

ADDENDUM

From the Finance Committee

FOR INFORMATION

At the general recommendation of our Committee on Mission and Evangelism (who oversees most of our grants), agreed to move \$29,000 of the Creativity Fund and \$9652 from the YAMI (Young Adult Ministry Intern) Scholarship into the Harry Halpert Fund, since the Halpert fund is used more frequently and addresses greater monetary need.

from the New Hope Administrative Commission

FOR INFORMATION

1. Moved that up to \$50,000 be pulled from their endowment fund to assist in the closure of the church in order to help with smooth transition and operations.

FOR ACTION

2. Recommends to the presbytery that New Hope Presbyterian Church be dissolved effective May 31, 2025, and that the presbytery grant the Administrative Commission additional authority to explore possibilities of usage and/or sale of the church building and property as well as to determine proper distribution of personal and property assets of New Hope Presbyterian Church.

Additional Note:

The session of New Hope voted in the affirmative for the dissolution of the congregation on April 16th and the congregation voted to dissolve both the call of Colleen Cook and the congregation itself on April 27th. The congregation voted to dissolve both the call and the congregation, effective May 25, 2025.

3. Recommends to the presbytery that Jimmy Moye and Connie Happell be added to this commission in order to give legal and pastoral guidance in the closure of New Hope Presbyterian Church.

An Opportunity to support the Church in Lebanon

**– a note from Curtis White, pastor of St. Andrews (Macon), CME (Mission and Evangelism)
moderator and former FRP Moderator**

Dear Flint River Saints,

In April I had the privilege to travel to Lebanon, and while there I met with a few of our PC(USA) partners in the region. One of these meetings was with the Administrative Dean of the Near Eastern School of Theology (NEST), Dr. Rima Nasrallah. During this meeting, Dr. Rima Nasrallah mentioned some of the vital work she is carrying on as a part of NEST strengthening and equipping the Church in the larger Middle East region. I believe there is an opportunity here for Flint River to support this work and our Sisters and Brothers living lives of faith in a difficult part of the world.

A Little History:

Before explaining about the project, I wanted to share a little of the background regarding the PCUSA's partnership with NEST. For starters, NEST owes its existence to the Presbyterian mission to the Levant region that began in 1819. Through the efforts of these missionaries, the first protestant seminary in the region was established in 1835. This Protestant seminary was distinctly Reformed in its teaching and tradition. NEST remains, to this day, a Reformed theological seminary and one of the only Reformed seminaries in the entire Middle East. For almost two centuries, our denomination has supported the work of NEST to help educate those who serve the church in the countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Arminia.

The Current Need:

Despite the regional challenges, not all news out of the Middle East is bad news. Dr. Nasrallah reported to me how the church in Jordan is overflowing with children, teenagers and young adults all of whom are connecting to church and wanting faith to be a part of their lives. The issue is there are not nearly enough theologically trained children and youth workers in Jordan to accommodate the need. The second hopeful report is that the Reformed Church in Armenia is currently experiencing a revival. In the last few years a church that was once a super minority has grown to 40 churches throughout the country. However, given its extremely small status until recently, there are only 6 trained pastors to serve the 40 vibrant and growing Reformed churches in Armenia. This growth in churches without trained pastors has resulted in completely untrained laypersons acting as pastors for the majority of the churches.

These lay pastors want and need proper theological education, some of them need to become fully ordained and more new leaders need to be established if the reformed church in Armenia is going to continue to flourish. Beyond meeting these two hope-filled needs, NEST continues to train top tier seminarians who serve bruised and hurting churches throughout Syria and Lebanon.

How We Can Help:

To address the need for highly qualified children, youth and lay ministers Dr. Nasrallah is hoping to rebuild NEST's Center for Christian Education. The CCE was a program operated by NEST until the crisis (Massive explosion in the port of Beirut mixed with a financial collapse) of 2019, and all the subsequent crises after that (Covid, War between Hezbollah and Israel, total devaluation of the Lebanese currency). The Center for Christian Education would be able to offer training for children/youth workers, and lay pastors and so would directly address the current need of the church in Jordan and Armenia. In addition, its curriculum would benefit the region as a whole as every church in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine also have need for qualified Children/youth workers as well as lay pastors. Dr. Nasrallah's belief is it will take about \$35,000 (USD) a year to operate the center. She also is confident that after about three years the center would be self-funding given the immense need for the kind of service this center would provide.

I am asking all of us who are members of Flint River to consider participating in this project by offering a small amount of financial support. I know that our presbytery already contributes to many worthy causes. My question for us is, could each church commit to offer \$300 to the reestablishment of the Center for Christian Education at NEST, over the course of the next three years (\$100 per year x 3)?

This relatively small contribution on our part would have a massive impact in a part of the world where the church's witness is deeply needed. The Reformed churches of Lebanon continue to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ to their neighbors throughout the region. The church speaks, and acts, prophetically in their context by being dedicated to peacemaking, women's rights, disability rights, poverty elimination, working against the exploitation of workers and teaching love for enemies. We would do well to follow their example in our own context. And we would do well to support their efforts by offering what we can towards NEST's efforts to strengthen the church through education of leaders.

There is a lot more I could write but the need for brevity outweighs my desire to do so. I am happy to speak with anyone at greater length about what I saw and learned when I was in Lebanon this April. I also would encourage anyone wanting to be more involved with our Siblings in Syria and Lebanon to connect with the **Syria Lebanon Partnership Network** (<https://www.syrialebanonpn.org/>). I work with SLPN and can help establish connections as desired.

Thank you friends and colleagues from Flint River, for reading this letter. Reach out to me with more questions and please consider if you or your church can contribute financially to this project. Whether you can contribute or not, please do support the ministry of Christ's Church in the Middle East by praying for Dr. Nasrallah and all the staff and students at NEST who are dedicating their lives to Christ's service in a context that is often much more fraught than our own.

Grace and Peace from your brother in Christ,

Rev. Curtis White