

**David Weaver****Program director at the National Council of Churches in the USA****AWR-subscriber**

Arab West Report is a unique compendium of current news concerning religion and related issues from original Middle East media sources. It has offered me, first as the director of the Church World Service/National Council of Churches Middle East Office and now as program director for Mission Relationships and Witness, valuable alternative information and a perspective that is not available in the mainstream press in the U.S., and provides a much better, more nuanced sense of the regional context.

There is a tendency outside the region, in Europe and the U.S., to look at the complex dynamics of the Middle East in isolation. As you are well aware, however, ill-informed, biased and distorted media coverage of the Middle East in the Western press has had very negative impacts on popular and elite attitudes both in the West and in the region. Since people in the Middle East characteristically understand things in religious categories, there are tendencies to perceive differences, misunderstandings, disagreements or even conflict with those outside the region in terms of religion, regardless of the actual circumstances. From there, it is a small step to misperceiving local Christian communities as allied with foreign adversaries. Therefore, accurate, balanced coverage of the Middle East in Europe and the U.S. is important to remove causes of misunderstanding and to support the long-term viability of Christian communities within pluralistic societies in the Middle East. Accurate, balanced coverage requires presence on the scene, to ascertain facts and dispel speculation.

I hope that Arab West Report will continue to mature, to develop and to expand. Given the rapid increase in Web-based communications, I hope that you will be able to complete your website in the near future. Presently, AWR has found a readership among persons who have a direct, professional interest in the Middle East. Since the Middle East will continue to be at the center of global concerns, there will be increasing interest in detailed information. I think that the possibility for expansion of AWR's readership in the future is good.