

MEWS BULLETIN



SPECIAL REQUEST FROM THE MIDDLE EAST WORLD SECTOR - AUGUST, 2005

TO: Congregational Leaderships

FROM: Andy Fleming, MEWS Missions Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Commemorate 9/11 by Supporting Mission Work in the Middle East**

Dear Brothers,

The memory of September 11th, 2001, remains vivid in each one of our memories. We can all recall exactly where we were when the tragic news reports and shocking images of devastation flooded our senses and forever changed the meaning of 9/11 in our minds. Our general awareness of the religion, culture and history of the Middle East has grown a great deal over the past four years, and more than ever we are aware of the challenges and difficulties of taking the 'good news' about Jesus to the modern peoples of the Old Testament world. As many in the world seek to commemorate and honor the victims of both the terrorist acts of 9/11 and the ensuing *War on Terrorism*, I would like to bring your attention to some real needs being faced our brothers and sisters living throughout the Middle East at this present time.

Our mission work in the Middle East has faced its own set of unique challenges over the years – governmental opposition often connected with the foreign flavor of our original mission teams (i.e., the visible presence of Americans), predictable persecution from religious authorities (resulting in a growing fellowship of brothers who have been imprisoned for their faith), and the daily pressure of well-established ethnic-religious-political boundaries that have gone unchallenged in many communities for dozens of generations. In recent years another challenge has materialized – a significant reduction in missions funding from our first world churches for Middle East missions. Although such reductions have been commonplace throughout our fellowship due to the restructuring process that has been taking place worldwide, the Middle East missions suffered even more as the result of a domino effect created when the NET World Sector withdrew support from the Pac Rim missions to focus on supporting *Upcyberdown* and its other 'Special-Needs Educational' programs in 2003. At that time, it was decided that the Southwest U.S. family of churches who had formerly contributed 50% of the budget for Middle East missions would begin to direct their support to the Pac Rim, and then later even more specifically to the Philippines. It was also planned at that time that a single multiple of Special Missions contribution given to ICOC overhead would make up for the missing MEWS funding, but in April 2003 when it became clear that the ICOC would no longer collect revenue from member congregations as in the past, this source of funding for Middle East missions never became available.

In monetary terms, these changes amounted to a drop in revenue for Middle East missions of almost 66% over a two year period – from \$1,500,000 in 2002 to \$510,000 in 2004. A special word of thanks to the *West* and *Inland Empire* Regions of the Los Angeles church who together contributed \$385,000 last year. Thanks also to our sister congregations in San Diego, Phoenix, Anchorage, South Florida and the *Metro*

Heights Region of the Los Angeles church who gave the remaining \$125,000. Unfortunately, when combined with our carryover balance of \$100,000, we are still \$265,000 short of our current year (2005) needs of \$875,000. Since everything in this current budget has already been cut back to the minimum, further cuts will result in our mission churches losing vital ministry personnel, public meeting facilities and/or the possibility for additional ministry training.¹ (At the current time, all ministry personnel are nationals, and more than half of our congregations are being led by self-supporting missionaries). Whereas our financial year was previously running from January to December, it is now necessary to begin to use our 2005 funding as of September 1st, and if additional funding is not found soon the MEWS Board will be forced to make the difficult decisions of which needs will go unmet in our Middle East congregations. In the face of these challenges, I am happy to report that two more congregations have made commitments to substantially support Middle East missions beginning in 2005: the *Central Jersey Church of Christ* and the *Austin International Church of Christ* have committed to an additional \$110,000 annually.

The Middle East World Sector is in dire need! There are yet a small number of congregations that are presently operating without a specific missions target – *we invite your partnership*. There are others who may presently have some surplus in their foreign missions budget – *we appreciate any help that you might offer*. And finally thanks to a creative suggestion by one of our well-known evangelists, Tom Brown, the Middle East mission needs could be well supplied by *a freewill offering to be taken up on September 11th* (or whenever it would be convenient this fall) by any congregation that would be willing to help. For those congregational leaders interested in responding to such a request, we would be more than happy to supply you with a DVD including some informative video clips, as well as hard copies of our most recent **MEWSLetter**² for distribution to your congregations. Please direct your responses to our administrator, David Bruce (David_Bruce@icoc.org), or to me personally if there are any other questions pertinent to the operations of the MEWS mission society.

Thanks so much for your consideration of this request and please remember the Middle East missions in your prayers.

In His service,
Andy Fleming
Evangelist / MEWS Missions Coordinator

¹ Specific budget details can be found in the attached files – “MEWS 2005 Budget (Overview)” and “MEWS 2005 Budget (Presentation Detail)”.

² To view a copy please go to <http://www.laicc.net/Content/Regions/West/MEWS/MEWSletter0405.pdf>.