

# The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 2: November 2011

*An ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries. UK registered charity No. 1081204*



## **Living Stones goes to GREENBELT**

*By Lesley Dawson*

Greenbelt is a Christian Arts Festival held annually at the Cheltenham race course, attended by thousands of Christians across the denominational spectrum. It includes music, drama, poetry readings and seminars on theology and current political issues. There is always a huge tent that allows Christian charities and social concern groups to discuss pertinent issues with festival attenders and to publicise their activities. Over the last three years there has been a particular focus on Palestine and the problems of Palestinian Christians and so all those groups related to Palestine were located in a separate Peace Tent.

This year for the first time, as a way to publicise the charity in a sympathetic setting to Christians of all persuasions, Living Stones shared a space in the Peace Tent with ABCD (Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability). Jim Penn and Lesley Dawson wore unique Living Stones T-shirts to publicise our presence.

We used our table space to demonstrate Living Stones activities through our latest magazine, flyers about our pilgrimage in January 2012, and leaflets put together by Jim Penn to highlight our particular focus in terms of supporting Palestinian Christian groups. The importance of the Living Stones T-shirts became apparent when seeing most of the volunteers from other groups in the Peace Tent also wearing distinct T-shirts advertising their group. Without this obvious publicity very few festival goers would have known who we were.

The majority of exhibitors in the Peace Tent were social action groups linked to Rediscovering Palestine, except Sabeel, the group supporting the work of Palestinian liberation theology, which is based in Jerusalem. Another theology-based group present at Greenbelt for the first time was Musalaha, the group promoting reconciliation between Israeli/Palestinian Arab Christians and Israeli Jewish believers/Messianic Jews.

Lesley comments, "Initially I was not convinced that the Greenbelt Festival was an appropriate venue to highlight the concerns of Living Stones. However after discussions with colleagues from Living Stones and other groups present, I decided it was important for Christian faith groups to complement social actions groups at Greenbelt". There are different motivations for people and charities that support Palestine and those with strong political reasons for their work make those reasons very clearly heard, so Christian groups should do so too.

For those of us whose support is particularly Christian, our efforts are focused on enabling Palestinian Christian leaders to develop coherent theological theories pertinent to their position in the Holy Land and enabling western Christians to understand Palestinian Christians' perspectives on political and social issues that affect them. For many social action groups their motivation is the love of God and support of Palestinian Christians to sustain their position in the "body of Christ" in their home land. To this end I now see that it is very appropriate that a group like Living Stones is present at a gathering such as the Greenbelt Festival to give Christians who support work in Palestine a theological basis for their work.



## The Coptic Orthodox Church Centre

In a recent statement, His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK, said:

“The whole world looked to Egypt at the beginning of this year with excitement as Egyptians appeared to reclaim their nation, looking towards a more promising future of unity and collaborative efforts for their homeland. Only weeks later however, this idealistic dream started to fade and there was a return of attacks on an unprecedented scale against churches and Christians in Egypt. .... [and now] .... The escalation of unrest in Egypt has been caused by the numerous, and until now unresolved, attacks on churches and Christians and these must be investigated, and the perpetrators prosecuted and the situation rectified.

....

Persecution is nothing new for Christianity, and especially for Egyptian Christians. Persecution and martyrdom have been an integral part of our identity since the establishment of our Coptic church in the first century. We have confidence in God, Who is powerful, merciful and victorious; Who maintains His promises and Who seeks to protect His whole creation, if we indeed walk in His way. That is why we do not fear for Christians or Christianity in Egypt. Egypt has been, is, and will continue to be a place in which Christians witness their faith on a day-to-day basis. We do however fear for Egypt, because it is Egypt that will weaken if Egyptians do not stand together, .....

*The full text of this article is on our website, [www.livingstonesonline.org.uk](http://www.livingstonesonline.org.uk).*

### **Living Stones THEOLOGY GROUP:** *report from Colin South*

Created following the demise of the Friends of Sabeel UK Theology Group, we had our first meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September in London in accommodation thoughtfully provided by the Armenian Orthodox church. Professor Mary Grey introduced the meeting with readings and a period of quiet prayerfulness. Colin South explained that the group was by invitation although anyone can suggest their name or that of others to Mary ([m.grey@surfwise.co.uk](mailto:m.grey@surfwise.co.uk)). The Steering Group at the moment comprises Mary Grey, Duncan Macpherson and Colin South, and it is this group that issues invitations.

The intention is to have fifteen to twenty members of whom it is expected that no more than ten at any one time are likely to be present around the table. A member of the group presents a paper on a topic that the group has agreed beforehand. The paper is discussed and the presenter, following the discussion, prepares a final paper for inclusion in the Living Stones Journal which will be published annually. It is hoped that the first edition will be published in Living Stones Jubilee Year, 2012. In this way the group acts in a similar way to a peer review prior to publication.

It is hoped that the group will meet three or four times a year. In addition it is hoped that colloquia/seminars, inspired by these discussions, will be developed in venues such as Kellog College, Oxford, Heythrop College, London, and St Mary's College, Twickenham.

At this inaugural meeting Rev. Dr. Duncan Macpherson presented his paper entitled 'What is to be done? Addressing issues facing Christians in the Middle East; finding an agenda for the Living Stones Theology Group.' Together with contributions and comments from the discussion and further reflection, this will form the basis of a revised article eventually to be printed in the Journal.

#### MEETINGS IN 2012:

- February 7<sup>th</sup>, 12-3pm, Dr Anthony O'Mahony, "Middle Eastern Christian Ecumenical Theology and its Wider Significance".
- May 22<sup>nd</sup> 12-3pm, Colin South, "They came and they saw: experience as base for theological reflection in the Middle Eastern context".
- September 11<sup>th</sup>, Fr Robin Gibbons, "The Locked-in Churches: Dhimmi status in Eastern Christianity".

## **Michael Prior Memorial Fund: SILVER JUBILEE APPEAL**

The Revd Professor Michael Prior C.M. Vincentian priest and academic, who died suddenly in July 2004, was also a stalwart, fearless and vocal supporter of the rights of Palestinians, and a founder and chairman of Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust. In response to his death along with a wish to see his work perpetuated, Living Stones decided to establish a memorial educational fund in his memory.

The primary purpose of the Fund is to promote the development of higher academic studies among Palestinians, particularly in the areas of

- Contextual Palestinian Christian theology,
- Holy Land Studies and
- Contextual pilgrimage and tourism in the Holy Land.

Support is effected through:

- the provision of scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate or postgraduate students who have been accepted by accredited universities anywhere in the world,
- by financing research fellowships or lectureships at partner institutions of higher education in the Middle East,
- and provision of financial help for the organisation of conferences and publication of books that promote the development of research in the said areas of study.

Support from the Fund has been given to a series of lectures and sponsored studentships in Michael Prior's name since 2007, and full details of events and individuals supported are available on the website ([www.livingstonesonline.org.uk](http://www.livingstonesonline.org.uk))

The Fund stands at approximately £100,000. Living Stones would like to extend its influence but needs to double the fund in the next five years. If you would like to make a contribution specifically to this fund, please use the form below and overleaf, marking it clearly 'Michael Prior Memorial Fund'. Please also use the Gift Aid form if you are a UK tax payer.



### The **Living Stones** of the Holy Land Trust

UK registered charity No. 1081204

**MEMBERSHIP** entitles you to our regular newsletters, a copy of the *Living Stones Journal* to be published annually, free attendance at conferences and other major events, news of our Scholarship programme, notification of pilgrimages and much more. For current news and other items see our website at [www.livingstonesonline.org.uk](http://www.livingstonesonline.org.uk).

Please send your form to 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, BR6 9UE together with EITHER a cheque for £20 payable to Living Stones OR the Standing Order Mandate. If you are a UK tax payer please ALSO complete the Gift Aid form. **Personal Details:**

Name:  
Address:  
Post Code:  
E-mail address:

**I am also interested in:** (please tick as appropriate)

- serving on the Living Stones Committee as Trustee
- contributing articles or news items about the churches in the Middle East
- participating in a Theology Group
- attending conferences in London;  Oxford;  Birmingham;  
 Durham;  Edinburgh;  Cardiff
- receiving the Journal
- receiving newsletters, etc, by e-mail attachment

# PILGRIMAGE to Jerusalem for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 21-29 Jan 2012

*with optional Galilee extension.*

Jerusalem only (Sat 21<sup>st</sup> – Sun 29<sup>th</sup> January): ) £475\* (single supplement £150\*)

Galilee extension (Sun 29<sup>th</sup> Jan – Weds 1<sup>st</sup> Feb):) £100\* (single supplement £50\*)

*\*Please note these prices are a guide based on current exchange rates, and may need to be adjusted slightly. Participants should arrange their own flights, expected to be approximately £600 with British Airways or £150 with EasyJet.*

**PLACES AVAILABLE – contact [josimister@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:josimister@yahoo.co.uk).**

## Samira Hassassian, RIP

Samira Hassassian (a Patron of MAP and wife of the Palestinian ambassador to the UK) was diagnosed with cancer in 2009 and, in a tragic turn of events, her death was hastened by a recent trip to Jerusalem. This was not a voluntary trip: Palestinians born and living in East Jerusalem have to return home several times a year to renew the residency permits issued by Israel – otherwise their residency is revoked, making them stateless. Thousands of Palestinians who live abroad must do the same – if they lose their residency they also lose the right to return, to visit family, and the ownership of possessions and property – and they also lose the right to be buried in their own land. Despite being in the middle of treatment, the Israeli Embassy and the Israeli Ministry of Interior adamantly refused any delay to her travel.

“Samira was left with a stark choice: either to stay and continue her treatment, thereby losing her residency in the place of her birth, or to return to East Jerusalem and delay her treatment. She summoned as much energy as she could and made the trip back with the support of a wheelchair. She returned, exhausted, to continue her treatment. The cancer had become more aggressive ....”

*(The full text of this article can be found in ‘Britain and Palestine: A Parliamentary Focus’ from MAP and CAABU)*

### STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To the Manager of .....  
(name of your Bank/Building Society)

Address:

Postcode:

**Please pay the sum of twenty pounds/ £20 annually on: ....**  
..... (insert date) **until further notice in writing**

From:

**Your account name:**

**Your account number:**

**Your Bank Sort Code:**

To:

LIVING STONES Account No: 8913 7808; Code: 09-01-55

**Your signature:**

**Date:**

**Your Address:**

Postcode:

### DONATIONS & LEGACIES

*Living Stones is very happy to accept donations and to help with legacies. Both can be Gift Aided.*

### GIFT AID DECLARATION

*As a registered charity, Living Stones can recover basic rate tax on your membership and other donations provided you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax equal to or more than the amount of relief LIVING STONES is claiming in the tax year that the donation was made.*

I wish LIVING STONES to reclaim tax on all donations I have made for the six years prior to this year and on all future donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise.

**Title: Forename(s)**

**Surname:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

*Please send all forms and enquiries to Living Stones at 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, Kent, BR6 9UE.*

NOTES:

1. Please notify LIVING STONES of any change in your above details or in your tax circumstances
2. You can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying LIVING STONES.
3. If you pay tax at the higher rate, you can claim further relief in your Self-Assessment tax return.