



## April 2024 – part 2

### Connections through Christ in Lebanon

Dear Friends,

This is my third letter in a series of Dear Friends letters for 2024 focused on the word “connection.” If you missed the first two letters of this series, you can read them here:

Connection #1 letter: <https://www.rca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TenClay-February-2024.pdf>

Connection #2 letter: <https://www.rca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/TenClay-April-2024.pdf>

In May of 2022, RCA missionary Peter Ford (now retired), reached out to me regarding a refugee care need in Lebanon and introduced me to the Rev. Linda Macktaby for the first time. Pastor Linda is a former student of Peter’s at the Near East School of Theology and has since been ordained as a pastor by the National Evangelical Church of Beirut. She is only the second woman ordained by her denomination, and the fourth woman ordained in Lebanon!

It was clear from my first interaction with Pastor Linda that she is a woman of deep faith, profound theology, and a proven record of caring for some of the people most marginalized and made vulnerable by our broken and hurting world, including children with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, and refugees.

Pastor Linda is the first person I thought of in October 2023 when I received word that the violence in Israel and Gaza had expanded into Southern Lebanon, displacing approximately 100,000 people in Lebanon from their homes, and putting the lives of those who remained in the conflict zone in Southern Lebanon at risk. It came as no surprise to me that by the time I reached out to Pastor Linda, she had already assembled a group of interfaith colleagues to provide emergency care for around 1,100 people who were displaced by the conflict, but also to provide care to hundreds who chose not to leave their homes and remained in the conflict zone.

Thanks to generous donors who gave financial gifts to the RCA Global Mission Refugee Care Crisis Fund, we sent an initial gift of \$10,000 (USD) to support Pastor Linda’s work, and I was given the green light to begin a fundraising campaign (The RCA Global Mission Lebanon Displacement Relief Project), inviting others to join us in providing compassionate care for people in Lebanon affected by this conflict.

I’m grateful to report that since November 2023 RCA Global Mission has sent \$27,000 to support the work of Rev. Macktaby! Thanks be to God. This money has been used by Pastor Linda and her colleagues to provide

*Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at [kgilmore@rca.org](mailto:kgilmore@rca.org) to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.*

shelter, mattresses, medication, food (including some meat and beans/legumes for protein), clean water, diesel fuel, diapers, hygiene products, cleaning supplies, and beyond for approximately 1,100 displaced people and an additional 1,400 people (around 450 families) who still live in the conflict zone. Many are Christians who currently live where Jesus and his disciples once ministered and performed miracles.



*Above left: Preparing pre-cooked meals for distribution, as many are without electricity and fuel.*

*Above right: Purchasing food for distribution*

Rev. Nathan Busker and his congregation at Ponds Reformed Church in Oakland, NJ, have played a significant role in supporting Pastor Linda's work and this fundraising effort, and have also sent Pastor Linda additional funds. Thank you for supporting RCA Global Mission and Pastor Linda in this time of great need!

Recently, however, on a particularly difficult day after I received yet another anxious message from Pastor Linda about the situation in Lebanon, I reached out to a friend and colleague, Jeff Chu, because I knew he was someone who truly cared and would give me the space to share my laments. Jeff's response was one of not only compassion, but a willingness to help, and he asked if I would connect him with Pastor Linda. Jeff proceeded to interview Pastor Linda about her work in Lebanon and wrote an amazing piece about this interview for his blog. I encourage you to read it here: [https:// jeffchu.substack.com/p/kitchen-stories](https://jeffchu.substack.com/p/kitchen-stories). At the end of the piece, Jeff encouraged his readers to give a financial gift in honor of his pending ordination to one of three projects or organizations providing care for people in Lebanon and Gaza and included the RCA Global Mission Lebanon Displacement Relief Project as one of the options. Thank you, Jeff, for supporting me, for using your interviewing and writing skills to share a part of Pastor Linda's story, and for using your platform to invite others to support Pastor Linda's work.

And now I'm asking a favor of all of you: will you share this DF letter with someone in your life who cares about Lebanon and her people? Will you invite them to pray for those suffering in Tyre, Cana/Qana, and other communities in Southern Lebanon we read about in our Bibles? Can we, together, raise a few more dollars to provide compassionate, Christ-like care for those displaced from their homes or who continue to live in the conflict zone?

Anyone interested in donating to the RCA Global Mission Lebanon Displacement Relief Fund can do so by clicking on this link: <https://www.rca.org/give/lebanon-displacement-relief-project/>, or by contacting me at [jjtenclay@rca.org](mailto:jjtenclay@rca.org).



*Photo taken by Pastor Linda while distributing aid in Southern Lebanon. The light shines in the darkness...*

*RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.*

To those who have prayed and donated funds—thank you.

Finally, I want to share my deep gratitude for Peter and Patty Ford, who recently retired after serving as missionaries for RCA Global Mission for 40 years, including 10 years of service in Lebanon. Their son, David, continues to serve as an RCA missionary in Ethiopia, and I'm blessed to call them all friends and colleagues. As I mentioned before, Peter first introduced me to Pastor Linda, and, though retired at the time, Peter joined me in writing an appeal to RCA churches and leaders last Fall for the Lebanon Displacement Relief Fund in support of Pastor Linda and her life-sustaining work. On a personal note, Peter and Patty have been a great source of encouragement and support to me and my family as we continue to serve God in mission and ministry through the RCA and RCA Global Mission. Peter and Patty—thank you.

Longing for Peace/Salam and Prosperity in Lebanon,

JJ TenClay