

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 5: Easter 2013

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

The Garden

What can I see?

Green – so many different shades: grass, clover, cypress leaves, pine needles and of course, olive trees. Varying sizes and shapes – some saplings but others gnarled and bent, the trunk and boughs split many times. The most ancient perhaps as many as 4,000 years old – here at the time of Zechariah's Messianic prophecies and here when Jesus wept and prayed in this Garden. Some colourful flowers – pink oleander, yellow mimosa and the bright red lilies of the field. But above all green – serene and calming.

I see the face of the Creating God everywhere in this Garden

What can I hear?

Birdsong – pretty and musical – I catch the notes through the sounds of the cars, vans and tourist buses. It's easy to shut out the modern-day noise and concentrate on what's here within this garden wall. In a moment of absolute quiet, I hear the soft sound of the butterfly's wings and the whispered words of the pilgrim's prayer. I reflect on Jesus' plea "Abba, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me" and then his resigned "Yet not what I want but what you want".

I hear the voice of the Redeeming Son loud and clear in this Garden

What can I feel?

The history of this place gives powerful vibes – I feel such a sense of awe when I think of all the encounters which have taken place here – just outside the wall of Zion, the holy city of David. As I ponder the holy scriptures, I can almost reach out and touch God. The presence of the Lord is truly moving in this place but somehow I feel it inside too – the spirit of God is not just to be found in the green beauty of this peaceful oasis. I find her within too and carry her as I go, wherever God sends me.

I feel the power of the Enabling Spirit strong and mighty here in this Garden

I meditate on the meaning of the word Gethsemane – oil-press – and Jesus' Agony in this Garden. He asked Peter, James and John to sit and watch. Then he became distressed and agitated. "*I am deeply grieved, even to death, remain here and stay awake with me*" he asked them. He threw himself on the ground as he prayed "*My Father if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done*". In his anguish he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. Like the olives in the press – the oil of his spirit lamp was being drained away – his energy starting to sap. Yet it was the disciples who slept – not he!

**Abba, Father please I pray let me not run away when the going gets tough
Living Lord please I pray let me be ever alert, especially when it is my watch
Sustaining Spirit please I pray comfort and strengthen me as I try to follow God's will, not mine
Amen**

Alison Driscoll

At the Oasis of Peace

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon and Moon in the valley of Aijalon”- Joshua 10, 12-13

Since a first pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1996 the narratives of dispossession and of redemption have become increasingly clear. Clear, and irreconcilable, so polarised as to leave an enormous sense of hopelessness and futility. For me, such emotions have been seriously reinforced during regular visits to the Holy Land, and by active participation in organisations formed to bring about an end to injustice and promote security for both parties to the Israel – Palestine conflict.

In autumn 2012 I signed up for a visit to the West Bank, which fizzled for lack of support. I was not too upset by this as, another option was not hard to find. Plan B followed a series of seminars run by the Sisters of Zion in London on the subject of Family Conflict in the Bible, and Conflict Resolution. It was here that I learned of the ethos of Oasis of Peace, built in the 1970's from nothing, on land given by the Cistercian Monastery of Latrun. I resolved to get there once I learned of its origins - and the existence of a Guest House.

Oasis of Peace (Neve Shalom, Wahat as Saalam), *Isaiah 32: 18* was founded by a Catholic priest, Fr Bruno Hussar. What was more intriguing was that he was a Jew. It is the last of his projects and arguably the most enduring. Having explored his Jewish roots through his conversion to Christianity his overwhelming desire was to bring together both peoples of the land in harmony. The village was built from scratch on a bare hillside. Arabs, Christian and Muslim, and Jews have elected to live and work together. There is too, a healthy waiting list to join this community Bruno Hussar died in 1996 and is buried overlooking the Ayalon valley, so important in the time of Joshua and no less so in conflicts within our own era.

My arrival prompted generous responses. Despite my not belonging to a visiting group, staff made a program possible. It was a special privilege to be given time on a one to one basis with members responsible for Development, Communication, the Spiritual Centre, and the School in the village. Apart from this educational aspect to the work of oasis of Peace, a welcoming spirit was manifest in residents & visitors alike. Considering my dependence on public transport, there was never a shortage of willing offers of lifts.

A reasonably priced buffet style restaurant, which provided varied & plentiful meals, supports the Guest House consisting of forty individual residential units. The overall culinary style is Middle Eastern. Staff comprises both Jewish & Arab Israelis. Guests set a lively tone on account of the strong emphasis on young people. These too are Israeli, both Arab & Jew along with visitors from all over the world. A first encounter within an American group suggested I had joined a remake of “Friends”. Rahek and Dyana provided in a small café, an alternative within the oasis for refreshment, music and a time to reflect or to meet. It was noticeable how many regular visitors from outside used this.

The Oasis of Peace experience provided opportunities that most of my previous visits to Israel Palestine lacked. Talking with Israeli and American Jews revealed a different understanding of the fundamentals affecting this troubled part of the world. In so doing, it was possible to allow pre-conceptions and prejudices to be challenged. Perhaps this was a major obstacle overcome.

At the heart of Oasis of Peace is a village school, again staffed by both communities. An invitation to meet staff, and participate in English lessons I felt instinctively was to reach the very core of the life and mission of the village. Jewish & Arab children are taught together, learning respect for one another. Playground squabbles are of the sort usually found worldwide, and certainly not based upon racial difference. All the children anticipated the festival of Purim with a parade in fancy dress, and with much spray foam in evidence. The classroom experience was no less formative. An important by – product of the educational system operative at Oasis of Peace is its attraction to outsiders. Two hundred children are taught there, a significant proportion from outside. A further four schools run on similar lines are established in other Israeli cities run by “Hand In Hand” founded by a teacher from Oasis of Peace.

The work of the School for Peace covers programs in five main areas: Residential encounter workshops for young people; Universities & Women's studies in collaboration with two Israeli Universities covering

Psychology & Social Psychology; Work between Israelis and the Palestinian Authority; Conflict Group facilitation similar to that carried on in Northern Ireland. Publications and research – A version of Identities in Dialogue (2001) is available in English.

The Spiritual Centre's activities reflect the religious and national identities of both peoples in Israel. Listening, meditation and discussion are at the forefront. There are many other tools used to achieve understanding of the "other", and important cultural and religious considerations, including theatre, dance, films and music. Perhaps the most important is silence, something that I do not seek, but found the most important part of dealing with my experience of this community.

Deep down hurts and fears of many years of suffering remain. Despite that, Jews and Arabs have elected to live together and work, despite the problems. In this way trust, which has been lost through conflict, can be restored. Elias Chacour has declared that unless both peoples learn to live together in the land, then they will assuredly die together.

It struck me forcibly during my visit that many share the vision of Bruno Hussar, and predictably it does not make sensational headlines. His vision is a slow – burn project, like the planting of an acorn. No doubt I will never see the mighty oak, but can rest in the knowledge that the tree, once established will be strong. The sense of hopelessness produced by the ineptitude of politicians and churchmen has faded. The solution here is homegrown, and not imposed by outsiders. Further, it seems more than fitting that Ayalon the violent valley, the scene of so many military exploits and painful memories should be the nursery for a project of peace. Let nothing spoil it.

My thanks in particular to Zeyad, Howard, Rita, Daphna, Ragheda, Rayek & Dyana, Idit, Rachel, Rose, and Amir for their trust and care. My thanks also to Rami, Michael & Simona, Moti, Mish & Mark, Elias, and Reyad for putting wheels under me.

David Toorawa

Have you heard of the Palestinian History Embroidery Project?



A not for profit organisation established to support Palestinian embroiderers in telling their stories



The olive harvest, a lovely interpretation of a peaceful and calm family activity. The panel measures 1metre by 50cm. It has been embroidered by the women of the Haneen Project in Balata refugee camp Nablus.

Find out more at
<http://pht2012.wordpress.com/author/janchaImers/>



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity PILGRIMAGE to JERUSALEM 2014

with the Living Stones Trust

Saturday 18th – Wednesday 29th January 2014
with optional 3-night Galilee extension to Saturday 1st February

ENQUIRIES AND BOOKINGS:

Enquiries to Jo Simister: josimister@yahoo.co.uk (81 Corbet Close, Wallington, Surrey SM6 7AR).
Reservations & payments: Living Stones Administrator, 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, Kent, BR6 9UE.

Aims of the Pilgrimage:

- ❖ *Participate in the Jerusalem Week of Prayer for Christian Unity programme*
- ❖ *Worship with a wide range of local Christian denominations (Greek Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Armenian and many more, plus the more familiar Anglican, Lutheran, Quaker and Roman Catholic churches)*
- ❖ *Find out why and how the churches differ, by looking at the causes and results of their history*
- ❖ *Find out about the challenges Christians face and how we might support them from outside*
- ❖ *Encounter the wider work of the various Christian communities, visiting educational, health and social care centres, for example – several of the trustees have links with these*
- ❖ *Support Christian-run enterprises, by staying in local religious communities and visiting Christian businesses*
- ❖ *Meet with Christian clergy and community leaders in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Taybeh*
- ❖ *Take time to explore, or join with other local activities, on the free days.*

Proposed Pilgrimage Itinerary:

(Will be adjusted in line with the finalised Week of Prayer Schedule, when known)

Saturday 18th January: arrival

Pilgrims make their own way to the St Thomas' Syrian Catholic Guest House. NB: if a group are arriving on the same flight Living Stones will arrange transfer to Jerusalem for a small charge. For early arrivers, at 5.30pm Greek Orthodox Office of Apodeipnon (Compline) is celebrated in the Anastasis (Calvary) of the Holy Sepulchre Church. Dinner will be at 8pm followed by a meeting.

Sunday 19th January: Taybeh; Inaugural Service for the Week of Prayer at St George's Anglican Cathedral

Coach and guide to Taybeh (departure time to be confirmed): worship with local Greek Orthodox congregation, lunch with the RC priest, visit the museum; hear about interfaith relations in this wholly Christian village. Visit the renowned brewery and learn about problems of conducting international business. Return for 5pm to the Anglican Cathedral of St George, Nablus Road. Dinner at 7.30pm, evening speaker arranged by Living Stones.

Monday 20th January: Armenian Quarter / free time

Free half day in Jerusalem – maybe visit the nearby Garden Tomb? Visit and short talk at the Armenian Museum to learn about the Armenian community in preparation for the evening liturgy at 5pm in the Armenian Cathedral of St. James. Dinner afterwards at a traditional Armenian restaurant.

Tuesday 21st January: Lutheran and Anglican health programmes

Public transport to Mount of Olives, to visit the Lutheran World Federation and Augusta Victoria Hospital to learn about access to health services. Walk along to visit the Amira Basma Children's Centre and have lunch. Taxi, or walk down to Gethsemane visiting various churches (e.g. All Nations Church, Pater Noster, Dominus Fleuit) and back

through Lion Gate for 5pm at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, near the Holy Sepulchre. Dinner at 7.30pm, evening tbc.

Wednesday 22nd January: Quakers; education, peace and justice

Coach to Ramallah to the Friend's Meeting House and Peace Centre. The day's programme will be arranged in cooperation with Ramallah Quakers (<http://www.rfmq.org/>), with youth escorts from the Friends schools, and will include meeting local human rights campaigners and lunch at a women's cooperative. Return for 5pm at the Latin Patriarchate Church near New Gate. Dinner at 7.30pm, evening tbc.

Thursday 23rd January: Free time / An evening with Messianic believers

Free day in Jerusalem: maybe join Sabeel for their lunchtime Eucharist, or to explore the Arab Orthodox Women's museum and Coffee Shop, see embroideries from the needlework cooperative, etc... The service at 4pm in the Upper Room (Cenacle) on Mount Zion will be followed by dinner in Ein Kerem with Musalaha (www.musalaha.org).

Friday 24th January: Free time / Ethiopian Orthodox

Free time in Jerusalem – join the Way of the Cross devotions, or explore until walking into West Jerusalem for 5pm at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Dinner at 7.30pm, evening tbc.

Saturday 25th January: Free time / Coptic Orthodox

Free time in Jerusalem until 5pm service at St Anthony's Coptic Orthodox Church, on the roof of the Holy Sepulchre. Dinner at 7.30pm.

Sunday 26th January : Abu Ghosh Crusader Church / Closing Service with the Greek Catholics

Coach and guide to Abu Ghosh, 10.30am Mass at the Benedictine Crusader Church in Abu Ghosh; Lunch at café – or picnic – returning to Jaffa Gate for the closing service of the Week of Prayer, at 5pm at the Greek Catholic Church of Annunciation, near Jaffa Gate. Dinner at 7.30pm at convent, packing.

Monday 27th January: transfer to St Vincent's Guest House, Bethlehem

Coach via Wadi Nar to Beit Sahour, pause at Al-Basma Centre; drop groups at Bethlehem University or Bethlehem Arab Society Rehab centre in Beit Jala. Either walk, talk and sandwich lunch in Deheisheh refugee camp, or at the Bethlehem Arab Society. Opportunity to visit Manger Square, the Nativity church, the Bethlehem Home Museum, Peace Centre, etc. Dinner at a traditional Bethlehem restaurant.

Tuesday 28th January: Hebron

Coach and guide to Hebron to visit village clinics; if possible we will meet families in the Old City of Hebron and visit a traditional glass-blowing factory, before having dinner at the Tent of Nations project outside Hebron.

Wednesday 29th January: Jericho and transfer to Nazareth

Coach and guide via Wadi Qelt to Jericho and the Monastery of the Temptation, and the baptism site if open. Lunch in Jericho town, and transfer to St Margaret's Guesthouse, Nazareth for dinner.

Thursday 30th January: Ibellin and Nazareth

Opportunities to visit Ibellin and Mar Elias College; Kafr Kana and possibly Haifa, as well as the Nazareth Village project, and the Annunciation church. Dinner at St Margaret's; evening tbc.

Friday 31st January: Galilee

Tabgha, Capurneum, etc, with guide; meeting Christian groups in Zababdeh for lunch. Dinner at St Margaret's.

Saturday 1st February: return to UK

Transfer to Jerusalem via Ben Gurion, departure time depends on flights.

Fees: half board and all costs in the advertised programme, including fees, tips and lunches on activity days.*

Option:	sharing	single supplement
Jerusalem & Bethlehem – 11 nights: (Sat 18 th – Weds 29 th Jan)	£900	£250
With Galilee extension – 14 nights: (Sat 18 th Jan – Sat 1 st Feb)	£1100	£300

NB: It is possible to book for the Week of Prayer only, 8 nights in Jerusalem. Price on application.

Deposit: (cheque payable to Living Stones)

£200 by 23rd November 2013.

* Does not include: personal spending, flights, personal travel/health insurance, lunches etc on 'free' days. Participants should arrange their own flights, expected to be approximately £470 with British Airways or £180 with EasyJet, if booking well in advance.



Old City of Jerusalem from the roof of the Maronite Convent

**Week of Prayer for Christian
Unity pilgrimage
to Jerusalem and the
Galilee, 2012.**



Set of 8 COLOUR postcards £2.50 + 2nd cl p&p
70p;
5 sets £11.25 + p&p £2.50p;
10 sets £20 + p&p £2.50.

Cheques to 'Living Stones', c/o Mrs A Driscoll, 48
Strickland Way, Orpington, Kent, BR6 9UE.



Drummers and singers at the Ethiopian Orthodox church



Cantors at the Greek Orthodox parish church of St George in Taybeh

Save the date!

The Living Stones AGM 2013

will be held at

St James' Sussex Gardens W2 3UD

(<http://www.stjamespaddington.org.uk>)

on

Saturday 16th November 2013

*Programme includes a talk, lunch and worship
as well as official business
(times to be confirmed)*

**Evaluating the Balfour Declaration:
Breaking the Deadlock in the Middle East**

Sat May 18th 2013; The Stripe, University of
Winchester.

A one day conference exploring the different
legacies of the Balfour Declaration and how a
greater understanding of history can contribute to
justice and peace in the Middle East today.

To reserve a place or for more information please
contact Dr Mark Owen: Mark.Owen@winchester.ac.uk.

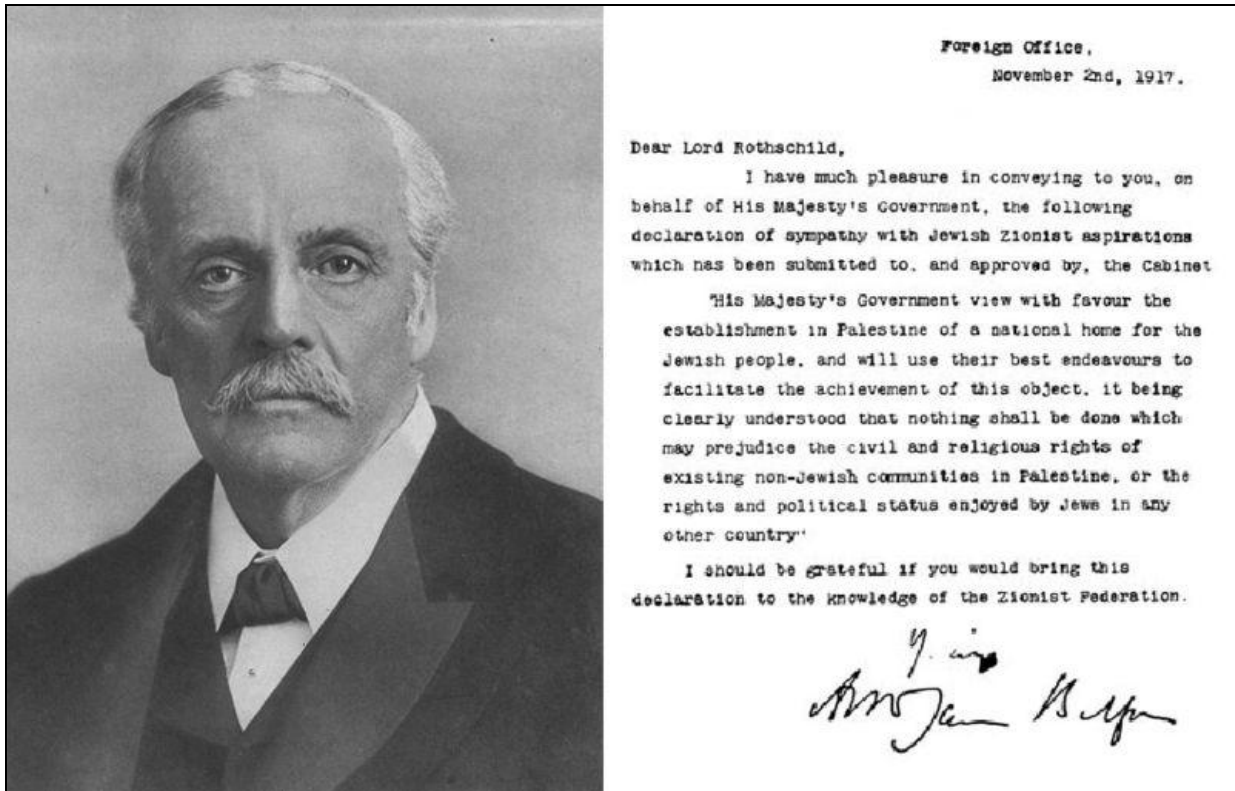
In the next issue:

Leah Levane spoke at our 2012 AGM, describing her experiences as an Ecumenical Accompanier working among the villages south of Hebron. 24 of the 36 villages she was trying to support had full or partial demolition orders on them, and her sequence of slides movingly followed the experience of one of the families. We will include a selection of her pictures along with her commentary.



The Balfour Project

Marking the centenary of the Balfour Declaration in 2017 as a contribution to justice, peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.



Britain's actions in the Middle East nearly a hundred years ago still reverberate throughout the region – and across the world.

Acting in ways which, for an outside nation, now seem supremely arrogant, Britain made different promises to both Arabs and Jews about who might expect to control the land then known as Palestine. Because these promises fundamentally contradicted each other, the stage was set for a struggle to control the land which has intensified into the bitter enmity which we call the 'Israel-Palestine conflict'. Many are unaware of Britain's imperial hubris in Palestine, but modern-day Israelis and Palestinians, and those in surrounding countries, still live with its consequences.

The "Balfour Project" has been created by a group of concerned British individuals who believe that the approaching centenaries should be marked in our nation with awareness and honesty. We believe British people need:

- to learn what our nation did a hundred years ago, and understand how those actions are perceived today by all concerned
- to acknowledge, with honesty and humility, where reprehensible attitudes and unethical behaviour in our nation contributed to the ensuing impasse. The historical record clearly identifies elements of racism and anti-Semitism, deceit and cynical hypocrisy, arrogance and exploitation.

In responding to Jewish aspirations, Britain deliberately ignored the rights and expectations of the Palestinian Arabs who inhabited the land. Without questioning the right of Israel to exist, the Balfour Project believes it is time for the British people to express our shame at this unacceptable double standard. There is evidence that healing and reconciliation can flow from acknowledging the wrongs of the past.

Our objective is simple: to be a catalyst for justice and peace. Find out more at www.balfourproject.org.



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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.

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.

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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

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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.

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- NOTES:
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 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.