

**A History of The Outreach
Foundation in Egypt:
1998–2020**



Jefferson Ritchie

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Introducing a 2000-Year-Old Church

It has been a great joy to write some of the history of The Outreach Foundation between 1998–2020. The first volume of our history was about our work in China. This volume will cover our mission activity in Egypt during the same period, but we must first give some history of the Church in Egypt.

A First-Century Church

Egyptians are very proud to point out that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus went to Egypt to escape King Herod. They probably lived among the large Jewish Diaspora there. Tradition has it that Saint Mark went to Alexandria in A.D. 45 and preached the gospel. From that time until the seventh century, the Church grew amidst periodic persecution. Eventually, it became the dominant religion of Egypt and produced some of the greatest theologians for the early Church. The monastic movement also began in Egypt. In short, Egypt was a significant center of the early Christian movement prior to the arrival of Islam.



The Holy Family in Egypt

The Arrival of Islam

When the Arab armies conquered Egypt in the seventh century A.D., Islam became the official religion of the land. Under Arab rule, Egypt's Christians had to pay a tax if they wanted to remain Christian. Over the next 300–400 years, a majority of Egyptians became Muslims, and the Christian minority was increasingly concentrated in the middle part of Egypt.



Muhammed Ali Mosque, Cairo

Christians in Egypt were known as “Copts,” and the Church in Egypt was the Coptic Orthodox Church, a branch of the Orthodox Communion. They had their own Pope who traced his office back to the time of St. Mark. Although their heritage was strong, the percentage of Christians continued to decline. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Christians numbered only 10–12 percent of the population of Egypt.

The Coming of the American Presbyterian Mission and the Emergence of a Presbyterian Church in Egypt

Presbyterian missionaries went to Egypt in the mid-1800s. They hoped to renew the ancient Coptic Orthodox Church and inspire it to reach out to the Muslims in the land. Unfortunately, the theological and cultural differences between the Orthodox and Protestant expressions of the faith led the Orthodox leadership to reject the missionary efforts. Some Orthodox lay people did accept the message of the missionaries, and the churches the missionaries formed from these Orthodox converts became the nucleus of the Coptic Evangelical Church. Over the years this Presbyterian communion became known as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile. Today Egyptian Presbyterians refer to their local churches by the simple title “Evangelical Church.” Here “Evangelical” means “Protestant” in contrast to “Orthodox” (Coptic Orthodox). Today there are other Protestant denominations in Egypt, but Presbyterians were the first Protestants to arrive, and they co-opted the title.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent hundreds of missionaries to Egypt over the 150 years prior to the involvement of The Outreach Foundation. Over time, the number of missionaries declined, and by 1998 there was only a handful of Presbyterian mission co-workers. The Evangelical Church in Egypt was a fully independent Church carrying out its own ministries and mission as a minority faith in a 90% Islamic context.

At the time The Outreach Foundation began its work in Egypt, the Evangelical Church had over 300 churches, a seminary, and a large system of church-related secondary schools. A nongovernmental organization founded by Presbyterians, the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), was effectively engaged in community development throughout the nation. Additionally, Presbyterians formed the principal leadership of the Bible Society of Egypt, a nondenominational ministry supplying Bibles for all Christian communions. Egyptian Presbyterians, while comprising less than 0.5 percent of the total population of Egypt, were having an impact beyond their numbers. However, they—and all Christian communions—were circumscribed in what they could and could not do in relationship to their life and ministry. For example,

- Any new church construction or repairs to existing churches required the signature of the president of Egypt to approve a building permit. Often churches would have to wait years for simple repairs to be approved.
- Conversion from Christianity to Islam was constantly encouraged and sought for, but to convert from Islam to Christianity invited possible death.
- On a more personal level, a Christian could work in the government but could never aspire to a post at the highest levels. These jobs were reserved for Muslims.

Into this context came The Outreach Foundation, an evangelistic mission organization.

¹ The Synod of the Nile is the highest governing body of the Evangelical Church in Egypt.

The Beginning of The Outreach Foundation's Mission in Egypt

1991 Trip to Egypt and the Birth of a Vision

In 1991 a group from Presbyterian Men, a national organization in the PCUSA, visited the Church in Egypt. Among the U.S. participants was Dr. Richard LeTourneau, a trustee of The Outreach Foundation.

Upon his return, Elder LeTourneau urged the Board of Trustees to consider supporting the teaching of mission and evangelism at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC). In support of his proposal, LeTourneau reminded the trustees that The Outreach Foundation had made possible a renewed emphasis on teaching evangelism and mission at the four seminaries historically connected to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.



*Dr. Richard LeTourneau
Outreach Trustee*

Dr. Bill Bryant, former trustee of The Outreach Foundation and its Executive Director from 1994–2002, recalls that there was interest among the board members in LeTourneau's proposal. I was on staff at the PCUSA's Worldwide Ministries Division at the time and was its liaison to The Outreach Foundation. I asked my colleague, Dr. Victor Makari, the PCUSA staff for the Middle East, to share this offer from The Outreach Foundation with the Egyptian Church. Dr. Makari spoke with the Board of Directors of the Cairo seminary and reported back that they were interested.

1999 Visit to Egypt and the Beginning of the Egypt-Outreach Partnership

In spite of the initial interest among its trustees, The Outreach Foundation did not have sufficient staff to follow up with the Cairo seminary until 1998 when I left the Worldwide Ministries Division of the PCUSA and joined The Outreach Foundation. Hoping to resurrect the vision of Dr. LeTourneau, I made my first trip to Egypt in early 1999. One of our U.S. partners, First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, had several mission partnerships in Egypt. The senior pastor, Dr. John Stevens, was also a member of our Board of Trustees, and he invited me to join him, his wife, and one of their sons to meet with their partners at

the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and explore a possible Outreach Foundation initiative with the seminary.

We visited several ministries being carried out by partners of the Colorado Springs church in Egypt; some were parachurch mission organizations with Presbyterian leadership. We then met the General Secretary of the Evangelical Church of Egypt, Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, who took us to the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. There we met Dr. Ekram Lamie, president of ETSC; Dr. Stephen Davis, a new PCUSA co-worker assigned to teach at the seminary; and a new Egyptian professor who was almost finished with his Ph.D., the Reverend Atef Gendy. On behalf of The Outreach Foundation, I shared the hope of our former trustee to support the training of a person to teach mission and evangelism at ETSC and asked if the seminary was still interested in this. President Ekram Lamie assured us that they were. The presence of the Synod of the Nile's Executive Secretary underscored the commitment from the Egyptian side.

Having begun our mission relationship, the next step was to begin fundraising for the future mission professor at the Cairo seminary. When our first major gift was received in early 2000, I wrote the seminary's president to inform him of the



*The Rev. Dr. Atef M. Gendy
President of the Cairo seminary*

gift. There was no response, and I wrote a second note a few months later asking if the seminary was still interested in this joint project. What we did not know during this time was that Dr. Ekram Lamie was no longer at the seminary and that the new President, Dr. Atef Gendy, would not assume his duties until the summer of 2000.

When Dr. Atef began his work, he found the second note from me to Dr. Ekram and wrote

immediately to assure The Outreach Foundation that the seminary was still committed to this plan. What he did not say in his email to me was how dismal the situation at the seminary was when he became president:

- There was contention with the Synod of the Nile.
- There were only 67 students enrolled in the seminary.
- The seminary was almost bankrupt.
- Bridges had been burned with overseas financial partners and others.

Unbeknownst to us in The Outreach Foundation, the timing of our visit could not have been more providential for the Cairo seminary. The Rev. Dr. Darren

Kennedy, a long-term PCUSA mission co-worker who teaches at the seminary, made this statement years after our first meeting in January 1999: “The Outreach Foundation came in with a vision that dared to dream about big things. You were an answer to our prayers at a critical time in our history.”

Twenty years later in an interview in 2019, Dr. Atef offered this reflection on the impact of the seminary’s first encounter with The Outreach Foundation and what it led to over the next twenty years: “We were touched that TOF would invest in a ‘failure.’ Trust developed very quickly between us. We like the way The Outreach Foundation has worked with us. You have been true partners in building God’s kingdom.”

² In Egyptian culture, a person is addressed by title and first name. So instead of referring to Dr. Atef Gendy as “Dr. Gendy” in this volume, we will use the Egyptian appellation, “Dr. Atef.”

Finding Friends and Mission Partners

The trip to Egypt in early 1999 established the priority goal for the mission of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt: building the capacity for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt to engage in mission and evangelism. The first two projects that emerged from the 1999 trip were training of a professor to teach mission and evangelism at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and support for a new church development in a city named “10th of Ramadan.” This city was one of 44 new cities being developed by the Egyptian government to alleviate the population crush of Cairo.

This chapter will trace the initial follow-up steps on the Cairo seminary’s commitment to teach mission and evangelism. The next chapter will introduce the new church in 10th of Ramadan.

First Presbyterian Church of Houston

We had received one generous gift for training a future professor of mission and evangelism, but we needed much more to cover the costs of a Ph.D. program. The First Presbyterian Church of Houston had a long history with The Outreach Foundation, and it was there I focused my efforts. The church’s pastor, Dr. Vic Pentz, had recently served on our Board of Trustees. The Director of Missions, Mrs. Marilyn Borst, had great interest in Egypt, both from her academic study in archaeology and history and from First Presbyterian’s involvement in other parts of the Middle East. Marilyn also knew The Outreach Foundation well, as we were both members of the PCUSA Network of Mission Pastors and Mission Directors.

That fall I traveled to the Houston church to share the seminary’s vision to train a professor for mission and evangelism. I proposed that First Houston commit \$10,000 a year for three years, the minimum time it would take to earn a Ph.D. The staff liked the proposal, and Marilyn Borst became the point-person to advocate for the proposal with the mission committee.

She got tentative approval from the committee to support the project, but the committee did not like the idea of a three-year financial commitment. “Let us approve \$10,000 now,” they said, “and revisit the proposal each year.” Then one of the committee members quietly asked, “If this person is willing to commit three years to training, why can’t we commit to three years to support it as well?” Her word carried the day.

First Presbyterian Church was to invest almost \$75,000 over five years in the Reverend Tharwat Wahib Wahba’s Ph.D. studies at the London School of Theology. This investment was just the beginning of a deep relationship between the Houston congregation and the Evangelical Church in Egypt.

Darren and Elisabeth Kennedy



Elisabeth and Darren Kennedy

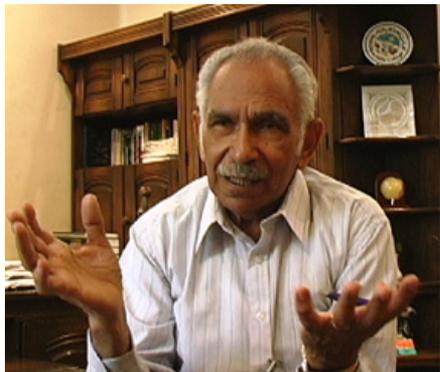
In the late 1990s I visited the campus of Princeton Seminary to spend time with one of the student fellowships on campus. It was there I met a couple, Elisabeth and Darren Kennedy. Elisabeth had grown up in Jordan as the child of missionary parents. She was fluent in Arabic. Darren and she had met at Princeton University, were married, and were now studying at Princeton Seminary in preparation for missionary service.

As part of their preparation, they went to Egypt between their first and second years in seminary and served as interns in a congregation of the Evangelical Church. I was delighted to meet them and encourage them in their missionary vocation. Their journey reminded me of my call to mission service in Korea, which had taken shape during my seminary days twenty years earlier.

The Kennedys were appointed to serve at ETSC in 1999, and The Outreach Foundation raised funds for their support. They, in turn, became enthusiastic advocates for our first two projects in Egypt. Darren also helped introduce us to the next person who would be critically important in teaching mission and evangelism at the Cairo seminary, Dr. Swailem Hennein.

Swailem Hennein

When Dr. Atef Gendy became president of the seminary in 2000, he felt completely overwhelmed by the challenges the seminary faced at the time. The new job literally made him sick, and he was hospitalized for stress. Amidst his worry, he remembered the story of Elijah whose life had been threatened by Queen Jezebel. Elijah complained to God, "I alone am left," (1 Kings 19:14). God's answer to him was, "I have others who are faithful." Taking hope from this scripture, Dr. Atef looked around for those whom God would bring to the seminary to help it turn around and move it in a positive direction.



Dr. Swailem Hennein

One place where Dr. Atef knew he needed help was in laying the foundation for a mission department at the seminary. He had heard of a missionary family sent by the Egyptian Church to Sudan in the 1950s, the Reverend Swailem Hennein and his wife, Sameera Rizk. They served in Sudan for ten years and then in Kenya for seven years. After his missionary service, Swailem earned a Ph.D. in Public Health and taught in the United States until his retirement.

Dr. Atef had never met Dr. Swailem, but he knew the high regard the Egyptian Church had for Swailem and Sameera's missionary service in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Atef called him to ask for his help in setting up a mission department at the seminary. Dr. Swailem volunteered without hesitation. "Atef, I am with you," he said. Beginning in the fall of 2000, Dr. Swailem taught mission classes, helped develop the mission curriculum, and worked with Dr. Atef to discern who might be best suited to become the Professor of Mission and Evangelism after him.

Sometime after Dr. Swailem began working at the seminary, The Outreach Foundation began hearing about him from Darren Kennedy in Egypt and from the Reverend Dan McNerney of Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship (PFF), a mission organization we have worked closely with over the years. As Swailem was the point person for the seminary in shaping its initial mission vision, we wanted to meet him for ourselves. So did First Presbyterian Church of Houston. Darren Kennedy worked with Dan McNerney, First Presbyterian Houston, and Outreach to set up a meeting with Dr. Swailem in Houston in January 2002.

Dr. Swailem spoke to us on what he termed "Reconciliation Evangelism," his concept of mission and evangelism for the Egyptian context. Just as Christ came to reconcile the world to God, so the church is called to be an agent of reconciliation in the community in which it is located. Dr. Swailem expressed the hope that ETSC would train 30–40 "primary reconciliation workers" who would then be sent by the Evangelical Church to establish mission outposts in areas of need. Working together with others in the community, Christian and Muslim alike, these primary reconciliation workers would provide services that the community had identified as its most important needs.

Where would the "evangelism" part of "reconciliation evangelism" come in, we asked? Dr. Swailem's reply was careful, but hopeful:

"Information ... about church matters will be readily available for those who ask. Wisdom will be applied whom to invite for regular worship and church services. In time, the beginnings of a congregation will evolve [emerge] around Bible Study and prayer activities. Instruction with open-ended dialogues will be given about the overriding concept of "reconciliation" which includes good will, mutual trust, constructive relationships, and handling prejudice and fear."

As we listened to Dr. Swailem, we discerned the heart of a deeply spiritual man who had grown up in rural Egypt and knew the challenges of outreach and

mission where Christians were a small minority of the population. Dr. Swailem was proposing that Egypt's Christians move out of their comfort zone and initiate church-based social service programs that would serve the whole community, Christians and Muslims alike. He trusted the Holy Spirit to work in and through the church as it became outwardly focused.

The Outreach Foundation and our sister organization, Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, were ready to "sign on." So was our first strong U.S. partner, First Presbyterian of Houston, which reaffirmed its willingness to support not only the training of the future mission professor, but also to send four of its mission people on our trip scheduled for May 2002. That trip became the catalyst for many future mission connections with the Evangelical Church of Egypt.

³ Some of this history is related in "The History of The Outreach Foundation in China," available from The Outreach Foundation, 381 Riverside Dr., Ste. 110, Franklin, TN 37064, or by request from the author.

The Catalytic Trip of 2002

A Joint Outreach Foundation and Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship Initiative

Significant in the early involvement of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt was how much we worked in complementary ways with another Presbyterian mission organization, Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship (PFF). This mission was founded in 1981 by Presbyterians who wished to rekindle a passion for evangelism and mission among the least-evangelized people of the world. Much of its work was focused on people groups in the Muslim world.



2002 The Outreach Foundation and Frontier Fellowship Trip to Egypt

Dan McNerney joined PFF in 1996. Through trips to Bosnia after the inter-religious and ethnic Balkan wars, he was introduced to the world of Islam. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001 moved him deeply, and he turned his eyes to the heartland of Islam, the Middle East. Knowing of the interest of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt, Dan called me in late fall 2001, and we decided to sponsor a joint Outreach-PFF trip to Egypt in the spring of 2002. The Outreach Foundation did the advance work to set up the trip through our connection with Darren and Elisabeth Kennedy, and in mid-May 2002, twenty persons arrived in Egypt for a two-week experience. This trip was a life-changing experience for us all.

What We Saw

We spent much time at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, but we were also introduced to many other ministries, which clearly indicated the passion for outreach that was already present in the Church in Egypt. We went north to Alexandria and visited new church developments, a ministry to children with mental disabilities, and outreach to Sudanese refugees. In Cairo and its environs, we visited new churches; the Bible Society of Egypt; Kasr El Dohara, the largest Protestant congregation in the Middle East; the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS); and a vibrant ministry on the edge of a “garbage village,” so named because most of the residents of that community

collect and sort the garbage of the city of Cairo. We also became acquainted with various parachurch ministries; some were international while others originated in Egypt.

Egypt is an ancient land with marvelous antiquities. We explored a Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, visited the Pyramids at Giza, and went sailing on the Nile River. Our final excursion was to Mount Sinai where we trekked from the Monastery of St. Catherine to the summit of the mountain, arriving just as the sun was coming up.

People We Met

Because the group had been recruited by both of our mission organizations, we spent some of the first days getting to know each other. We represented mission organizations, church staffs, and mission committees. Our team included seminarians, new pastors, and a couple of Egyptian Americans who were already deeply involved in mission in Egypt. Over time many of those on the trip would become deeply connected with each other and with the Church in Egypt. But all that lay ahead of us.

The first Egyptian we met upon landing was Tharwat Wahib Wahba, the seminarian whom ETSC had selected to become the mission professor at the seminary. He, along with Darren Kennedy, greeted us warmly at the airport and got us settled in at the seminary, our base for most of the trip.



Tharwat Wahib Wahba, 2002

The first full day in Egypt set the tone for the rest of our visit. At the seminary we had two orientations to the Evangelical Church in Egypt, one from Dr. Atef Gendy, president of the seminary, the other from Mr. Ramez Atallah, director of the Bible Society of Egypt. Both leaders cast a vision for the incredible opportunity for outreach and mission that the churches in Egypt had at this moment. This was news to us. Before this trip we had heard mostly about the obstacles to witness to Jesus in the Muslim world.

Dr. Atef said, “Many people outside of Egypt do not understand that we have an unprecedented amount of freedom to speak about the word of God in our country. The religious context permits, and even fosters, this freedom.” He shared that almost every time he travels, he has a chance to give a witness to his faith. Even though witness and service in the Middle Eastern context is difficult, Dr. Atef affirmed that the church in Egypt should reclaim its heritage of witness, for

the ground is prepared to hear the good news. He told us, “If you see something good, encourage it.” He also exhorted us to share our difficulties in evangelism, so that the Egyptian Christians may realize there are problems everywhere, and that no one person or church or denomination “has it all together.”

Ramez Atallah gave us a short history of the Church in Egypt and spoke of the work of the Bible Society of Egypt, which engages both Christians and Muslims in many creative ways with a call to read and study the Bible. We saw one of those creative ways on our way to Alexandria the following day. The Bible Society had installed a set of three billboards advertising the Bible: “Read the Bible” — “It Will Change Your Life” — “Call to Get Your Copy Today.” Other billboards advertised the “Jesus Film.” Both Bibles and the Jesus Film could be bought at rest areas of these inter-city highways where the Bible Society had rented kiosks. As Ramez said, “We may not be able to evangelize, but we can advertise!”

In Alexandria we met other Christians involved in witness and service. The presbytery’s women’s organization told us of the new church they hoped to establish. An entrepreneurial pastor, the Reverend Gendy Rizk, showed us two new church developments and a ministry for children with mental handicaps that his local congregation had started. Mr. Tawfik George, a deeply committed lay leader from an Egyptian mission, “Think and Do,” shared how his mission forms lay people for evangelistic witness and provides them with vocational training.

Dr. Swailem and Tharwat Wahba accompanied us on this three-day trip to Alexandria. We had the opportunity to get to know Tharwat, formerly on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ in Egypt, as he shared about his faith journey, his call to teach mission, and his research into where he might study for a Ph.D. For more than half the group, it was their first meeting with Dr. Swailem, and they were inspired as he spoke on reconciliation evangelism in more detail.

Returning to Cairo, we worshiped on Sunday with the large Kasr El Dobara congregation and had a precious time with their co-pastors, Menes Abdul Noor and Sameh Maurice. The church they serve is a beehive of mission activity. Their pastors serve upwards of half their time with other churches and organizations. They are developing a youth sports ministry, a drug rehabilitation work, and have sent their own missionaries to Arab-speaking communities throughout the Middle East and Europe.

It was the witness of the Kasr el Dobara Church among the majority population (that is, the 90% of Egyptians who are Muslim) that was most electrifying to us. One of their members told a participant in our group, “This is a formative moment in the church’s history and witness. Egyptians were horrified by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and many are re-evaluating their Muslim faith that could have inspired such mass murder.” Others told us that Muslims were coming to faith in Jesus because they have had dreams or visions of him. We were encouraged to pray that more Muslims would have such dreams and visions of Jesus.



Pastor Helmy Hennein in 10th of Ramadan

Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous , General Secretary of the Synod of the Nile, was most anxious for us to see the new churches that the Synod of the Nile had begun, and we devoted a day to see these bold initiatives.

We went to the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan, one of only two churches allowed in this new city east of Cairo, which already had a population of 200,000. Founded by Presbyterian lay persons, they had

recently called a pastor, the Reverend Helmy Hennein. He had been a missionary of the Egyptian Church to Sudan and Kuwait and was a man of great vision, faith, and contagious joy. With initial support from The Outreach Foundation, the church had laid the foundation of their new sanctuary. Their next goal was to see the church roofed within three years.

The other Synod priority for us was to visit a new church in a city called “15th of May.” This church also had laid its foundation but was not as far along in its development as the church in 10th of Ramadan. It was clear to see that both churches had a vision for outreach, and the Synod was hopeful that our trip would result in mission partners for each new church.

The Impact of the 2002 Trip on Participants

At various time during this catalytic vision trip, the team discussed what we were seeing and experiencing in Egypt. Here is a summary of one of those discussions:

- We have seen the Egyptian Christians show confidence in the truth of the Gospel and creativity in sharing the Gospel.
- It is a new day for the Church in Egypt (breakthrough beyond fear).
- The pivotal nature of the Cairo seminary for the Evangelical Church in Egypt is evident, as is the strategic nature of Egypt’s churches for reaching the Middle East with the Gospel.
- We have come to Egypt at an opportune time for progress in such matters as approvals for church construction while the current government is more generous in granting permits. Let us assist while the attitude is good.
- It is important that Egyptian Christians equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12) in this new day for the Church.

Commitments Made to Strengthen the Church in Egypt

Toward the end of the trip, Dan McNerney and I highlighted the mission commitments our respective organizations were ready to make, and we invited our fellow participants to consider joining us in three areas:

1. Strengthen the Cairo seminary's mission initiatives, including support of Tharwat Wahba's studies; translate the basic mission textbook of the seminary, Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, into Arabic; and train an initial group of grass-roots workers in "reconciliation evangelism."
2. Support the new church developments in 10th of Ramadan and 15th of May.
3. Partner with Egyptian congregations and ministries that were already involved in evangelism and mission among Muslim peoples in Egypt and the wider Middle East.

All the trip participants indicated that they wanted to be part of what God was doing in and through Egypt, and the next decade-and-a-half would show just how deep those involvements would become.

⁴ The city's name, 10th of Ramadan, refers to the date in the Muslim calendar that Egypt invaded Israel in October 1973 to begin the "Yom Kippur War."

⁵ The city's name, 15th of May, refers to a reform movement, "The Corrective Revolution," launched by President Anwar Sadat on May 15, 1971, which moved his government away from the politics of his predecessor, President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

The Impact of the 2002 Trip on Participants

The joint Outreach Foundation-Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship trip to Egypt in 2002 was catalytic in bringing the Church in Egypt to the awareness of U.S. congregations. The trip launched what would become significant, long-lasting partnerships between congregations in the U.S. and the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, new church developments, and other ministries in Egypt. This chapter highlights the personal impact of the trip on some of the individual participants and their resulting impact on God's mission in Egypt.

Lee Mulder

While all the participants on the 2002 trip shared what they had seen, heard, and felt with their local churches, one participant went further. Mr. Lee Mulder, an elder from First Presbyterian Church of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, was a free-lance journalist and videographer, and his passion was to document missionary work around the world. Lee chronicled our trip through hours of videos, and when he returned, he wrote an article in *Presbyterians Today*, the official magazine of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Mulder's article, "Mission Possible in Egypt," introduced our new friends Swailem, Atef, and Tharwat, and their vision for mission and evangelism to a wider Presbyterian audience. He edited hours of video footage to bring the trip to life for churches in the Chicago area.



Lee Mulder recording footage of the 2002 Outreach-Frontier Fellowship trip to Egypt

Then Mulder found a new calling that led him to Uganda. For the better part of the next decade, he was part of a children's ministry in that country. Lee spent much time on the field and even wrote a book about his experiences. However, Egypt was never out of his mind and heart. Mulder maintained a close connection with Dan McNerney of PFF and with Dr. Swailem. In 2018, sixteen years after his first visit, Lee returned to Egypt with Dan, Swailem, and others to celebrate the completion of a revised Arabic translation of the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. Mulder brought his video camera again and chronicled the impact that *Perspectives* and Dr. Swailem had on the renewal of mission in the Egyptian Church in the 21st Century.

Now living in Florida, Lee Mulder continues to share the amazing work of God in Egypt with his church and with various prayer groups to which he belongs. He has even arranged for Dr. Tharwat Wahba to visit these groups and bring the latest

mission news from Egypt. As we say in The Outreach Foundation, there is only one thing to do with good news—you share it!

Brice Rogers

A rising senior at Austin Seminary, Brice Rogers received a renewed call to mission service through our 2002 trip. Before going to seminary, Brice had been a PCUSA co-worker on the Mexican border. The Outreach Foundation was seeking seminarians to join our vision trips, and we provided a partial scholarship for Brice and another of his classmates, Sharon Bryant, to join us on our 2002 trip. Sharon also had a mission background as daughter of long-time Presbyterian missionaries to Thailand.

During our time in Egypt, Darren Kennedy brought up the seminary's need to have an international volunteer to coordinate the visits of groups like ours and to help the seminary develop new global relationships. Brice was interested and told us that he would like to be considered for this potential missionary work following graduation. We became interested in Brice for this position because of his previous mission experience and because we saw that he was already making intentional efforts to learn Arabic during our two-week trip. Brice had a missionary calling!

On Brice Rogers' behalf, The Outreach Foundation and the seminary communicated his interest to Dr. Victor Makari, PCUSA Coordinator for the Middle East, and matters progressed rapidly. A Mission Volunteer position was approved by the PCUSA. The Outreach Foundation agreed to help Brice raise the support he needed. ETSC offered housing as their contribution to his support. Finally, in early 2004, Brice Rogers arrived in Egypt.

From 2004–2009, Brice served as the International Liaison of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. During this time he coordinated the trip details for visiting groups like The Outreach Foundation, worked with the president of the seminary to plan his travel to visit global partners, and created an Office of Development for the seminary to raise funds within and beyond Egypt.



Brice Rogers (left) preaching while accompanying an Outreach trip in 2007

During his service Brice met and married Sung Min, a Korean missionary serving in Egypt. In 2009, after the birth of their first child, they felt they needed a different work in Egypt. The Synod of the Nile offered them a ministry in the city of Luxor in southern Egypt. They worked there until 2012 when they resigned and moved to Korea to help care for Sung Min's recently widowed mother.

The Outreach Foundation is deeply grateful to Sung Min and Brice for the bridge role they served in connecting the Cairo seminary with its global partners and for all their help in making our trips to Egypt go so smoothly. Thank you, friends!

Owen Stepp

Like Lee Mulder and Brice Rogers, the Reverend Owen Stepp was also changed by the 2002 trip. The following is Owen's testimony to the impact of Egypt on his life and ministry.

"On September 11, 2001, I had recently completed my first year in ordained ministry as a pastor in Wake Forest, North Carolina. The events of that dreadful day sparked emotional responses that ranged from fear to anger to grief to bewilderment. Church folks were no different. Pastors were no different. With so many voices calling for a retreat from overseas ministry in the days that followed, I sensed a particular word from the Spirit that I had a calling to go to the Arab world as a sort of witness of what the Gospel of Christ compels us to do in such times.

"One of my mentors told me that he was planning to be a part of the Outreach Foundation's trip to Egypt that would come in 2002. In fact, the trip would include a visit to the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo where some of my friends from seminary were serving as professors. It seemed that God was putting all the pieces together in ways that I could not have orchestrated myself. That team, led by Jeff Ritchie from The Outreach Foundation and Dan McNerney from Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, became a sort of pilgrimage for those of us who were there. Having conversations with Egyptian professors and pastors, bus drivers, and tour guides gave us a sense of the courage and endurance of the Egyptian church. I was also deeply moved by the times of prayer that we shared. It seemed to me that the Holy Spirit was sealing our relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ as only the Spirit can. I had a refreshed, empowered and personal perspective on the vision of heaven in Revelation 7:9. In addition, I also had new friends and partners in the gospel on both sides of the ocean whose fellowship blesses me to this day.

"That trip planted seeds within my life and ministry that grew as I have served other churches. At Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church in Tennessee we had an annual mission conference, and one year we invited a pastor from Egypt to speak and lead in prayer. His ministry among us was a gift from God.



The Rev. Owen Stepp on a later Outreach Foundation trip to Ghana

"I currently serve at Clairmont Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Georgia. The Outreach Foundation has helped us begin a partnership with a new church development in Egypt, the Evangelical Church in Moassat. We have had three teams visit the Moassat church, and we have taken a special offering to help them finish a portion of their building, so that they now have a worship space and a base of operations for community outreach and evangelism in the impoverished area in which they are located. We praise God for this partnership."

Lee Mulder, Brice Rogers, and Owen Stepp are just a few of the many people whose lives have been profoundly touched by their experiences with Egyptian Christians. They exemplify another of our Outreach Foundation maxims, "Follow Jesus into the world, and the first life you change may be your own."

Deepening the Bonds and Broadening the Mission

Gulf War Changes Our Plans

The 2002 trip to Egypt marked the beginning of many wonderful mission relationships. Churches began to commit themselves to the mission initiatives at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and to new church developments, especially the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan. Kasr el Dobra Church also had attracted the interest of several of the participants on that remarkable trip.

The Outreach Foundation was eager to build on the relationships that had begun in 2002, and we planned a follow-up trip for May 2003. However, as we were in the process of recruiting for this trip, the events leading to the Second Gulf War were unfolding. We cancelled the trip. One who had planned to go, Walter Lewis from Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita, Kansas, had a message from the Holy Spirit while he was on a mission trip in Hungary. The Spirit said, "Go to Egypt." Walter shared this message with me, and I wrote our friends in Egypt to ask if the current Gulf War would make it impossible for them to receive us. They replied, "Come," and so in May 2003, Walter Lewis and I found ourselves in Egypt once more. Eastminster's Associate Pastor for Mission, Tom Edwards, also joined us.

A Visit to Upper Egypt with Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous

Our host again was the General Secretary of the Synod of the Nile, Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous. He was eager to take us back to two of the new churches we had visited in 2002. He also pointed out that on our previous trip we had not traveled to Upper Egypt. No visit to Egypt would be complete, he said, without going to Luxor, where 25% of the world's antiquities were located.

We were glad to take advantage of his offer and spent the first few days of our 2003 trip in Luxor and its environs. As we admired the tombs of Pharaohs and the Karnak Temple, we were overwhelmed with the splendor of Ancient Egypt. While in Upper Egypt, we also visited congregations of the Evangelical Church of Egypt, some over 100 years old. Their buildings needed extensive repair and restoration, and migration of people from the countryside to the cities had decimated their membership. Yet there were



One of the many antiquities of Upper Egypt

still many people living in these rural towns and communities who longed for their churches to be vital, and their buildings serviceable, for the gospel.

While in Upper Egypt, we spent many hours with Dr. Abdel Masih. He was a scholar in Reformed Theology with a Ph.D. from Princeton Seminary. He served as director of the Bible Society of Egypt for a time and was a professor at the Cairo seminary. In addition, Dr. Abdel Masih was part of Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), a ministry to promote Reformed teaching among the churches of the Middle East and North Africa. He also had a personal mission, Philip Ministries, which was focused on support for the Church in Sudan. We were glad to have such a committed church leader as our host for this trip.



Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, General Secretary, Evangelical Church of Egypt

Cairo Visits

Returning to Cairo, we visited the churches in the cities of 10th of Ramadan and 15th of May and saw the progress they had made on the construction of their sanctuaries. Each had a place in their new buildings for the congregation to worship during construction.

At the Cairo seminary, we had a wonderful session with Dr. Atef, Dr. Swailem, and the newly ordained Tharwat Wahba concerning Tharwat's plans for Ph.D. studies. After a year of exploring schools in England and the United States, the three leaders decided that Tharwat should enroll at the London School of Theology.

Further, they agreed that the focus of his studies would be the history of the missionary work of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt.



Dr. Swailem Hennein, Jeff Ritchie, and Dr. Sherif Salah

At another meeting, Dr. Swailem updated us on emerging mission initiatives at the seminary and throughout the country. In particular, he introduced us to Dr. Sherif Salah, a psychiatrist who had enrolled at the seminary. Dr. Swailem saw potential in

Sherif to become part of the Mission Department, now that Tharwat was about to leave for his Ph.D. studies.

We met two other persons at the mission briefing who were so interesting that Darren and Elisabeth Kennedy arranged a separate meeting to speak with them at greater length. They were Pastor Isaac William and Mr. Medhat Saied from the First Evangelical Church in Tayyaba, a rural church in Middle Egypt, the heartland of Egyptian Presbyterianism. Isaac was Associate Pastor at the church and Medhat, currently a seminary student, was part of the church's outreach team. They were excited to tell us about their church, and especially about some new fellowships the church had begun in remote areas beyond Tayyaba. We were intrigued by the grass-roots initiative of the church in Tayyaba. It was an example of what Dr. Atef and Dr. Swailem were hoping that all the churches of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt would become as a result of the vision for mission being cast at the Cairo seminary.

Our time in Cairo continued to be blessed as we spent much time with the leadership of the Kasr el Dobara Church. We had an informal dinner on a boat on the Nile with three of the church leaders and their wives. The next day two of these leaders took us to their ministry center in Wadi el Natrun, half-way between Cairo and Alexandria. There they introduced us to their sports ministries and drug rehabilitation ministries. It was a time of bonding with the leadership of the church that would lead to a long-term friendship between Eastminster Presbyterian Church and Kasr El Dobara.



Elder Fayez, Mission Director at Kasr el Dobara Church, with Tom Edwards from Eastminster Church

The focus of The Outreach Foundation has been to equip our global partners for their evangelism and mission work. On the 2002 and 2003 trips to Egypt, we had found a great vision at the seminary, churches being planted in new cities, and exciting mission initiatives of large urban congregations and small rural ones. Before we left Egypt, we met one more entrepreneurial missionary.

The Reverend Wagih Abdelmasih, a missionary in London working among hundreds of thousands of Arabic-speaking residents and visitors, was in Egypt at the time of our visit. Pastor Wagih contacted ETSC and asked if there was anyone visiting the seminary whom he should meet. We were delighted to meet him and learn about his ministry, Agape Arabic Christian Centre. It was a further joy to learn that he was the brother of the Reverend Anwar Abdelmasih, pastor of the Evangelical Church in 15th of May, which The Outreach Foundation was

supporting. As we parted, Pastor Wagih urged us to “stop by Agape the next time you are in London.” Walter went there twice before the year ended, and I visited in early 2004. The Agape Arabic Christian Centre soon became another mission partner of The Outreach Foundation.

⁶ Egypt has several regions that are both geographical and cultural in nature. The Nile River flows from south to north. Hence when one travels up the Nile River, one is heading south towards Upper Egypt. Middle Egypt refers to that part of the country that is south of Cairo and includes the governates (similar to states) of Beni Suef, Minya, and Asyut. Upper Egypt begins with the governate of Sohag and continues through the governates of Luxor and Aswan all the way to the Sudanese border.

The Bible Society of Egypt and Its Entrepreneurial Mission



Ramez Atallah

In Chapter 4 on the “catalytic trip” of 2002, I mentioned two Egyptian Christian leaders whose presentations on the Church in Egypt set the tone for our trip. This chapter will focus on one of those leaders, Mr. Ramez Atallah. He is director of the Bible Society, which is doing some of the most creative work of any Christian organization in Egypt or around the world. Ramez also is an excellent communicator of the challenges and opportunities Egyptian Christians face.

The Bible Society of Egypt was founded over 130 years ago to print and distribute the Bible among the Christian communions in Egypt—Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant. Ramez Atallah has been its director since 1990. Prior to becoming director, Atallah was involved with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), the international organization with which Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) is connected.

The Bible Society is not only a distribution center for Bibles. It has also been proactive in engaging both Christians and Muslims in creative ways that challenge them to read and study the Bible. For instance, they have installed billboards along major highways in Egypt inviting people to read the Bible. As Ramez has told many Christian groups visiting Egypt, “We may not be able to evangelize, but we can advertise!”



Billboards advertising the Bible and the Jesus Film on the highway between Cairo and Alexandria

By law, Christians may not give a Bible free of charge to a Muslim, but there is no law against selling a Bible. The Bible Society has thus opened Bible bookstores in several cities that sell Bibles and Bible-related materials at subsidized prices. Some Muslims hesitate to enter a Christian bookstore, but the Bible Society does not let that deter their outreach. Through newspaper advertisements they let people know there is a number they can call, and a Bible will be delivered to their home!

The Bible Society's concerns are both pastoral and evangelistic. For older believers who find the font in which standard Bibles are printed too small to read, they offer large-print Bibles. For people not familiar with the language of the traditional Arabic text of the Bible (akin to the "King James Version" of the English Bible), they produce audio New Testaments in a more colloquial Arabic. Christian taxi drivers are among those who have purchased these to share with their customers.

A major focus of the Bible Society is the Orthodox Communion to which 90% of Egyptian's Christians belong. Orthodox churches have many festivals throughout the church year, and the Bible Society sends staff to these festivals where they sell Bibles and materials that help people know how to read the Bible.

Another outreach of the Bible Society is their participation at the annual Cairo International Book Fair. Upwards of a million people attend the Book Fair, and the Bible Society is one of the many vendors participating. A successful marketing tool it uses for this event is "Kingo," a puppet figure from a video series produced by the American Bible Society. Kingo teaches Christian values through catchy songs that children love, and they are eager to see him "in person" at the fair as they purchase Bible storybooks.



"Kingo" with friends at Bible Society of Egypt presentation

Why has the Bible Society been so effective in its ministry in a 90% Muslim society? Ramez Atallah and others point out to Westerners that the Egyptian society is very religious. As one who lived in the United States and Canada before returning to his native Egypt, Ramez points out that it is much easier to talk about God and religious matters with a Muslim in the Middle East than with a secular person in the West.

This religious culture allows for plenty of Islamic critique of Christianity, as Muslims are quite zealous to share their faith. For example, one of the long-standing Muslim criticisms of Christianity is that the Bible manuscripts have been corrupted over the centuries. Therefore, the revelation in the Qu'ran dictated to Muhammed by Allah is more accurate than the Bible, which has diverging manuscripts from various times and places. To address that claim, the Bible Society developed a creative, interactive exhibit called "Bible World" on one floor of its headquarters in Cairo. Geared for children of all ages, Bible World helps people to experience in a hands-on way that the text of the Bible has been accurately transmitted over the centuries.

Ever aware of the current events in Egypt, the Bible Society puts out special Bible materials that speak a word of hope and love to the wider society. For example, when the nationwide protests of the “Arab Spring” of 2011 led to the resignation of President Mubarak, the Bible Society came up with a campaign, “Rebuild Egypt.” Front-page newspaper ads, billboards, printed materials, and compact discs were produced to promote biblical values such as honesty, credibility, group effort, perseverance, and love. These were the urgently needed building blocks for a new start for Egypt.

Seeing such creative, entrepreneurial energy and imagination in this mission organization, The Outreach Foundation became a champion of the Bible Society of Egypt from the beginning. We make a Bible Society visit a “must see” on every trip to Egypt. We list it often as one of our “alternative Christmas gift” offerings, and we seek out individual donors we know to be passionate about supporting Bible distribution around the world.



Faces of hope in the Arab Spring of 2011 highlighted by Bible Society

Mr. Milton Scott, one of the donors to the work of the Bible Society of Egypt during the past twenty years, needs special mention. Throughout his life Mr. Scott, a Presbyterian layperson from Georgia, had a passion for Bible distribution. In retirement he lived very simply from

his pension and gave away all excess funds for Bible distribution efforts of the Presbyterian Church, the American Bible Society, and other organizations.

I met Milton Scott only once, but I developed a relationship with his nephew, David Scott. David was also deeply committed to Christian mission at home and abroad. After his uncle’s death in 2001, he took over the responsibility of distributing the remaining funds that Milton Scott had set aside for Bible distribution. Upon the recommendation of The Outreach Foundation, the Milton Scott Fund began supporting the Bible Society of Egypt. As a result, thousands of Egyptians have received Bibles, New Testaments, and other Scripture portions for more than a decade. Thank you, David Scott, for faithfully stewarding the legacy of your uncle and blessing the people of Egypt with the Word of God.

Our appreciation for the creative work of the Bible Society of Egypt led The Outreach Foundation to invite Ramez Atallah to be a speaker at a global mission conference we co-sponsored in 2005 with Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship. Ramez was the closing speaker, and in his talk, he gave a moving testimony

about his wife, Rebecca, who serves in a ministry among children and youth with disabilities. The ministry, "Center of Love," is in Mokkatam, a part of Cairo where the city's garbage collectors live. After hearing about Center of Love, The Outreach Foundation began taking groups to visit it on our trips to Egypt.

We give thanks for the many ways the Holy Spirit has used his servants, Ramez and Rebecca Atallah, to share God's love in word and deed with the people of Egypt. The creative witness of the Bible Society and the compassionate service of Center of Love to "the least of these" continue to inspire us and countless others around the world.

The 2004 Short-Term Teaching Mission

By 2004 The Outreach Foundation had been taking groups to Egypt for five years. The first two trips concentrated on new church developments in the areas around Cairo and Alexandria. The May 2003 trip took us briefly to Upper Egypt, but our time in that area was mostly for sightseeing. We realized that to know the Church in Egypt, we needed to see the Church in Middle Egypt, where it was strong and had great vision for outreach. We also needed to spend more time in Upper Egypt, where the Church was weakest and most in need of creative new mission energy.

We also decided that this trip, scheduled for January 2004, would be more than the usual Outreach “vision trip,” a trip on which we introduce American Christians to our global friends and ministry partners. Our host for the previous trips to Egypt, Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, had requested that we bring some people to encourage the pastors and leaders of the churches in Middle and Upper Egypt through teaching, preaching, prayer, and fellowship. We agreed with his idea and recruited a couple with connections to The Outreach Foundation, Dr. Julius Scott and Mrs. Florence Scott.



Julius and Florence Scott in the home of AWEMA Director, Maher Fouad and his wife, Violet, during 2004 Outreach trip

Dr. Scott was a retired professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and the brother of David Scott, mentioned in Chapter 7. Florence Scott, also theologically trained, had her own connection to The Outreach Foundation through her sister, Elizabeth (“Bibby”) Swayze. Bibby, along with her husband, the Reverend Dick Swayze, were The Outreach Foundation’s Mission Consultants for Brazil. From David Scott and Bibby Swayze, we learned that Julius and Florence had done short-term teaching in Malta through AWEMA (Arab World Evangelical Ministers Association). As we got to know the Scotts before the trip, we learned that in Malta they met a couple who were physicians in Aswan, a city in Upper Egypt. They had hoped to meet this couple again someday, and our trip provided them with just that opportunity. Four others joined the Scotts and me for this eventful trip.

Strategic Meeting of Mission Leaders

We started the trip with a meeting of mission leaders from the Evangelical Church of Egypt, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and The Outreach Foundation. The

meeting was a time for brainstorming for mission and evangelism ideas that could be done in Egypt cooperatively among the mission organizations represented. One of the most promising suggestions, proposed by Dr. Atef Gendy, was that the Cairo seminary and two councils of the Evangelical Church of Egypt—the Church Development Council and the Social Services Council—develop a lay pastor program to revitalize the 100+ rural churches without a pastor.

Visits to Urban New Church Developments and Ministries in Cairo

On this trip we learned about the progress on the new church developments we had first visited in 2002 in Alexandria and in the city of 10th of Ramadan. We were pleased that the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan now had a worship space that could seat 400, and that the membership was continuing to grow.



Dr. Sherif Salah (right) and his family in Minia, Egypt

We received updates on the ministries of ETSC, the Bible Society of Egypt, and Kasr el Dobara. We were especially blessed by the amount of time we were able to spend with Dr. Sherif Salah. Dr. Sherif had finished his studies at the seminary and was now assisting Dr. Swaillem Hennein in the Mission Department there. Dr. Sherif became an integral part of our team when we traveled to Middle and Upper Egypt, and we had the delight of being in his home in Minya, in Middle Egypt.

The Church in Middle and Upper Egypt

After these days in Alexandria and Cairo, we journeyed by train to Minya in Middle Egypt, then took a car to an extremely rural area for a visit with the First Evangelical Church of Tayyaba. Our hosts were Pastor Isaac William and Mr. Medhat Saied, whom we met in 2003 at the Cairo seminary. Medhat was the church's Outreach Coordinator and took us to five of the six new fellowships the church had started. Pastor Isaac told us about the church's other outreach programs including a clinic, a preschool, ministry with disabled people, and a home-building ministry in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.



New church planted by First Church of Tayyaba, Middle Egypt

In addition to the joy of seeing Isaac and Medhat again, we had a surprise.

One of the church's elders told us that he had a daughter in Nashville. I promised Elder Helmy that I would meet his daughter, Amal, when I returned home. Not only did I meet her, but through her and her family I learned about the large Egyptian Diaspora in the United States that remained connected to their churches in Egypt.

The next day we attended the first of two conferences that Dr. Abdel Masih had arranged. Over 170 pastors and leaders from three presbyteries heard Julius Scott speak on the theme, "That You May Know the Saving Acts of the Lord." After Dr. Scott's talk, the pastors and leaders shared their challenges and opportunities for ministry, and we had an extended time of prayer.

Interlude in Cairo

Before going to Upper Egypt for the second conference, we returned to Cairo. I met with Dr. Andrea Zaki, the Chairperson of the Synod's Council of Services and Development. Dr. Andrea told me more about the lay pastor program proposed at the meeting early in our trip. The group then visited Kasr el Dohara Church and met their beloved senior pastor, the Rev. Menes Abdul Noor. He told us the story of how this large, imposing church had received permission to be built in a high-profile part of Cairo.

Luxor and Aswan

The next day our group flew south. Most of us got off at Luxor, but the Scotts went on to Aswan to meet the two doctors they had gotten to know through their short-term teaching ministry with AWEMA in Malta. Doctors Samia and Kamil Shoukrallah welcomed them warmly. They had arranged for Julius to preach at the Evangelical Church in Aswan. They also introduced the Scotts to people involved in an outreach to Nubians, a people group living in southern Egypt and northern Sudan. The rest of us had a day-and-a-half of sightseeing among the amazing antiquities in and around Luxor. We also visited rural churches in the Luxor area. The buildings were greatly in need of repair, and there was a feeling of discouragement among the leaders of these congregations. We now knew why Dr. Abdel Masih had asked us to come to Upper Egypt. The pastors needed a word of spiritual refreshment and encouragement.

When the Scotts rejoined us, we began our second conference. Almost 60 pastors and leaders from three presbyteries of Upper Egypt came to Luxor for two days. As was the case in Middle Egypt, Julius Scott gave a talk focusing on the "Big Story" of the Bible. Florence Scott followed up with a brief study of Ephesians, showing how it was part of the "Big Story." There was a good time for sharing and prayer with these hard-working servants of the Church in Upper Egypt.

Final Days in Cairo

Upon our return to Cairo, we spent time at the Cairo seminary. It was during the last days of ETSC's January term, and we attended a talk given by visiting lecturer Dr. Jerry Andrews, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Glen Ellyn, Illinois. As a result of the 2002 trip and a report by Elder Lee Mulder, Dr. Andrews' church had been supporting the seminary and the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan. We were impressed by Dr. Andrews' talk on the theologies of Augustine and Pelagius.

At a final debriefing meeting, the group discussed what The Outreach Foundation's priorities for mission engagement in Egypt should be. We agreed that our priority commitment was our relationship with the visionary people we had met over the past three years—Dr. Swailem, Dr. Atef, Darren and Elisabeth Kennedy, Pastor Tharwat, and Dr. Sherif. Each one of them was a deeply committed servant of the Lord. Programmatically, ETSC with its mission initiatives and a proposed Center for Middle Eastern Christianity continued to be our top priority, along with support for Tharwat Wahba in his Ph.D. studies. We also reaffirmed our commitment to the new church developments in two satellite cities of Cairo, 10th of Ramadan and 15th of May.

The greatest "felt need" that emerged from this trip was the plight of over 100 rural churches who were without pastors or any kind of trained leader. They needed leaders with a mission vision. Not only did the need in the rural churches surface throughout this trip, so did one solution: the Lay Pastor Initiative. Dr. Swailem had cast this vision for us two years before. Now we saw a concrete plan of action to address the need.

After the group departed, I stayed an extra day to visit the Cairo International Book Fair that we had heard so much about from Ramez Atallah and visited the Bible Society's booth. Then I returned home by way of London. I spent a day with Tharwat Wahba who had begun his Ph.D. program at the London School of Theology. I visited his home, his school, and the Arabic congregation he and his family were attending. I also visited the Agape Arabic Christian Book Centre whose director, the Rev. Wagih Abdelmasih, we had met on our May 2003 trip. I was able to see first-hand how Agape was providing opportunities for Arabic-speaking people living in London to explore Christianity. The ministry also served as a base for Egyptian Christians to come to London for short-term evangelistic missions.



Global Mission of the Church in Egypt, in London, England

Having ended this trip with a glimpse of the global outreach by Egyptian Christians, I realized that the dream of the first American Presbyterian missionaries who went to Egypt 150 years before was coming true. There was a core group within the churches in Egypt who shared God's heart for the world. They were committed to living out that vision through missions at home and abroad. They were committed to casting that vision to the next generation of leaders through the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. The Outreach Foundation was truly blessed to be their friend and mission colleague.

Epilogue: The Story Beyond the Story

The short-term teaching mission of Julius and Florence Scott was just the beginning of a series of invitations to return to Egypt. In early 2006, Dr. Scott returned to give one of the first scholarly lectures at ETSC's new Center for Middle Eastern Christianity. His subject was the early papyrus versions of the Bible that were discovered in Egypt. On another one of these teaching trips, the Scotts visited a Coptic Orthodox monastery and saw a rare manuscript of the Bible that few people are permitted to see. The Abbot of the monastery pleaded with the Scotts to return and give his monks a full week of biblical teaching. Julius and Florence also continued to go to Malta to teach leaders of Muslim-background churches scattered throughout the Middle East and North Africa. They were much beloved by their Egyptian friends.

The Center for Middle Eastern Christianity and Ken Bailey's Visit to Egypt in 2005

A Dream Shared in 2003

During the May 2003 trip to Egypt, Dr. Atef Gendy and mission co-worker Darren Kennedy shared a long-term dream for the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. The seminary was thinking about establishing a center focused on the study of Christianity in the Middle East. This center could be a place where Arabic Christian works, some of which dated back to the Middle Ages, could be translated from the Arabic text and made available to the global church. In this center biblical scholars who had grown up within traditional Middle East culture could produce books that interpreted the Bible with understanding and insights not readily available to scholars from outside the Middle East. Finally, Egypt was an especially good place to do this work because it had the largest number of Christians of any country in the Middle East.

Dr. Atef and Darren used the work of a long-time Presbyterian missionary, Dr. Kenneth Bailey, as an example of the potential impact of the proposed center. Dr. Bailey was the son of missionaries to Egypt and, with his wife, Ethel, served as a missionary in the Middle East for over 40 years. During that time, Bailey had spent much time among Middle Eastern Christians in villages where they had preserved the cultural norms that existed from Bible times. As a result, his commentaries and lectures have helped countless people, both in the Middle East and in the West, understand the Bible better.

Dr. Bailey knew Dr. Atef well and suggested that the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo carry on the work to which Bailey had devoted his life. Further, if the seminary established a Center for Middle Eastern Christianity, he would give them his collection of rare manuscripts.

The Eastminster Connection and the Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

One of the churches that had benefited from Dr. Bailey's lectures on the Middle Eastern background of the Bible was Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita, Kansas. The church had invited him to speak on several occasions. Walter Lewis and Tom Edwards, who were on the 2003 trip, were excited to hear about a connection between Dr. Bailey and the Cairo seminary. The Eastminster



Dr. Atef Gendy (center) with Dr. Kenneth and Ethel Bailey, 2003

church wanted to be involved.

A follow-up conversation about the proposed Center for Middle Eastern Christianity was held in the fall of 2003 at Pittsburgh Seminary. I was present, along with Dr. Kenneth Bailey, Dr. Atef Gendy, the Reverend Darren Kennedy, the Reverend Tom Edwards, and Mr. Walter Lewis.

Dr. Bailey and the seminary agreed that this was the time to establish a Center for the Study of Middle Eastern Christianity (shortened eventually to Center for Middle Eastern Christianity). Dr. Bailey predicted that the center would have a great impact on the global church. On behalf of the seminary, Dr. Atef expressed his gratitude for the promised gift of Dr. Bailey's library.

The Outreach Foundation approved support for the Center for Middle Eastern Christianity as part of its overall commitment to ETSC. We also asked all the participants on the forthcoming trip in early 2004 to take some of Dr. Bailey's books in their luggage as a first offering for the future center's library.

Dr. Bailey Joins the 2005 Outreach Trip to Egypt



Ken Bailey returns to Deir el Barsha in Middle Egypt, 2005

The Outreach Foundation planned our 2005 trip to Egypt to coincide with the inauguration of the Center for Middle Eastern Christianity. Dr. Kenneth Bailey was asked to give the inaugural lecture, and we included him and his daughter, Sara, as part of our delegation.

For Dr. Bailey, who had spent his early years in Egypt and had served as a missionary there in the 1960s, this trip was a homecoming after almost 40

years. Both the seminary and the Evangelical Church in Egypt were lavish in their hospitality and appreciation for this distinguished missionary who had grown up among them, served alongside them, and had learned much from them that was reflected in his teaching and writing.

When we arrived, construction had barely begun on the Center for Middle Eastern Christianity (CMEC), but that did not deter the inaugural lecture from taking place amidst the construction. The lecture was well-received, and we looked forward to what the Center would become under the leadership of Dr. Wageeh Mikhail, a young scholar whose focus was on Arabic theology from the Middle Ages.

Dr. Wageeh served as CMEC's Director for fifteen years. During that time, he organized public lectures, published seven books, and brought both Orthodox

and Protestant Christians together to study subjects like Coptic Monasticism and the Spirituality of the Eastern Church. Over time the Center for Middle Eastern Christianity has become a destination for those who are serious about studying Middle Eastern Christianity and how it has interacted with Islam over the centuries.

We thank God for the vision of Dr. Atef to establish the Center and build on the legacy of Dr. Kenneth Bailey. We are grateful for how Dr. Wageeh Mikhael developed the program of the Center during the first fifteen years. We are indebted, as well, to Eastminster Church in Wichita, which invested over \$300,000 over the course of its construction, and to its Mission Elder, Walter Lewis, who traveled to Egypt numerous times to encourage the seminary in its progress.



The Rev. Wageeh Mikhael, Director, Center for Middle Eastern Christianity, ETSC



Graduates of a Certificate Program at the CMEC which included both Christians and Muslims

Mission Among the Egyptian Diaspora

Discovering the Egyptian Diaspora

In Chapter 8, I mentioned meeting a family in a village in Egypt whose daughter lived in Nashville, Tennessee. Upon my return I was able to meet the daughter, Amal Abdelnoor, and her husband, Ishak. Through them I was introduced to the Egyptian Diaspora in Nashville, which number over 10,000. Most of these are relatively recent immigrants; 90 percent are Christian with 90 percent of the Christians belonging to the Coptic Orthodox Church.



Amal and Ishak Abdelnoor, standing in middle with two of their children on either side, welcomed an Outreach delegation to Tayyaba, their hometown, in 2007.

There were two or three Arab-speaking Protestant congregations in Nashville, and Ishak and Amal were lay leaders in one of those congregations. Most of the members of their fellowship were from the Evangelical Church of Egypt, but the church was unaffiliated with any denomination. The thriving fellowship had no full-time pastor but was building its own place of worship. I began visiting the church and enjoyed getting to know the members, especially Amal and Ishak, whose hospitality our family enjoyed on several occasions.

This fellowship of Egyptian Christians inspired me to think about extending the ministry of The Outreach Foundation among Egyptians and Arab-speaking people in the United States. The Outreach Foundation already had a missionary working in the U.S. among Brazilians and other Portuguese-speaking immigrants, the Reverend José Carlos Pezini. Was God calling us to a new ministry in the U.S. among Arab Americans?

With permission from Dr. Rob Weingartner, Executive Director of The Outreach Foundation, I began to look for a person who could be our missionary to Arabic-speaking immigrants in the U.S. I consulted with denominational leaders and with Arab fellowships in the PCUSA. I also spoke with some of our partners in Egypt who had extensive contact with the Egyptian Diaspora in the U.S.

Joseph Faragalla, Missionary to the USA

After diligent research, we found a strong candidate, Mr. Joseph Faragalla. Born to an Evangelical family in Egypt, his family of origin and his church experience

gave Joseph a passion for mission. He joined Youth With A Mission (YWAM) as its Director for the Middle East and North Africa. After a decade with YWAM, Joseph served as pastor of Arabic-speaking congregations in the Middle East, Canada, and the United States. At the time we met Joseph, he was serving as the Interim Pastor of an Arab-American congregation in Jersey City, New Jersey. Joseph himself was not an ordained pastor in the PCUSA, but the Presbytery of the Palisades commissioned him as a lay pastor for this ministry. The Arab Evangelical Church of Jersey City was one of the oldest Arab-American congregations in the PCUSA. It had had some conflict, and to prepare for a new pastor, the congregation called Joseph to help it restore peace and unity.

Joseph Faragalla had great zeal for mission among the Arabic-speaking people of the U.S. Further, we clearly recognized his pastoral heart for the church in Jersey City. Equally at home in English and Arabic and personable in conversation, he struck us as a person who had the gifts to encourage Arab fellowships scattered throughout the United States and to develop new ones. We called him to be our Coordinator for Arabic-Speaking Ministries in the U.S., and he began his work in January



Mr. Joseph Faragalla, Coordinator for Arabic-Speaking Ministries in the USA from 2005–2007

2005. Joseph worked tirelessly with local congregations that were hosting Arab fellowships. He met with start-up fellowships of Arab Presbyterians and sought to connect them with PCUSA congregations and presbyteries. In all of this, he worked collegially with PCUSA staff at the national and presbytery levels.

Beyond his grass-roots church work, Joseph was invited to speak in conferences sponsored by Arab Christians in the U.S. He took part in the Middle East Caucus of the PCUSA and co-led a workshop on developing immigrant ministries for The Outreach Foundation's Global Mission Conference in 2005.

Unfortunately, the ministry of The Outreach Foundation among Arabic-speaking peoples in the U.S. did not bear the fruit for which he—and we—had hoped. Over the three years of Faragalla's ministry with The Outreach Foundation, we learned that Arab-American Protestant churches were strongly committed to Christ and to the churches in their home country. However, they were divided on how to relate to the "American churches." Some fellowships were already related to PCUSA congregations, but the non-affiliated fellowships Joseph met were not sure they wanted to connect with any American denomination. Another reality of Arab Protestant immigrant churches that proved a challenge for Joseph Faragalla was church conflict. These conflicts absorbed so much time and energy in many of Arab-American churches that they had no energy to consider cooperating with, or integrating into, the U.S. Presbyterian family.

In 2007 the Palisades Presbytery in New Jersey asked The Outreach Foundation if we could employ Joseph Faragalla part-time, as they needed his ministry gifts. Joseph began working one-fourth time with the presbytery and three-fourths time with The Outreach Foundation. Beginning in 2008, Joseph Faragalla left The Outreach Foundation for full-time work with Palisades.

Diaspora as Gifts for God’s Mission

While our intention to reach out to the many immigrant groups in the United States was laudable, the core mission of The Outreach Foundation was and is to connect U.S. Christians with God’s mission outside our own country. We thus began to see the Egyptian Diaspora and other diaspora peoples in the U.S. as gifts to The Outreach Foundation, as people who could help us do our global work more effectively.

An Egyptian American who has become a special gift and ministry partner in recent years is the Reverend Fakhri Yacoub, pastor of the Christian Arabic Church in Richmond, Virginia. Fakhri and his wife, Taragy, started the church in 1990. The new church was strongly supported by Third Presbyterian Church of Richmond, a church with an historic connection to The Outreach Foundation. Pastor Fakhri became an enthusiastic advocate for The Outreach Foundation’s projects in Egypt, particularly the work of new church development. He has served on our Board of Trustees, has led groups to Egypt, and hosted a meeting of the Egypt Outreach Network, which will be introduced in a future chapter.



The Reverend Fakhri Yacoub, Pastor of the Christian Arabic Church in Richmond, Virginia, and Trustee of the Outreach Foundation, 2016–2018

Fakhri and Egyptian Americans like him have been great gifts to The Outreach Foundation. Through their extensive relationships in their home country, they have opened doors for ministry for us. They have been ambassadors and advocates for God’s work in Egypt among their own circles of influence in the U.S. In short, the Egyptian Diaspora has greatly extended the ministry of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt.

The Lay Pastor Initiative

The Outreach Foundation began its work in Egypt in partnership with the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. The seminary had a vision to renew a passion for mission and evangelism in the Evangelical Church of Egypt. For that renewal to take place denomination-wide, a huge challenge loomed over them. More than 100 churches, almost one-third of the congregations of the Evangelical Church of Egypt, had no pastor. We learned about this problem on the 2004 trip which took us to Middle and Upper Egypt, where most of the churches without pastors were located.

Two factors contributing to this lack of pastors were the exodus of people, especially youth, from rural areas to the cities, and inadequate salaries and housing for pastors who might otherwise consider a call to these areas.

During the 2004 trip we also learned of plans to address this issue. A partnership among the Cairo seminary and two ministry councils of the Egyptian Church proposed a Lay Pastor Initiative. This proposal called for committed lay leaders to be given a year of seminary training in theology and mission. Then they were sent to churches without a pastor to serve for three years as lay pastors. Their mission was to revitalize congregational life and send the members into their community as God's missionary people.



Rural community churches without a pastor were the focus of the Lay Pastor Initiative.

Their salaries would be paid by the Synod's Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council. The first year, 100 percent of the salary would come from Pastoral and Outreach Ministries. Each of the next two years it would be reduced, with the local congregation picking up the difference. As churches developed projects for community ministry, the Synod's Council on Services and Development would offer grants and technical expertise. The Outreach Foundation was asked to provide scholarships for training the lay pastors at the Cairo seminary. We were glad to join this initiative as a ministry partner, for it was our first mission partnership with the Evangelical Church at the denominational (Synod) level.

By 2005 the plan was ready to be implemented. The presbyteries of the Synod recommended lay persons who dedicated themselves to this work. Dr. Sherif Salah oversaw their training at ETSC. The first lay pastors finished their training

in the spring of 2006 and were assigned to churches in the Minya and Mallawi Presbyteries in Middle Egypt.



Lay Pastor Philip Karam, second from left, at the Sinarea Church in Minya

The Outreach Foundation was eager to meet these dedicated people, and we had that opportunity during our June 2007 trip to Egypt. We met all the new lay pastors at a conference center and spent time with some of them at the churches where they were serving. One of the lay pastors, Philip Karam, had been in the poultry business before answering a call to become a lay pastor. After his training, Philip and his wife, Hella,

were assigned to the Sinarea Church in the Minya area. We found that their church was flourishing in worship and reaching out to the community through a preschool and a health clinic. From the other lay pastors we met, we heard about health ministries, micro-loan projects, and other outreach ministries. In all the cases these churches were also being revitalized in ministry and growing in numbers.

After a few years, the Synod and the seminary evaluated the Lay Pastor Initiative. The churches served by the lay pastors had been revitalized and had brought hope to their communities through education, health, and development ministries. Nevertheless, the Egyptian Church culture was such that people wanted their pastor to be ordained. Lay pastors, in the eyes of most Egyptian Christians, were not “real pastors.”



A resource person from the Synod speaking at the Sinarea Church

Thus, the Lay Pastor Initiative was discontinued, but it produced some unexpected and positive results. Of the 44 lay pastors in the program, 19 returned to seminary after their three years of service and became ordained in the Evangelical Church of Egypt. In addition, a revised plan to revitalize churches without pastors was developed in 2012–2013. This time the plan called for ordained clergy to be sent to these churches as missional pastors.

The Outreach Foundation is humbly grateful to have been part this initiative of the Evangelical Church of Egypt. Through it we saw a church learning through trial and error to be more effective in mission in rural Egypt.

The Beginning of the South-South Mission Initiative *(Now called Collaborative Mission Initiatives)*

The 2005 Global Mission Conference

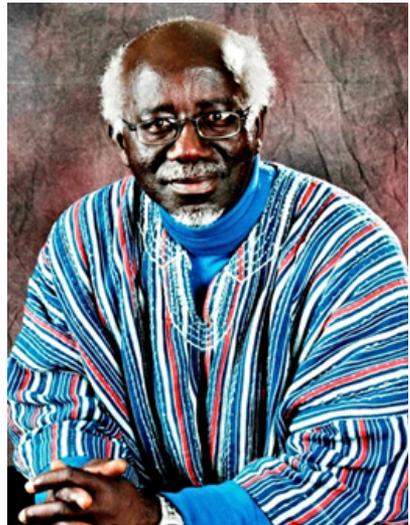
A key event for The Outreach Foundation in 2005 has already been alluded to in this history, namely, the global mission conference we co-sponsored with Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship. Entitled “From Everywhere to Everyone: The New Global Mission,” the conference emphasized that the center of gravity for Christianity around the world has shifted from Europe and North America to the “Global South,” that is, to Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Plenary and workshop speakers from Egypt, Ghana, China, and Nepal shared what God was doing in their lands and inspired conference attendees to be part of this “new global mission.”

A plenary speaker from Ghana inspired us in a different way. Dr. Kwame Bediako, Rector of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission and Culture, gave an African perspective on the mission of God. As we heard Dr. Bediako, we realized that we were in the presence of a giant in the field of missiology. Professor Bediako was calling the Church in the West to pay attention to theology and missiology emerging from the Global South.

Next Step: The “Reverse Mission” Experience of 2006

I had known about Kwame Bediako more than a decade before this conference. Having now heard him in person, I wanted to visit Ghana and spend time with him. I planned an Outreach Foundation trip for this purpose, and five persons joined me in March 2006 for a life-changing experience at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute.

For a week we traveled around Ghana visiting churches and seminaries. For the better part of another week, we plunged into the life of Akrofi-Christaller Institute (ACI). We sat in on lectures, worshiped with the community of scholars at ACI, and shared meals with Dr. Bediako and his colleagues in their homes. It was an overwhelming experience for us as we saw worship, theological reflection, and



Kwame Bediako, Founder of Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission and Culture

mission practice integrated seamlessly in the preparation of students for their ministries. I termed our week at Akrofi-Christaller Institute a “reverse mission” experience for our group; we were the recipients of the ministry of Ghanaian Christians.

As I reflected on our trip, I realized that we American Christians were privileged to have these kinds of global connections. We could go to Ghana or Egypt, to China or Brazil, and learn from our friends how to be more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and participants in his mission. Our friends in these countries did not have the same opportunity to learn from each other, unless they were connected through ecumenical mission structures such as the World Council of Churches or the Lausanne Movement. Could The Outreach Foundation connect our global partners with each other?

The South-South Mission Initiative Emerges

Out of that trip, The Outreach Foundation developed a new mission initiative, “Developing South-South Mission Relationships” (now called “Collaborative Mission Initiatives”). The initiative envisioned bringing together mission leaders from the Global South around common mission challenges. We hoped that as they shared their experiences and best practices in mission, they would develop long-term mission relationships with each other.

A concrete opportunity to launch the South-South Initiative came less than six months after our trip. Dr. Atef Gendy, President of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, began a sabbatical in the U.S. in the summer of 2006. Another friend of The Outreach Foundation, Dr. Maqsood Kamil, Vice-President of the Gujranwala Seminary in Pakistan, was also in the U.S. at that time. Both had been invited to be resource persons at a Presbyterian mission conference hosted at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia. The Outreach Foundation was part of the conference planning, and we brought Dr. Atef and Dr. Maqsood together to get to know each other. Out of our discussion came the seeds for a South-South mission consultation. Both lived in countries where Muslims were overwhelmingly in the majority. Both faced a common issue: How does our curriculum prepare our students for witness among their Muslim neighbors? They agreed that a consultation seeking to answer this question would be beneficial to both seminaries.

Egypt – Ethiopia – Pakistan

Over the next 18 months the project came together. The Church in Egypt hosted the event, “Consultation on Preparing for Witness to the Majority,” in the spring of 2008 at the Kasr El Dohara Church retreat center. Dr. Atef Gendy, Dr. Tharwat Wahba, and Dr. Sherif Salah, along with other seminary staff, served as both hosts and participants. Three representatives from Gujranwala Seminary, all of whom were friends of The Outreach Foundation, were invited, but only one of

them, Dr. Aslam Ziai, received a visa. The planners of this consultation also invited three representatives of the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary in Ethiopia to the consultation. Ethiopia, though not a Muslim-majority nation, was 40 percent Muslim, and churches in Ethiopia faced challenges similar to those in Egypt and Pakistan.

In addition to the participants from seminaries in the Global South, we had two international resource persons: Dr. Dudley Woodbery of Fuller Seminary and Dr. Wafik Wahba, an Egyptian Canadian teaching at Tyndale University in Canada. Also present were staff and trustees of The Outreach Foundation. Major funding for the event was provided by friends of the The Outreach Foundation in the U.S., especially the Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita.

During the consultation, each seminary's representatives were invited to share the religious context of their country. They described the curriculum used to train students in the understanding of Islam and in witness to Muslims. Finally, they shared prayer requests for their seminaries, their churches, and their countries. The resource persons helped participants see the larger context of the encounter of Islam and Christianity. They gave case studies of movements to Christ among Muslims and described the challenge of training leaders from among these Muslim converts. Worship, fellowship and prayer times were extremely rich parts of the three-day event.



Participants for the Consultation on Preparing for Witness to the Majority in Spring 2008 hosted by ETSC

This consultation was a great encouragement to the participants. Faculty from each seminary committed to develop relationships with faculty from the other seminaries. After hearing the reports of the other presenters, the Gujranwala Seminary resolved to develop a Christian-Muslim Relations curriculum. The Cairo seminary committed itself to develop theological education by extension as a possible means of training converts from among the “majority people.” The invited resource people, Dudley Woodbery and Wafik Wahba, challenged participants to explore mentoring as a means of theological formation for Muslims after they became Christ-followers.

Egypt – Ghana – Brazil

“Preparing for Witness to the Majority” was the first South-South Initiative to be considered, but it was not the first one to be carried out. As part of our 2007 trip to Egypt, The Outreach Foundation brought two of our global friends to experience the bold vision for mission and outreach of the Egyptian Presbyterian Church. The Reverend Jonas Furtado do Nascimento came from the Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil. Dr. John Azumah represented the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Mr. Alcenir Oliveira, a lay leader in a Brazilian Presbyterian Church in the U.S., also participated in the 2007 trip to Egypt.

The purpose of that trip, as described in the previous chapter, was to visit the Lay Pastor Initiative which had been launched the previous year. We knew from our mission relationships in Brazil and Ghana that the churches there placed a high priority on lay pastors (variously termed “evangelists,” “missionaries,” or “catechists”). The leaders we invited had experience with lay training programs and with mission initiatives in which lay pastors played leading roles. Seeing the Egyptian Lay Pastor Initiative at work through Global South “eyes” might be valuable both to our Egyptian friends and to U.S. supporters.

Although the trip’s purpose was only secondarily to develop “South-South” mission relationships, the Egyptian, Brazilian and Ghanaian participants enjoyed the experience so much that they agreed they should develop their own South-South process. Dr. Azumah offered to host a consultation in Ghana in 2008. The theme would be “Lay Leaders in Ministry.” The participants also agreed that at least two representatives should come from each of the visiting churches. The story of that consultation will be told in the history of The Outreach Foundation in Ghana, the next volume in this series.

The South-South Mission Initiative was important for The Outreach Foundation, in that it was a response by an American mission organization to the reality emphasized throughout the Global Mission Conference of 2005. God was doing a new thing in mission in the calling and sending of people from every church in the world to every place in the world. With the whole people of God engaged in mission to the whole world, The Outreach Foundation’s mission had expanded. Not only was Outreach being called to continue its primary mission of connecting U.S. Christians with global Christians; it was also being called to connect these global friends with each other for greater faithfulness in God’s mission.



Participants in 2007 Outreach Foundation trip to Egypt: John Azumah, Jonas Furtado, Alcenir Oliveira, Ann Miner, Buddy Fisher, Jeff Ritchie

Developments at the Evangelical Theological Seminary

Facilities at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo

By 2009, the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo was faced with a new problem. The vision for mission and evangelism ETSC had been casting for almost a decade was attracting so many students that the seminary was running out of room on its tiny campus. Should the seminary buy land outside of Cairo and build a new campus, or should it find a way to expand in its current location? President Atef Gendy and the seminary board had a decision to make.



At left, property next to Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, bought by a Christian businessman. The first floor was completely renovated for the seminary's expansion.

There was property next door that was not being used, but the cost of purchasing the land was beyond the seminary's means. The idea of building a new campus also seemed out of the question. As ETSC looked at the two options, both of which seemed impossible, an unexpected solution knocked on their door. A Christian businessman decided to buy the property adjacent to the seminary, tear down the existing building, and build a new, multi-purpose building on the land. He offered to sell the seminary one of the floors of the new building. With this space, which was larger than their four-story administration and classroom building, they could meet their current needs and expand their vision of how the seminary could serve both church and society.

To buy just one floor of this building would cost \$600,000, an amount that the seminary under ordinary circumstances would never consider taking on. However, Dr. Atef and the board had to solve their space problem, and so by faith they agreed to the businessman's offer. They developed a three-phase plan: they would buy their portion of the new building in Phase 1; they would design and build out the space for the needs of the seminary in Phase 2; and they would furnish the new addition in Phase 3.

When The Outreach Foundation heard about ETSC's faith commitment to expand its facilities, we added support for their capital campaign to our

overall commitment. Long-time friends of ETSC, like Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita and First Presbyterian Church in Houston, gave generous support towards the initial purchase, over and above their ongoing commitments to the seminary. A major gift from National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. helped in the final phase. The Egyptian Diaspora added their support and advocacy for the seminary's expansion, particularly Dr. Amir Metry, an engineer in Pennsylvania who served on the seminary's board. PCUSA co-workers at the seminary—Brice Rogers (2004–2009) and Cinda Gorman (2013–2015)—assisted the seminary's development staff led by Mrs. Mariam Hanna to obtain grants from foundations.



On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. Luke 4:16 CEB

Stained glass window, part of the seminary's chapel renovation

By summer 2020, ETSC was finally ready to begin using the new space. In terms of fundraising, the seminary had exceeded its wildest dreams. For example, over one-third of the initial purchase came from resources within Egypt. Also amazing is the fact that while this long-term capital project was going on, the seminary had extensive—and expensive—building projects going on. Construction for the Center for Middle Eastern Christianity was still underway, and the seminary renovated its chapel as part of a campus beautification project.

Innovative Programs at the Seminary

It would be a mistake to think that most of the seminary's energies during this period of rapid growth were devoted to capital projects. The vision of the seminary has always been to prepare men and women for participation in God's mission in Egypt and beyond. To carry out this vision, the seminary's leadership has periodically asked such questions as, "How does what we teach and the way we structure campus life prepare our graduates for their ministry?" "What is there about Egypt today—politically, educationally, socially—that may be calling us to look at new ways to deliver theological education to students and serious learners in order that they may be better equipped for God's service?"

The answers to these questions have resulted in exciting innovations at the seminary. Its curriculum has been thoroughly overhauled and integrated more closely with the spiritual formation of students, faculty, and administration. Extension campuses have started in Alexandria and Minya. A new platform for

online learning has been developed for use in conjunction with other theological seminaries in the Middle East. Two new Masters-level programs, one in Media, the other in Management, have begun in partnership with ministry organizations in and beyond Egypt.

Programs Housed through the Expansion Project

The new space in the seminary houses several programs: the Center for Church and Society, the Martha Roy Center for Worship, the Office for Alumni Affairs, and the Office for Online Learning. The Martha Roy Center for Worship is named after a long-time missionary, Dr. Martha Roy, who taught worship at both the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and at an Orthodox seminary. During her lifetime, Dr. Roy helped Protestants in Egypt discover the rich worship legacy of the ancient Orthodox Church. The new Center will continue and extend her legacy as it connects the churches in Egypt with an emerging worldwide worship renewal movement.



Dr. Sherif Salah, Director of the Center for Church and Society

The Center for Church and Society, to be directed by Dr. Sherif Salah, represents a deeper commitment to the vision that Dr. Atef Gendy has cast for the seminary over his tenure as its president: namely, that graduates of ETSC see themselves as God’s missionary agents in Egypt and beyond. This Center will do field-based research in the demography of Egypt and on the problems facing Egyptian society. The contextual and cultural studies coming out of this research will help the churches be proactive and creative in their witness and service among the people of Egypt.

Conclusion

We give thanks to God for the amazing developments since 1999 at ETSC. God has used President Dr. Atef Gendy, the faculty and administrative staff, and a supportive board of directors to accomplish abundantly more than anyone could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). May the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo continue to be attentive to the Holy Spirit as it carries out its mission, and may God continue to be glorified through its graduates for years to come.

Egypt Mission Networks in the United States

The Outreach Foundation was an active participant in several of the PCUSA Mission Networks during the late 1990s and early 2000s. As our commitment to mission in Egypt began to increase, we realized that there was no Egypt Mission Network in the PCUSA as such. To be sure, U.S. Presbyterians, with more than 150 years of mission in Egypt, were still connected with the Church in Egypt. Besides the PCUSA mission co-workers serving in Egypt, there were a few advocacy groups in the United States for various Egyptian ministries or mission organizations.



*2013 Egypt Outreach Network meeting
hosted by West Hills Presbyterian Church,
Omaha, Nebraska*

However, there was no specific group in the U.S. that focused on building

the capacity of the Evangelical Church of Egypt for evangelism. The Outreach Foundation and Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship thus decided to create a network in the U.S., which we called the Egypt Outreach Network. We hoped it would eventually be folded into an inclusive, country-wide Egypt Mission Network in which all those with mission connections in Egypt could share what they were doing, learn best practices in mission, and pray for God's work in Egypt.

The first meeting of the new Egypt Outreach Network took place in Atlanta during the 2005 Global Mission Conference co-sponsored by The Outreach Foundation and Frontier Fellowship. Dr. Nancy Fox, who was at that time one of the Mission Directors at First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, became the Network's convener. Several of our Egyptian mission partners were present at this conference, including one of the plenary speakers, Mr. Ramez Atallah, who was to inspire us with his message later that week. He told the network participants how much we had encouraged him by our interest in the church in his country.

After this initial gathering, the Egypt Outreach Network met every year between 2007 and 2013. We were hosted by churches in Chicago, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; Arcadia, California; Richmond, Virginia; and Omaha, Nebraska. On two occasions we planned our gathering to coincide with PCUSA mission events. Almost every year we had a representative from Egypt speak in person or by Skype.



Informal conversation at 2013 Egypt Outreach Network in Omaha. (from left) Church host Ron Gatzke, ETSC President Atef Gendy, and Network Convener Nancy Fox.

Although the Egypt Outreach Network stopped meeting after eight years, it had more than accomplished the purposes for which it was created. Through the annual meetings, bonds between U.S. and Egyptian friends grew deeper and stronger. In addition, the U.S. constituencies in the network learned about each other's outreach in and beyond Egypt. It was a rich time of sharing, learning, and praying.

Another U.S. network for churches interested in evangelism and mission in Egypt, although not strictly Presbyterian, is the Partners Group of Kasr El Dobara Evangelical Church (KDEC). KDEC is part of the Evangelical Church of Egypt, as a mega-church with over 5,000 members, but it functions almost as a denomination in terms of its extensive mission work in and beyond Egypt. To support these missions, KDEC has many global partners. It nurtures its relationships with these friends through an annual gathering in the U.S. and an annual mission conference in Egypt. Several of the strongest supporters of The Outreach Foundation's work in Egypt have been equally committed to Kasr El Dobara, especially its global mission work. They build their visits to Egypt around the date of the KDEC mission conference and attend the annual KDEC Partners meeting in the U.S.

The U.S. mission networks related to Egypt have built strong mission relationships with and support for churches and institutions in Egypt. However, with the exception of Kasr El Dobara's Partners Group, the networks have been initiated by mission organizations outside Egypt such as The Outreach Foundation. Has the time come for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt to initiate its own Egypt Mission Network to which they invite friends from outside Egypt? The Outreach Foundation will gladly say "yes" to such an invitation.

⁷ In her invitation to the 2008 Egypt Outreach Network meeting, Nancy Fox listed the following Egypt connections within the PCUSA: an emerging partnership between the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii and the Synod of the Nile; Care With Love; Joining Hands Against Hunger Egypt Network; Hands Along the Nile Development Services, a support group for the Presbyterian-founded Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS); and the Egypt Outreach Network.

The Arab Spring and Its Effect on the Church in Egypt

Egypt's political developments have always affected the Christian community, and never more so than during the "Arab Spring" in 2011–2013. When The Outreach Foundation began working in Egypt in 1998, its president, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, had been in office since the early 1980s. Government corruption, ruthless suppression of any opposition, and the lack of improvement in the lives of the citizenry led to increasing discontent with his regime. When Outreach groups visited Egypt, conversation frequently turned to Mubarak's successor and what kind of country Egypt might become. Mubarak had been an authoritarian military dictator; our friends in Egypt expressed their concern that the next President might present a different challenge. That is, the next leader of Egypt could be a radical Islamist, and the situation of Christians might become worse than it was under Mubarak.

Against this backdrop the Arab Spring arose. It began in Tunisia in December 2010 when a street vendor named Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest the arbitrary police seizure of his vegetable stand for lack of a permit. Street protests



Muslims and Christians celebrating the overthrow of President Mubarak

ensued in Tunis, the country's capital, eventually prompting that country's president to abdicate and flee to Saudi Arabia.

Activists in other countries in the region were inspired by the regime change in Tunisia and began to protest authoritarian governments in their own nations. In Egypt, the protests began in late January. Christians and Muslims alike came in massive numbers to Tahrir Square in Central Cairo to call for an end to the Mubarak regime and for greater participation in the political process.

After only eighteen days of these protests, Mubarak was overthrown and the country embarked on a quest for a new, democratic Egypt. Christians were relieved that the Mubarak regime had ended and saw it as an opportunity to participate in building a new Egypt.

The Bible Society of Egypt, for example, supported the national theme, "Let's Build Egypt Together," by creating billboards and producing pamphlets with scripture

passages that gave the message that the Bible and the values in it reflect our revolution's aspirations.

The Synod of the Nile, the highest council of the Egyptian Evangelical Church, issued a call to the nation two days before President Mubarak stepped down. In that statement they called for bread, freedom, dignity, and social justice for all Egyptians.

Kasr El Dobra Church, which was very close to Tahrir Square (where so many of the demonstrations had been), opened its campus for medical officials to treat those injured in the demonstrations.

With the overthrow of Mubarak, Christians at the grass-roots level formed "Citizen Committees." Realizing that their future in Egypt was bound to the welfare of all Egyptians, these groups brought together Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians and moderate Muslims to provide literacy training and basic instruction on how to get an ID card, how to follow the issues, and ways to engage in the exciting, messy process of building a democratic Egypt.

Among the churches there also was much prayer for the nation. Over 50,000 people from all Christian communions held a prayer gathering in November 2011. Churches in Egypt traditionally hold a New Year's Eve worship and prayer service. Kasr El Dobra Church held their year-end service outside the church at nearby Tahrir Square, scene of so many of the 2011 demonstrations. Thousands of people, Muslims included, gathered there to pray for the future of their country.

However, with new freedom came the rise of the long-suppressed Muslim Brotherhood. Other more militant Islamist political parties were formed. Attacks on Christians and Christian churches increased with growing disregard of the rule of law. Some Christians, fearing for their future, emigrated to the United States, Europe, or Australia. Most, however, stayed the course and waited with mixed feelings of hope and alarm.



Bible Society of Egypt poster with the slogan "Let's Build Egypt Together" and a quotation from Isaiah 29:7

When Parliamentary elections were held in 2012, candidates from the Muslim political parties formed the overwhelming majority. Three candidates ran for president in June of that year and the winner was Mohamed Morsi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood party. Toward the end of 2012, a new constitution was approved that contained provisions strengthening the role of Islam in the governance of the land. Christians realized that tough times were ahead.

The Evangelical Church of Egypt responded to this increasingly tense situation in a remarkable way. The Council for Services and Development, the social service arm of the church, developed a project to train church leaders in peacebuilding, "Stand Still through Storms." The architect of this project was its chair, Dr. Radi Iskandir Atallah. On New Year's Eve 2010, Dr. Radi witnessed first-hand the violence against Christians, as radical Muslims bombed a Coptic Orthodox Church in his city of Alexandria. He also witnessed hundreds of Muslims forming human shields around the churches in Alexandria a few days later. These Muslims were protecting Christians as they gathered for their Christmas celebration on January 7, 2011. Having known this pastor and supported his evangelistic work in more peaceful times, The Outreach Foundation was glad to support this new witness to the way of Jesus Christ: a way of nonviolence and forgiveness; a way of conflict resolution, not conflict escalation.

Another response to the Islamist rule was that churches simply kept on doing what churches do, that is, they worshiped God and served people. Surprisingly, Muslims began to attend Christian worship. The number was just a trickle, but the pastors were shocked. So were government security forces. On an Outreach Foundation trip to Egypt in April 2013, a pastor shared, "When the security people came to us, they asked us why we were inviting Muslims to worship. We told them that we had not invited Muslims. They had just shown up. Our doors were open, and they walked in."

We were to learn that this story was not unique among the churches. The message we took from this was that ordinary Muslims were becoming alarmed by the increasing political violence of the Islamist regime. On the last evening of our 2013 trip, we experienced that political violence first-hand. There was violence at the main Coptic Orthodox Cathedral just a few blocks from the Cairo seminary where we were staying. Some of our seminary friends had a harrowing time getting back to the seminary after attending a meeting at a local church. We were greatly relieved when they returned safely.



Massive protests in June 2013 leading to the fall of the Morsi regime

As spring turned to summer, matters came to a head. Large protests against the Morsi regime were held in June, culminating on July 3 when the Egyptian military, led by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, stepped in and removed Mohamed Morsi from power. The military's action brought great rejoicing to an overwhelming majority of Egyptian people. In the August 2013 newsletter of the Bible Society of Egypt, Ramez Atallah wrote, "Most Egyptian Muslims and Christians are more united than ever in their common vision for the future, as together they have rejected extremist 'Political Islam' and are working towards the noble task of establishing a civil society which recognizes all Egyptians as equal citizens."

However, the fury of the Muslim Brotherhood was aroused. In retaliation for the military's removal of President Morsi, they went on a rampage in August 2013 and destroyed eighty-five churches and buildings housing Christian ministries. The churches, on their part, did not retaliate. Rather, they shared a message of forgiveness and hope for the future. Pope Tawadros II, the spiritual leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, had this response to the destruction of the churches, most of which were Coptic Orthodox: "If the destruction of these properties is the price Christians in Egypt have to pay to get a free Egypt, then that sacrifice is worthwhile!" (cited in the September 2013 newsletter of the Bible Society of Egypt)



Evangelical church burned in August 2013

In the months that followed, a new constitution was written, General el-Sisi was elected president, and Egypt became stable once more. Sadly, many of the dreams that inspired the Arab Spring in Egypt have been placed on hold; participatory democracy and economic development for all continue to be aspirational goals. Nevertheless, the work of the Church has not only continued, it has positively thrived.

Implementing the Vision for Church Planting, Church Revitalization, and Global Mission

The Evangelical Church of Egypt has always had congregations that were passionate about starting new churches. Presbyteries have also planted churches. However, at the Synod level of the church there was neither staff nor budget to engage in new church development at the time The Outreach Foundation began its work in Egypt.

Synod of the Nile's Strategic Plan for Mission and Evangelism

That situation changed in 2012 when Dr. Tharwat Wahba became the chair of the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council, the council charged with evangelism and church development for the Synod of the Nile. Dr. Tharwat was now in position to implement the vision for mission and evangelism that he and his colleagues at the seminary had been casting for years. He developed a plan that engaged the Evangelical Church of Egypt in church revitalization, church planting, and mission beyond Egypt.

New churches were needed in the satellite cities that continued to be built outside Cairo. Internal migration from rural Egypt to Greater Cairo also created brand new population areas without churches. Beyond these readily observable opportunities, the Mission Department of the Cairo seminary had been doing extensive demographic research throughout the entire country of Egypt and had discovered thousands of population areas without a single church—Orthodox, Protestant, or Roman Catholic.



Church being built in New Assiut City

For church revitalization, Dr. Tharwat learned from the earlier Lay Pastor Initiative that ordained pastors were needed for a congregation to sustain its transformation into a spiritually vital and community-oriented church. From the presbyteries he compiled a list of their priority churches and sought out young seminary graduates with a calling to go to churches needing revitalization.

The “mission beyond Egypt” component of the action plan resulted from Dr. Tharwat’s doctoral research. He found that, from the coming of the American missionaries in 1854 until 1970, the Egyptian Evangelical Church had sent few



*El Adaima, a congregation being revitalized
in Upper Egypt*

cross-cultural missionaries to other countries. Tharwat's mentor, Dr. Swailem Hennein, was among those few. Dr. Swailem Hennein and his wife, Samira Rizk, were sent first to Sudan in the 1950s and then to Kenya in the 1960s. During their missionary service, they were supported entirely by the Egyptian Church. Tharwat concluded from his research that it was time for the Egyptian Evangelical Church as a denomination to participate again in God's mission outside Egypt.

With a strategic plan of action in place, Tharwat Wahba looked for partners to come alongside the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council of the Synod of the Nile. He encouraged Egyptian congregations to sponsor a new church or a church in need of

revitalization, and he welcomed The Outreach Foundation and other friends outside Egypt to join in the council's work.

U.S. Presbyterians Embrace the Vision

Meanwhile, a couple of developments were taking place in the U.S. that helped propel this vision. Mr. Jim Davis, a Presbyterian layperson who had a decades-long commitment to Presbyterian global mission, gave the PCUSA one million dollars designated for the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and the evangelistic outreach of the Synod of the Nile. Of the total, almost 40 percent was given to the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council. The PCUSA also appointed a new Presbyterian mission co-worker, Dr. Steve Gorman, to work with the Synod of the Nile. As the PCUSA's point person for Egypt from 2013–2015, Dr. Gorman stewarded PCUSA resources in support of the priorities of the Synod of the Nile, including the work of the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council.

The second development in the U.S. was that in the years 2012–2013, there was a fissure in the PCUSA. Hundreds of PCUSA congregations left the denomination for two other American Presbyterian communions, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). Many of these departing congregations had supported the global mission work of the PCUSA through The Outreach Foundation. Concerned that these congregations might lose their connection to the rich legacy of Presbyterian mission spanning two centuries, Outreach staff and trustees strategized how to retain and even expand the global connections of these congregations.

Egypt was of particular interest to several members of ECO churches who had a relationship with The Outreach Foundation: Mr. Tom Widmer, Associate Director for Development of The Outreach Foundation and an elder at Third Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia; the Reverend Brian Stewart, Mission Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, and a trustee of The Outreach Foundation; and the Reverend Fakhri Yacoub, Pastor of the Arabic Church in Richmond, Virginia. Tom Widmer had been to Egypt, and Brian Stewart had heard exciting reports from staff and other trustees at board meetings. The Reverend Fakhri, having immigrated from Egypt, was aware of the vital work in his home country.

A key factor in these ECO leaders' interest in Egypt was the fact that the vision of Egypt's Presbyterians paralleled the priority commitment of their new denomination to plant new churches. Within a short time, Tom Widmer, Brian Stewart, and Fakhri Yacoub mobilized congregations to partner with the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council of the Synod of the Nile. ECO congregations began supporting Egyptian new church developments and churches undergoing a revitalization. They visited these churches and invited Dr. Tharwat Wahba and other Egyptian church leaders to their congregations, presbyteries, and synod. The new partnership was an incredible encouragement to the work of the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council.

Global mission, the third component of the Synod of the Nile's mission vision, developed as well. The Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council has sent a long-term missionary from Egypt to Gaza and sent several pastors to Basra, Iraq. It also has called Mr. Hany Bareh to work part-time among the eight churches in the Synod of the Nile that were made up of Sudanese refugees in Egypt. Hany Bareh and his wife, Cristina, also do short-term mission work in South Sudan and in Sudanese refugee camps in Ethiopia in conjunction with The Outreach Foundation. New mission opportunities are surfacing daily, such as short-term missions among refugees in Europe and a mission initiative in northern Iraq.



Cristina and Hany Bareh, shown with Outreach staff Marilyn Borst

To coordinate all this work, Dr. Tharwat has brought together a staff of 19 and an advisory council of experienced mission leaders. When asked about the results of his vision over the past eight years, he says in amazement and with great humility that the culture of the denomination has changed. The vision for new church development cast at ETSC two decades ago is no longer an initiative; It has become a movement. Since 2004 the number of churches in the Synod of the Nile has increased from 311 to 419. A generation of young pastors is eager to

start new churches, to serve churches in need of revitalization in rural areas, or to be sent to another culture as cross-cultural missionaries.

For The Outreach Foundation, this work over two decades is an amazing testimony to the work of God among a people wholly dedicated to God. The evangelism and mission initiative of the Synod of the Nile illustrates the truth of Jesus' parable of the woman who added a little yeast to a lump of dough. The Cairo seminary's vision was like yeast cast into the lives of students. They, in turn, became the leaven for new and revitalized churches. Over time these outwardly-focused congregations have grown to be a source of joy for the Church in Egypt.

As this chapter concludes, a word of caution must be spoken. Egypt is a majority-Muslim country. Since the Arab Spring of 2011–2013, Egyptian Christians have carried out an expansive outreach in relative freedom. This freedom might not last. However, as long as the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo continues to cast a missional vision for its students, Evangelical Christians in Egypt will find faithful, creative, and courageous ways to engage in mission and evangelism within and beyond Egypt.

Two Examples of New Church Development in Egypt during the Years 2013–2020

Space does not permit the many reports that have been sent to The Outreach Foundation over the years about the exciting work of new church development and revitalization. Here are two stories from an August 2014 report by Marilyn Borst, Associate Director for Partnership Development at The Outreach Foundation.

Depending upon where you want to draw the boundary lines around Egypt's largest city, you are looking at between 9 and 19 million people, making Cairo not only the largest city



Pastor Awni Salib with construction skeleton

in Africa but in the entire Arab world. The Presbyterian [Evangelical] Church in Egypt has a vision to see the Church greatly expanded in that strategic city and has 22 New Church Development projects currently under way there. One of those can be found in a brand new master-planned "satellite city," which is already home to over 250,000 people: Obour City. Driving through, it appears to have a lot of the trappings of a western upper-middle-class suburb, complete with a large modern shopping mall featuring a Chili's and a Starbucks. On the outer edges where huge apartment complexes are under construction on the verge of the desert, a concrete "skeleton" atop an imposing platform marks the place where a new Presbyterian church is taking shape.

Pastor Awni Salib was doing ministry in Germany before hearing a call to return to Egypt. Not long after that, the Morsi government, remarkably, gave the land for this new church plant—part of the master plan for the community (usually, the Protestants and the Orthodox are each given a plot). This is not, however, a case of “if you build it, they will come” because there are already 85 people in the area eagerly awaiting its completion, and many more are expected.



Rev. Gemy Wagih

Driving back toward the main part of Cairo, you pass the poor areas where those seeking a better ar-ea have migrated from the villages in the middle of the country. Unable to afford rent in the city itself, they have put up simple brick houses connected by unpaved streets, spotted with small piles of ir-regularly collected trash. No malls or amenities here in Gebel Asfar. Gemy Wagih’s family lived here, as did other poor Presbyterian families from Assuit, looking for jobs. But Gemy was following a call and was accepted to study at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. One of his first classes was being taught by Dr. Sherif Salah, a professor of mission, who shared data indicating

that there were more than five million Egyptians who had no access to a church anywhere near where they lived.

Gemy began to weep. He lived in one of those areas: Gebel Asfar. His tears watered the seeds of a vision, and now Pastor Gemy has begun a Presbyterian fellowship group in a rented storefront in Gebel Asfar. They are 20 in number, and when they reach 30 (enough to pay a small salary for their pastor) they can organize. Already they are searching for their own piece of land upon which to build a sanctuary.

Sustaining the Vision Over Time: Two Case Studies

The previous chapter recounts the work of new church development and church revitalization by the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council of the Synod of the Nile over the past twenty years. The results have been an amazing 25 percent increase in the number of churches in the Synod and a heart-warming revitalization of churches in the rural areas of the country. The question this chapter will attempt to answer is, “What is the long-term future for these new and revitalized churches?” Two churches developed in satellite cities around Cairo have been chosen as case studies. These congregations were among the first projects of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt.

The Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan

On The Outreach Foundation’s first trip to Egypt in 1998–1999, we learned about the government’s decision to build satellite cities around Greater Cairo. This clearly presented itself as an opportunity for the Evangelical Church of Egypt. Among the first new cities to be built was 10th of Ramadan. One person brought in by the government to establish the new city was an engineer named Munib. He and his wife,



Samiya and Munib were among the lay persons who founded the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan

Samiya, were Christians. They met a few other Christians, and the families began a Bible study in their homes. Over time the government allotted plots of land for a new Coptic Orthodox Church and a new Evangelical Church. Both fellowships, however, waited years to receive a permit to build a sanctuary.

Around the time that The Outreach Foundation began its work in Egypt, the government became more lenient in giving licenses, and the budding Evangelical congregation in 10th of Ramadan received a permit. Munib knew a pastor, the Reverend Helmy Hennein, who had served congregations in Sudan and Kuwait before returning to Egypt. He asked Pastor Helmy to help their fellowship become an organized church, and the pastor agreed.

Meanwhile, the secretary of the Synod of the Nile, Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, urged The Outreach Foundation to help the church build its sanctuary. “We should not miss this opportunity,” said Dr. Abdel Masih. He went on to explain that building permits usually put a time limit on completing the exterior structure,

including the roof. The penalty for not completing the sanctuary on time might be revoking the building permit and even demolishing the church building.

With that sense of urgency in mind, The Outreach Foundation made the 10th of Ramadan church one of its two priority projects for Egypt in 2000. We commissioned a promotional video in 2001 that highlighted this mission opportunity and made a point to visit the congregation each time we took a group to Egypt. Early support for the new church came from congregations who had been on the 2002 trip. The building started going up, and the church grew as well. By 2004 the congregation had grown to several hundred people and had a worship space on the ground floor of the new structure. It was well on its way to being roofed, but the main sanctuary, which would accommodate over 1000 people, was a long way from completion.



*An Outreach Foundation group in 2002
praying for the new church in 10th of
Ramadan City*



Pastor Isaac William and his family

The Reverend Isaac William was called to be pastor of the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan in 2007 and has remained at the church. He came from the Evangelical Church in Tayyaba, known for its extensive evangelism and mission activity. Pastor Isaac brought a mission-oriented outlook and strengthened this already-strong church. A preschool was started for young children, and Sunday School and youth work thrived. Relationships with U.S. friends continued to deepen as well. U.S. partners visited 10th of Ramadan regularly and invited Pastor Isaac to visit their congregations.

Around the time of Egypt's Arab Spring, Pastor Isaac received an opportunity to go to Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, for training in peacebuilding. One way to promote a culture of peacebuilding, he thought, would be to start a church-run school. The Evangelical Church of Egypt had a country-wide system of church-related schools, which served Muslims as well as Christians, but the Synod was unable to start a new school in 10th of Ramadan. As a result, Pastor Isaac began exploring ways for his own congregation

to develop the school as a witness in the city. As of this writing that dream is still awaiting its fulfillment. As they say in Arabic, “Inshallah” (if God wills), it will happen.

In my most recent conversation with Isaac, he told me excitedly that the Synod has land in 10th of Ramadan City for another congregation and wants the church he serves to plant it. What good news! The vision for mission and evangelism that inspired the lay couple, Munib and Samiya, to start the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan City more than 30 years ago continues. Thanks be to God for the ministry of the Evangelical Church in 10th of Ramadan.

The Evangelical Church in 15th of May

The Outreach Foundation was introduced to the new church in 10th of Ramadan City in 2000. We learned about a new church in another satellite city, 15th of May, on our 2002 trip. This church started in 1989 with seven families. They applied for a building permit in 1991 and, after ten years, received permission to start construction of a sanctuary.



Pastor Anwar Abdelmasih and his family in 2009

When The Outreach Foundation and Frontier Fellowship team visited 15th of May in 2002, the church was meeting for worship in a church in a nearby city. Prayer meetings and other activities were done in homes. The land was in the process of being excavated for the foundation, but the church had little money of its own to put into the building. It seemed a huge challenge for the congregation, and they were looking for outside help.

When megachurch Kasr El Dohara took up an offering for the church’s construction, the emerging church in 15th of May City was encouraged, and so was The Outreach Foundation. It became another of our priority projects in Egypt.

The Reverend Anwar Abdelmasih, pastor of the Evangelical Church in 15th of May, arrived in 2003. With support of churches in Cairo and The Outreach Foundation, the congregation built a worship space that could accommodate a little more than a hundred people. However, the same challenge that was being faced by the church in 10th of Ramadan was pressing upon the church in 15th of May. They needed to get the exterior walls of the final structure up and the sanctuary roofed as soon as possible. For that they needed new partners.

God provided such a partner for 15th of May through what Pastor Anwar called “their miracle.” Arcadia Presbyterian Church in southern California, became

interested in Egypt because it had a relationship with a local Arabic-speaking Presbyterian congregation. Arcadia was also a mission partner of The Outreach Foundation. About the time that 15th of May needed an extra boost to roof its sanctuary (2008), the Arcadia Church embarked on a capital campaign. Through Arcadia's interest in Egypt and its trust in the Outreach Foundation, the California congregation agreed to tithe their capital campaign proceeds for missions in Egypt. About \$30,000 supported seminary's expansion project and another \$30,000 became the "miracle gift" for the completion of the top floor and roof of the Evangelical Church in 15th of May.

Even with that gift, the church was still a little short of the final amount needed, but the Lord provided through another providential relationship. The Reverend Jack Peebles, a trustee of The Outreach Foundation, developed a passion for Egypt through an Outreach Foundation trip to Egypt in 2005. When he became pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Yakima a few years later, Jack recruited members of First Presbyterian and the Executive Presbyter of the Central Washington Presbytery for the 2009 Outreach trip. During that trip we visited the church in 15th of May, and the team members who had come from Washington pledged to do what they could. Over the next year enough funds came in, and the church was roofed.



Pastor Anwar and leaders of the Evangelical Church in 15th of May City atop their newly-roofed sanctuary, December 2009

Sometime later, another U.S. congregation developed a quite different relationship with the church in 15th of May. Grace Church in Nashville, Indiana, a nondenominational church of about 25 people, decided not to call a full-time pastor. Instead, guest preachers would lead Sunday worship, and the church would use the bulk of their Sunday offering for mission. They called The Outreach Foundation and asked for help in finding a global partner they could support and with whom they could have a personal relationship. We introduced them to the Evangelical Church in 15th of May.

The church began sending its offerings to Egypt, and Mr. Ken Harker, Grace's liaison to the Evangelical Church, exchanged emails regularly with Pastor Anwar. Mr. Harker traveled to Egypt with an Outreach team in 2013, and Pastor Anwar visited Grace Church a few years later. The weekly offerings from the small church in America were used by their Egyptian friends to repurpose one of the church's rooms for use as a preschool, for children in the community.

In a 2019 email, Pastor Anwar thanked The Outreach Foundation for connecting the Evangelical Church in 15th of May with the Arcadia and Grace churches. He then went on to describe the outreach ministries of his church and included

video footage of their service to poor people in their city, outreach to refugees from other African countries, and short-term medical mission trips to the villages of Upper Egypt. We were inspired!

This Presbyterian congregation, like its counterpart in 10th of Ramadan, is essentially a church of outreach. Pastor Anwar has shepherded his flock well. They may be working on their building for years to come, but they have their priorities straight: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)



Evangelical Church in 15th of May outreach to refugees

Egypt as a Case Study of the Missiology and Mission Practice of The Outreach Foundation

The history of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt is a story about the missional renewal of the Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church in Egypt. It started as a “mustard seed,” a vision for mission and evangelism cast at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo at the beginning of the 21st century. The seeds took root and, 20 years later, new churches have sprung up, churches without pastors have found new life, and Egyptians are serving in mission beyond Egypt. This final chapter will focus on how The Outreach Foundation’s involvement in Egypt reflects some of our fundamental mission convictions. Further, it addresses how we have acted on those convictions over time in one part of the world.

Continuity with Our Presbyterian Mission Heritage

The work of The Outreach Foundation in Egypt has been built on more than 150 years of Presbyterian mission in Egypt. Egypt, however, was a mission field of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (“Northern Presbyterian Church”). The Outreach Foundation began as a mission support organization for the Presbyterian Church US (“Southern Presbyterian Church”), which had no history in Egypt. When the PCUS and UPCUSA merged in 1983 to form the PCUSA, specialized organizations within each former denomination merged. Presbyterian Men was one such example. Outreach Foundation Trustee Dr. Richard LeTourneau participated in the Presbyterian Men’s organization and was a member of the delegation that went to Egypt in 1991. There he saw the rich legacy of Presbyterian mission and dreamed of a role The Outreach Foundation could play in Egypt.



Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC), founded by American Presbyterian missionaries in 1863

PCUSA, specialized organizations within each former denomination merged. Presbyterian Men was one such example. Outreach Foundation Trustee Dr. Richard LeTourneau participated in the Presbyterian Men’s organization and was a member of the delegation that went to Egypt in 1991. There he saw the rich legacy of Presbyterian mission and dreamed of a role The Outreach Foundation could play in Egypt.

Part of a Global Evangelistic Movement

Further impetus for a mission initiative in Egypt was provided by a global network of churches and mission agencies called “AD 2000 and Beyond.” This movement began in 1989 with the aspirational goal of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with “people from every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Rev. 7:9) by the year 2000, God willing. The PCUSA Office of International Evangelism, where I served from 1989–1997, was involved with this movement from the beginning. As an expression of the PCUSA’s commitment to global evangelism, the Office of

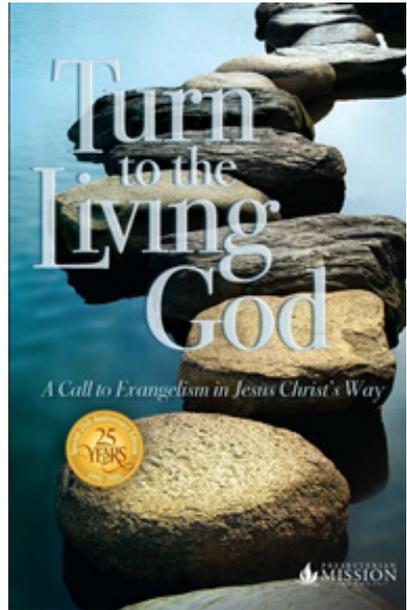
International Evangelism produced a major document, “Turn to the Living God: A Call to Evangelism in Jesus Christ’s Way.” The International Evangelism office also worked closely with Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship and The Outreach Foundation to mobilize Presbyterian support for and participation in cross-cultural evangelism and mission, particularly among those who had little or no access to a thriving church in their own culture.

First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, one of the largest churches in the PCUSA at the time, was already involved with AD 2000; it also was a strong partner of The Outreach Foundation. Through this congregation I learned about “Pray through the Window,” a prayer movement connected with AD 2000. In 1995 Pray through the Window focused on key cities of the world, “Gateway Cities,” so termed because of their impact on the political, social, and cultural life in their surrounding regions. They were also cities where the Christian population was tiny by comparison with adherents of other religions.

Cairo, Egypt, was one of these Gateway Cities. It was 90 percent Muslim and the home of Al-Azhar University, the intellectual center of Islam. It was also a city where many Middle East Arabic-language television programs were produced. Thus, Cairo was the center of popular culture for the region. In 1995 First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs was led to pray for Cairo.

In the providence of God, a congregation connected with The Outreach Foundation was praying for Cairo at the same time Dr. Victor Makari, PCUSA Coordinator for the Middle East, was in conversation with the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo about The Outreach Foundation’s overture to fund a mission professor. Could a renewal of mission and evangelism at ETSC be part of the Holy Spirit’s plan to ignite a Christian movement for the people of the Middle East? Cairo indeed seemed to be strategic for God’s purposes in the Middle East.

First Presbyterian Church’s prayers for Cairo led them to take a “listening trip” to Egypt in 1996, followed by a short-term mission trip in 1998. By the time they were planning their next trip to Egypt, I had joined The Outreach Foundation. Dr. John Stevens, senior pastor and an Outreach Foundation trustee, invited me to join the team he was leading in early 1999. It was the open door that Outreach



“Turn to the Living God,” adopted by the PCUSA in 1991 as its official statement on evangelism

needed for our next step towards partnership with the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo.

Distinctive Focus: Building Capacity for the Church’s Evangelism and Mission

The Outreach Foundation began its mission in Egypt with the same commitment that led the initial Presbyterian missionaries to go there in the 1850s. They had gone to Egypt to work with the Coptic Orthodox Church to renew its vision for witness to the Muslim majority. As described in Chapter 1, the missionaries did not accomplish their purpose, but they did succeed in helping establish the Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church of Egypt. By the time of the 1999 trip with First Presbyterian of Colorado Springs, the Evangelical Church of Egypt also had a renewed passion for evangelism, particularly among Muslims.

On its early trips to Egypt, the Colorado Springs church had been exploring the Christian movement there, primarily through individual congregations or parachurch mission organizations. The Outreach Foundation wanted to work with the Evangelical Church in Egypt as a whole. Our hope was to build the capacity of the Synod of the Nile for its witness and service in Jesus’ name. The Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo seemed the most strategic place to impact the church, and we were gratified that the seminary’s leadership welcomed our proposal to support the training of a professor of mission and evangelism. We were grateful also to First Presbyterian Church, for they invited me to be part of their “Cairo Connection,” and they enlarged the mission to include The Outreach Foundation’s initiative at the Cairo seminary.

“The Right People on the Bus”

In the book *Good to Great*, author Jim Collins documents that companies succeed or fail by who their leaders are and where they are placed in the company. The language Collins uses is, “Who are the people on our ‘bus,’ and are they in the right seats on the bus?” God indeed brought the right leaders to the Cairo seminary at the right time in the early years of the 21st century: Dr. Atef Gendy, Dr. Swailem Hennein, Dr. Tharwat Wahba, and Dr. Sherif Salah. Their vision has guided our partnership through the years.



From left, Tharwat Wahba, Atef Gendy, and Swailem Hennein in 2002

Dr. Atef had been nurtured in his faith and practice in one of the leading churches in Egypt and through his involvement in the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. When he became president of the Cairo seminary, Dr. Atef wisely invited Dr. Swailem Hennein, universally admired by the Egyptian Church for his

mission work in Sudan and Kenya, to guide the development of the fledgling Mission Department. Together they nurtured two students at the seminary, Tharwat Wahba and Sherif Salah, who showed promise for future leadership in mission. Tharwat and Sherif did doctoral studies and took over the leadership of the Mission Department at the seminary. It is not an overstatement to say that the renewal of the passion for mission and evangelism in the Evangelical Church of Egypt happened primarily because of these four leaders.

In a statement that shows the humility of these leaders, Dr. Atef wrote the following tribute to The Outreach Foundation:

I personally owe The Outreach Foundation a lot, due to the support you have given me from the beginning of my leadership of ETSC and until now! I don't really know how you put such trust in me, in spite of not knowing me enough at that time [2000]. Nothing was promising or encouraging then. It was such a risk, close to gambling, that you invested a lot of time, effort and money in a vision of a young and new leader who had not proven himself and in a seminary that was in the worst time of its history then! In fact, lots of the success and change that happened at ETSC and the Church of Egypt is due to what you, Dr. Swailem and many others poured so generously into us—love, patience, and unceasing support. I cannot but say with Jacob: "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant" (Gen. 32:10).

Not as Partners, But as Friends



Nancy Fox, Outreach Trustee, and Tharwat Wahba, Egypt Mission Consultant for The Outreach Foundation

The heart-felt tone of this note reveals something else about our work in Egypt over the past 20-plus years. We have developed deep roots of friendship with the Christians of Egypt. They are not simply mission partners; they are our friends, our brothers and sisters, with whom we have been privileged to work in God's mission. Our lives have been profoundly touched by the friends we have grown to love over two decades, and the feeling has been mutual.

We look forward to working with one of those friends more closely in the coming years. In addition to continuing as Professor of Mission at ETSC, Dr. Tharwat Wahba has

joined the Outreach “family” as part-time Egypt Mission Consultant. In that role Tharwat will work with Outreach staff to deepen our partnership and explore new models of shared ministry.

There will be changes in the coming years at The Outreach Foundation, at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, and within the Evangelical Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile. The future will not be simply a continuation of the past. Nevertheless, the foundation of friendship for two decades and the participation of Dr. Tharwat as Outreach’s Egypt Mission Consultant ensure a solid “Cairo Connection” for years to come.



*From left, Jeff Ritchie, Atef Gendy, Darren Kennedy,
And Marilyn Borst in 2019*

-APPENDIX-

The Impact of the Church in Egypt on American Christians

Falling in Love with the Mission of God’s Church – in Egypt

Nancy Fox, Outreach Foundation Trustee

Jesus said to his disciples, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:19). When I first went to Egypt with The Outreach Foundation and Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship in 2002, I was impressed mostly with the fact that the church there had existed since the time of Pentecost under some degree of persecution or at least harassment. That is almost 2000 years! It was strange to me to see church properties and even the seminary surrounded by high walls, like fortresses. This did not seem very welcoming, but I learned walls were a vital element of self-preservation. The opposition had not prevailed; the church had survived. Clearly, we American Christians had much to learn from the Egyptian church.

When I joined the mission staff at First Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs in 2001, I inherited a rich heritage of seven years of relationship in Egypt. The first Egyptian I met was Marianna Sobhy, a recent college graduate and member of Kasr el Dohara Church. She was a children’s ministry intern with First Presbyterian for the summer, and she stayed with our family for her first three weeks. Everything about Marianna was a surprise to me, especially her strong biblical foundation and mission vision. It seemed to pulse in her blood, the fruit of stronger training than I had ever seen. Before the 2002 trip, I knew Marianna and a handful of other Egyptian leaders who had come through Colorado Springs, a veritable “mecca” for mission organizations. These Egyptian Christians shared about their ministries and led conferences on a broad range of topics from Muslim outreach to prayer and sports ministry. I went to Egypt primed to soak up all I could from our various Egyptian hosts, for I had already experienced the zeal, expertise, creativity and depth of dependence on God of these Egyptian Presbyterians.

What I cannot explain is how or why the Lord planted my heart in Egypt on that first trip. As a mission pastor, I had visited many countries, but inexplicably Egypt is where I really fell in love with the church.

My love is not for the church as an abstraction, but for the specific churches I have visited in Egypt and for specific people in those churches and in leadership. Dr. Swailem Hennein (see earlier chapters) was one of the first loves. This former missionary had a twinkle in his eye and a gentle spirit of inclusive love which he poured into the mission vision of the seminary and its emerging leaders, Drs. Tharwat Wahba and Sherif Salah.

Swailem, Egypt’s first missionary, knew of course that not all people in a Muslim

majority country would come to a church. Even so, he taught a holistic ministry model that was radically inclusive in a way that looked and tasted, not like the majority culture and its expectations, but very much like Jesus. When a church— whether brand-new or already established—began a medical clinic, offered parenting skills classes, or started a pre-school,



El Kom el Akhtar Church with Outreach Foundation team 2018. Nancy Fox is at the far right

it would invite and serve all members of the community, not just Christians. This inclusivity was and still is radical in Egypt. But the seminary shaped its new mission curriculum around this model, and it is a beautiful thing to behold.

I think of a clinic of a new church in Fayoum which had a waiting room full of Muslim women in conservative dress with only their eyes showing. I think also of Medhat Nady, who planted a church as a seminary student, and each week would walk the streets of Abo Regala, a new city-under-construction, with a local imam talking and picking up trash together. And I think of El Kom el Akhtar Church's micro-loan program which included Farida, a Muslim widow who raised a hundred chickens in her house to sell for Eid al-Fitr feasts at the end of Ramadan. I think of so many leaders and members of the churches up and down the Nile in Egypt and their audacious ministry dreams and goals.

My own home-away-from-home in Egypt is the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo. ETSC is the heartbeat of the church in a way quite foreign to American Presbyterians because every Presbyterian pastor in Egypt has been trained there. For the last twenty years the heartbeat of the seminary has been Dr. Atef Gendy, whose wise leadership has integrated a commitment to academic excellence and a vital mission vision in entrepreneurial ways.

At the seminary also is Dr. Tharwat Wahba. During the past eight years (2012-2020), Dr. Tharwat has not only been head of ETSC's Mission Department, but he has also chaired the Synod's Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council, the council which has translated the mission vision of the seminary into concrete programs of outreach and mission. The results have been a transformation of the Church in Egypt. This is not just my own impression; I have heard old and young Egyptian pastors up and down the Nile say this.

The Presbyterian Church in Egypt has shown that it is possible for the culture of an entire 150-year-old denomination to change from being inwardly focused to

being outwardly focused in its basic ministry orientation. The change had started decades ago in pockets like Kasr el-Dobara Church with leaders like Pastor Menes Abdul Noor. Now anyone can see the rich harvest of the new culture of mission. Well over 25% of the 400-plus Presbyterian churches in Egypt have been planted in the last ten years, and each of them is a point of light and service in their community. In true Egyptian style, there is humorous teasing and energetic competition between the pastors when they gather to share the stories of the new fellowships their established churches are planting.

Jesus continues to build his church in Egypt, and truly the gates of hell are not prevailing against it. At one time, I had thought this passage was about the church surviving in spite of pressure and persecution. But Jesus is talking about a church that will be God’s active instrument for breaking down the gates of hell itself to free those who are suffering under ignorance, poverty and darkness, without the hope of the liberating good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ. Churches have started up in many hellish slums like “400 Village” located on the outskirts of Alexandria, where high levels of drug addiction make life terrifying for young people. This church has been without a pastor for three years, but Naveela, herself a young mother, boldly leads the Sunday School of more than eighty kids, giving them a safe place to be children and learn that they are loved by a good Father God. In the loving face of a missional church like this that is resilient in hardship and depends on the presence of God, the gates of hell cannot resist. I love the hundreds of leaders like Naveela.

I returned most recently from Egypt with a small team in mid-March, a few days earlier than planned because of the rapid spread of Covid-19 and border-closures. That was my 17th visit. I hope more Outreach groups will travel to Egypt soon, to “taste and see” what a missional, outwardly-focused church can look like, and learn from our friends . . . and that they, too, will fall in love with this church. Over the years, many have said to me, “You know everybody in Egypt!” But I don’t even know all of the Presbyterian Christians, and keep falling further behind because the church is growing faster than I can keep up with. I guess I’ll have to go back!



Friendships More Precious than Gold

Walter Lewis, Outreach Foundation Trustee

In 2001, Jeff Ritchie from The Outreach Foundation visited Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita, Kansas to report on a church that we supported in China. During his remarks, he shared an invitation to join an Outreach trip to Egypt in May, 2002. Having witnessed a wonderful partner relationship in China brokered by The Outreach Foundation, I knew that this trip to Egypt was worth considering. When I sent my deposit for the trip, I thought that it would be the only time I would travel to Egypt, as my ministry interests were in other regions.

But that expected “one-and-done visit” in 2002 has now grown to twenty-four trips to Egypt, for God built a living relationship of hearts and souls. The bonds that were created on that and subsequent trips are the reason we have returned again and again. The mutual encouragement that has been shared in the relationships with our friends in Egypt has been a joy and blessing for American and Egyptian alike. Some of the friendships that have grown out of the 2002 Outreach Foundation trip are more precious to me than all the gold in a Pharaoh’s tomb.

Another impact of Egypt on me is that it has shown me how God connects his people ahead of time for the missions they will be involved in in the future. Here are a few stories that illustrate this:

Dr. Ken Bailey and the Center for Middle Eastern Christianity

In 2002, we met Dr Atef Gendy at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. He is a wonderful leader and the seminary has grown in enrollment and vision under his care. In 2003, I joined Jeff Ritchie and Dr. Atef for a meeting with Dr Ken Bailey in Pittsburgh, PA. Dr. Bailey had grown up in Egypt and had spent forty-five years teaching New Testament in the Middle East. During his missionary service he had accumulated a large library. At this meeting, he announced his intention to gift this library to the Cairo Seminary. The Seminary was happy to receive this great gift and proposed expanding their facilities to create a place for research and teaching. The Outreach Foundation was prepared to raise funds.

We at Eastminster were excited to become involved in this project because we already had a relationship with Dr. Bailey. He had spoken at our church, and we had been supporting his teaching ministry for years. We made the first gift for the new Center for Middle Eastern Christianity and over several years provided the funds for the construction of a floor of the administration building in Cairo that would house the Center. My participation in the project focused on helping the seminary match the design of the facility with the purpose they hoped the Center would serve. Others across Egypt, Europe, and the USA joined in the vision and together we completed the project. It was a joy to attend the dedication of the Centre for Middle Eastern Christianity with Dr. Bailey in 2013.

Kasr el Dohara Evangelical Church

On the May, 2002 Outreach Foundation trip to Egypt our group visited the Kasr el Dohara Evangelical Church. Several churches on that trip were intrigued by the ministry of KDEC and wanted to learn more. In 2003, First Presbyterian Church in Evanston, Illinois invited leaders from the Kasr el Dohara Church to be keynote speakers at their annual Mission Week, and I traveled from Wichita to hear them. During the conference I offered to assist one of the KDEC guests visit a store to buy a camera. The simple act of driving Hany Fouad, one of KDEC’s missionaries to Barcelona, Spain, led to an ongoing connection, friendship, and eventual travel

to Barcelona to serve on the board of directors of Arab Ministries in Spain which Hany and his wife Mona founded. It has been a joy to introduce these friends to my friends in the US and together witness God at work in this ministry, especially the baptisms of new believers in Jesus.

Like family

Most of my trips to Egypt have included visits to the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo or the Kasr el Dohara Church. My friends there have become like family. For example, I met Darren and Elisabeth Kennedy at the seminary on the 2002 trip. We had an immediate bond. Then I found out that Darren was raised in Kansas, a short drive from my home. When their younger son was baptized, I attended the service in Kansas City and quietly provide a bottle of Nile River water which Darren added to the baptismal font when no one was watching. I also visited them during their PhD studies in Scotland and enjoyed a round of golf with Darren at the historic St. Andrews golf course.

The Kasr el Dohara congregation has also been a church family to me and was the location of my baptism in 2005 by my friend, Pastor Sameh Maurice (to my left in the photo). Present were friends from Houston, The Outreach Foundation, and Egypt (including the Kennedys). To have been baptized in Egypt, a nation that I so care about, remains a highlight of all my travels which have taken me to more than over eighty nations.



Walter's baptism at Kasr El Dohara Church with friends from Egypt, Houston, and The Outreach Foundation

My experiences in Egypt have reinforced the knowledge that electronic communication may be instant and convenient, but true fellowship requires physical presence. The May 2002 trip to Egypt with The Outreach Foundation was the beginning of deep friendships and ministry connections. I am grateful to Jeff Ritchie for the introductions that he made for our team and for his ongoing fellowship.

The Impact of a Vision

Caryl Weinberg, Outreach Foundation Trustee

It was in 2007 that I first started serving as Missions Director at First Presbyterian Church of Evanston, Illinois. Though the church had over eighty partners scattered around Evanston, Metro Chicago and the world, it was clear that a priority of our church, and a passion of many of our members, was to support our partners in Egypt. I was not part of the original trip in 2002 when our Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. David Handley, Missions Director George Atkins, and Elder Ron Ehresman traveled with The Outreach Foundation and Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship to visit and establish what has become a long and lasting relationship with the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt/Synod of the Nile. But I soon learned of the relationship and became thoroughly captivated in how the Lord was at work through these amazing brothers and sisters.

In 2009 I visited Egypt for the first time. I was part of a small group that went to Alexandria to be part of a gathering of university students through the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). It was there that I met a leader of both IFES and Synod of the Nile, and I started to see the impact that the



First Presbyterian Church of Evanston visit to 10th of Ramadan Church in 2014. Caryl Weinberg is 5th from right.

Egyptian church was having beyond Egypt in the Middle East and North Africa. From Alexandria I traveled on my own to Cairo where I spent the next week getting to know Dr. Atef Gendy and the wonderful staff of Cairo Seminary (ETSC). I was impressed with this gentle leader who had tremendous Spirit-led vision and the skills to mobilize the seminary into a new future. Dr. Atef's vision was that the seminary would revitalize local churches and empower pastors to lead the church with an awareness and concern for the communities they served. The seminary's focus on translating and teaching the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course inspired our own church to host a Perspectives course which engaged our surrounding communities and churches. First Presbyterian Evanston had the privilege of investing in the ETSC translation of Perspectives and were honored to be included in its formal launch in Cairo in 2018.

Out of the initial visit in 2002, First Presbyterian began investing in the New Church Development Initiative of the Egyptian Presbyterian Church. Specifically, we supported the church plant in the 10th of Ramadan City. On the visit I had

in 2009, I saw a church with walls and several basement rooms that were somewhat complete. I also met their pastor, Rev. Isaac William. Over the years we have seen that church grow in its outreach and make progress completion of the church building. Hosting a kindergarten, day care and clinic are just some of the means the church has used to serve its members and the Muslims who make up 90% of the population. Today this church, with its own building not quite complete, is pursuing planting another church in a nearby city. Their passion to share Christ's love is remarkable, and their love for their neighbors is growing all the time.

Over the years we have visited our friends in Egypt, and they have come to our church. For example, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Cairo Seminary in Egypt in 2014, and Dr. Atef made a special trip to be part of First Presbyterian's 150th Anniversary in 2018. We covet our relationship with our Egyptian partners. God has used them to teach us to be a church of salt and light in a world that so needs Christ. God has used them to challenge us to move beyond comfort and our fears to vision and action that impacts our community for the good of everyone, not just for our own good. God is using them to grow our church, even as he is using them to grow the church worldwide. May God use us together always for his glory.

Hearing God's Call to Egypt

Cinda and Steve Gorman, Presbyterian Church (USA) Mission Co-Workers



Moses was minding his own business (and his father-in-law's sheep) in Egypt when ... the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. (Ex 3:2). Here we are, 275 miles away from Mt. Sinai and ten days away from our departure after three years as mission co-workers in Egypt. This timing gives us the opportunity to reflect on a series of our own "burning bushes" that culminated

in our call to Egypt. We are amazed and grateful for God's leading.

My own curiosity led me back through saved e-mails and old Facebook posts to construct a timeline of the trail markers on this journey to Egypt. I could see God's hand working through Stu Ross, whom I met on a solo trip to Kenya in 2000. Stu and Linda Ross were The Outreach Foundation's East Africa Mission Staff and were responsible for working with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in a ministry of building

schools, churches, and orphanages as well as managing water projects. I remembered Stu and wrote to him on September 20, 2010:

We are 61 and 62 years old and are seriously considering possibilities for mission work in two years when my obligations as Presbytery Moderator have been completed. We have talked about this for years but are just beginning to explore this seriously. Kenya is one of the two top countries on our list. We would be looking at selling our home and relocating for a two-year stint if there is a place the Lord could use our gifts. We would appreciate learning from you and your experience as well as finding out if there are positions available through the Outreach Foundation. We could live on a limited stipend if we could get medical benefits and housing. We enjoy preaching and teaching and are both educators/coaches at heart.

Stu connected us with Jeff Ritchie who responded the next day and became a trusted mentor/connector for both of us. His first letter mentioned the nations of Kenya as well as South Korea, Pakistan, and China. And then, in three words I shall carry to my grave, Jeff wrote,



Steve and Cinda Gorman celebrating 150th anniversary of ETCS, November 2014

Then there's Egypt. *The seminary has lacked an "international liaison" for the past two years....*

This position is volunteer, with housing provided. This person interfaces with the groups that come to see the church in Egypt—even helps plan their itineraries. The Outreach Foundation and Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship are indebted to whoever serves in this position.

To be honest, even on our Dream Travel list, Egypt had never been a consideration. This must be God's sense of humor dangling this challenge in front of us. We confided in a realtor and invested uncounted hours of labor and trips to home improvement stores over the next 18 months preparing our home for selling. Those "mindless" afternoons of stripping wallpaper and painting gave me time to reflect on how God had prepared us. God provided me with parents as models who stepped out in faith in their late fifties to go to work for World Vision International and travel to Cambodia during the conflict there. The timing seemed good for family. Our children were grown, Steve's parents were still in good health, and mine were no longer living.

On New Year's Day, 2011 we submitted our application for service through the PCUSA. Before the end of that month, the First Egyptian Revolution began, and we wondered if we should pursue another course. We corresponded with people at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo for their counsel. Mission Co-Worker Dr. Darren Kennedy encouraged us to continue with the application process. However, we did not hear

from the Seminary's President, Dr. Atef Gendy, for over two months. It turns out that our letter of March 26, 2011 was shuffled off to a SPAM box due to the theft of copper wiring and internet cable outside the Seminary walls. When Dr. Atef finally wrote us in June, he urged us to keep considering the opportunity. Meanwhile, we met the Rev. Dr. Raafat Zaki, our new Synod Executive, and discovered he was an alumnus of the Cairo Seminary. Were our encouraging conversations with him a mere coincidence or God's providence?

We knew we needed to visit Egypt to meet our potential colleagues. An Outreach Foundation travel opportunity presented itself, and in February of 2012 we were interviewed by Dr. Atef Gendy and stayed for two nights in the dormitory apartment that would become our home.

Mr. Amgad Beblawi, the PCUSA's Coordinator for the Middle East and Europe, also encouraged us along our path to mission service which culminated in our arrival in Egypt in mid-February (2013). Since then we have had a lifetime of adventures in three short years. Steve served as the PCUSA's Regional Liaison to Egypt. In that capacity he connected with the pastors of churches burned in the aftermath of the Second Egypt Revolution; encouraged New Church Development Pastors; and communicated the work of the Synod of the Nile to Presbyterians in the US. My volunteer position as International Relations Coordinator for ETSC involved organizing the itineraries of many visitors to Egypt, building the capacity of the growing development office of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, welcoming 115 international visitors to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Seminary, and organizing the U.S. travels for Dr. Atef.

Through our work and through our life in the seminary community, we fell in love with our Egyptian friends and co-workers and are grateful for this closing chapter of our ministry.

Experiencing the Incarnational Nature of the Church through our Partnership in Egypt

Andrew Dickinson, Associate Pastor for Mission

First Presbyterian Church of Douglasville, GA

I began working as a mission pastor for the First Presbyterian Church of Douglasville in July 2012. They had already been supporting the work of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo and the Church Planting Initiative associated with the Pastoral and Outreach Ministries Council (POMC) of the Synod of the Nile, for a few years. Rev. Dr. James Harper, the senior pastor at First Presbyterian, had been to Egypt and visited the seminary. He assured me of the great work that they were doing.

My initial work as mission pastor involved building a relationship in Haiti. It was through the development of this partnership that our Global Missions Team decided that although we had been supporting the seminary and church planting initiative for

several years, we didn't have a strong relationship with the church in Egypt and we wondered whether it would be possible to develop a relationship with the recipients of the financial support we were providing. This prompted me to begin a dialogue with Dr. Tharwat Wahba and seek his guidance how to personalize our relationship with Egypt.

It so happened that several other East Coast congregations in new denomination of which we were part, the Covenant Order of Evangelical Christians (ECO), were also pursuing closer personal ties with the church in Egypt. This, in time, became known as the Egypt Initiative, of the East Coast presbyteries of ECO. The initiative involved an annual contribution of up to \$1000 per church and the opportunity to develop sister relationships between US and Egyptian churches.

Dr. Tharwat sent me a list of eight Egyptian churches as possible sister churches. Our global mission team read the information packet and realized that we could pick a church based on our concerns or preferences, but we also recognized that Dr. Wahba had a close working relationship with all the churches on the list and would probably be best placed to make a recommendation. He suggested we consider the Evangelical Church of Sohag.

I first visited the church in Sohag on an Outreach Foundation trip to Egypt in November 2017. I flew down to Sohag and was met at the airport by Pastor Emad Shawkyi, the senior pastor of the Evangelical Church of Sohag. Since that first meeting, Pastor Shawkyi has visited Douglasville on two occasions. He has preached at the church and brought greetings to our Presbytery. We regularly share Facebook updates about the different happenings in the Douglasville and Sohag churches, and we pray for each other regularly in our Sunday morning services. For the last two years the church in Sohag has been in the process of building a new church in New Sohag City, new city being built by the Egyptian government. Our church has been supporting this work since its beginning in 2019.

Perhaps the greatest impact of our relationship with the church in Egypt, both personal and ecclesial, is experiencing the incarnational nature of the body of Christ. It's one thing to see a line item, "church planting initiative" on a church budget, it's an entirely different reality to break bread and drink from the same cup with Christian



From left Andrew Dickinson, Fahed Abu-Akel, Ann Cordle, Emad Shawkyi, James Harper

brothers and sisters on the other side of the world. To share our hopes, challenges and prayers with each other; to rejoice together, to build together, to learn together and to grow together. Our contexts are all unique, with different opportunities and challenges, but as we nurture these global relationships, as we stand together, support each other

and encourage each other, we gain a more profound and nourishing understanding of the body of Christ.

Another word I would use to describe the relationship we have with the church in Egypt is “inspiring.” It is no secret that Christians are a minority religion in Egypt and the Evangelical Church is a small subset of the larger Coptic Church. As a minority, Christians in Egypt can experience discrimination and at times violence e.g. the Palm Sunday church bombings in 2017. In spite of persecution, the church in Egypt continues to gather and love their neighbor as Christ has called us to do. Pastor Shawkyi shared how the church sends teams out into 8 different areas around the city of Sohag. They build relationships with people and invite them to meetings and conferences. It is inspiring to see the faith and commitment of the believers in Egypt despite contextual realities that at times puts limits on their freedom to practice their religion as they would like to. The witness of the Egyptian Evangelical church to me challenges me to be more generous, take more risks for the kingdom of Christ, and to be ready to give grace to others.

Mutually Encouraged through Mission in Egypt

Marilyn Borst, Outreach Foundation Staff



November 2019 Outreach Foundation trip to Egypt: 17 persons from seven states representing three US Presbyterian denominations. Marilyn Borst is the one farthest right on the first row.

In November 2019, I made my 17th trip to Egypt. I had been drawn there as a young adult through my study of archaeology. Fascinated with the ancient Egyptian culture, I participated in three archaeological digs. In the 1990s I fell in love with the Church in this complex and historic land. Through my work at the First Presbyterian Church of Houston and at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta I mission teams who encountered their Presbyterian “family” there. That ministry continued when I joined the staff of The Outreach Foundation in 2009 as Associate Director for Partnership Development. What

follows here is an edited version of the last trip blog from the November 2019 trip. I hope it captures a glimpse of the impact Egypt has had upon me and upon my ministry.

On my 7 hour layover in Paris on the way home, I had a lot of time to reflect, with gratitude, on the excellent team of The Outreach Foundation who shared the journey together in Egypt, meeting family-by-faith in numerous churches of the Synod of the Nile, celebrating the good work of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC), taking deep dives in the rich history of the place, praying together, laughing

together, and taking care of one another over long days.

Our time in Egypt was beautifully planned and facilitated by staff (friends!) of ETSC, like Mina Kolta and Mariam Hanna, and by Dr. Tharwat Wahba who, as Chair of the Synod's Pastoral Outreach and Mission Committee, guides the robust vision of church planting and church revitalization which is facilitating a Spirit-led expansion of the Presbyterian presence in Egypt.



Mutually encouraged: Jim and Peen Hardy with 3rd year ETSC student Yotham Gamal

And speaking of “friends,” God gifted us with so many of those along the way. New friends inspired us by their faith and faithfulness, and “old friends” were warmly embraced after being too long apart. All these friends play an important role in building up Christ’s Kingdom in Egypt, be they seminary students who eagerly await their first call; Synod of the Nile leaders who chart the course of the Church in turbulent times; pastors who shepherd flocks in villages, towns, or in the mega-metropolis that is Cairo; or the elders and ministry leaders of congregations whose history may be over 100 years old— or newly begun just a few years ago.



*Mutually encouraged: two pastors meet---
Magdy Gendy of Naga Hammadi and Brian
Stewart of Greenville, SC*

On our first night our Outreach team of seventeen was together in Egypt, I tried to “set the stage” for the essence of the journey ahead of us using Paul’s opening words to the Church in Rome: “I long to see you that I may impart to you a spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by one another’s faith.” Thinking back over our days on the road, our bonding as a team from three Presbyterian communions, and the rich encounters with which we were gifted, I can affirm the efficacy of Paul’s words: mutually encouraged.

Till we meet again, dear friends, till we meet again. . . .

-Acknowledgements-

This is the second in a series of histories of The Outreach Foundation in countries where I was its primary liaison for mission partnerships, programs, and projects. I want begin by acknowledging a number of people who helped with this history of our work in Egypt.

Thank you, first of all, to the primary agents in this history, namely our friends in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (which will be referred to as the Evangelical Church in Egypt). Dr. Atef Gendy, Dr. Tharwat Wahba, Dr. Sherif Salah, Mr. Ramez Atallah, Pastor Isaac William Ibrahim, and Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, I am grateful for our hours of face-to-face meetings, phone interviews, emails and other communications through which you shared how God has been at work in Egypt over the past two decades. Many colleagues of yours are featured in this work as well, and to them also we give our thanks for their servant leadership.

Thanks to present and former Presbyterian Church (USA) mission co-workers, Darren and Elisabeth Kennedy, Brice and Sungmin Rogers, Cinda and Steve Gorman, both for your work as co-workers and for your contributions to this volume. Thanks to Outreach Foundation Trustees Nancy Fox, Walter Lewis, and Caryl Weinberg, for your many and varied contributions to the work of The Outreach Foundation and its U.S. partners in Egypt over the years. In this volume your testimonies of the impact of God's work in Egypt bless us. Additional thanks to Walter Lewis for supplying most of the photographs.

Deep thanks to the long-term U.S. partners we connected with the Evangelical Church in Egypt, or, in the case of First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, Colorado, who connected us with God's work in Egypt. First Presbyterian Church of Houston, Texas, First Presbyterian Church of Evanston, Illinois, and Eastminster Presbyterian Church of Wichita, Kansas were among the earliest to join with our friends in Egypt in God's mission. One of the newer partners with the Evangelical Church in Egypt is represented in the appendix of testimonies, First Presbyterian Church of Douglasville, Georgia. In between, there is a host of U.S. partners too numerous to be named. Please know of our gratitude for each of you.

I had several editors for this Egypt history: Megan Ritchie, Jane Holslag, Pam and Barry Bowman, and Nancy Fox. Each of you looked over my drafts and improved them. It was a team effort, and I am so grateful.

To the staff of The Outreach Foundation, thank you for the privilege of the opportunity to write this history and for your encouragement along the way. Special thanks to Franklin staff Kelly Rickert for your role in formatting the book for publication.

Finally, to outgoing Executive Director, Dr. Rob Weingartner, thank you for the blessing of being your friend and colleague over the decades. Your consistent encouragement and support of me have made me a better follower of Jesus.