



# FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

## Families...we must do more

Thanks to the generosity of our many Friends, including to the FHL Emergency Family Support Appeal, we've been able to channel \$29,000 for the care of the most needy Christians in Gaza. But the increasing pressures on the Christians of both Gaza and the West Bank mean that we can't help all the people who need our help.



**'This is the first FHL newsletter to carry a direct appeal for more money on our front page', said Jim Quinn, FHL's Chairman. 'But these are very difficult times in the Holy Land, so we ask you to start 2015 with a resolution to do all you can to raise the money we need to help more Christian families.'**

On 24th November Peter Rand, FHL Vice Chairman, and our Founder Patron, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, handed a donation to Fr Jorge Hernandez, the Parish Priest of Holy Family Church in Gaza. The first contribution from the FHL Emergency Appeal we launched in August, after the terrible damage of the war became clear, is \$29,000. It's being spent on the *Oratorio* psycho-social support programme for the children of the parish and school-fees for the poorest children, to help their lives return to normal as soon as possible, and on essential repairs to homes.

Peter Rand's visit to Gaza, his second since FHL decided early in 2014 to extend support to the area, coincided with the Westminster Diocese Pilgrimage to the Holy Land led by Cardinal Nichols. Peter was able to join the Cardinal and the Latin Patriarch, His Beatitude Fouad Twal, at Mass in Holy Family Church, and to review the great work being done by the churches in Gaza.

'One very poignant feature of life in Gaza since the war is the number of families whose homes have been so badly damaged that they can't keep their children with them' said Peter. 'The orphanages have taken many children in, but they're now full, and under great pressure. It's a real tragedy.' Peter writes more on his recent visits to Gaza inside this issue.

*Image; CBCEW/Marcin Mazur*

### *FHL's Objectives*

- to raise awareness of the challenges facing the Christians of the Holy Land
- to encourage prayers for their intentions
- to generate financial resources to give them a sustainable future
- to encourage visits to the Holy Land to meet local Christians

### *In this issue*

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# FHL in the UK

## Chairman's message



**Friends of the Holy Land is now five years old, and it's time to look back over those extraordinary years and look forward.**

Since our foundation in 2009 FHL has grown from a shared vision of helping the Christian people of the Holy Land to the reality of life as a busy, committed, influential charity working in a very difficult field and faced with ever-increasing demands. It's been a wonderful, if challenging, experience for everyone involved, and I pay tribute to the many people who've helped FHL raise over £1.5 million for much-needed projects in the Holy Land. Thank you all.

Thanks to you there's also greater awareness now of the difficulties faced by the Christians of the Holy Land, and of FHL as a force for good, an organisation that knows what to do and how to do it. It's brought us new Friends, and the warm support of the Bishops in the Anglican and Catholic churches of England and Wales. We have also played a small part in developing ecumenism both here and in the Holy Land.

Five years ago our founders, led by Dr Michael Whelan, set out the four objectives you'll see on the front page, and we remain true to them. We still concentrate on work in education, employment, health and housing, and now offer regular support to families in serious difficulty because of unemployment or poor health. Our founders adopted a policy of avoiding the politics of the region so we can carry on our essential work in very difficult circumstances. The greatly increased tensions of today make us even more grateful for that far-sighted decision.

However difficult life was for Christians in the Holy Land in 2009, it's become even more difficult. The Middle East is more complex, more divided and more tense than ever, and the needs of the Christian people of the Holy Land grow daily. In 2014 we decided to extend our help to Gaza, and the war that took place soon after has greatly increased demand for our help.

Now we have to grow and raise even more money, and new groups from Jersey to Galloway, in Scotland, have taken up the challenge. Please do what you can to increase your efforts for the Christians of the Holy Land; they've never been in greater need than today. Finally, I send you all my very best wishes, and my warm thanks for all you do.

**Our two senior Patrons have each sent a message to mark FHL's anniversary.**

*Congratulations to Friends of the Holy Land on reaching its fifth birthday. Well done everyone!*

*More importantly, I offer my sincere thanks to everyone involved in the work of Friends of the Holy Land for all that has been achieved over these five years. There is much to be celebrated and much for which we can be thankful. One is the great efforts of Michael Whelan, who did so much to drive the 'Friends' from the word 'go'. Then there is the great step of Friends of the Holy Land evolving as an ecumenical venture with the clear support of Archbishop Rowan Williams and now of Archbishop Justin Welby.*

*Any visitor to the Holy Land can see, in Palestine, the real fruit of this work. I was privileged to see that for myself last November and to realise the immense potential there is for more projects to bear great fruit for a hard-pressed people. In Gaza, too, I was able to see the gratitude of the parish for the support it is receiving from Friends of the Holy Land.*

*So my thanks to all! My thanks, personally, to all who contributed to the collection for the Friends of the Holy Land marking my appointment as Cardinal. That was a tremendous effort for which I am so grateful.*

*Happy birthday, Friends, and long may your good work continue.*

**+Cardinal Vincent Nichols**  
*Archbishop of Westminster*

*I have followed Friends of the Holy Land's first five years with growing interest, and I am very pleased to have become a Patron. FHL has raised a significant sum for the hard-pressed Christian people of the Holy Land. Their well-run projects in education, employment, health, housing and family support have brought invaluable help to many Christian families there. I am pleased to see more and more Anglican dioceses and parishes supporting FHL's work, as I also see the charity as making a valuable contribution to ecumenism. I will continue to follow this excellent charity's progress and development, and to give them my support and my prayers.*

**+ Justin Welby**  
*Archbishop of Canterbury*

# FHL in the UK

## Our new Director of Development



FHL recently appointed Vicki Urch as Director of Development, to build on our achievements of the last five years. We asked Vicki to introduce herself to our Friends.

*'I've worked in the charity sector for over twenty years, most with the disadvantaged in the West Midlands. For the last six years I worked with a local charity supporting homeless men and women, helping them move forward with their lives and become active members of society. The skills I gained there and in other charities will be invaluable to the work I will lead for FHL.'*

*'I am very pleased that FHL feels that my skills in fundraising, supporting and developing community groups and organisational development are what they need for the next stage of their development. I am hugely excited by the opportunity to work with an organisation making such a difference to Christian families in the Holy Land, and I hope to see for myself shortly the positive impact FHL has made there. I look forward to meeting our Friends, and to seeing many of you very soon. Meanwhile you can contact me by email at [vicki.urch@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](mailto:vicki.urch@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk)*

We hope that Vicki will enjoy working with the FHL family of Friends, and wish her every success.

## A new Patron for FHL



We're very pleased that Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP, KC\*HS, Archbishop of Liverpool, has kindly agreed to become a Patron of FHL, and we welcome him. He joins his predecessor in the See of Liverpool, Archbishop Patrick Kelly, one of our Founder Patrons. We now have

nine Patrons, listed on the back page.

## FHL Trustees' Report

A charity's Trustees are responsible for ensuring accountability for the funds it raises and distributes, and each year they write a report for the Charity Commissioners. You can find our Trustees' 2014 Report on our website - [www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk)

## FHL's dynamic Friends

This issue features Pat Revans, of Wallasey, in the Diocese of Shrewsbury, a formidable and energetic Friend. Pat, a member of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, was at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral for the launch of FHL in November 2009, and it was the words of the Latin Patriarch, His Beatitude Fouad Twal, that led Pat to joining FHL. Now he gives pulpit presentations across the North West as one of FHL's Ambassadors, and is a leading light in the busy FHL Groups and Parishes of Shrewsbury Diocese.

*'Our fundraising events in north east Wirral are very effective - we had a Hot Pot Supper and Auction in early December that raised £1,888 in one evening, and with donations on the evening the total is over £2,500. Our next event will be a Ceilidh on 16th January, and I know that will be a really good evening. It's fun to fundraise!'*

*'After meeting them while on pilgrimage, I'm greatly inspired by the forbearance of the older Christians who have stayed in the Holy Land despite the countless difficulties they face each day – their spirituality, their ability to turn the other cheek with dignity, is a huge example to me', he said. 'Parishioners right across the Shrewsbury Diocese have been so enthusiastic for FHL and Holy Land pilgrimages. Last year our pilgrimage filled three coaches, and we're already well on the way to selling out the next one, in October 2015.'*

## Our Jersey Group is thriving

Deacon Iain MacFirbhisigh has told us that the Jersey Group founded in 2014 by the Anglican, Catholic and other churches of the island has already raised over £5,000. They've held several fundraising events, including a Sponsored Slim, Silent Auction and Crib Collections, and received donations from the Rotary Club of Jersey and the Catenians. Well done!

## ...and FHL goes north of the Border

We're very pleased that an FHL Group has been formed in the Diocese of Galloway, Scotland. It's at St Andrew's Church in Dumfries, where the very enthusiastic and energetic parish priest, Fr David Borland, has a great love of the Holy Land and its people. We're very pleased to welcome our first Scottish group, and to thank them for their interest in FHL.

# FHL in the UK

## FHL film released

A great Friend of FHL, James Agha, recently completed a twenty-minute film on the Christians of the Holy Land and FHL's work for them.

**James has done a tremendous job of telling our story and explaining why FHL's work is so important to our Christian brothers and sisters there, and we're very grateful to him. It will be an ideal introduction to FHL for those who've never met us, as well as a means of motivating and inspiring people to help. Every Parish Group should have a copy. A viewing will be a good start to a fundraising or recruiting event.**

It's now available as a downloadable link on our website, [www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk), and on a DVD. Contact the FHL office for your free copy.

## Fundraising in 2015

Lent is a time for fasting and giving alms, so make a Lenten Appeal for FHL through your parish. Here are some good Lenten fundraising ideas from one of FHL's Kenilworth volunteers, June Palmer.

### **A Blessing Each Day - for adults;**

We'll provide a Calendar for Lent through FHL's website, with facts about the plight of Christians in the Holy Land and inviting donations for the blessings that we have in this country.

### **And for children;**

We'll provide a sheet through our web-site looking at the plight of Christian children in the Holy Land and inviting children to write down one blessing that they have received each day during Lent. At Easter time their families will return these to their parish with a donation for FHL. The children's sheets can then be put in a spiral binder and displayed in the Parish until Pentecost.

**Miss a Meal** - ask everyone who can to miss one meal a week and make a donation to FHL. (Of course, some people may prefer to make a donation *not* to skip a meal!)

**Lenten Lunch** - prepare a simple Lenten lunch in the Parish, run a raffle and promote FHL's work for the Christians of the Holy Land. The new FHL film will be a great help in telling FHL's story.

If you have any fund-raising ideas you'd like to share with our supporters please email them to the office, [www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk)

## Do you shop on-line?

If so, here's a really easy way to raise funds for FHL while you shop. Everything you buy on-line through the **easyfundraising** website earns a donation for FHL at no cost to you. And all the big retail names are there - Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Tesco, Amazon, Argos, M&S, John Lewis, Debenhams, eBay, more than 2,700 in all. Why not give it a try for FHL?

Go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and register as a supporter of Friends of the Holy Land. Then simply click on your chosen retailer and start shopping. When you pay for your shopping the retailer sends a donation to FHL at no cost to you. It's simple, and so effective. Get your friends to do it too.

For more details go to the easyfundraising website - [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/how-it-works/](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/how-it-works/)

## On-line donations

Our on-line donations are handled by BT MyDonate. We already have a donations page, and you can use it now -

[mydonate.bt.com/charities/friendsoftheholylan](http://mydonate.bt.com/charities/friendsoftheholylan)

## New Diocesan Co-ordinators

We're very pleased that several more members of the clergy in Anglican and Catholic dioceses have agreed to act as Co-ordinators, to help FHL grow locally. The latest additions are

*Bristol* - Revd Jules Barnes

*Carlisle* - Revd Rob Jackson

*Chester* - Revd Lynn Boyle

*Clifton* - Monsignor Bernard Massey

*Coventry* - Revd Andrew and Mrs Chris Haines

*Exeter* - Revd Alison Shaw

*Galloway* - Rev David Borland

*Portsmouth* - Revd Giles Harris-Evans

*West Yorkshire and the Dales* - Revd Gordon Dey

Thank you all for joining us in our work for the Christians of the Holy Land.

# FHL in the Holy Land

## More demands on FHL than ever

On his second visit to the West Bank and Gaza this year Peter Rand, FHL's Vice Chairman, noticed a number of changes that are likely to affect FHL's work there.

'First is the impact on local employment of the 2014 war in Gaza. The Palestine Authority's Tourism Minister Rula Ma'ay'a has said that by early December the war had caused a \$30 million loss in revenue to the Palestinian economy.'



'Although most UK pilgrimages still took place, there was a 60% cancellation rate overall, with many US, German and Scandinavian pilgrims staying at home. This has had a marked impact on the Palestinian economy, already heavily dependent on travel and tourism', said Peter.

'It soon became obvious that this has affected jobs right across the board, not just in those directly involved in travel and hospitality, but their suppliers as well. It's caused problems for many families all around the Holy Land. And security concerns have grown as the chances of a sustainable peace have faded, leading to more emigration'.

'The persecution of Christians in neighbouring countries like Iraq and Syria has also increased the fears of the Christians of Palestine, and has started to affect their relationships with their neighbours. At the same time, the Christian response to the 2014 war has enhanced its standing. From the start the churches and Christian institutions opened their doors to anyone who needed shelter.'

'In general the people leaving Palestine are the best educated, the most talented, the better-off, the young, people who could form the basis of a really strong, thriving and resilient Christian community.'

'But the increased tensions across the region have led to even more requests for our help, especially as after five years working there we're now recognised as a significant source of practical support to local Christians. Sadly we've had to start prioritising the most urgent and needy cases, and even deferring requests for help and rationing our involvement in some areas. For example, we were able to increase our educational support from 60 to 180 children and students in 2014, but we can't increase numbers in 2015. And in 2014 we decided to discontinue the Christmas donations to families that have been a feature of FHL's work since we started.'

'This means that we all have to do more to help if we are to continue the work begun by Michael Whelan, Cardinal Nichols and the other founder members five years ago. It's worth all the effort, though, to know that our help is valued and appreciated, and that FHL is making a significant difference to the Christians of the Holy Land.'

## School of Joy

In the five years that FHL has supported the School of Joy for children with special educational needs our support has allowed the School to grow from three classes and 30 children to six classes and 62 children. The School does great things for the many disadvantaged children in its care, and of course we'll continue to support it in 2015.



In November Bishop Declan Lang, Chairman of the International Affairs Department of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and Dr David Ryall, its Secretary and a valued friend and Trustee of FHL, visited the School of Joy, where they met the children and its Director, Fr Mamdouh AbuSada.

# FHL in the Holy Land

## FHL family support

We continue to help Christian families with problems, and by December 2014 we were supporting 52 families facing exceptional hardship because of unemployment or poor health.

On Peter's last visit he met George, a little boy of five suffering from a complex medical condition that means he has to live on a special, and expensive,



milk substitute product called Neocate, dispensed by a machine. FHL has been helping his family with the cost for some time. With his diet under control George is now able to go to school with his older sister, and he's doing well.

Another problem is poor housing, and Peter Rand saw several houses needing urgent work to make them fit for the winter. One was this house, with a very leaky flat roof and unhealthily damp, mouldy



rooms on both floors. The provision of reasonable housing has always been one of FHL's priorities, and we've funded essential repairs to several homes identified by our Holy Land Committee.

## St Martha's House

The House is again full, with 42 local elderly ladies going there twice a week for social time together and a good meal. We've been supporting SMH since we began, and it's run on a tight budget by our good friend Laila Asfoura, who continues to look for new projects to support the local community.

## FRESH in Bethlehem

We continue to hear good things about FRESH, the new enterprise in Bethlehem making quality food for local shops, offices and schools. Their latest venture is cup-cakes, and the chocolate ones passed the Bishop Declan Lang 'taste test' with flying colours.



## Looking ahead

For some time Laila has seen a Christian Hospice, possibly run by a religious order, as another major contribution to the welfare of the Christian community of the West Bank. There has been no hospice in the region, and as younger people emigrate and leave more elderly people without their traditional family support network, there is a rapidly growing need for care for the elderly and especially for palliative care.

**This will be a costly and complicated project, though you'll agree it's worth taking on, and if any Friend has specific experience in setting up and running a hospice we'd like to hear from you.**

## Archbishop Suheil Dawani

We were very pleased to learn of the appointment of our friend Bishop Suheil Dawani as Archbishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, and we wrote to congratulate him and wish him well.

Although relatively small in membership, the Episcopal Church is immensely active in the Holy Land. There are 27 parishes in five countries, centered on the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr in Jerusalem. The church supports 33 institutions, including hospitals, clinics, kindergartens and schools, vocational training programmes and institutions for the deaf, the disabled and the elderly.

# FHL in the Holy Land

## Beit Sahour housing project

Just like planning authorities and lawyers in the UK, their counterparts in Palestine take their time, and although we're making progress with this important project it's moving slowly. We're now waiting for the transfer of ownership of the land and the contract to build to be completed. We'll keep you informed as this vital project progresses.



Meanwhile our Founder Patron Cardinal Nichols visited the site when he was in Palestine leading the Westminster Diocese Pilgrimage, and told Peter Rand how impressed he is with FHL's plans for the development of affordable apartments here. He is seen with the site's current owners and George Saadeh, a member of FHL's Holy Land Committee (centre), who is leading the project.

## Bethlehem office

The recent opening of our Holy Land office has already improved our systems. Reem (left) and Nancy visit people referred to us and advise us



on how we can best help. It's proving to be a quick and effective approach, and helps ensure that our funds go where they're most needed.

## Fr Jamal Khader

Chairman of the FHL Holy Land Committee, Fr Jamal is Rector of the Latin Seminary in Beit Jala. We were touched by what he wrote on the occasion of our fifth anniversary, and we'd like you to read it. He wrote *'FHL has made real change in the lives of many Christian families in the Holy Land. Although it began only five years ago, FHL's work and assistance is felt by many needy families in various ways - school or university fees, restoration of houses, medical expenses, monthly assistance to needy families and more. The local committee of the FHL volunteer to assess the needs, respond to urgent calls for help and make sure that assistance is given to the most needy. In the next five years we plan to organize our work in a better way, so we can reach more of the poorest and most vulnerable. What is specific about FHL is the direct contact with people and the change we make in their lives, so they can live in dignity and meet their needs. This is our way to help the living stones of the Holy Land and this is our mission.'*

## The Cardinal in Gaza

Cardinal Nichols visited this orphanage run by nuns. Since the 2014 war many Gaza homes are so badly damaged that they're not fit for children to remain with their families, so the Sisters are caring for even more than usual. *Gaza images by Marcin Mazur/CBCEW.*

*Image; CBCEW/Marcin Mazur*



## JUST A FEW POUNDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Please donate to FHL and help our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. Please be generous, and consider -

**A one-off donation.** Please send a cheque payable to Friends of the Holy Land to the office (address below).

**A regular payment by standing order to FHL.** Please ask the office for a form or download from the website, by clicking the 'donate' button.

**Gift-Aid your donation** if you're a UK taxpayer. That way your donation is worth a further 25% to FHL. Please complete a Gift Aid form and send your donation to the office.

**Ask for donations to FHL** instead of presents at your next celebration!

**Leave a legacy to FHL** in your will.

**Ask for a retiring collection in your parish.**

Please contact the office - we'll send you a supply of Gift Aid envelopes.

**Donate to FHL on-line** through BT MyDonate by visiting our website.

**YOU CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

## FHL film now available

This excellent new 20 minute film tells explains why the Christians of the Holy Land need our help, and why FHL's work there is so important. It's a perfect introduction to FHL for those who've never met us, and a way to motivate and inspire people to help. Every Parish Group should have a copy. Use it as the basis of a fundraising or recruiting event. It's available on a DVD - contact the FHL office for your free copy. Or download it from

**[www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk)**

*If you'd like further information on FHL or for one of our team to visit your parish to make a short presentation or address a group of parishioners, call the FHL office on 01926 512980. Speak to Karen Baxter or one of our volunteers, or email [vicki.urch@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](mailto:vicki.urch@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk)*

## FHL's Patrons

**His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols**  
*Archbishop of Westminster*  
**The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby**  
*Archbishop of Canterbury*  
**The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Lord Williams of Oystermouth**  
**The Most Rev Patrick Kelly**  
*Archbishop Emeritus of Liverpool*  
**The Most Revd Barry Morgan**  
*Archbishop of Wales*  
**The Most Rev Bernard Longley**  
*Archbishop of Birmingham*  
**The Most Rev Malcolm McMahon**  
*Archbishop of Liverpool*  
**The Rt Rev Christopher Chessun**  
*Bishop of Southwark*  
**The Rt Revd Dr Michael Langrish**

## Trustees

Jim Quinn - Patrick Horsfield - Jim Kelly  
Peter Rand - Charles Reed- David Ryall  
Tony Stokes - Norah Whelan

## Management Committee

Jim Quinn - *Chairman*  
Peter Rand - *Vice-Chairman & Executive Trustee*  
Tony Stokes - *Director of Finance and Trustee*  
John Bradshaw - *Communications*  
John Rice - *Pilgrimage Liaison*  
Karen Baxter - *Office Manager*  
Vicki Urch - *Director of Development*

## Beit Sahour Housing Project - a Special Appeal

FHL is committed to raise £120,000 for this project. While the fundraising is being led by the Croydon Deanery, it is open to all. Such is the urgency and importance of this project that some of the Cardinal's Gift will be used to start development of these ten affordable apartments for young Christian families.

**Please help this vital project. You can donate by post by cheque or standing order, or on-line. Visit [www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk)**

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