

## Monthly Update **November 2018**

### Can you help us fill Lichfield Cathedral?



#### **FHL Carol Service Lichfield Cathedral - Friday 7th December 7.30pm**

*Doors open from 7pm, city centre parking free from 6.30pm*

**Tickets £10** to include refreshments and souvenir programme

**To book tickets: call 01926 512980 or email the office**

In just over 4 weeks we will be holding our second FHL dedicated Carol Service at the splendid venue of Lichfield Cathedral. This wonderful occasion, with singing led by the Cathedral Choir, costs just £10 and includes refreshments and souvenir programme. All profits will help our work supporting Christians in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan.

What better time to raise awareness of the plight of Christians living in the Holy Land than Advent, when hearts and minds turn naturally to the 'little town of Bethlehem'? Perhaps you could arrange travel for a number of parishioners to attend, or make a day trip to the historic town of Lichfield and join us in the evening?

### New film – 'Separating Nativity from Resurrection'



Those of us who visit the Holy Land are frequently asked to comment on the impact that the Separation Wall has on the people whom we support in the West Bank. The FHL short film 'The Suffering Church', available to view on our website, goes some way to explain its effect on the Christian community.

Recently, another short film has come to our attention, produced by the Society of St Yves, a Catholic human rights organisation working under the patronage of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The film 'Separating Nativity from Resurrection' addresses the Jerusalem closure policy, the Separation Wall and the associated system of closures, checkpoints and permits - but solely from the Palestinian point of view. However, it does provide a useful exploration of the impact of these restrictions on the lives of those living behind the Wall.

The film, which features commentary by FHL's Holy Land Committee Chairman, Fr Jamal, can be viewed via YouTube and search 'Separating Nativity from Resurrection'.

### Report from Fr Jamal

*"What FHL is doing is to touch the hearts and lives of many Christian individuals and families. It is a sign that Christian love transcends borders and distances to meet in the love of Christ."*



Holy Land Committee Chairperson, Fr Jamal Khader, has been a parish priest in Ramallah since August 2018. Ramallah is located in the central West Bank six miles north of Jerusalem and serves as the administrative capital for the Palestinian National Authority. Historically an Arab Christian town, Ramallah is now

predominantly Muslim, but with a significant Christian minority who represent 22% of the total population. The change in demographics is due mostly to the migration of Muslims to the area, and the emigration of Christians. After 18 months in this new role, Fr Jamal has written a report, providing insights into life in the parish. He explains, that even though the Christian community in Ramallah are poor, they are doing what they can to support each other. However, there is an urgent need for more funds to extend support.

*“When the economic and political situation gets bad, the most vulnerable and the poor suffer the most. This is the situation for many Christian families who live in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In the last few months, we have witnessed political developments that appear to block “hope” for a future of peace and justice in the Holy Land. The steps taken by the Trump administration regarding Jerusalem, their cutting of economic aid to the Palestinians, the cutting of financial help to the UNWRA, the settlement policy of the Israeli government, and the lack of interest of the international community are just some of the developments that drive many to lose faith in a better future.*

*As a parish priest of the Catholic community in Ramallah, I notice the increasing number of requests for financial help, regarding health, education and daily basic needs. Although nothing can replace a just peace to improve the economic situation of Christian families, urgent help cannot be overlooked. As a parish priest and as Chairperson of the FHL local committee, the poor and the needy come first. With limited resources, we are always encouraged by the little that we can provide, but we are saddened when we cannot offer help to more poor people.*



*We are blessed with the generosity of local Christians who contribute to help other Christians. At Christmas and at Easter, we launch a campaign for the poor; the results exceed our expectations. Last Christmas, after launching the campaign, we prepared a list of needy families; when contributions began to arrive, I noticed an envelope with a small donation coming from one of the poor families we intended to help! The “coins of the widow” was a source of great joy! At the same time, what Jesus said about “you will always have the poor among you” is true. We face this reality every day and that is why the solidarity of our brothers and sisters in the churches is needed.*

*The “Council of Churches in Ramallah” is a gathering of the priests and pastors of all Churches in the city. We collaborate together and we organize prayers and social initiatives. It is a sign of hope for many Christians as we set an example of many other communities on the ecumenical collaboration. We share our joys, hopes and frustrations too. We feel that our mission is to do what Jesus himself did: giving priority to the poor and the oppressed and open new horizons to all human being for a better future.”*

**Can you help us to support the Christians in the West Bank?**

## **School Partnerships – support from Cardinal Vaughan School**



We have identified a growing trend for younger supporters to engage with our work. From youth pilgrimages to school fundraising events FHL is successfully nurturing the next generation of donors. This sort of involvement can be a ‘win win’ situation for schools and youth groups, building participation in activities and engendering a sense of social responsibility.

The Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School in London is a wonderful example of what happens when a school community collaborates with FHL. The School is committed to making donations of around £3,000 each year to support the School of Joy in Beit Sahour and to cover the fees of Christian children studying there. The ties between the two schools are close, with School of Joy Director Fr. Mamdouh making visits to speak at assemblies, selling olive wood items made by the students and in November 2019, two teachers from the School of Joy will be spending a week at Cardinal Vaughan to learn new teaching methods. Most recently, pupils have been involved in creating 75 shoebox Christmas parcels to be distributed to pupils at the School Joy.

Accessibility to a Christian education contributes significantly to the security of the Christian community in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan and we urgently need more funds to support Christian education in Holy Land. Church schools in the Holy Land receive very limited state funding so need to charge fees to cover essential overheads. These fees are not at all comparable with private education in the UK but are still beyond the reach of many poor Christian families.

## Celebrating the Contribution of Christians in the Middle East

### Service at Westminster Abbey 5pm Tues 4th Dec



FHL recently received an email from the Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, asking us to help promote a service at Westminster Abbey on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, which we are delighted to do.

The Abbey is hosting a service to 'Celebrate the Contribution of Christians in the Middle East' at 5.00 p.m. on Tues 4th Dec. The service is an opportunity for Christians in the UK to express solidarity with, and offer encouragement to, the Christian communities in the Middle East, to remember their suffering, endurance and hope.

The Archbishop of Canterbury will preach at the service, and Cardinal Vincent Nichols will be in attendance. Other church leaders, representing the churches and countries of the region as well as representatives of their communities now living in the UK, will also be present.

Applications to attend, for which there is no charge, may be made via the Westminster Abbey website.

### Autumn Fundraising

As ever, FHL's supporters have shown superb personal commitment helping to raise funds. Gillie Carrington, a parishioner of St Francis of Assisi in Kenilworth, held a sale of her personal artwork at our recent National Gathering and raised over £1,000. Gillie has asked that this money be used in our work with Fr Mario supporting Iraqi Christian refugees on Jordan.



And, as promised, here's the update on Ayr parishioner Allan McNeil who took part in Glasgow's Great Scottish Run at the end of September. Allan completed the run and raised a splendid £1,326 for FHL

We love to hear your fundraising stories be they large or small – please send them, with photos where possible, to our Communications Manager, Marion Homer.

### Christmas cards still available!



We still have FHL branded Christmas cards available for order. Each pack purchased contributes to our work supporting Christians living in the West Bank Gaza, Israel and Jordan. Some designs have sold out so please order quickly to avoid disappointment. Please phone the office for an order form or to order direct. Packs can be posted with a small additional charge to cover mailing costs. All payments should be made by cheque payable to 'FHL Olive Wood Products', sent to us at time of ordering, and posted to: Olive Wood Products, Friends of the Holy Land, Farmer Ward Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2DH.

### Olive Wood Sales

Also available to order ready for Christmas is our full range of Olive Wood products - all manufactured in the workshops of Christian families in the West Bank. All purchases support our work in the Holy Land. To see the full range please contact the office.



### Contact details:

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**Registered Charity No**

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