



Audrey and Colin Gibson

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Location: Lebanon



What we do: Working with A Rocha Lebanon on creation care projects, Colin as national director and Audrey as education and church liaison officer.

Dear Friends

It is with some sadness that we send you our 26th and last link letter. After just over seven years, we finished our service with CMS at the end of November. We will not be sending any more Notes from Lebanon either – the email many of you receive in the months between link letters. So, it is time for us to give thanks and say our farewells.

First, we want to say thank you to you all – churches and individuals – for your prayers, your interest in our work and your financial support during our time in Lebanon. As we have said before, through your support you are as much in mission as we are, and we certainly could not have done our work without you. We hope that you will continue your partnership with CMS by supporting another mission partner. Please email churchrelations@churchmissionsociety.org for more information.

We would also like to give a big thank you to all the staff at CMS, especially our regional manager Tanas Alqassis and personnel manager Philip Bingham, for all their help and advice. We appreciated too the support and fellowship of other CMS mission partners in and around Lebanon, and of our friends and colleagues at LSESD and A Rocha Lebanon – the two NGOs we worked with.

Since our return to the UK in May we have been able to visit nearly all our supporting churches. It has been a joy to see many familiar faces and we thank you for the warmth of your welcome and wonderful hospitality. For us, the visits were bittersweet as we had to say goodbye as well. In our sermons we often mentioned the need to care for our world – an A Rocha theme – and it has been heartening to see many churches already signed up to the EcoChurch scheme. On our very last visit – to St Mary, Malpas earlier this month – we were impressed to see they even had a bug hotel in the church grounds.

In late October, the Ammerdown centre (where we stayed for a few weeks earlier this year) invited us to give a talk about our work at the monthly TLC day for retired people. It was good to be able to support the centre in this way and to have an opportunity to share about CMS and the work of A Rocha too.

Lebanon remains very much in our hearts. Please continue to pray for that country which holds so much promise, but which is imprisoned by tensions that go back to its founding, if not before. Ethnic, religious and political loyalties continue to undermine solutions that would be good for everyone. One result (we write in



Presentation by mission group, St Mary, Malpas



early November) is that there is currently no political leadership, as talks to form a government after the parliamentary elections in May have stalled, and at the end of October the presidential term ended with no agreement about a successor. Meanwhile, an outbreak of cholera – spilling over from neighbouring Syria – is adding to the difficulties faced by ordinary people already beset by hyper-inflation, a lack of services and shortages of basic commodities. International and local NGOs are, once again, having to step in to meet needs that could and should be provided for by the state. It is very sad.

Please pray especially that a new government will be formed quickly and one that will rule justly and fairly for the good of all.

LSESD and ARL continue to work in the face of these increasing difficulties. The relief and development department at LSESD is now helping combat the cholera outbreak alongside its other work supporting refugees, migrant workers and the poorest Lebanese as winter approaches. Meanwhile, ARL has moved its office to Aana, a village near the nature park project at Mekse where, in addition, they can offer accommodation. This will provide a place for volunteers, researchers and interns to stay while supporting the work in the Bekaa Valley.

Please pray for LSESD, ARL and the many other NGOs and agencies in Lebanon as they seek to meet the needs of the people there.

Many of you have kindly asked about our future plans. We would like to live closer to at least one of our children after so many years being apart, and so are planning to move to Portugal where our daughter, Harriet, has lived for the past four years. With regular visits to the UK we will also see more of our son Josh, who lives in Croydon. We hope our long-stay visas will arrive before our planned travel date of 13 December; booked travel tickets were a requirement for the visa application even though there is no guarantee on how long it will take to grant the visa!

We do not have any fixed plans yet, but we are looking forward to an active retirement. We have no doubt that God will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5–6), as he has always done. **However, we would value your prayers during this time of transition, both between countries and from “work” to “retirement”.**

So, once again, thank you for journeying with us during our time in Lebanon. We are thankful to God for the opportunity, through CMS, to serve there. Our six and a half years were very rewarding – the people, the diverse cultures and faiths and the beautiful countryside gave us a very rich experience from which we learned a lot. We will miss it.

Finally, although this is our last newsletter, if you would like to keep in touch, please feel free to use our email address: cna.gibson@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you.

Every blessing,
Audrey & Colin



Photos from top to bottom: Bug hotel at St Mary, Malpas; talk at TLC day at Ammerdown centre; press photo in connection with the cholera outbreak in Syria and Lebanon; ARL office in Aana



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Please note that opinions expressed in link letters are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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