

## A Presbyterian Retreat Center for Syria

The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon owns an historic retreat center in the mountains north of Beirut at Dhour Schweir. For decades, this has been a place for summer camps,



training events, and seminars, as well gatherings of youth, women and men from across the Synod's

"territory" of Syria and Lebanon. However, it has always been a bit difficult for Syrians to cross the border and pay extra expenses and transportation to join their brother and sister in Lebanon in joint events. Since the onslaught of the war in Syria, this difficulty has escalated.



### Dhour Schweir, Lebanon

In 2003, the Synod began exploring possibilities to build a retreat center in Syria and in 2006 purchased a 10,000-square meter plot---about 2 ½ acres---in the Christian village of Amar al-Hosn, close to the Lebanese border, where there was also a small Presbyterian church. A planning process began and permits



were sought from local authorities, but then the war began, and the Synod had to shift its priorities to supporting local families as well as the ministries of the congregations in Syria.



The Presbyterian Church in Amar al-Hosn

The Rev Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of the Synod, observes:

### Amar al-Hosn

*In the last 6 years, the Christian Education Department has increased the number of camps, retreats and training opportunities for the different constituent groups of the Synod. Dhour Shweir, as the sole retreat center, has struggled accommodate those activities for both the Syrian and the Lebanese. In the midst of pain, suffering, and relief obligations though, the Synod has stayed focused on the need of the Church to gather, learn and grow and to be equipped for mission and ministry as a community of faith. The urgency to provide this kind of place for the Syrian congregations and IN Syria became more pressing for the following reasons:*

- 1- More people than ever before are attending and joining church activities in Syria

- 2- *Difficulty of obtaining a visa for the Syrians to cross the border to Lebanon.*
- 3- *High cost of traveling between Syria and Lebanon*
- 4- *The limitation of Dhour Shweir to host the increasing number of participants from Syria*
- 5- *The higher cost of room and board in Lebanon relative to Syrian salaries and war-time inflation*

An estimation of costs for this project is around \$600,000 which would cover the construction of a chapel, kitchen, dining room, assembly hall with breakout rooms and two 50-person dormitories.

*Rev Kassab sums up:*

*This project is becoming a vital one today, due to the peace that Amar al-Hosn finally enjoys. This location has also become shelter for many Christians who have fled other areas to seek security and relative peace here. May this project find grace in the eyes of those who care for the future of Christians in Syria.*



**The Presbyterian Church in Aleppo**

