

## **AGREEMENT FOR SYRIA-LEBANON NETWORK PARTNERSHIPS**

The aim of our partnerships is to encourage the development of mutual, personal relationships between churches in the United States and those in Syria and Lebanon. It is a ministry that is centered in Christ, visionary and dynamic in a way that adjusts to the changing conditions in the region. It is because of this, that we are asking churches to begin prayerfully and thoughtfully and to form expectations that are realistic in terms of what is happening amongst the churches of the Synod there.

We are inviting you to start by working with the SLPN in selecting a church from among the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) and by mobilizing a prayer group within your community for the church you choose. During this time, we recommend learning together all you can about the particular congregation you have chosen, the name of the pastor and leadership, where the church is located, what they have experienced and what specific challenges they are currently facing. Secondly, we can help by working to connect you with a leader in the congregation you have selected in hopes that some contact can be established between churches. This may take some time and even when it is established, it may be inconsistent with some periods of no response. This is understandable for obvious reasons. Nonetheless, you must at the very least continue to reach out and to consistently pray for your particular church partner. This is very meaningful and encouraging for these churches who are living with so much uncertainty.

Below you can see the Goals and Guidelines we have been working with:

### **OVERALL GOALS**

1. **Relationship Building:** This initiative is about building relationships. We want to come alongside, support, and encourage each other, especially our brothers and sisters in this very dangerous and conflicted area of the Middle East. We want to become friends as part of the wider Christian community and to partner with them in a lasting friendship.
2. **Mutuality:** Relationship is a two-way street. We are going to be praying for each other. As we ALL need prayer, we want to avoid coming to them in any paternalistic manner. Therefore, to share the needs of your congregation would be appropriate so they can pray for your church as you pray for them and their congregation. In your communication, you can sense the needs of each other give each of us a stake in this shared relationship.
3. **Respect:** Along those same lines, this needs to be a respectful exchange. From America, we are inspired by the brave and courageous ways our brothers and sisters there are remaining faithful and from Syria and Lebanon they can see how the church in the United States is working to create a Christian witness in an increasingly secular society, one that yet suffers from racism and injustice.
4. **Length of the Commitment:** This is a long-term commitment we are asking you to make. Any normal relationship takes years to unfold and develop. This will be more challenging, as it is one of some distance and is cross-cultural. Because of this we are asking you to be as consistent and as responsive as possible. It is likely that you may not share mutual communications over long periods of time, but taking into consideration the challenges these churches are dealing with in both Syria and Lebanon, we must understand why. You must try not to let long periods of time lapse before communicating, but when you are not hearing from your partner church, we ask for your patience.

5. **Prayer:** Prayer has been a significant part of our work on all levels. Take time to pray as you consider this partnership. When you make contact, pray prior to writing out your messages. It is so important to our friends in Syria and Lebanon that prayers are being offered for them by those of us in this country. Also, remember to ask your congregation to pray in your worship services, mission committee meetings and session meetings. This kind of consistent prayer over time makes a true and tangible difference.

### **IMPORTANT GUIDELINES REGARDING THE PARTNERSHIP**

1. **Not a Financial Exchange:** As you begin, remember that this relationship is not intended to be a financial exchange. As it develops, you may consider different ways of financial help through appropriate channels, however at the outset was ask that you please refrain from participating in any financial transaction. In fact, at the current time there are legal issues that restrict citizens of the United States from sending any money at all to Syria, and complicated regulations on sending any to Lebanon. Later, as a full network, we may find ways to contribute financially through appropriate (and legal) channels. Information on how you can donate financially is available through our network ([syrialebanonpn.org](http://syrialebanonpn.org))
2. **Internet:** It is important that you have Internet access, as these partnerships will be done through email. If you don't have a computer and on-line access at home, perhaps you may be able to use one at your church or a nearby public library. At present and for the foreseeable future, postal mail will not be a reliable option.
3. **Language differences:** The difference in language, aside from some nuances, should not be a problem. We are thankful for those in Syria and Lebanon who speak English and for Arabic-speaking people who live in America who have volunteered and can speak English quite well, so English will be the operative language.
4. Please realize **the situation in the middle east** is such that our friends who live there are obviously restricted as to what they can post on the internet. The dangers to them should they violate those restrictions are real and we want to be sensitive to that as we share in these partnerships.

We thank anyone who shows an interest and welcome questions or further inquiries. Please send them to Rev. Tim McCalmont ([macrev44@gmail.com](mailto:macrev44@gmail.com)).

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