



FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

Monthly Update

September 2016

FHL Regional Gatherings 2016

London - Saturday 8th October

Leeds - Saturday 15th October

At this year's Annual Gathering we'll give you the opportunity to influence our support of the neediest Christians in the Holy Land. You'll hear the latest from the Holy Land, including the daily challenges of intermittent water and electricity supplies and travel restrictions, from Peter Rand, who'll have returned just two weeks earlier. We'll share the words of the families we're supporting with video clips and pictures, news from our successful projects and information on the most urgent needs. We know that the need for our support is increasing all the time, and it's crucial that we plan how we tackle this. After lunch we'll ask you to help us improve our support in the Holy Land and develop our plans for the future.

This is a key event in the FHL calendar, an opportunity for you to meet supporters from across the country, our staff and volunteers, and to help us shape the future.

- the event and lunch are both free (registration form attached)
- friends and family are very welcome to join you
- access to both venues is very easy, with directions on the registration form
- buy the popular FHL Christmas cards, Olive Wood and Christmas Vouchers before your favourites have all gone

Don't miss out - book now.

Could you be an FHL Ambassador?

FHL relies on your support to help raise awareness, pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and help us raise funds to alleviate the difficulties they face. We now need to build on the excellent work we've done so far by recruiting volunteer FHL Ambassadors to help ensure that the Christians in the Holy Land and FHL's work remain a focus in their local parish, and perhaps a couple of others. If you're keen to support your Christian brothers and sisters, why not call our Development Director, Vicki Urch, to discuss this role and see if it's for you? You'd get all the help and support you need from Vicki and the FHL team.

Back to School

As our children go back to school here, so too do children in the Holy Land. As a result September is a very busy month for FHL, as invoices arrive for fees for the students we support. Giving children a good Christian education is the best way to secure their economic future and strengthen the Christian community. We ask groups to send us any funds they hold so that we can meet our commitments to the Christian community, the children we've promised to support and, we hope, support some of the other children now on our waiting list.

Gaza Update

Last week we received a report from the Pontifical Mission, our partners in Gaza. Sami, the Regional Director, has just returned from a visit and has sent a detailed update on the ten Christian university students in Gaza funded by FHL. They report that the coursework is exciting and challenging, but as Christians they feel very isolated. Strict adherence to Islamic courses is a prerequisite of the curriculum, and it's an offence for the women to swim or even to ride a bike. Two years after the last conflict, very little has changed for the better. There is no real progress on infrastructure projects to repair the damage. Please keep the whole community in your prayers. A more detailed report of FHL's work in Gaza will be shared at the Regional Gatherings next month.

Christmas Cards, Christmas Vouchers and Olive Wood

We had our 2016 Christmas cards printed in Bethlehem to help the economy there, and they've now arrived. Please see the attached order form, and remember to ask for your supplies early before the popular designs run out. We have a lovely card designed for our Wyre Forest Group by artist David Carson Shaw.

Last year we introduced the FHL Christmas Voucher. In £5, £10 and £20 denominations, each voucher gives an idea of what that sum buys for a needy family. At the time of year when we celebrate Jesus' birth, they're a good way to show our support to our Christian brothers and sisters. Vouchers can be bought as gifts to enable friends and relatives to support Christians in the Holy Land. If any FHL groups would like to sell these, please contact the FHL office. For individual orders, see the attached order form.

We have a good supply of olive wood products for sale, so why not consider ordering a selection and running a stall at your church? Try it in Advent, alongside FHL Christmas Cards and Vouchers. Please remember to ask for supplies early as we have a lot of events to cover, and stock is limited at our busiest time of year. It takes a couple of weeks for your order to reach you as this venture is run by our office volunteer, Pam.

Exchange rate fall hits FHL

You'll know of the recent fall in the value of the pound, but do you know how this affects the charities you support? The pound is now 15% down against the Israeli Shekel, so we now get less than five Shekels to the pound instead of the six we got three months ago. That means we need a 15% increase in donations just to maintain current levels of support for the poorest Christians.

A Gift-Aided donation towards school fees of £20 a month, £240 a year, is now about £36 a year less than the actual school fee we pay. But we support more than 200 students, so you can see we now have a significant shortfall on this project alone. Multiply this across all our projects and you can imagine the huge task we face. Please try to increase your donations if you can, so that we can keep all our essential projects going.

Peter and Marion to visit the Holy Land

On 18 September, Peter returns to the Holy Land accompanied by Marion Homer, FHL's new Communications Manager, making her first visit. As well as meeting our partners, including the Archbishop of Jerusalem, Suheil Dawani, and the new Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate, Archbishop-elect Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Peter and Marion will attend a meeting of the local FHL Committee, visit our projects, including recent house refurbishments and many families benefiting from the FHL Family Support Fund. The visit has been arranged to coincide with a pilgrimage led by Fr. John Deehan, FHL Diocesan Coordinator for the Westminster RC Diocese, whose pilgrims will visit FHL projects and families helped by FHL.

Management Committee Meetings

There are now nine members of the FHL Management Committee, most volunteers. We usually meet for three hours every eight weeks, now at the new FHL office. The meetings are run to a tight timetable, and full minutes with action points (usually between 35-40) are faithfully recorded by June, one of our office volunteers. The last meeting was 10th August, and because FHL is so busy the next meeting will be on 14th September.

Friends of the Holy Land

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Registered charity No1130054

Friends of the Holy Land was founded in 2009 to help and support the Christian population of the Holy Land. We work to improve education, employment, health and housing, and to develop a resilient and enduring Christian community there.

