



The
Outreach
FOUNDATION™

**MISSION
PARTNERSHIP
UPDATE**

**Dustin and Sherri Ellington (PCUSA)
Justo Mwale University (JMU)
Zambia**

Dear friends,

Sherri and I have some big news to share with you. In recent years, we've had a growing sense that God is tugging on our hearts to return and do mission service in the Arabic-speaking world again.

Many of you will remember that we served in Egypt from 2005 to 2009. It was invigorating to be learning Arabic, building trust on behalf of the gospel in a Muslim setting, and training people for Christian ministry in that region. We had thought we were called there long-term and were deeply saddened when we were forced to leave. It felt as though our ministry, dreams, and future were taken from us – though in the end we landed well and have deeply appreciated our 11 years in Zambia.



In the last few years, Sherri and I have been wrestling with and answering some questions: What do we need to do on behalf of the gospel and the world within this limited lifetime? Where and when do we most come alive in serving what is good for the kingdom of God and the progress of the gospel? As much as we love Justo Mwale and Zambia, answering such questions has helped us to trace God's hand pointing us back to the Arabic-speaking world.

Also in the last few years, a seminary in Lebanon where I've sometimes taught short intensive courses has been reaching out and inviting me to consider joining their full-time faculty. They offer their courses in Arabic. They welcome students from across North Africa, the Middle East, and the Arab diaspora. These students come from a wide variety of Christian and other backgrounds, all with a longing to go deeper in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and to be trained and formed for ministry.

Sherri and I have a sense of unfinished work to do, and the move to Lebanon also feels like wise stewardship. We spent thousands of hours studying Arabic in the past. In Lebanon, I can use both my training as a New Testament scholar and my training in Arabic. For me, Arabic can shift from being a hobby in Zambia to being a tool and medium in Lebanon for building relationships and serving the gospel. I feel if I were to live a long life but didn't do my best to return to the Middle East, it would be something I'd regret. Sherri would love the gift of time to refresh her Arabic and be prayerfully present in the Middle East, to discern a path of ministry while being there on the ground. She's excited to get to have a ministry of presence and ask open questions about

what God is doing there and how she might fit.

We've felt a sense of redemption as this seminary in Lebanon has reached out to us. Only God owns the future, and we feel God is giving a part of ourselves back to us as we begin to make this move to serve that part of the world again. Something feels right for us to be living, praying, and doing mission service again in the Middle East. Trusting in God's provision, we hope to move to Lebanon this fall.

We can imagine some questions coming to your minds.

Isn't Lebanon in turmoil? Yes, Lebanon is going through tough times politically and especially economically. While this is sobering, the seminary still believes it's good for us to join them there, and we appreciate prayers for God to prepare us to live there and to be an encouragement.

What about Zambia and Justo Mwale University? We've had happy years serving in Zambia since 2010. Sherri has enjoyed coordinating the Young Adult Volunteer site, among her other forms of service. Teaching at JMU has been some of the happiest work of my life. Zambia has been a good place for us as a family. Our sense of pull to the Middle East does not arise from thinking that training people for Christian ministry in Zambia and surrounding countries, as JMU does, is less necessary or less important than in the Middle East. JMU is uniquely positioned for training Reformed and Presbyterian pastors for numerous African countries, and few settings provide a similar opportunity to walk with and touch such a huge piece of the African church as Justo Mwale. We want to stay engaged with JMU. The president of the seminary in Lebanon has offered that I can teach an intensive course each year in Zambia, even as JMU has allowed me to do in Lebanon for several years.

What does this mean for our relationship with Presbyterian World Mission? We are very thankful for our 17 good years serving through Presbyterian World Mission (WM), but we need to share that we are ending our service with WM on May 15 and joining another mission organization.

Sherri and I are excited about our future mission service and long to lean into this new direction as faithfully as possible. We would love for you to continue walking with us and praying for us. As you can imagine, 2022 is going to be a major year of change for us. We very much appreciate your prayers as we step forward toward ministry in Lebanon.

Yours in Christ,

Dustin and Sherri

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THE OPPORTUNITY

The Outreach Foundation will continue to support the mission and ministry of the Ellingtons during this transition. All gifts of any size are welcomed to help with support funds for the Ellingtons and for scholarships for students at Justo Mwale University. You may make a gift in one of three ways: send a check to The Outreach Foundation; make an online gift at www.theoutreachfoundation.org; or scan the QR code to make an instant gift. For an electronic version that can be shared, please go to our website and see Learn... Updates. If you prefer to receive communications electronically, please email info@theoutreachfoundation.org.

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