

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 10: May 2016

An ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries.

Contact: admin@livingstonesonline.org.uk or the editor at newsletter@livingstonesonline.org.uk

Website: www.livingstonesonline.org.uk; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/livingstonesonlineuk/>

DONATIONS TO SUPPORT REFUGEES IN ZARQA, JORDAN

Following an initiative by the President of Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust, Revd Dr Duncan Macpherson, to set up a fund to support Syrian and Iraqi refugees being cared for by the Sons of Divine Providence in Zarqa, Jordan, we have sent an initial donation of £1000 and have this letter of thanks:



A moment from our pilgrimage to Jordan at Easter 2015, taking tea with some of the Iraqi families now living in Zarqa.

Your donation together with other benefactors has enabled us to recommence our program of distributing food, medical and baby products to Iraqi refugees

The distribution of these coupons took place over a two day period; on the 24th March we gave them to 65 families living in Amman. On the 26th March 35 Iraqi families living in Zarqa received their food coupons. They then used them to buy food from a nearby Supermarket with which we have arranged them to be redeemed.

The overall number of Iraqi families is therefore 100. The value of the coupon received by the respective family depends on the size of the family. We calculate 10 JD per family member. Besides this we also gave out milk coupons for families with small children; 25 in all. Another 25 pamper [nappy] coupons we distributed to families who have babies. The overall cost of all this amounts to around 6000 JD.

Virtually all the Iraqi refugees living in Jordan are waiting to be resettled in other countries; the main ones being either Australia, USA or Canada. Some may opt for Europe if they have family there. Very few wish to return to Iraq. I have met only one who decided to return. They did so because the father of the family had received an offer of employment in Irbil.

There continues to arrive in Jordan Iraqi refugees not in great numbers as previously but all with the intention of moving on to another country. It seems that it is much easier now to come to Jordan. As long as they register with the UN as refugees they do are allowed to stay. Officially they are not allowed to work though this is allowed within the confines of a Christian institution or project.

Their children of school age are also being assisted by us. All of them are now attending Catholic schools run by the Church here. We help those living in Zarqa, where we live, by providing transport and books for them.

As you can see your help is much needed and appreciated.

To all those who have made this possible a sincere thank you and an assurance of our prayers.

God bless you all, Fr Carlo

Donations for this initiative may be sent to as a cheque to Living Stones, designated for the refugee fund – please see donation instructions on P 11.



Duncan (left) listens while the UN system of vouchers is explained.

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FROM THE HEART OF GAZA

Our Chair, Professor Mary Grey, reflects on a visit to Gaza, to a friend working with Caritas, in January 2016



A few weeks after Christmas many of us read a famous Gospel story where Jesus enters the Synagogue in Nazareth and, to hushed voices, (people had not heard him before) proclaimed those words of Luke's Gospel from the Prophet Isaiah), beginning; "The Spirit has come upon me: he sent me to give the good news to the poor..." These words, and what follows, have become famous, and known as The Nazareth Manifesto". They have acted as a beacon call to many Liberation Theologians around the world who seek justice in response to the poverty and oppression in many contexts.

I wrote this in Gaza, (with its Christian population of 1%), conscious also that Pope Francis had called for "A Year of Mercy". Living Stones readers will find it hard to suspend their political judgments as I ask for mercy for what I saw – and see – in the heart of Gaza with its 2 million people living in the aftermath of the war of 2014. Will the world have any compassion, especially for the innocent ones?

Mercy for the traumatised children who have now lived through 3 wars?

Mercy for the young people?

In a Caritas Centre, a psycho-social worker engages with a group of traumatised children. (see photo, right)

Gaza has an unemployment rate of 40%, but 60% for young people, who are highly educated. Mercy for the families, still living in bombed, destroyed houses- because there is nowhere else to go?





A new house – destroyed; photos before and after the 2014 War

Hope is present in the courage of people who try to reconstruct their homes from the rubble, breaking stones with their bare hands, trying to separate the tangled iron rods so they can be re-used. Given the sheer amount of bombed houses, and a bleak landscape of destruction, this is an overwhelming sign of peoples' will to live and survive. One young woman was an amazing witness to this: from Mauretania, she worked with a Norwegian NGO, trying to help families prepare for another conflict. She tries to help them deal with their anxiety and strengthen their houses against a possible attack.

Gaza Fishing port in the evening- Gaza could be so beautiful were it not for the war, and the fact that its people are living in fear for the next attack.

I had already seen the synagogue site where Jesus is thought to have proclaimed the Nazareth Manifesto – now a small but beautiful Church in Nazareth. I hope that wherever the Manifesto is proclaimed today, the world will bring transforming compassion to Gaza in this Year of Mercy.

Mercy for those disabled and injured in the conflict, who try to make a living? But most of all – mercy for this small land, in its desperate struggle to survive. Yet, mercy is already present- in the commitment of numerous NGOs from all over the world, without whom the people of Gaza would starve- and certainly not survive. Mercy is present in the hopeful spirit of so many young people: - I saw a radiant group of young women – all with university degrees, and determined there would be a future for them. Mercy is present in the work of NGOs like Caritas who do psycho-social work with young children helping them to cope with their fears – even terror- as well as giving them some nourishing food each day.



*God of mercy, even as we long to understand that which is often beyond our comprehension,
we lay before you the hearts, minds and bodies
of all those suffering from conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel,
and from the ongoing occupation.
Shower upon all the people of this holy land the spirit of justice and reconciliation.*

(an extract from the intercessions in the Prayers for Peace at

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/prayer/prayers-middle-east-gaza-iraq-syria.aspx>)

JUST PEACE

Living Stones trustee Felicity Young reflects on a moment in the UN refugee camp at Nur Shams in the West Bank, and our Pilgrimage to share in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Jerusalem, January 2016 .

Photos by two of our Vice Chairs, Dr David Toorawa and Jo Simister.

The little boy looked perplexed as laughter rippled around the room. What was so amusing to everyone? We were standing in what served as a treatment room in the community building at Nur Shams, the refugee camp which is situated between Nablus and Tulkarem in West Bank, Palestine, a mixed group of visitors, employees at the Centre, and mothers and children attending for treatment. Raia Mahmoud, the gorgeously attractive Palestinian physiotherapist who is funded for her twice weekly visits by the UK charity Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability (ABCD), had just planted a kiss on the cheek of the tiny seven year old as a reward for his efforts – he has cerebral palsy and has been having treatment for only about six months – leaving an unmistakable lip print. The atmosphere was friendly and the chuckles kindly but nonetheless I helped his mother remove the offending evidence with a wet wipe.

It was not my first visit to a Palestinian Refugee Camp but I was reminded again of the initial shock of seeing the very permanent brick and concrete buildings which keep on growing and developing, as people exiled from their homes back in 1948 after Israel's Declaration of Independence, get on with the business of surviving. The tell-tale sign is always the large key painted on the wall, an evocative symbol of homes lost but not forgotten, in an ethnic cleansing policy which continues.

I am a trustee of The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust, and since 2012 this charity has tried to visit Jerusalem for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as a gesture of solidarity with the shrinking Christian communities in the Land we still dare to call Holy. We attend the joint services which occur every day at 5pm in the churches and cathedrals of the different denominations within or close by the Old City, along with a very wide spectrum of Christians of diverse traditions, backgrounds and nationalities, many who are residents of Jerusalem, others who are visitors like us.

The message is "all are welcome in Jerusalem", but of course that does not apply to West Bank Palestinians, Christian or not. Permission to visit their own capital city is rarely granted, and even then only after a lengthy application process. We see generations of young Christians who have never been in Jerusalem though they are growing up very close by.

On our visits, therefore, we try to visit various towns in the West Bank, renewing long-standing friendships and building new relationships with our Christian sisters and brothers in their communities. We share an administrator and members with ABCD so enjoy seeing some of the projects which their funds support, such as the work at Nur Shams where Raia (who is also an international swimmer and black belt in judo) works so effectively. The small boy I spoke of suffers from cerebral palsy, and though he is still tiny for his age he has apparently made remarkable progress during the six months Raia has been giving him physiotherapy. There were other children attending, and also adults, for instance with back problems. This is an excellent demonstration of how effective a small charity can be when working with local professionals in such a personal way. Yet one cannot ignore the reality of the deprivation which exists as a result of the ongoing unjust occupation and apartheid. The population of Nur Shams, and another camp nearby live near to the sea but it is a



Felicity looks on at a treatment session at Nur Shams clinic, near Tulkarem, West Bank

world away because The Wall bars the way just west of Tulkarem, and the Israeli town of Netanya stretches along the coast. I could not but think of the potential benefits to these patients, and all the people, of regular bathing in the Mediterranean, yet it can never be.

There was considerable anxiety about our visit this year, given the ongoing regional uncertainties and threats, so we were a small group of just eight, and all of us had been before and felt it very important to see and be seen. Included in the week was The Michael Prior Memorial Lecture, given by our Chair, Professor Mary Grey, on *The Balfour Declaration: acknowledging Britain's past and exploring her responsibility for peace-making: a Christian perspective*, and held at The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, close by the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City. The joint service that afternoon had been at The Cenacle (by tradition thought to be the Upper Room where the Last Supper took place), a moving occasion led by the Benedictine community of the Dormition Abbey. There had been a rather unsettling attempt at disruption by a noisy Zionist settler, who disapproved of these infidel Christians worshipping close to the supposed site of King David's tomb, but we had all raised our voices in several languages to sing the final hymn lustily. Michael Prior was a founder member of Living Stones, a Vincentian priest and passionate protagonist of the Palestinian cause, who tragically died before his time, and in whose memory we offer scholarships to Palestinian students studying the theology of their situation. The audience at the lecture numbered around 60 people, a very mixed international attendance which included some distinguished Palestinian theologians. (Text of the lecture can be found through the Living Stones website www.livingstonesonline.org and more information about The Balfour Project at www.balfourproject.org).

It is hard to convey just how challenging, frustrating, even depressing, our ten day stay in Jerusalem was. We ourselves enjoyed our pilgrimage to the origins of our faith, and we were comfortable staying in a delightfully authentic Palestinian hotel, the Azzahra (Roses), with friendly staff and delicious local cuisine. Visits were achieved to Nablus and Sebastiya, to Hebron, to Ramallah, and to Taybeh, where two brothers set up a brewery some years ago, and have now extended to a winery. In spite of constant difficulties placed in their way by the Israeli authorities, who control all imports and exports (including essential glass bottles), they have somehow achieved success, and have an internationally-known beer festival every October. We managed to meet with very good friends of longstanding, both Christian and Moslem, at a school for the visually impaired, at a wonderful hospital in Beit Jala, and at a children's clinic situated on the walls of the Old City, as well as at the ABCD projects I have mentioned. I was very pleased to make my first visit to Sabeel, the centre for Palestinian Liberation Theology, for communion, conversation and lunch. We worshipped in four cathedrals and the oldest church in Jerusalem, including Anglican, Lutheran, Latin (Roman Catholic), Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopian traditions and liturgies, and I was also able to attend communion at St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church on our final day. The weather was seasonally cold and wet and on several days there was snow falling, but we were well-clothed and well-fed, and it is good to be able to discount the scepticism which can be expressed by some people over snow-clad Nativity scenes! Also, one can hope that lots of rain will delay a little the need for Palestinians to buy their own water, at inflated cost, even though expeditions through the Old City really merited wellington boots: discerning Nuns were appropriately equipped.

But at no point can one, or indeed should one, escape from confronting the brutal environment that Palestinians have to live with in their own land. This was my seventh visit to the Holy Land, but this time I felt



particularly desperate about the situation and the reality that time is fast running out for any sort of solution which even attempts to be just.

The Old City used to be Arab: houses, businesses, shops in the Souk, sounds, smells, everything, with just a small area around the Western Wall Jewish, but it feels different now. Any excursion through the ancient streets now involves encountering groups of Orthodox figures, striding around confidently, even provocatively, with armed, unfriendly Israeli police and soldiers on every corner. While we were there yet another announcement was made about more homes being built on occupied land, and Jerusalem itself is already completely encircled by settlements.

We met two EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) workers at many of the services and on other occasions, so came to know them quite well. On one such occasion the younger of the two, a Swedish girl, seemed subdued; gentle probing revealed that on the previous day she and her colleague had been called to witness the distressing process of a house demolition. The rules prevent any interference on their part so they had to watch while a large body of armed police and soldiers ejected a family of over 30 people, including young children and a girl confined to a wheelchair, from their home, so that it could be bulldozed along with most of the contents.



Because one of the young men “pushed” an Israeli the final cruelty was that they were all thrust into a neighbour’s home and pepper spray thrown in after them. This was not a so-called punitive demolition, but was required as a road was planned between two Jewish settlements and this Palestinian house stood in the way.

Where else in the world would this all go unreported? It feels as if the whole world is prepared to “pass by on the other side”, with the main concern a fear of being accused of anti-Semitism. Yet we surely owe it to all victims of ethnocide and apartheid, including Jews past and present, to speak out loudly against anything that questions the humanity of “the other”. However secular much of the Israeli government may be I have concern for the soul of a nation which acts in such a way in the name of faith. If we wish to continue to refer to “The Holy Land” we must surely be acknowledging that it is God’s Land, and no one group has inalienable right to claim, to conquer, to commandeer – and to cover with concrete – which is what I see when I visit.

Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem..... but also for peace within the souls of all its people.

And why not join us on a visit like this – second half of January – to pray for unity in exactly the right place.

LIVING STONES TRUST WEEK OF PRAYER PILGRIMAGE FOR 2017:

We are awaiting confirmation that the Week of Prayer will be celebrated during the last week of January – details will posted on our website as soon as we know (probably in June). During the Week of Prayer itself we expect to be Jerusalem based so that we are able to attend the services each evening, to worship with Christians of the different traditions represented there.

Additionally, we normally spend a few nights elsewhere. As 2017 will mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, we are considering an exploration of the Negev and Jaffa, and of course we also hope that at some point we will be able to go into the Gaza Strip. These areas figured prominently in WW1 and the events prior to the British Mandate.

If you are interested to be kept informed of planning progress, please contact Jo Simister at pilgrimages@livingstonesonline.org.uk.

Many thanks! *Jo Simister*

MEDITATION ON “THE ASCENSION”

Words by our Administrator Alison Driscoll, artwork ‘The Ascension’ by Peter Rogers from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.



Jesus ascends. He rises towards his zenith. He looks right up and reaches out his hands towards his ultimate destination.

Jesus, Son of God, prepares to return to his Father, his Maker.

He shows the way to God, all eyes are transfixed on him as he starts to move upwards

For him, the way is clear – he’s focused and, following in his footsteps, so too can we be as equally sure-footed and committed.

Jesus glows like the sun – people are attracted to the warmth and light he radiates. He is dynamic, yet can slow his pace, lest we, the onlookers, lose sight of him. He allows, no, enables, us to participate with him in his special moments, his high points.

As he ascends, so the Holy Spirit descends: he sends his gift of empowerment back down to bless, encourage and enable us. He does not leave us alone struggling to find the way – he fires us up. Even perhaps when we are least expecting it.

He is predominant – supreme. The Lord of the ascendant – masterful yet so very generously sharing some of his authority with us.

Jesus, you ascend like a river – ever drawn back towards your source. The movement is perpetual – because you are eternal, and as one with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, you ascend to your Father’s throne, though we strain our eyes to physically see your sovereign seat, we cannot, because we are mere mortals.

Jesus, you ascend to join your Father, the creator of all and you are telling us that we too can be with him and you for eternity, if only we will follow the path given to each and every one of us.

You are not afraid to go when God calls you because you are as ever, obedient to your Father. We believe, we know, indeed we are promised that you simply are going ahead of us, showing us the way.

We see though that before we can approach God (our Father too of course), we need to be brave and to let go and take that first step in the right direction. We cannot begin the journey if our feet stay rooted on the spot – set fast in the same place as if in stone.

You are pure gold, you are the light of the world – yet you do not leave us in the dark for though you soar upwards to heaven, we are promised that you are still with us.

Jesus, you are the circle of life – time and time again you rise for each and every one of us

You come back down to earth in the fire of the Holy Spirit, blood red to remind us that you died for us and will be with us whenever we call on your name: then yet again you rise and perhaps, just perhaps, sometimes we too might rise a little, just a very little, to move closer to you and nearer to our God.

Yes, Jesus, you go before us – to show us the way pray, help us to follow in your path

PALESTINE ACCOMPANIED, NOT ALONE

Andree Ryan, a member of Ealing Quaker Meeting and of the Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network (BPFTN) considers some ways to make peaceful links of friendship with partners in Palestine, starting from Quaker principles.

Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.

Advices & Queries 34.

British voluntary organisations, in churches, towns and villages across the United Kingdom, have created links of friendship or established formal twinning ties with a partner in Palestine.

Exchanges benefit both partners: think of art, culture, craft and cooking. There are so many diverse ways to create mutual support and mutual respect. People who participate in twinning schemes make lots of friends, perhaps visit their twin and receive visitors in turn, learn new skills and find that lots of people in their community are ready and willing to support them. The scope of activities can be huge, depending on individual choice, what matters to the group.

The Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network (BPFTN) is an organisation with links to Quakers that offers support to new groups here in the UK. It has a list of prospective places/organisations in Palestine seeking friendly contact with British potential partners. In my area we have had for 5 years a friendship link with the village of Sabastiya in the Northern West Bank (www.hafsa.org)

Why build friendship with Palestine? Palestinians have been living under Israeli military occupation for forty-eight years. They feel isolated – that is one of the many effects of occupation - and welcome contact with the outside world. Such a link helps to give them the moral and practical support they need to survive and look ahead.

Quakers have a tradition of supporting the oppressed. Friendship and Twinning Associations are a two-way street – we form lasting friendships and learn all about resilience in the face of adversity. Palestinians gain practical and visible support benefiting people on the ground, including those suffering the greatest hardship. Our activities stay away from rhetoric and “politics” to address everyday concerns, sharing experiences, breaking that artificial isolation.

If you decide to take part in a twinning project, the choice of focus for cooperation is yours. Some groups have sent volunteers to Palestine to teach English or other skills, others have concentrated on helping communities to become economically self-sufficient (such as promoting tourism from the UK, buying chickens, or beehives, or organising training). Some have invited Palestinian artists and theatre groups to perform in the UK; others have sent football coaches. Some have offered advocacy on how to obtain support in Palestine and have lobbied our own government on practical issues affecting their Palestinian twin - often with good results. What matters is what works, for you and for your Palestinian partners.

Further information: www.twinningwithpalestine.net

HISTORIC SHIFTS IN WORLD'S VIEW OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE

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(This and more at <http://www.agenceglobal.com/index.php?show=article&Tid=2960>)

BEIRUT — As Israelis and Palestinians continue to battle to the death in their contested land, it is important to note a historic shift in how the minds, hearts, and public politics of the world perceive the Palestine issue and a just Palestinian-Israeli-Arab peace accord that assures the equal rights of all parties. In many arenas and dimensions, far from dropping off the global political map, Palestinian rights are popping up in more venues

around the world, with a regular public focus on countering and even sanctioning Zionist excesses and criminal actions, such as expropriating and colonizing occupied Arab lands.

We see this most clearly in Europe and the United States, where open societies based on the rule of law provide credible opportunities for activists to challenge and stop their societies' complicity in Israeli colonial policies. This works in both directions, as public debates advocate Israeli as well as Palestinian positions. But by making the Israel-Palestine issue a matter for public discussion in local political or professional arenas — such as state legislatures, mainstream churches, universities, commercial activities, the media, and academic societies — the net effect is clearly to the advantage of the Palestinians.

This is because the debates focus on issues that Zionism and the state of Israel have always sought to downplay in the global discussion of this conflict, and that the Palestinians in contrast have sought to highlight: the international rule of law, the nature of Israeli political and military practices, and how to prod both sides to comply with existing international laws, conventions, and UN resolutions that uphold the rights or protection of all concerned.

Israel has continued its heretofore largely successful propaganda tactics and associated political leverage that depict the Palestinians globally as violent anti-Semites who refuse to accept Jews in their midst and seek to destroy the state of Israel and kill Jews. Yet the pendulum of global public perceptions has swung back to a more balanced position that continues to criticize Palestinian armed resistance, political violence, and occasional acts of terrorism against civilians, but more and more routinely these days also analyses Israel through the prism of South African Apartheid practices. Israel is worried, as it should be if Apartheid is the political term most often associated with it.

So Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his posse of professional propagandists, illusionists, and liars now desperately tries to link the Palestinians with terrorists such as "Islamic State" (Daesh). They have also tried to associate Palestinians with Iran, assuming that Iran is widely negatively viewed in the West, but that policy also failed on two counts: The West and the world have rejected Israel's exaggerated fears and bluster, have successfully negotiated with Iran, and mainstream Western political circles have harshly criticized Netanyahu's attempts to influence their domestic policy-making systems — for example, his rallying pro-Israeli groups in the United States against President Barack Obama.

The question of Israel-Palestine now has expanded into a wider contest over free speech on American college campuses, where Israel's intemperance freely accuses people of anti-Semitism in a desperate attempt to restrict public discussion or criticism of Israeli practices, such as colonial settlements, mass incarceration of Palestinians by the thousands, the continuing semi-siege of Gaza, or cold blood killings of Palestinians who are not a clear security threat. Such tactics have only generated more public, focused, and intense debates on Israeli and Palestinian practices, and explored more seriously the available responses — including boycotts and sanctions — of institutions and countries around the world that base their actions on law, justice, and morality.

The important trend taking place is two-fold: the Palestinians' shift from mostly ineffective military and government actions to a non-violent political challenge to Israel's occupation and colonization of Arab lands, and, greater public political debates about the Israeli and Palestinian people's mutual actions and rights, and how the world should act to achieve those rights.

The first line of global political action on Palestine-Israel is no longer Israel's ability to make its security the main focus of discussion and to nudge big powers' policies in its favor; instead, it has shifted to how collective global action can get both sides to comply with existing global norms while ensuring their mutual security and well-being. Some novel developments: The UN secretary-general speaks out forcefully on these issues, the French government wants to launch an international peace conference on Israel-Palestine, Sweden and other states recognize the state of Palestine, the European Union highlights its opposition to official contacts with Israeli institutions in occupied Arab lands, and one American senator has asked his government to investigate the actions of both Israeli and Arab governments. The times they are a changing, and mostly for the better as far as the Palestine issue in the world's eyes is concerned.

Rami G. Khouri is published twice weekly in the Daily Star. He was founding director and now senior policy fellow of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. Follow him on Twitter @ramikhouri.

A QUICK ROUND UP OF SOME OF OUR OTHER ACTIVITIES

Scholarships:

The latest on some of our scholarship and bursary recipients (more information is available on the website, on the Michael Prior Fund page)

- Usama Salman is in the final stages of writing his PhD thesis
- Johnny Bassous begins his second semester as a part time student on the MA Pastoral Theology programme at Bethlehem Bible College
- Abdel Masih Younan is in his final semester of a part time Masters in Jerusalem Studies at Al Quds University
- Emil Haloun from Ibillin in the Gallilee has received partial funding for his thesis in social studies at Bar Ilan University in Israel.
- Two other students have been promised financial support when they begin their Masters studies. one at Bethlehem University and the other in the USA.

Theology group:

One of the most important tasks that Living Stones seeks to address is to provide the space to reflect biblically, historically, sociologically and theologically on the lives of Christians in the Holy Lands..The Theology Group provides a voice, an historical record, a chance to reflect, a point of contact with the spiritual centre of the Christian community, its life and witness. Much of this reflection finds a place eventually in the Living Stones Yearbook, presented as a scholarly work which will stand the test of time and enable us all to better understand the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.

Over the last year the Theology Group has continued to represent strongly the varied interests of Living Stones' members and contributed to the wider discourse on the current crisis for Christians in the Middle East. We have been fortunate to have had the following seminars:

- June 2015: Duncan Macpherson: Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Bible
- October 2015: Len Harrow : Armenians and other Christians at the end of the Ottoman Empire and 100 years later
- December 2015: Roundtable discussion on contemporary Christian-Muslim relations in light of Nostra Aetate
- January 2016: Kristian Girling: Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako and ecumenical engagements between the Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church
- April 2016: we plan a session to be given by Dr Suha Rassam on the contemporary situation for Christians in Iraq

Living Stones members who might be interested in joining the group are welcome to contact Kristian Girling to enquire about attending <k.girling@heythrop.ac.uk>

Living Stones Refugee Fund, and Donations:

Earlier this year, we opened a restricted account, the "Living Stones Refugee Fund", with the primary purpose of helping the Christian refugees affected by persecution in Iraq and Syria. As you will see from the lead story, the first £1000 has already been sent to help with the rehabilitation of Christian refugees in Zarqa and we have very precise accountability of exactly how the funds have been spent. If you would like to make a donation to this new fund, please follow the instructions on page 11 and inform us in a covering note that you wish this money to be ring-fenced.

Many members send us more than the suggested subscription to help promote the aims of the trust: funding scholarships; organising and hosting conferences; publishing our Newsletters and Yearbooks, etc. Any contributions you are able to make would be most gratefully received. Just tell us if you would like the donation to go to a particular part of our work – and most important, if it may be gift-aided (you must be a UK tax payer). Thank you for your acknowledged support.

HOW TO SUPPORT US AND OUR WORK: PRAY, PAY...

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust recognises the vital importance of fostering friendship and fellowship with our sisters and brothers in the lands in which our Lord lived. This shows itself in four areas:

facing the facts - learning about the situation, developing links and connections, sponsoring visits from Middle Eastern Christian leaders, and sharing all these widely, by way of the website, the Newsletter, and our own contacts and conversations.

supporting study - offering scholarships for appropriate post-graduate courses, debating within and beyond our Theology Group, and promoting insights by way of the Yearbook.

walking the way - visiting, as we do for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Jerusalem, and taking additional opportunities to spend time with fellow Christians in their reality, taking a few steps together as companions.

reacting responsively - recognising particular needs when they arise, such as offering the grant to the Awareness Foundation for their study course, and setting up the new fund in support of the work in Jordan with Christian Iraqi refugees.

These four parts to our work can be seen as the heart, head, feet and hands of witnessing. The new annual subscription of £30 recognises the financial implication to make this witness effective. We count it a privilege to be called to this work, because the monetary cost is as nothing to the price being paid by Christians in the Middle East who represent and maintain the foundations of our faith.

This "whole body" witness must be clothed in prayer and, as our fellow Christians keep reminding us, this is reciprocal: we pray for them and they for us. As these, the direct descendants of the disciples, enrich us with the example of their faith and focus we can help in enabling them to remain in their homelands and continue to strengthen the kingdom of God in our world.

MEMBERSHIP: Please complete this form and return to: (please print clearly)

Living Stones, 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, BR6 9UE together with EITHER a cheque for £30 payable to Living Stones OR the Standing Order Mandate.

If you are a UK tax payer PLEASE ALSO complete the Gift Aid box:

- I enclose a cheque for £30 made payable to Living Stones
- I wish to pay by standing order, and have completed the form below
- I am a UK tax payer, and authorise Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust to collect Gift Aid on this and any subsequent donations.

Signed:Dated:

Name:

Address:

.....Postcode:

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STANDING ORDER MANDATE:

To the Manager of (name of your Bank/Building Society)

Address:.....**Postcode:**.....

Please pay the sum of thirty pounds/ £30 immediately, and thereafter annually until further notice.

From: Your account name:.....

Your account number:.....Your Bank Sort Code:.....

To: LIVING STONES Account No: 8913 7808; Code: 09-01-55

Your signature:.....Date:.....



Christianity in the Middle East today: present challenges and future perspectives

**Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College
and the Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust
Joint Conference**

Friday 17th and Saturday 18th June, 2016

Heythrop College, University of London, W8 5HN

Conference themes to include:

Armenian, Coptic and Syriac Christianity

Christianity in Iraq and Syria

Political theology, emigration and contemporary challenges in the diaspora

Christian-Muslim relations

Christianity in the Holy Land

Ecumenism

Mission in the Middle East

Conference registration details and further information, please contact:

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Details will also be publicised via www.livingstonesonline.org.uk and
<https://www.facebook.com/livingstonesonlineuk/>, once finalised.