

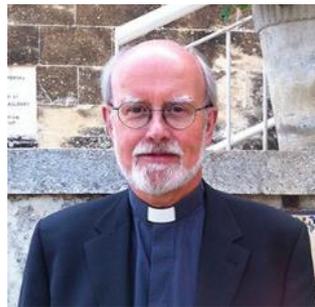
The Society of Friends of St Andrew's, Jerusalem

November 2017

Newsletter No 6

Report: St Andrew's, Jerusalem

by Rev Paraic Reamonn,
Minister of St Andrew's,
Jerusalem (extract)



Each year, the
Ecumenical

Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) sends around 100 ecumenical accompaniers (EAs) from different countries to protect and show solidarity with vulnerable Palestinian communities and, especially after returning home, to advocate on their behalf. Along with the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Quakers, the Church of Scotland is active in the British EAPPI committee.

Each time one group of EAs arrives and another departs, there is a handover service in which the outgoing group “passes the light” in the form of candles to those coming in. I was instrumental, early on, in persuading the programme to add St Andrew's to the list of service venues.

Last month we met for the first time in the Tantur Ecumenical Institute at the invitation of the institute's director, Fr Russ McDougall. Russ and I are involved in an invigorating Christian-Jewish group, now meeting mostly at St Andrew's. He regularly joins the Church of Scotland team visit to our partners in Gaza and some time ago introduced us to Sister Bridget Tighe, a redoubtable Irish nun who runs the

Caritas operation there (our next visit is October 17-19).

On Wednesday of the World Week, and on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and (ironically) the ten days of repentance, the Beit Jimal monastery, home to Salesian monks near Beit Shemesh, was vandalized – for the third time in four years.¹

Haaretz reports that “over 50 Christian and Muslim sites have been vandalized in Israel and the West Bank since 2009, but only nine indictments have been filed and only seven convictions handed down, according to Public Security Ministry data. Moreover, only eight of the 53 cases are still under investigation, with the other 45 all closed.”²

Gadi Gvanyahu, chair of Tag Meir, an organization that monitors hate crimes, believes that it is a question of police priorities: “Without a doubt, they aren't looking hard enough.” He adds that some of these crimes remain unsolved despite security camera footage that includes pictures of the suspected vandals' cars.

In a forceful editorial, Haaretz contends that “Israel's Public Security Minister is soft on crimes against Christian and Muslim sites.” It says: “[Minister Gilad] Erdan should be reminded that his job isn't psychiatric diagnosis, but running the police. It's high time for him to finally start doing this job, even when the crime victims are non-Jews.”³

¹ <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Catholic-monastery-vandalized-for-3rd-time-in-4-years-505739>

² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.813790>

³ <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/editorial/1.813955>

Will anything change? Not without serious external pressure from churches and governments.

We have our own problems with the Israeli government. Clergy visas for ministers and ecumenical associates coming from outside the country are usually not a problem. If the minister in question has a Palestinian connection, it is another story. We are currently struggling for a visa for Sara Deik, a Bolivian pastor married to a Latin Catholic Palestinian and playing a key role in Bethlehem Bible College.

Relationships with partner churches and organizations (and with other NGOs such as Breaking the Silence,) continue to develop fruitfully. Rev Grant Barclay was here recently, interviewing on video many people from these churches and organizations, and took time out to interview me.

Our modest congregation is growing modestly, adding both Arab Christians and Messianic Jews (we also attract expats, but most are here only for a time). We have recently started an ecumenical women's group that (at present) meets fortnightly: "ecumenical" because we invite and hope to attract women from beyond the congregation. Plans for young adult groups in Jerusalem and Bethlehem are taking a little longer. In November, we plan a congregational outing (together with the Tiberias congregation) to Beth Shean and the Jordanian Peace Park.



In the 1980s, the Church of Scotland passed legislation requiring church property in Scotland

to be surveyed professionally every five years. This was to avoid such property falling into such disrepair as to require costly renovation or, in extreme cases, demolition. The Scots Memorial has not been subject to this legislation (or at least, not to this practice). This should change.

Some time ago, Walter Dunlop pointed out that our stained-glass windows were in danger of falling out of their mountings. So we had the building surveyed. Happily, there are no fundamental problems, just a long history of neglect.

A proposal, complete with a business plan, was recently brought to the World Mission Council to carry out the necessary repairs and renovations, install sprinklers in the church and guesthouse (a new requirement by the Jerusalem municipality, without which the guesthouse will no longer be able to operate), and upgrade the guesthouse modestly so that it can be rebranded as a hotel, thus attracting more paying customers.

Ecumenical accompaniment in its widest sense and enhancing hope in the face of darkness seem to me an apt summary of what the Church of Scotland is and should be doing in Israel/Palestine: standing alongside two communities stuck in a conflict to which, as we were reminded this year, our own dear country has contributed significantly – and not just through the Balfour Declaration.

I have now been just over three years in Jerusalem and have given notice that I shall leave next year on Easter Sunday. I look forward in the remaining six months to the Friends battlefield pilgrimage, the visit of the Moderator in January, and (all being well) a handover to my successor in March.

Middle East Secretary Update

Kenny Roger

As I write there is a pilgrimage of 30 people visiting the country, organised by the World Mission Council. This is taking in the sights of the land, but also spending time visiting some of our partners in the Galilee, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. It is wonderful to see the connection of people, and the interest, as they learn more about the lives of Christians living in this country – their hopes and their fears.



Kenny outside Tabeetha

The Middle East however continues to be a melting pot. No day passes without some sort of story emanating from the region, as you will be witness to as you read or listen to the news.

Syria continues to be a mess, with no-one quite sure who is in charge, and no-one sure yet what the future will hold. Our partners, and in particular, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), continue to struggle to provide for the needs of both those internally displaced and those externally displaced. The work that they are doing to provide schooling for those who are in Lebanon is nothing short of amazing, and the pastors who have stayed in Syria to serve alongside their remaining congregations show huge courage and bravery in the face of severe situations. They manage to provide for the basic needs of so many people, not discriminating by religion, and showing the love of Christ in action.

Lebanon finds itself in a precarious position still. Although stable and holding on to peace, her population has increased by 50% with

refugees from Syria. These refugees find it difficult to take jobs, and those that do manage are taking the jobs from the Lebanese, which causes real angst.

Israel and Palestine so often needs no additional words. As we approach the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, we are reminded of the pain that this declaration caused to so many, even as we recognise the joy it brought to many others. Today the country remains in turmoil with no clear way forward politically. Both leaders (Netanyahu and Abbas) continue to move further apart and blame each other for everything, giving easy excuses to not try and solve the problems. Our partners continue to fight and struggle for justice and peace, and are a huge credit to their people as they put all their efforts into changing the landscape of the country.

The Lutheran church has appointed a new Bishop in Jerusalem to replace Bishop Munib, and Ibrahim Azar will be installed as Bishop next January. Paraic is working to develop our partnerships with both the Lutherans and the Anglicans, and to find new ways of working together.

There have been a couple of visits to Gaza in the last year, again highlighting the fact that there is a humanitarian crisis looming there. The recent decision by the Palestinian Authority to stop paying the electricity bills for Hamas is sure also to cause deterioration in the situation. Again, our partners try to make the most of what they have, but unless the situation changes soon, any remaining hope will run out.



St Andrew's Guest House, Jerusalem

The Guesthouse in Jerusalem has again faced a difficult year, but 2017 so far is looking much better. Tourists are returning, as are the locals. The Guesthouse is also now on Booking.com which has made a big difference to reservations. Events continue to be a strong source of income, with guests commenting on the fantastic location. The staff continue to provide an excellent service, and the food on offer at breakfast and for lunches and dinners has improved beyond measure. There has been a big increase in the amount of outside events using the Guesthouse facilities, and this has not only given us good revenue, but has meant that many more people have discovered the Guesthouse for the first time. And if you check Booking.com for the guest reviews, you will see many very positive comments!



Tabeetha School, Jaffa



Tabeetha School has moved on from its difficult year in 2015 and is thriving.

Staff are happy, parents are happy, and above all, the children are happy. The school is full and the Board is delighted with the progress made over the past eighteen months. A review of the school, looking back as well as forward for the next twenty years, is about to start,

which will highlight the areas where the school needs to improve and develop, whilst also looking at options for how Tabeeha can run to its full potential. These are very exciting times for all involved.

Scots Hotel, Tiberias

The Scots Hotel continues to go from strength to strength.



Making space for a labyrinth

Guest feedback

continues to be excellent, and both financial and non-financial targets have been exceeded throughout the course of the year, with 2016 being their most successful financial year ever. The visitor centre has been redeveloped and is now open to guests, the church is used much more often by visiting groups, and the facilities are used regularly by the guests staying in the hotel. The wine list has been re-modelled with the inclusion of Cremisan Wine from Bethlehem (also in the Guesthouse) and the Hotel continues to work with, and support, Sindyanna.

Face-Lift in Tiberias

Refurbishment has begun at St Andrew's Tiberias. Externally, a new roof, windows and doors are being addressed – along with cleaning and repointing of the walls. Internally, exposure of stonework and installation of new tiles in the worship area, along



with a new kitchen and toilets will restore the building to an aesthetic more in keeping with its original state.

During the works, informal services of Holy Communion are held in the Scots Hotel. It is hoped that all will be complete in time for the Moderator to rededicate the church during his visit in January 2018.



The roof comes off

As well as being Minister at St Andrew's, Tiberias, Kate McDonald has a pastoral role with staff and Christian visitors at the Scots Hotel and elsewhere. And she actively works alongside and supports local Christians and Christian groupings — in particular working with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

And recently Kate has been communicating with members of the UN working in the north or Israel. Click on the link to read more about her life and ministry in the land of the Holy One on her blog:

revisedontology.com.



Scholarly News

2018 Scholarship - £1500

The Society offers a wonderful opportunity for a divinity student to apply for a scholarship for £1,500. Level of qualification and age holds no barrier. The expectation in gaining a scholarship is that it will be used by students to undertake a course of study, formal or informal, within the

Holy Land, which will directly enhance their studies here in Scotland. The subject of the study is for the student to determine and the application will be judged on its relevance to their university course. Historically, most students have spent around four weeks in the region during their summer vacation, but over the years a great variety of topics have been researched each requiring different timescales.

Do you, or anyone you know, want to be considered? Further information and application forms are available from [Dorothy McMonagle](mailto:DorothyMcMonagle) and should be returned by Friday 12th January 2018.

(dmcmonagle@churchofscotland.org.uk)

2017 Scholars

Life Changing for Madeleine

“My experience was no less than the life-changing adventure I hoped it would be.”

Madeleine Kelly's intention was to meet as many interesting women as she could during her time in the Holy Land. And this she certainly fulfilled. Through friendships cultivated with women in the Old City, she learned how to cook their traditional dishes. Shirabe at Sumbula provided understanding of the importance of economic empowerment for individual communities for survival in difficult conditions. Christian Palestinians, particularly women of all ages, provided background to topics explored in Jerusalem.

Within the West Bank doors were opened to enlightening conversations and friendships with Palestinian artists, the work of Wi'am and that of the Noor



Women's Empowerment Group – discussing their relationship with the UN representatives, as well as their unique struggle living in a refugee camp. The first, and only, female brewer in the Middle East (at Taybeh Brewery) shared her experience as a Christian businesswomen, and the importance of taking a leading role to foster inter-faith dialogue.

“The scholarship provided me with a privileged look at life in the Holy Land...and time to understand the lives of Christians, and people of all faiths, living under tense and difficult conditions.”

Madeleine Kelly

Ruth challenged previous perceptions

Thanks to the award, I was able to return to Jerusalem to study a course on ‘The Role of Religion in Conflict’ at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A city that I had last visited in 2015.

During the course, I travelled around the Holy Land speaking to religious leaders for all perspectives of conflict, allowing me to personally challenge the internal bias that I had developed toward this complex situation. The award gave me opportunities to strike up genuine friendships with everyday heroes, such as the orthodox professor who crosses Palestinian checkpoints to teach at the



Bethlehem Bible College and the former Palestinian fighter who travels worldwide advocating for peace – as well as members of

the church working tirelessly as a mediator providing examples of Jesus' core teaching of loving thy neighbour. All these against the backdrop of the current hostile political climate.

Upon my return to student life in Edinburgh, I'm reminded of this famous line by the Jewish poet, Yehuda HaLevi – “My heart is in the east, and I, in the uttermost west”

My final year will be spent researching the role of religious rhetoric in another complex ethno-religious context – my home city of Belfast. I've learned that if we, as individuals, want to make a difference in this world, we must begin with the simple task of understanding and listening to each other.

Ruth Foster

Finance



Requests from St Andrew's

It has been agreed to continue supporting Sindayanna of Galilee (see below) over the next four years, subject to favourable reports from the Church. An exciting time for them, as well as us. The Visitors Centre in the Guesthouse is another project that the Society has undertaken to support – details of the element for which funds will be dedicated will unfold as plans for the project are finalised. Works are hoped to start in 2018.

Annual General Meeting 2018

Friday 18th May 2018
11.30 for 12.00

St Cuthbert's Church,
Lothian Road
Edinburgh

Lunch will follow the meeting – an opportunity to meet the team from St Andrew's, as well as friends, new and long-standing.

St Andrew's Day Centenary Service 2017

Thursday 30th November 2017

2.00pm

St Cuthbert's Parish Church
Lothian Road, Edinburgh

Choir of
George Watson's College,
Edinburgh

Please join us for
tea and coffee
after the Service

A retiring collection will be taken in aid of Sindyanna

Supporting St Andrew's in Jerusalem



In 2016 the collection at the annual St Andrew's Day was dedicated to [Sindyanna](#) of Galilee. Along with The Scots Hotel, the Guesthouse and Tabeetha, The Friends propose to continue supporting Sindyanna in their Olive Grove project at Rocha for the next four years.



Sindyanna is run entirely by women, and markets Palestinian olive products on the principles of Fair Trade. Established in 1996 it aims to advance the Arab economy in Israel to help preserve the land and support the mainstay of the farmers. Any oil which cannot be used for food is made into soap, using traditional methods, **Sindyanna** being responsible for cleaning, packing and exporting the products.





Pilgrimage Tour – May 2018

The World Mission Council is leading a Pilgrimage from 4-14 May 2018, which will be led by Grant Barclay, from Orchardhill Parish Church. The ten day trip will visit Church of Scotland partners and the local Christian Communities, as well as giving time to visit the historical sites. Accommodation will be at the Scots Hotel in Tiberias, the St Andrew's Guesthouse in Jerusalem, as well as 2 nights in Bethlehem. This would be a perfect programme for someone who would like to find out more about the region and the current situation, and would be ideal for someone who has either not visited the country before, or who has not been for a long period.

Price is £1,650 based on sharing a twin or double room, on a Half Board basis.

For more information please contact Kenny Roger, on Kroger@churchofscotland.org.uk

Can we help you? – just click on the link.

[St Andrew's Jerusalem](#)

[St Andrew's Facebook](#)

[St Andrew's Blog](#)

[St Andrew's Scots Guesthouse](#)

[The Society's Hon. Secretary \(Walter Dunlop\)](#)

[The Society's Membership Secretary \(Walter Dunlop\)](#)

[Church of Scotland World Mission Council](#)

[Tabetha School Blog](#)

Society of Friends of St. Andrew's Jerusalem

c/o Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN

☎ 0131 225 5722 x 2287