



FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

Monthly Update

October 2016

FHL Regional Gatherings 2016

London - Saturday 8th October

Leeds - Saturday 15th October

There's still time to book a place at one of our Regional Gatherings. We've planned a very informative and inspiring programme for you, with the latest news of the Holy Land, including from the families we're supporting and our successful projects, and information on the most urgent needs. We'll also ask you to help us improve and develop our work in the Holy Land.

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.

Don't miss out - book now.

FHL's Gaza Youth Employment Scheme

We're now bringing significant funding to the Gaza Strip to support and nurture Christian youth employment. Gaza's Christian population is about 1,200, and without sustainable investment in the next generation it could disappear entirely. After years of armed conflict and a near total blockade, many Christians find their situation unbearable. It's reported that around 40 Christians left Gaza earlier this year using Easter permits but didn't return, the main reason being a lack of jobs.

Despite their small numbers, Christians play a pivotal role in the life of the Gaza community. Many schools, healthcare facilities, social and community projects are run by Christians, and these also support the majority Muslim population. Gaza's infrastructure could collapse if these Christian institutions don't receive direct investment based on sustainable objectives. FHL has responded to this urgent need by pledging £46,000 to support the salaries of 16 young Christians for a year. In partnership with four Christian institutions in Gaza, 16 university graduates will be given one-year work placements to give them comprehensive on-the-job training, helping them gain valuable skills and earn an income, and thus encourage them to remain in Gaza to ensure a viable Christian community for the future.

FHL is now actively looking for groups or individuals to sponsor these young employees at £2,875 each over the year. We already sponsor 10 graduates through university, contribute to school fees for 16 students at the Rosary Sisters School and fund an employment project for five young people at the Holy Family Parish.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage continues to be an important objective of FHL. Please let us know if you learn of any pilgrimage to the Holy Land and, if you are an Ambassador or a Diocesan Co-ordinator, please continue to include this important aspect of our work in your discussions with your Bishops, Clergy and Parishioners, and encourage them to participate or to organise.

We're now advising a major ecumenical initiative, an ecumenical Pilgrimage to the Holy Land to be led by Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham and Bishop John Inge of Worcester, from 3rd to 12th November. Fifty three pilgrims are booked, almost equally from the two dioceses. We've also received news of a further ecumenical pilgrimage in Autumn 2017, organised by the Lichfield (Anglican) Diocese and, again, the Archdiocese of Birmingham. This will be led by Bishop Michael Ipgrave, recently installed Bishop of Lichfield, and Bishop David McGough, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham.

Marion Homer's visit to the Holy Land

FHL's new Communications Manager, has just returned from to the Holy Land. Marion writes 'As part of my introduction to FHL I've recently been on a five-day working visit to Bethlehem. This was my first trip to the Holy Land, and it was jam-packed, and hugely rewarding. I went with FHL's Vice Chairman, Peter Rand, to more than 35 appointments, including meetings with two Archbishops, two Bishops, one Canon, Latin and Anglican Priests, Coptic Christian Nuns and pilgrimage operators, and spent time getting to know Nancy and Reem in our Bethlehem office and our Bethlehem Committee.

Luckily I also found 90 minutes to visit some of the most important Holy Places, the Mount of Olives, the Church of the Pater Noster, the Garden of Gethsemane and the beautiful Church of All Nations, and I walked the Via Dolorosa along crowded streets to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and make a quick visit to the Church of the Nativity. It was amazing to see places I've read about so many times in the Bible - I regularly pinched myself, while feeling the responsibility of making it all mean something on my return home.

I travelled on dusty pot holed roads, passed half-built concrete apartment blocks, waited in the craziest check-point traffic jams, and felt humble and inadequate as I listened to fellow Christians tell their stories. I tried hard to imagine the daily reality of their lives in such a climate of uncertainty and challenge.

Among all these places and people, it was the faces I saw in the homes of Christians supported by FHL and attending our projects such as the School of Joy, St Martha's House and the Arab Episcopal Medical Centre in Ramallah that made the biggest impact on me.

I flew home with a deeper understanding of the need to share our work, to broaden our support and spread the word about the difference FHL already makes and how much more there is to do. And my visit has inspired me to tell our Christian family in the Holy Land, through the work of FHL, that we haven't forgotten them.'

Here are two of Marion's favourite pictures of people she met on her recent visit. Tamara is a pupil at The School of Joy, which FHL has supported since our foundation in 2009, while on the right, our Holy Land Committee member, Husam Wahhab, visits Samir Kunkar after FHL completed major refurbishment of his very damp house to make his life much better.



Parish Talks

One of the very effective ways of raising awareness of the plight of Christians in the Holy Land is for a member of the FHL team to give a talk. Generally we come along at a weekend and talk at all the Saturday and Sunday services, giving an overview of the lives of the Christians of the Holy Land and sharing what FHL's doing to help. We are usually able to have a second or retiring collection and give out the latest FHL Newsletter with further information. When possible we suggest we follow this up with a showing of the FHL film 'The Suffering Church' and a further presentation giving more detail of FHL work and how people can become involved. With these two events we hope to increase our support, perhaps set up a parish group or get agreement to run one or two fundraising events a year, and inspire some parishioners to give regularly.

If you'd like a talk in your church, please get in touch. We'll do arrange everything - we just need the name of the church and the parish clergy. Widening knowledge of the problems facing Christians in the Holy Land and how we help them is hugely important to our ability to meet our commitment to them, so please contact Vicki Urch - vicki.urch@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk, or Karen Baxter – office@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk

EasyFundraising

So far FHL has received £688.16 from 50 supporters just using the easyfundraising website to shop online through. If you shop online please go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk and register to get your favourite shops to give a donation to Friends of the Holy Land each time you shop with them. You can now even register your debit/ credit card with them, so that when you shop on the high street a donation is given to FHL. You can also click on easy reminders in the website so that you don't forget to shop through it. Have a look today and help raise a little more from your spending.

News from Amman

Despite the many problems facing Jordan and the local and refugee Christian community there, and while churches and mosques are being demolished in several countries in the Middle East, others are being built. A new church in Marj Al- Hamam, Amman, has been consecrated to the Martyrs of Jordan, the Christians martyred on Jordanian soil at the time of the Roman persecution.

In his homily at the consecration Mass, Patriarch Emeritus Fouad Twal inevitably referred to the 21st century Christian martyrs of Iraq, also suffering for their faith. 'Honouring the martyrs of the past doesn't exclude our admiration for and our solidarity with the martyrs of our time. These martyrs are all the innocent people killed or forcibly displaced from their homes and cities because of their faith. At this site, where this new church is located, brethren of ours from Mosul lived. When they had been expelled from their country because of their faith they watched each day this church being built. Theirs is the same faith for which John the Baptist, Xenon, Zenas and others were martyred. Greetings to all those who still suffer because of their faith in Lord Jesus Christ.'

Friends of the Holy Land

Farmer Ward Road
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
CV8 2DH

Telephone +44 (0)1926 512980
email - office@friendsoftheholylan.org.uk
website - www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk
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.