

# MEWSLETTER

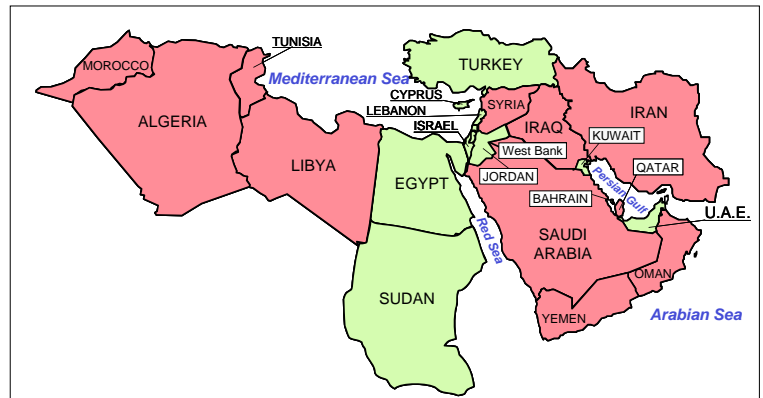


MISSION NEWS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST WORLD SECTOR - MAY 1, 2006 - #5

## Thank God for Opening Doors in the New Millennium

The Middle East World Sector (MEWS) is a Mission Society committed to taking the good news of Jesus Christ to the countries of northern Africa, the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. The majority of these countries are controlled by Islamic governments and have historically only allowed limited freedom to those who profess the Christian faith. Although legal status as 'churches' is still very difficult (if not impossible) in many of these countries, the cultural and economic changes of the past 20 years are creating new possibilities:

- A door of opportunity opened in Iraq during the confusion following the American offensive, and in the summer of 2003 we were able to restart our failed planting in Baghdad with a small team from Amman, Jordan (including some Iraqi refugees who were willing to return).
- As the European Union (EU) has expanded eastward through Eastern Europe, many in Turkey are desirous of membership and as a result have become more open to the West. This shift in attitude paved the way for our congregation in Istanbul to receive legal status in the spring of 2004!
- Although we did not begin our work in the Persian Gulf until mid-1998, we now have congregations in five countries with a combined membership of more than 150. The economic development in the Persian Gulf has opened the doors to a massive influx of foreign workers and although a social chasm still remains between these ex-patriots and the Arab population, a number of the Gulf countries have extended the freedom to worship to their visiting workforce. We are hoping that two of our fellowships there will be able to receive official registration this year.



*The green countries currently allow the public meeting of Christians within the established Christian sector of society – we have congregations in each one and two in Israel. The red countries are still very difficult for Christian ministry and we currently have congregations in four of these eleven countries (and a fifth is connected to a sub-Saharan African congregation).*

Please pray that we will be ready as God continues to open doors for the gospel through current events in the Middle East.

*Andy Fleming (Evangelist & Missions Coordinator)*

## Cairo Congregation Reaches 100 in Membership

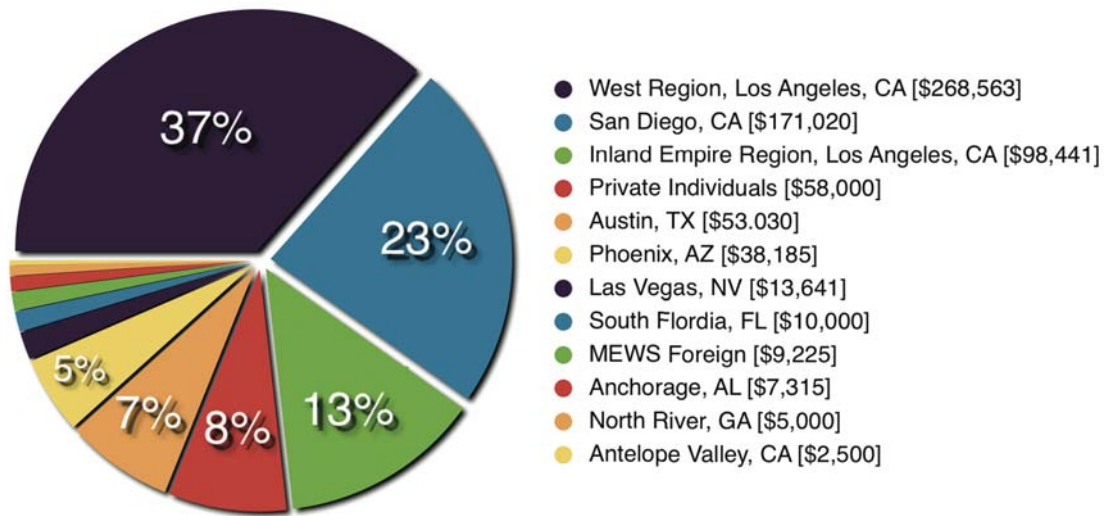
2005 was an exciting year for our Cairo congregation with more than 1500 visitors coming out to the various activities hosted by the Egyptian disciples. Amazingly, almost 150 of these new friends agreed to engage in personal Bible studies but 'counting the cost' and 'being baptized' always proves to be the greatest challenge. Praise God for the 22 souls who were united with Christ in waters of baptism! The Cairo congregation also matured through a teaching program where each member was part of a training group that focused on further equipping the saints for Christian ministry in areas like leading evangelistic Bible studies, spiritual mentoring, marriage enrichment, etc. The congregation also supports an evangelistic Bible correspondence course advertised through newspaper ads and flyers, and last year sent out over 6000 response letters to new contacts. In the fall, the Cairo congregation began a sector with Sunday services out in the historic port city of Alexandria (about two and a half hours from Cairo). Currently there are 7 disciples meeting together with their friends. Finally, the Cairo congregation ended 2005 with 99 faithful members, and in January 2006 became our first Middle Eastern congregation to reach 100 members with the baptism of a great new sister, Saddiya!



*Saddiya, the first baptism of 2006 and Cairo's 100th member!*

## God Loves a Cheerful Giver

The Middle East World Sector (MEWS) could not meet the needs of disciples in the Middle East if it were not for the love, prayers and material sacrifice of faithful disciples in the United States. Historically, the congregations in the southwest states (Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Southern California) have been involved with Middle East missions and we are very grateful for those congregations that continue to do so. In recent years some other congregations have also made ongoing commitments to the Middle East: Anchorage, Austin, South Florida and Central New Jersey. The Central New Jersey church supports our three congregations in Israel and the West Bank directly [ $> \$70,000$  per year] and does not give directly through MEWS (so their funding is not listed in our overall budget). We are very grateful as well to two generous individuals, as well as two congregations (Antelope Valley and North River) who also made special one-time contributions in 2005 equalling \$65,500 – without this support our Middle East missions work would have suffered greatly. In total, MEWS received a total of \$734,919 and this support will be used to cover our fiscal year which began in September 2005 and ends in August 2006. The following pie chart demonstrates the breakdown of current revenue for MEWS:



Paul said it best in 2 Corinthians 9:12-13:

*This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.*

## THE PLAN FOR MIDDLE EAST MISSIONS

Without doubt the Middle East has proven to be one of the most difficult regions of the world to evangelize. The long standing dominance of Islam together with centuries of social separation from the Christian population makes mission efforts conspicuous and often dangerous. We presently have 16 congregations in 15 countries and have yet to establish even a foothold in the 6 remaining countries. Half of our congregations are led by non-fulltime leaders and four of these congregations are in countries where their safety requires that we refer to them by code-names. Every soul is precious in God's sight and we have already seen God move powerfully in the lives of hundreds of people. The *MEWS 2006 Financial Plan* has been created to help strengthen and encourage the members of our Middle East congregations, as well as open the doors for further evangelistic programs. All the support that has been generously given is being used to fund three major categories of expenses: 1) *Mission Field Support* (MFS - 61%); 2) *International Training Support* (ITS - 29%), and; 3) *Local* (stateside) *Administrative Support* (LAS - 10%).<sup>1</sup>

### Mission Field Support [\$451,700]

The single largest line item for Mission Field Support is 'Employee Compensation' [\$155,787] which covers the salaries (including housing) of 13 fulltime ministers and 2 part-time administrators. All of these workers live in either Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon or Sudan. The next largest line item is 'Facility Rentals' [\$134,200] which includes both Sunday worship and mid-week services in 11 countries – in two locations, apartments are also being subsidized for non-fulltime church leaders to facilitate their weekly meetings [an additional \$20,400]. Therefore employee compensation and facility rental (including the apartments) accounts for two-thirds of the Mission Field Support budget.

<sup>1</sup> A downloadable copy of the 'MEWS 2006 Financial Plan' can be found at [http://www.laicc.net/Content/Regions/West/MEWS/MEWS\\_2006\\_Budget\\_Handout.pdf](http://www.laicc.net/Content/Regions/West/MEWS/MEWS_2006_Budget_Handout.pdf).

The phone budget is mostly for communication between countries within the Middle East, and facilitates ongoing training and discipling – and sometimes just much-needed encouragement. There is a limited budget for medical assistance to church leadership as well as a budget for benevolence – mostly for situations involving the church members or their immediate families. Another budgeted item is expatriate relocation since there still remains a number of ‘foreigners’ (i.e., from France, South Africa, and the U.S.) who are self-supporting team members or church leaders, but may need financial help upon returning to their homelands. During the past 3 years MEWS has repatriated 9 American couples – most of whom were original team members and serving in the fulltime ministry. The remaining funding covers administrative costs, as well as the legal fees involved with getting official registrations and maintaining legal status.

Almost one-third of the Missions Field Support budget goes to supporting our work in Egypt, but this is understandable due to Egypt’s strategic importance. About 10% (7 million) of Egypt’s current population of 70 million has a traditional Christian background which makes Egypt home to the largest ‘Christian’ bloc in the Middle East – almost half of the total Middle Eastern Christian population. Egypt is also home to our Geographic Regional Evangelist for the Arab-speaking disciples – Maher al Hinn. Maher was converted 20 years ago as a teenager in Amman, Jordan and has matured into a solid minister and servant for the churches.

### **International Training Support [\$212,300]**

More than half of our Middle Eastern congregations are being led by disciples working fulltime secular jobs. Initially trained as Bible Talk leaders and sometimes Family Group leaders in their home congregations, these noble brothers (and sisters) have stepped out in faith and are fulfilling the Great Commission in the face of very challenging circumstances. The MEWS is fully committed to helping them meet the challenges and responsibilities of leadership and this portion of our budget has been dedicated ‘to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.’ (Ephesians 4:12-13) Beginning in 2003 we began an intensive program of Bible teaching, pastoral training and leadership education. Despite many changes in personnel (i.e., 18 Americans returning to the U.S.) and a significant reduction in mission funding (more than 50%), most of our Middle East congregations have remained stable and forward-looking. So far our program has included the following themes and teachers:



*Steve energetically outlining the gospel of ‘Matthew’.*

Feb 2003 - **The Gospel of Mark**, Andy Fleming  
July 2003 - **First Timothy**, Andy Fleming  
Nov 2003 - **Godly Leadership**, Andy Fleming  
Feb 2004 - **Old Testament Survey**, Douglas Jacoby  
Jun 2004 - **Marriage & Family**, Anthony and Saun Galang

Nov 2004 - **Heart & Ministry**, A. Fleming, A. Galang, M. Hinn  
Feb 2005 - **The Gospel of Matthew**, Steve Kinnard  
Jun 2005 - **Parenting & Spirituality**, Al and Gloria Baird  
Feb 2006 - **Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**, Andy Fleming  
Jun 2006 - **Biblical Motivation**, Jeff Chacon [planned]

These seminars are usually three days in length and are filled with many hours of teaching, fellowship and discipleship groups. (Due to financial considerations we have been hosting these conferences in either Egypt or Jordan where facilities are cheaper and where we also have fulltime staff to help organize the events). Since international travel is required between countries, the travel expenses for these conferences are often greater than the cost of accommodations and meeting facilities. In many cases our ‘volunteer’ leadership force is required to use up their vacation leave just to attend the conferences, and to their credit they do so with glad and sincere hearts!

Last year we also began a new program of visitation so that the supporting congregations would be able to get a better understanding of the mission work. Evangelists, elders and mature members from San Diego, Phoenix, Austin and Los Angeles spent time teaching, strengthening and encouraging various congregations in the Middle East. Already in 2006 the Gulf states had their first annual Discipleship Conference in Dubai, U.A.E. with Simon Hinn from Amman, Jordan as their guest speaker – it was a great success! For some of the brothers and sisters this was the largest gathering of disciples that they had ever seen and the plans are already being made for next year’s conference to be held in Bahrain. These programs are vital for the building up of our brotherhood in the Middle East and the disciples look forward to these refreshing times of learning and spiritual encouragement.

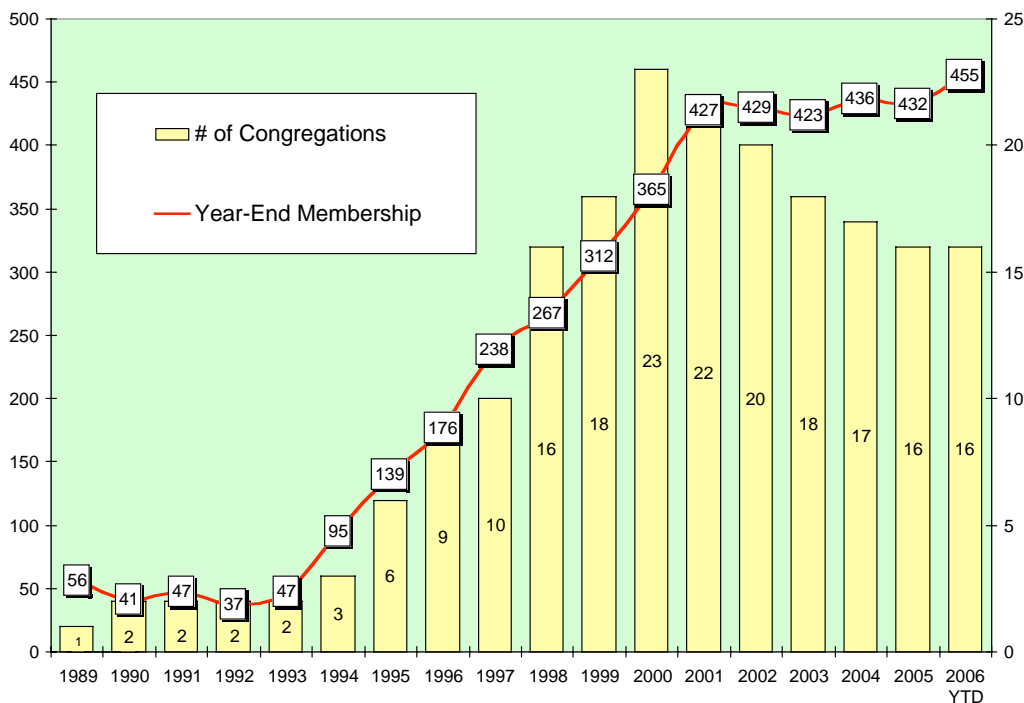
## Local Administration Support [\$71,000]

The greatest part of our local administrative budget (80%) covers the stateside aspects of funding a mission society that operates in the Middle East including the necessary legal, financial and auditing services. The remaining 20% of this budget is used for limited fund-raising travel and for the production and distribution of multimedia reports and regular newsletters – like the one you’re reading right now. Every effort is being made to keep these administrative costs as low as possible so that the maximum effect can be achieved with your mission contributions.

## Dreaming About the Future

The future of Middle East missions is both challenging and exciting! As much of the world’s media attention continues to be focused on current events in that part of the world, let us continue to keep our brothers and sisters in our hearts and remember them in our prayers. More and more opportunities are opening for your involvement, including: evangelistic campaigns like last year’s *2005 Jerusalem Mission Trip*; university students doing one year of overseas study; employment opportunities especially in computer technology and English language teaching; and there is always a standing invitation for as many as 6-10 outside visitors (first come, first served) to attend our Ministry Training Seminars in Jordan or Egypt at their own expense. Thanks again for your continued support and let us continue to faithfully bring honor and glory to our incredible God!

# 17 YEAR CHURCH GROWTH SUMMARY FOR MIDDLE EAST PLANTINGS



*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*  
1 Corinthians 3:7

Brothers and sisters, our mission to the Middle East has only just begun. Although this challenging region of the world continues to test our hearts and wills, the promises of God stand firm and the gospel continues to bear fruit and change lives. As we continue to ask, seek and knock, God has promised that we would receive, find and that the doors would be opened. The first four months of 2006 has already seen 25 more souls baptized into Christ as compared to 55 baptisms in all of 2005. Let us all pray for boldness as the first century church did, and let us all take the Christ’s expression of compassion from Matthew 9:37-38 to heart: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

*Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.* 2 Corinthians 6:2