

## Prayer Letter

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### November 2006

*Dear Friends,*

It has not been long since our last newsletter, but we thought it would be good to let you know how things are here. We have been back for about a month now, and in some ways it feels as though we've never been away.

We arrived as planned on 12 September, with everything going smoothly. It was quite emotional to be flying in to Beirut airport, when only a month before we had thought that we might not have been able to return. We landed on a different runway to usual, but with all the airport buildings functioning normally, this was the only sign of the previous month's troubles. The drive back to our apartment was quiet and we passed one of the bridges in Beirut that had been destroyed.

We spent the first week here adjusting to the heat and cleaning two months worth of dust out of our apartment! We were warmly welcomed by the families in our building, who seemed surprised and happy to see us back.



The first weekend here Mat and the director went for a drive around the southern suburbs of Beirut to see for themselves some of the devastation.



It was a difficult experience, but one they felt they needed to go through. In this area the buildings are very close together, so where one building was hit it affected those around it. Already, work had begun on



shifting the remains of buildings. Mat found it very hard to see the bulldozers working whilst families were still dragging clothes and belongings out of the rubble that had been their homes. However, the Lebanese are a very resilient people and are doing all they can to get their lives back together. There are large billboards in the city with big posters saying 'hope cannot be destroyed'. Shops and restaurants are open, people are getting back to work, schools are opening and life is carrying on.

#### **School/Boys' home**

It was wonderful to meet up with all the staff at Dar El Awlad. We had a special time in rejoicing in God's provision and protection and for bringing us back together. It was such a relief to know for certain that all the staff and the children were safe and well. We had two days of staff training, which involved a lot of being together and praying for each other – it was a good time!

School began at the end of September. It has been a very busy start to the school year. We have had a lot of new children in the residential and school programme. Many

of the children are quite young and have had no kind of structure in their lives. The little boy pictured – Hady – is from a Bedouin family in the north of Syria. His family is very poor. He and his brother have found it very difficult adjusting to life with us, but gradually their angry faces are



turning to smiling faces! There has been a lot of screaming and crying and our kindergarten teachers have remained incredibly patient! Most of the new children have had little, if any schooling so need quite a lot of extra support. At the moment we don't have any teaching assistants, so do keep this in your prayers.

The school now has 57 children and it feels as though we are bursting at the seams. It is fantastic that we are able to help so many children. It has been sad as some of the children we had last year, as yet, have not been able to return. Some of our Filipino families were evacuated and we have heard that they will probably not be allowed to return.

A couple of the older boys (Milad and Mohammad) whom we had expected to come back to start the vocational carpentry programmes have not come back. It has been really hard to say goodbye to these boys, not knowing what the future holds for them.

### Church/General

Again we have had a wonderful time of meeting together and sharing our stories of the past few months. As a church we are feeling the absence of many families and are wondering how we move forward. We have a church away-day planned for the beginning of November; it will be good to spend time together, encouraging and supporting one another.

We should also tell you that George (our guinea pig) is alive and well. He survived the summertime and seems pleased to be back with us, content with eating and sleeping!

We feel that we have fitted back into life here quite quickly and it feels good to be back. Once again we are experiencing problems with our car. Even after several trips to the garage and replacing the gear box, it continues to give us problems. We were quite embarrassed to break down at a very large roundabout in the city. We caused much chaos and there was even more horn beeping than usual. We were so thankful that we had a Lebanese member of staff with us, who bravely stepped out into the road and stopped the traffic to allow us to roll into a more convenient place to be stopped. So, we are thinking of trading our car in for something more reliable – but as ever there are no guarantees!

We would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who has been praying about our return to Lebanon. We have been safe, we have been welcomed home and we have settled in quickly. Your support has been and is invaluable.

### Thanks

- ◆ For the protection of the staff and children during the summer.
- ◆ For the protection of the buildings on site.
- ◆ For our safe return to Lebanon and settling in quickly.
- ◆ For the new children that have joined the residential and school programmes.

### Requests

- ◆ The new children as they settle in.
- ◆ Provision of staff (teaching assistants) to support in meeting the needs of the children in the school.
- ◆ Milad and Mohammad – as they live away from the security of Dar El Awlad, that we may be able to maintain some contact.
- ◆ For us – wisdom about getting another car.
- ◆ For us – wisdom as we consider our future.

*With love and prayers,  
Mat and Suzanne*

BMS World Mission supports 360 personnel working in more than 40 countries of the world. Together they are involved mainly in church planting, development, disaster relief, education, health and media and advocacy.

Mat and Suzanne are BMS mid-term workers in Lebanon. They are both teaching at the school attached to Dar El Alwad orphanage for 50 boys. Mat is the headteacher of the school and Suzanne is also a teacher.

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to receive an e-mail alert for future letters from Mat and Suzanne



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