



The Outreach Foundation REACHING OUT

Winter 2017

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Our Family in Syria and Lebanon

Ed. Note: An Outreach team of 10 recently returned from a 14 day trip to Lebanon and Syria. They visited some of the 18 Presbyterian churches in Syria, meeting with pastors and church members. Outreach Executive Director Rob Weingartner, who traveled with the team, shares his thoughts below about the moving experience.

Everywhere we went in Syria we were warmly welcomed, by shopkeepers and soldiers, patriarchs and porters, governors and grandmothers. And the Presbyterian churches? They welcomed us like family. In fact, we discovered that we had brothers and sisters whom most of us had never met.

During our nine days in Syria, The Outreach Foundation team received humbling thanks for our prayers and the support that we have sent for the churches' relief efforts. We received the thanks on your behalf, all of you in the Outreach family who have been praying and giving so generously. Many of you were also praying for our team. Thank you.

With fighting continuing in many parts of the country and half the population displaced, tremendous challenges remain. Nevertheless, it is the strategy of our partner, the National Evangelical Synod of

Syria and Lebanon, to help people stay, to keep the churches open, to care for those whose lives have been shattered, both Christian and non-Christian, to preserve a witness to the Gospel in a place where many have lost hope and long for good news.

Paul makes it clear in Colossians 1 that bearing fruit and bearing burdens go together. Why did we go to Syria? To be with members of our family who are suffering. Nothing can take the place of just showing up. How we were inspired and humbled by their faith and their faithfulness!

We worshipped on successive Sundays in Latakia and Damascus, met with government leaders in Latakia and Homs, prayed and sang and wept with family in many of the Syrian Presbyterian churches, and we listened. Mostly, we listened.

At Yazdiah, where pastor Michel and his wife

Houda are serving in beautiful ways – their hands strengthened by your gifts – we listened to the stories of many who had been driven from Homs. 2,000 hurting families have been helped by this small congregation. “If there are angels on earth,” one woman said, “this church is the angel.” Across the country Syrian Presbyterian congregations are saying, “Do not be afraid; for we bring you good news.”

How sobering it was to visit the church in Mhardeh, a Christian town that is still under fire by militant Islamists. We greeted and embraced and wept with many of those who have lost loved ones in the fighting, 66 martyrs for Christ. A poster of these dear saints' pictures and photos on many cell phones illustrated the stories of violence and loss we heard. The day following our visit, shells hit the plaza near where we had parked. There were four casualties.

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“Words cannot express,” Salam said, “my thanks to God!”



Outreach trustees Jack Baca and Ed Hurley visit with Rev. Jaccoub Sabbagh, pastor in Fairouzeh.



Julie Burgess and Marilyn Borst hear the story of a young son's death in Mhardeh.



About The Outreach Foundation

The Outreach Foundation engages Presbyterians and global partners in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Because our ministry is Kingdom work, not denominational work, we work with PC(USA), EPC, ECO, Fellowship Community congregations and others. We help congregations build long-term partnerships with the global church that are mutually transformational. Every person, project and partnership we support is directly involved in sharing the Gospel in word and deed.

Our work depends entirely upon the involvement and financial support of mission-minded individuals, congregations and organizations. We receive gifts in our office and disburse them to partners around the world. Established in 1979, The Outreach Foundation is independently governed by a Board of Trustees, all of whom are pastors or officers in their respective congregations.

Our Mission

Connecting Presbyterians to build the church's capacity to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ

Our Convictions

Committed to the historic Christian faith as it is revealed in God's Word and expressed by the ecumenical creeds and in the Reformed confessions, we affirm that

- Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Savior.
- God's grace in Jesus Christ is for all people.
- The church exists for God's glory and God's mission.
- Discipleship and mission are the calling of every follower of Jesus.
- God connects us in mission through relationships of mutual respect and support.
- The Holy Spirit empowers the church to bear witness to the Good News by its life words and deeds.

OUR PRIORITIES

Helping the church live out its missional calling

Building the mission capacity of the global church, especially where the church is vulnerable or growing rapidly, as together we

- cultivate deep, long-term relationships
- support the work of missionaries
- help each other equip leaders, plant and build churches, and strengthen ministries of compassion

Transforming lives through mission involvement

Reaching Out

Reaching Out is published three times per year by The Outreach Foundation to inform friends and donors about our involvement in God's mission. Subscriptions are offered free of charge upon request. To request a complimentary subscription, inform us of an address or name change, or for more information about our ministry, please contact us.

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We were challenged by the resolve of Pastor Ibrahim Nseir from Aleppo who traveled with us for several days. We rejoiced with Elder Najwa and Salam whose houses in Homs have been rebuilt with your help. "Words cannot express," Salam said, "my thanks to God!" We thrilled at the resolve of young people who are committed to rebuilding their nation, both the buildings and the people.

In Lebanon, Iraqi refugees Hala, Ramzieh and Wafa described the incomprehensible horror of being driven with their families from their homes by ISIS near Mosul. Now in Beirut, they spoke with deep gratitude of the trauma healing ministry led by Rola Al Kattar through the Our Lady Dispensary, an Outreach partner. "I choose to forgive!" Hala boldly affirmed.

There are so many other people whom I wish I had space to tell you about. I hope that you will read our team's trip blogs at <https://www.theoutreachfoundation.org/trip-blog/> At each of the churches we visited, a team member presented a beautiful banner with these words from Psalm 27: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" We saw that faith and trust everywhere we went.

Know this, you are making a difference in Syria, and you have family there who remember you in their prayers with thanksgiving. 🙏

Rob Weingartner, Executive Director



Travel with The Outreach Foundation

Like many others, Jane McDow felt a call to serve. A member of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Jane has had many service opportunities, both locally and globally. "I will do what God calls me to do," Jane said. Her discernment about where to serve directed her to her own "Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8) – serving in her church and local community. Over the years, Jane has served as an elder, been on multiple search committees, been active in Congregational Care (Westminster's special needs ministry) and other areas such as flowers, visitation and special meals.

Jane receives a chicken as a gift at Kaphinimbule.



She has a very special and busy service ministry.

In the meantime, her husband, Tom, also an elder and an Outreach trustee, has served locally and globally. Tom has traveled to Iraq, China, Pakistan, Kenya, Guatemala and is significantly involved in Outreach's Mozambique ministry, traveling there annually. Through the years, Tom had asked Jane to travel with him internationally. Jane's response each time was, "I don't feel called to go. If God calls me to go, I will go." Last April, she heard his call. Her pastor was preaching on Acts 9:1-20 in a sermon entitled "But...But...So." Jane clearly heard it as "But...But...Go." Although not feeling completely comfortable, she obediently registered for the trip to Mozambique and became excited about it. And, it exceeded her expectations. "It was a wonderful, challenging experience," Jane offered. "It deepened my understanding and appreciation for the ministry and its importance to the people there."

Jane's story is about obedience. Listening to God's call. Is God calling you to see what he's doing in other parts of the world? If so, join The Outreach Foundation on a vision trip this year to see how he works through others around the globe. Contact Lisa at 615/778-8881 for more information. 🙏

Equipped to Make a Difference in Cuba

Life will never be the same for Maricela Muñiz. She will soon graduate from the Matanzas Evangelical Theology Seminary (SET, for its initials in Spanish) in Matanzas, Cuba, where God has transformed and called her to serve him in her native country of Cuba.

Her first touch with the seminary was in grade school. Maricela was brought up in two locally popular religious traditions, Santeria and Spiritism. However, at the age of 12, she attended Sunday School through a program sponsored by SET in her small rural village. It was there that she first came to the realization of God's grace in her life through Jesus Christ. "I realized that God could help me with my difficulties and give me hope," she shared. As she was nurtured and grew in her faith, she began to feel God's call to ministry.

Upon completing high school, she enrolled in the bachelor of theology program at SET. "My understanding of our participation in God's mission has grown tremendously during the three years that I have been here," says Maricela. In her quiet but strong way, she says she feels equipped to make a difference and is confident in her ministry.

Maricela's ministry focus has been the growing youth movement in her denomination. When she completes the program later this year, she will likely return to lead the youth program, focusing on teaching faithful responses



Maricela Muniz



Matanzas Evangelical Theological Seminary

to the expanding "prosperity gospel" and other toxic spiritualities that are spreading rapidly in Cuba.

Praise God for lifting up young people like Maricela to serve the growing church in Cuba in the name of Jesus Christ. 🌍

2017 OUTREACH FOUNDATION TRIPS

Holy Land • May 15–27

**Holistic Evangelism in Tete Province
June 5–15**

**Rebuilding Hope in South Sudan:
A Vision Trip to Ethiopia and South Sudan
June 20 – July 1**

Ghana: Witnessing With Joy • July 20–30

**Colombia: Experiencing Vibrant Latino
Missional Movements • August 20–26**

**Brazil: Church Legacy and Dynamism
August 27 – September 3**

Haiti Vision Trip • September 1–4

**A Mission-Vision Trip to Egypt
October 23 – November 3**

**Iraq: A Journey of Solidarity
November 5–15**



Elizabeth and Berry Long and Jane and Tom McDow in Mozambique.

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Goats: The Gift that Keeps on Giving

For the past several years, through alternative Christmas giving and Vacation Bible School programs, The Outreach Foundation has helped provide goats for Rwandan families. Goats produce milk for making cheese and yogurt to sell as well as provide meat for families. But, they do so much more and have significant impact on livelihoods. They also manufacture “organic” fertilizer! This fertilizer enhances the families’ crop production and vegetable gardens, proving that goats are amazing for economic development. The goats may also be sold to help the families with medical and other expenses.

Through the “goat project,” each family is given two goats. As “payment,” families team up with others from their church to breed the goats. The first-born kid is then returned to the church to be given to another family in need. At about 30 months, kids are ready to have kids of their own. Most goats have twins and some may even have triplets. Goats improve a community in many ways. They truly are “the gift that keeps on giving!” 🌍

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Good to Know

New Trustees

We are pleased to announce two new trustees serving on the board of The Outreach Foundation effective January 1, 2017. **Rev. Jerry Deck** serves as senior pastor at Zionsville Presbyterian Church (IN). He and his wife Megan have four daughters. Jerry studied at Wheaton (M.A., Bible and Theology) and Princeton Seminary (M.Div.). **Rev. Ryan Moore** serves as co-pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Tulsa. Ryan and his wife Heather have three children. His M.Div. is from Duke, and he is completing a Ph.D. in theology at St. Andrews, Scotland. **Rev. Dr. Rob Perkins**, Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, Moraga Valley, CA and **Tom McDow**, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN are also returning to the board in 2017.

New Staff

Rev. Juan Sarmiento, *Associate Director for Mission*

Frank Dimmock, *Africa Mission Specialist*

Marcus dePaula, *Digital Communications Specialist*

Rev. Dr. Jeff Ritchie retired in December but will continue with Outreach in a part-time capacity as Mission Advocate.

2016 Year End Highlights

Thanks be to God, 2016 was a special year for The Outreach Foundation. As we look back, we would like to share several of the highlights:

- Charity Navigator, the nation’s foremost charity rating firm, awarded Outreach with a perfect score. Only 55 of 8,000+ charities achieved such a score; they also rated us the highest rated charity in the Religious Activities category.
- We were also blessed by visiting brothers and sisters in Christ in 12 countries with 167 Outreach travelers on 20 total trips. We prayed, worshipped, laughed and cried with friends in Egypt, Mozambique, South Korea, Lebanon, Syria, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Cuba, China, Kenya, Guatemala and Costa Rica.
- Generous partners in the U.S. purchased 26+ goats for Rwandans, helped buy school supplies for refugee children and provided supplemental support for seminary students and their families as alternative Christmas gifts.
- Through your generosity, life-giving relief efforts in Iraq and Syria were aided by gifts in excess of \$565,000, and compassionate donors continue to support these efforts.
- Again, thanks to your generosity, Outreach enjoyed another record year of gifts that we, in turn, distributed to more than 95 mission partners in 30 countries. For that, we are most grateful. A full accounting will appear in the Spring/Summer issue of *Reaching Out*.