



RCA Global Mission

2021 Year in Review



Peter and Patty Ford - Lebanon

NEST has worked hard this past year to maintain its teaching program as it deals with numerous simultaneous challenges: Lebanon's economic collapse; ongoing COVID restrictions; the aftermath of the August 2020 Beirut port blast; all resulting in fewer incoming students. As colleagues and students nevertheless seek to fulfill God's calling of training and studying for pastoral ministry in the Middle East, they have expressed their deep appreciation for how we are standing alongside them here as they face these challenges.

Blessings of 2021

We thank God that NEST was able to hold in-person graduation in June, although with limited attendance due to COVID. We celebrated the fact that five very qualified students (Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian) were able to complete their degrees despite the challenges. They are now all involved in pastoral ministry in this region.

We usually have several local Christian students who attend nearby colleges (such as the American University of Beirut) staying in our NEST dormitories, but last spring those rooms were empty while the colleges operated completely online. This fall, those colleges (as well as NEST) went back to in-person teaching and our dorm rooms are now full! Also, a group of German and Danish pastors joined us for a three-month sabbatical program. We were able to celebrate all this with a neat welcome party on the NEST veranda in October.

After an academic year when field trips were all canceled due to COVID, Peter was again able to take his "Introduction to Islam" class to visit a mosque in Sidon where his good friend Shaykh Muhammad Abu Zayd is the Imam.

Challenges of 2021

The economic situation in Lebanon keeps getting worse as the Lebanese pound continues to lose its value against the dollar. Sharply increasing prices has meant that basic stocks of food, medicines, and fuel become too expensive for most Lebanese, and are often unavailable. NEST has managed to continue its programs through outside donations towards these costs.



Meanwhile, electricity cuts have increased such that the government supplies only a few hours per day. NEST is thus forced to operate its generator for most of the rest of the day while paying much more for diesel fuel. We still get six hours of complete cuts per day, worked around our class schedule. Fortunately, NEST also invested in a large backup system for our IT server, allowing it to operate around the clock.

Hopes for 2022

2022 will mark a major milestone for us: 40 continuous years serving as your RCA missionaries, with subsequent church and school partnerships in Oman, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Lebanon. It will also be a year of major transition for us, as we prayerfully anticipate our retirement in early 2023. This spring will be our last semester at the Near East School of Theology after 9½ years here. Between next September and February 2023, we will be engaged in our final Home Assignment, hopefully visiting all of our 23 supporting congregations to express our deep gratitude for sustaining us in prayer and financial support all these years. We will also encourage you to consider ongoing support for the work of God's kingdom through RCA Global Mission. Perhaps some of you might consider transferring your support for us to that of our son David in Ethiopia, whose increased budget is now facing a financial shortfall. We also look forward to the October wedding of our younger son Andrew to Anita, his girlfriend for many years. 2022 looks to be a year of much thanksgiving to God!

How We Can Pray

Continue to pray for the Lebanese government, that it can overcome the many differences which are keeping it from finding a suitable approach to the economic problems facing the country. Meanwhile, please keep up the prayers for the people of Lebanon who are especially financially vulnerable, including Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian refugees; and pray for those organizations that are seeking to assist them.

Also, continue to pray that more Middle East Christians will sense God's call into Christian ministry and be sent by their churches to NEST for training.

Thank You

We continue to be greatly encouraged when individuals and groups among our supporting churches reach out to us through email, Zoom, or sending a card for a special occasion. We've also received positive feedback about a couple of video clips we were able to produce with the help of our RCA Global Mission team in Michigan. If you haven't seen them, check out our Global Mission website: www.rca.org/pford