclude my duties at the end of September in order to focus on my family, managing my Parkinson's disease and finding new ways to serve. During these uncertain days, I find it helpful to focus on certainties that have shaped Outreach down through the years.

First and foremost, Outreach has always been about engaging God's people in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Our mission has not changed, and it must not change. Yet how we live into that mission will require innovation and new directions.

When Outreach was founded in 1979, we worked alongside the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. After reunion, it was the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Today, we serve congregations in the extended Presbyterian family, PC(USA), ECO, EPC and more. Part of Outreach's unique calling is to invite Presbyterians across those boundaries to join in God's mission. That diversity is beautifully reflected in our Board of Trustees.

We used to think of mission primarily as something we did for others. Today, we recognize our own continuing need to be transformed by the Gospel. Often it is those we are serving whom God uses to teach us, to deepen our faith and our understanding of what it means to live for Jesus in the world.

That is reflected in a word we often use to describe our ministry – partnership. Partnership is not a strategy or a methodology. It is a biblical way of thinking about the church that is grounded in the very nature and character of God. David Bosch wrote that there is mission because God loves people. Mission is not primarily an activity of the church. It is rather the church's shared participation in the activity of God.

So, what certainties can we turn to? Jesus is the only Lord and Savior. He invites us to yield our lives to him. He sends each of us into the world in his name to bless all the peoples. He promises never to leave us or forsake us and that nothing can separate us from his love. In any and every age, that is good news, really the best news of all.

**Rob Weingartner •**



Rob, Rwanda Trip 2015

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Rob in Kenya

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# COVID-19 EMERGENCY APPEAL

The Outreach Foundation is in regular contact with partners around the world, many of whom are sharing with us the upheaval that they are experiencing as the COVID-19 virus and the response to it burdens their ministries of medical outreach and compassionate service. The pandemic has brought urgent requests from our partners: for food, support for pastors in poor areas, care for refugees in already-fragile circumstances, along with simple technologies so that far-flung congregations can participate in worship and be equipped for outreach and discipleship.

Iraq



The COVID-19 Emergency Appeal was launched on March 23 and your gifts now total over \$125,000. Those funds are going out quickly to sustain the work and witness of the Church in places like Cuba, Rwanda, Iraq, Costa Rica, Syria, Lebanon, Guatemala, Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, Brazil, and Zambia.

The Global Church is modeling Paul's words, as they have been "hard pressed but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair" by the contingencies of the pandemic. We can continue to encourage them, strengthen their mission and ministry and demonstrate the unity of the body of Christ with gifts made to The Outreach Foundation's "COVID-19 Emergency Appeal."

In the meantime may we unite our voices in an echo of Psalm 61: *Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.* •

## Kenya

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# OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS



# Covering Five Continents and Thirty-Nine Countries

Lebanon



Rwanda



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# The Blessings of 2019 and the Challenges Ahead

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**The Outreach Foundation had a successful year in 2019** as we engaged new churches and individuals in exciting partnerships and projects around the world. Our loyal supporters continued to enable The Outreach Foundation to reach out to God's people with God's word. Please review our financial results in the charts on page 9.

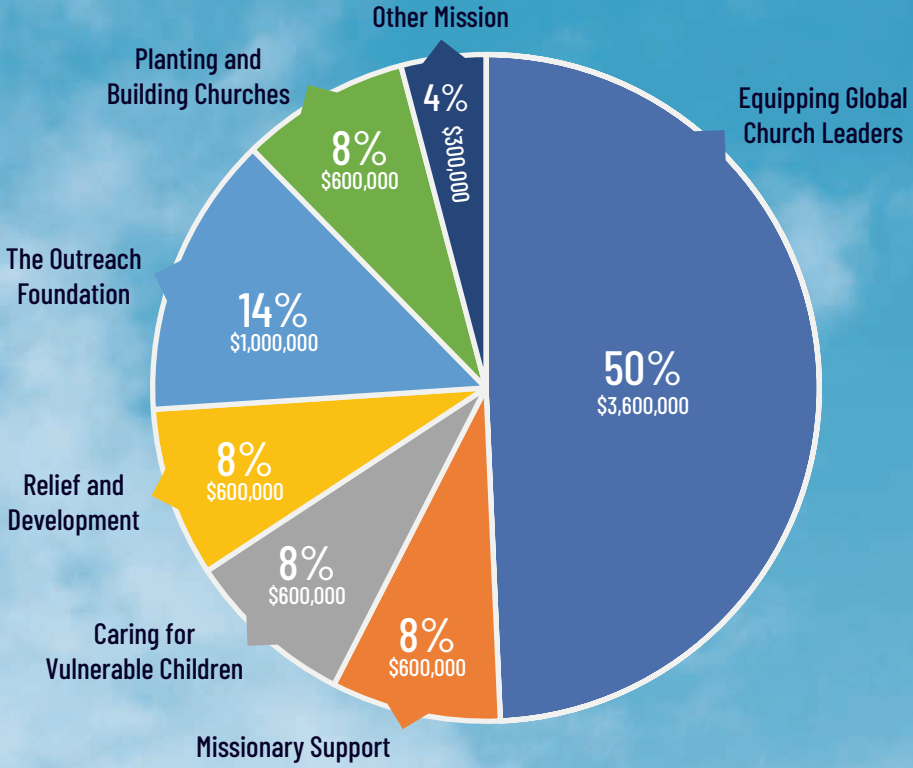
Some special appeals played a big part in our focus and were well-received by our donor base. The Venezuela Appeal, in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Venezuela provided more than 38,000 meals during a devastating crisis in that country. The Emergency Syria Appeal allowed three Presbyterian churches in northeast Syria to receive desperately needed food and medical supplies for members of the church and the community.

With more emphasis on a social media presence, The Outreach Foundation received over 120 gifts through Facebook. We anticipate that additional forms of social media will play an even bigger role in our future fundraising and communication.

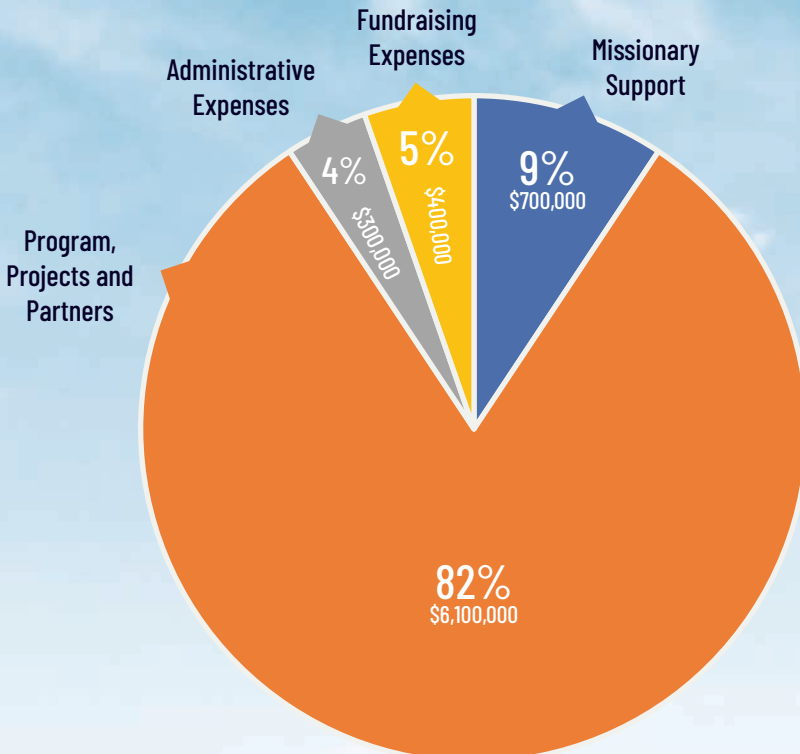
As we prepared to celebrate the blessings of 2019, a world-wide pandemic hit. With the human and financial effects of COVID-19, The Outreach Foundation, along with other not-for-profits, expects to face challenges in the coming months. We remain committed to our mission of engaging God's people in his work in the world and ask for your continued prayer. •



# 2019 CONTRIBUTIONS – \$7,300,000



# 2019 DISTRIBUTIONS – \$7,500,000



# MARRIAGE, MISSIONS, AND MINISTRY



Heather & Eric Swofford

Swoffords (left) and Rev. Brian Stewart (far right)  
travel together with Outreach to visit partners in Egypt



**Heather and Eric Swofford are a phenomenal ministry team** from First Presbyterian Church – Greenville SC. However, Heather and Eric did not always view themselves as a ministry team. In fact for 12 years as busy parents raising two children, Heather and Eric saw themselves as “in by association, i.e., saved by being in the pew.” Things started changing when Rev. Brian Stewart, FPC Evangelism/Mission pastor and former Outreach trustee, invited Eric to venture out of the pew and into the mission field by receiving missions training. Even more life-changing was the challenge from senior pastor Rev. Dr. Richard Gibbons for Eric and Heather to pray together daily.

Their journey from marriage to missions to ministry has been rich and continuous. Eric tells us that for 25 years, he worked as a bank manager, but felt another type of calling. Today, Eric is a Ramsey Preferred Coach and coaches adult children who need to talk to aging parents about long-term health care and financial well-being. Heather is a nurse practitioner working in the field of infectious disease. In her work and ministry, Heather recognizes that people can be lonely and have deep needs for Christ in community, especially in this era of COVID-19. Zoom calls are uplifting, but isolated cancer or COVID patients or those in memory care miss out – there is no substitute for phone calls and prayer.

“Today we love what we do!” They lead two missional communities each week in their home with 12–25 people (now via Zoom), take an online prayer class, and are HUDDLE mentors for other missional communities. Eric is an elder and Heather a deacon, and together they have been on mission trips to Egypt, the Dominican Republic, and the United Kingdom to visit FPC’s Iranian Christian sister church. “We love the idea of leaving a legacy for another generation. Our call is to love one another and share our house and ourselves selflessly and generously with other people, while keeping the focus on him, NOT us,” Heather said.

**Ralph Wheeler •**

## PLANNED GIVING

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**What is Planned Giving?** Planned Giving is simply the term used when you plan ahead of time who receives your assets after you die and making the decision that charities you love should be included. Supporting The Outreach Foundation is a tangible affirmation of faith. Planned Giving can take many forms, most of them simple to execute.



To learn more about planned giving opportunities, scan the QR Code, visit [www.theoutreachfoundation.org/planned-giving](http://www.theoutreachfoundation.org/planned-giving) or contact Ralph Wheeler at The Outreach Foundation by phone (615) 778-8881 or by email [ralph@theoutreachfoundation.org](mailto:ralph@theoutreachfoundation.org).



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Learn about COVID-19  
response inside!