

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 7: May 2014

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

REPORT: Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 2014 *extracts from Hansa Shah's reflections*

Church history shows that relations between different denominations have not always been harmonious. This year's theme was **'Has Christ been divided?'** (1 Cor 1:13).



The first thing that struck me was that all the church leaders had done their best to cooperate with each other in their joint acts of worship. This was heartening indeed. Their message delivered in different languages, (sometimes with brief translations in Arabic, English, French) emphasized the Gospel message of unity in Christ and the costly price we pay for failing to follow it. The churches which hosted these services conducted them in their own traditional form of worship which made us aware of the beauty and diversity that exist in these different traditions and the richness which follows when there is a genuine will to worship in unity.

Greek Orthodox Church in Taybeh: Feast of the Theophany (Baptism of Christ)

(Please see pages 9-13 for the main article)



LIVING STONES JORDAN PILGRIMAGE TO COINCIDE WITH ORTHODOX EASTER 2015

**April 7-16, with
Father Philip Keogh and Deacon Duncan Macpherson**

*(Father Philip had a ministry in Jordan for a number of years and is a fluent Arabic speaker.
Deacon Duncan is honorary president of Living Stones and has led many pilgrimage groups to the
Middle East over more than 30 years)*



- This pilgrimage will be focused on meeting and worshipping with the Christian communities in Jordan as they celebrate Holy Week and Easter together (In Jordan, Catholic and Protestant Christians observe Easter on the same date as the Orthodox churches, which is April 12 in 2015).
- There will also be opportunities to visit sites of religious or historical importance, to meet our Muslim brothers and sisters in Jordan and to find out more about work being done for refugees from neighbouring conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.
- An optional five day add-on pilgrimage to Bethlehem, Jerusalem and the Galilee will also be available.
- Fuller details will be available later, but please register your interest now with:
Duncan McPherson (Living Stones) <Duncan@deaconduncan.com>

Provisional itinerary: accommodation and cost:

- Coach and half board accommodation.
- Jordan 7 days: approximately £370
- Petra 2 days add on: £225 (both prices subject to group of 20 or more people)
- Details of flights will be available later.

BASIC PILGRIMAGE TOUR

- Day 1 Holy Tuesday April 7
Arrive Queen Alia Airport and transit to hotel in Amman for dinner and overnight
- Day 2 Holy Wednesday April 8
Baptismal site, Mount Nebo, and Madeba for Orthodox service of the Holy Unction
- Day 3 Holy Thursday April 9
Morning liturgy with Syrian Orthodox, visit citadel and Roman Theatre and Blue Mosque, evening Mass with Latin Catholics in Amman
- Day 4 Good Friday April 10
Choice of Good Friday services in either Fuheis or Al-Hussein, which are exclusively Christian towns
- Day 5 Holy Saturday April 11
Coach trip to Jerash, one of the cities of Decapolis referred to in the Gospels. Return to Amman for Easter Vigil at Melkite Cathedral.
- Day 6 Easter Day April 12
Choice of Anglican, Orthodox or Latin morning Eucharist in Zarka.
- Day 7 Easter Monday April 13
Meetings (Church leaders, Caritas International and Middle East Council of Churches).
- Day 8 Easter Tuesday April 14
EITHER: Return flight to London
OR PETRA ADD ON TOUR:
Excursion to Petra with overnight at Taybet Zaman
- Day 9 Easter Wednesday April 15
Return to Amman visiting Ain Musa (Moses spring) and Kerak to visit Crusader castle and for meeting with local Christians
- Day 10 Easter Thursday April 16
EITHER Return flight to London
OR HOLY LAND ADD ON TOUR:
Transit to Sheikh Hussein Bridge for 5 day add on visit to the Holy Land (details as available on request)
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FOOTNOTE: for anyone unable to manage these dates but interested in the Holy Land and Jordan:

***Holy Land Pilgrimage, travelling with
Deacon Duncan Macpherson and Father Christopher Silva***

Monday 21— Tuesday 28 October 2014

Visiting Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho and the Galilee, Jerash Madeba and Mount Nebo,

Meeting and worshipping with the Christians of the Holy Land and Jordan

Optional Petra Excursion: 28-30 October

More information is available from Duncan@deaconduncan.com

Early booking is essential

*We will go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the Lord that he may teach us his ways (Micah 4:2)
Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road? (Luke 24: 32)*

**REPORT: Conference at Bethlehem University on Christian-Muslim Relations 2013:
"Religion and State: From theocracy to secularism and in between"**

Dr Lesley Dawson



The Fourth International Conference on Christian/ Muslim Relations was held at Bethlehem University (BU) from October 2nd to 4th October 2013 and formed part of BU's 40th Anniversary celebrations. The conference was conducted in English and Arabic with simultaneous translation from one language to the other.

Rev. Duncan MacPherson and Dr Lesley Dawson attended the conference on behalf of Living Stones. Professor James Conroy accompanied us and gave the Michael Prior Memorial Lecture. The Conference Planning Committee was chaired by Fr Jamal Khader, Head of the Department of Religious Studies at BU. Local participants included BU faculty members and students and local Christian and Muslim clergy. International participants, some of whom were speakers, came from France, Austria, Greece, Bulgaria and the UK.

Day 1

Opening Session: Brother Peter Bray, Vice Chancellor of BU welcomed the conference to the University.

Other speakers in this session were Dr Khalil Hindi, President of Birzeit University, Dr Hanna Issa, Secretary General of the Islamic-Christian Committee to Support Jerusalem and the Holy Sites and Fr Jamal Khader.

Other speakers included:

- H.B. Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah: *"Religion and State in Palestine"*
- Dr Saeed Ayad: *"The Struggle on the Concept of state and the meaning of society from a religious and secular point of view in Palestine"*
- Fr Iyad Twal: *"Towards a Christian political philosophy in a Muslim country; the example of Jordan"*
- Sameeh Hammoudeh: *"Tunisia; the position of Rashed Ghannoushi from secularism and civil society"*.

Day 2

- PhD Candidate Zsofia Windisch: *"Austria; Multi-religious and secular society, Focus on the Muslims in Austria"*;

- Archimandrite Nikodemos Anagnostopoulos: *“Turkey, Religious minorities and the State; The case of the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul”*
- Dr Remi Caucanas: *“France, Muslims in Europe: Between fear and dialogue”*
- Prof Sebastian Kim: *“Christianity and Islam in the public sphere; the role of public theology in contemporary society”*
- Prof James Conroy on *“The Toledo guidelines and the myth of the Andalusian Caliphates”* (Michael Prior memorial Lecture: see note below)

Day 3

- Prof Pauline Kollontai (York St John University): *“Come to the edge and reach over to your neighbour; Christian and Muslim women in the UK working together to create communities of trust”*
- Dr Irene Brennan: *“Different models of the use of religion in public life praising Allah/glorifying God: Developing forms of spirituality for work in justice and peace”*
- Fr Jamal Khader: *“The mission of Bethlehem University and the future of Christian /Muslim relations”*
- Mr Walid Atallah: *“Teaching democracy and human rights”*
- Rev Victor Makari: *“The academy; a resource for community action”*

Michael Prior Memorial Lecture and speaker:

Prof James Conroy, Professor of Religious and Philosophical Education (Creativity, culture and faith) at the University of Glasgow was a student of Michael Prior and Duncan MacPherson at St Mary’s College, Strawberry Hill. He grew up in Ireland where he was nurtured on a series of heroic nationalist myths which he learnt to distrust.

He argued that reliance on the Toledo Guidelines of the European Council fails to support the growth of authentic pluralism because toleration is everything for the self and nothing for the other and concern with the other occludes the necessity of looking at the self and subjecting oneself to critical scrutiny.

He suggested a starting point for meaningful religious pluralism to be a psychological and pedagogical scrutiny of the self and recognition of one’s own ineluctable strangeness. What binds us together is our being made strange to ourselves from within and not our being made strange by being different from the other.

About the Michael Prior Memorial Fund and Scholarships:

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust invites applications for financial help from suitably qualified persons wishing to undertake post-graduate degrees wholly, or in part, in the following areas of study aiming to benefit the Palestinian/Arab community in the Middle East:

- Christianity in the Middle East
- Contextual Palestinian Theology
- Pilgrimage and Holy Land Studies

Studies related to advancing the interests of the Palestinian/Arab community will also be considered, such as:

- Charity management
- Secondary or tertiary education
- Social welfare and health care

Priority will be given to those planning to study at doctoral level (PhD, D.Phil), but students applying for Masters level study (MA, MSc, MPhil) will also be considered.

Preference will be given to applicants who are currently living or working in Israel/Palestine, without prejudice to religious or cultural identity. Others living outside Israel/Palestine, but with family connections to the Holy Land, will also be considered.

Applications will be considered twice a year, in January and September.

Please apply to Dr Lesley Dawson (lesleyd70@gmail.com) Secretary of Scholarship Fund at Living Stones of the Holy Land.

Michael Prior Memorial Fund Scholarships List

- Grace Al Zoughby MA completed at London School of Theology.
Dissertation topic "Transforming revolution; A study on Jesus' interactions with women in the Gospel of St John and its contemporary application to a Christian Palestinian context"
Living Stones contributed full fees and expenses
- Munther Isaac Completed PhD at Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.
Thesis topic "Theology of the Land with a special reference to the Palestinian Church"
Living Stones contributed to final year expenses



Nikodemos Anagnostopoulos



Ussama Salman



Munther Isaac

- Usama Salman Completing PhD at University of Wales, Lampeter.
Currently editing his thesis on "Analysis of the problems that face Palestinian Christians on their presence and identity in Jerusalem"
Living Stones contributed full fees and expenses

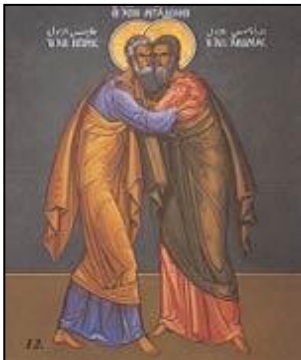
- Archimandrite Nikodemos Anagnostopoulos
Completing a PhD @ Heythrop College, University of London.
Thesis topic is "Turkey, Religious minorities and the State; The case of the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul"
Living Stones contributed to living expenses in London

- Abed MasihYunan Currently doing an MA in Jerusalem Studies through Al Quds University
Living Stones contributed to cost of Year Two modules

There are three other applications currently being considered by the Living Stones Scholarship Subcommittee.

**Suggestions for twinning of parishes/churches in UK and Ireland
and the Holy Land and neighbouring countries
through Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust**

Dr David Toorawa



In light of our avowed purpose of “*promoting links between Christian communities in Britain and in the Holy Land ...*” promoting twinning between parishes with which we have links would seem to be an appropriate activity for Living Stones to undertake.

Fresco of Sts Peter and Andrew from the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Patriarchal Church of the Annunciation, Jerusalem

There are **many on-line examples of parish twinning** from the USA, UK, Ireland, Italy and Sweden:

- Some of the twinings are same-country (rural and inner-city links).
- <http://www.st-peter-ad-vincula.org.uk/EmmanuelLink.htm> and others are international, involving Haiti and other parts of the Caribbean, South America and various countries in Africa, such as Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria and South Africa.
- The Church of Sweden has developed twinings with nearby countries in Europe (Finland, Estonia and Latvia) - www.porvoochurches.org/interchange/Reports_from_twinings.php
- The Roman Catholic Church seems to be at the forefront of twinning with links through Catholic Relief Services and at Diocesan level, although there are examples of Church of Scotland and Anglican twinings.

Resources for parishes planning to embark on twinning agreements are provided by:

- www.stdenishf.org/index.php/about/14-sample-data-articles/83-what-is-twinning) - Archdiocese of Cincinnati Mission Office
- www.ckpd.org.uk/twinningreport.htm - Twinning Report the Presbyterian World Mission Council
- “Bridges to Faith: Building a relationship with a Sister Parish” by D.P. O’Connor; ISBN - 10: 0867165847 and ISBN -13: 978-0867165847; (book available on Amazon)

Regarding **existing twinning arrangements with parishes in the Holy Land**, there is already a link between the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem and the San Martino Parish in the Diocese of Milan, Italy - (<http://en.ipj.org/2012/08/24/jerusalem-latin-parish-and-san-martino-parish-twinning/>)

In addition there is a Britain-Palestine Twinning Network and Friendship Association (BPTN) website - (<http://www.twinningwithpalestine.net/xarchive/groups-churches.html>) - with a sub-section on “Churches and Palestine” which included a list of current twinings between UK churches and Palestinian groups and also a questionnaire for those groups wishing to join BPTN.

Their aim is to “...*increase awareness of the situation in the Holy Land and to raise money for projects and organisations in the Holy Land that;*

Improve the quality of life of the Palestinian people

Support and sustain Palestinian Christian communities

Work for peace and justice through the use of non-violent methods

As this aim seems to be in line with what Living Stones aims to do, LS committee decided to develop better links with BPTN.

(continued overleaf)

Dr David Toorawa attended a conference run by the BPTN on November 23rd 2013 and made the following comments and recommendations;

- Such twinings are started by individual contacts.
- BPTN has no Christian focus
- There were twenty nine groups represented at the conference
- BPTN acts as resource for those in the UK seeking Palestinian partners
- There are greater numbers from Palestine seeking twinning with UK groups
- Growth in number of twinning arrangements appears to be slow
- Living Stones could be a conduit for BPTN with a link through our website, but would be ill-advised to “re-invent the wheel” by duplication of tasks
- Contacts made on Living Stones pilgrimages would seem to be the best source for twinning between Christian groups in the UK and in Palestine.
- Living Stones should be on the BPTN email circulation

REMINDER: Kairos Palestine Newsletter:

www.kairospalestine.ps; Email: info@kairospalestine.ps

A newsletter to connect and inform the global community of Kairos supporters about the latest initiatives, gatherings, and progress, and an opportunity to reach out to friends of Kairos Palestine around the world to share reflections, struggles, successes, plans for the future, and news of our work on the ground.

FOR YOUR DIARY:

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY IN JERUSALEM 2015 and 2016

The next Living Stones Pilgrimage to Jerusalem is planned for January 2016.

However, there is a possibility of joining a parish group in January 2015. Dates are not yet confirmed, but likely to be Wednesday 20th January – Sunday 1st February 2015. Cost is likely to be around £1250 for a group of 15 (including lunches, tips etc but not flights). The group plans to stay in Tiberias (on the Sea of Galilee) and in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Please contact Jo Simister josimister@yahoo.co.uk to register your interest as soon as possible (Deadline Oct 31st 2014).

Please also contact Jo if you would like a pdf of a short PowerPoint presentation about Living Stones Pilgrimages:



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 2014

Extracts from Hansa Shah's reflections (see also p1)

with photos from Bridget le Huray, Lesley Dawson, Jo Simister and our guide Bassam Turjman



Joining the Way of the Cross walk through the Old City of Jerusalem

I was once again in Palestine and Israel. This time it was not to monitor human rights violations or to plant or harvest olives. It was on a pilgrimage with a difference! The emphasis was on meeting Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel – the ‘Living Stones’ of the place which is commonly referred to as the Holy Land. This was very much in keeping with the call of the **Kairos Palestine Document: A Moment of Truth; A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering** drawn up by leading Palestinian Christians in 2009. They had made this plea, “Come and see. Here we are.”



2014 Pilgrim group

The pilgrimage was so full, so rich in content and experience, that it would be difficult to mention all that took place during the two weeks: I am confining my comments to three themes.

1) Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (25/01–02/02)

We were conveniently located in **St. Thomas Syrian Catholic Guest House**, which is just outside Damascus Gate (East Jerusalem) and within a few minutes' walking distance from the numerous churches within and around the old city of Jerusalem. Whilst it was possible for us to attend one of the early morning services, which some of us did, the official service to mark the Week of Prayer took place at 5pm each day in churches of different denominations. We were able to attend all of these except the last two as sadly we were on our way back home.

The first of these services took place on Saturday January 25th in the **Greek Orthodox Church at the Holy Sepulchre** with an office in Greek. On Sunday it was in **St. George's Anglican Cathedral** located just outside the Old City walls. The Anglican Bishop Suheil gave the main message. The service on Monday was in the atmospheric **Armenian Cathedral of St. James** in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City. This cathedral is associated with the burial place of James the brother of Jesus. There were no pews and most worshippers remained standing. There were numerous chandeliers and we were given tapers to light. Candle light and solemn chanting created a reverential ambience. On Tuesday the service was in the **Lutheran Church of the Redeemer** within the Old City walls. It was a bright, airy building with ample pews. The message delivered by Bishop Munib was in English and there were readings in German, Arabic and a few other languages. Once again, the need for unity came across loud and clear. Wednesday's service was in **St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Church** within the Old City. Some traditions hold that this was the site of the young Mark John's (St. Mark) home and this is where the Last Supper was held. It was a small church and worshippers were crammed into every pew and corner. It was jointly led by clergy from the Syrian Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox Churches who were dressed in traditional ecclesiastical robes and head gear. The service was solemn with a fair amount of chanting. Thursday saw us in the **Cenacle (Upper Room)**, another site associated with the Last Supper. It is situated outside the Old City walls through Zion Gate and near what is believed to be King David's tomb and the impressive Dormition Abbey where according to some traditions, Mary the mother of Jesus is believed to be laid to rest. Franciscan monks, who have the guardianship of the Abbey, led the service. Here too, there was little seating room and most worshippers remained standing through the hour long service led in French, English and Arabic. Friday's service was in the large and beautiful **Latin Patriarchate Church**. Church leaders from numerous denominations were invited to join the Patriarch around the altar and take part in leading the service.



Latin Patriarchate

All the services were followed by sharing of refreshments and fellowship. The refreshments ranged from a simple Agape of bread and beverages to a much more lavish spread of cakes and pastries. People from different denominations, nationalities, cultures, lay and ordained, secular and Religious, rubbed shoulders with each other, making new contacts and getting to know a little about each other's work. One sad fact was that Palestinian Christians from the West Bank were unable to join us due to the discriminatory permit system regarding entry into Jerusalem.

Although our 7 am liturgy on Friday in the **Greek Melkite Catholic Church** was not part of the official Week of Prayer services, it was special. There were local Palestinian worshippers and the lovely Abuna (Father) called us each by our name as he administered the Holy Communion. At the end of the service he invited us to go up to the terrace from where we had a splendid view of Jerusalem. The same afternoon, some of us joined in the service of **The Way of the Cross, (the Via Dolorosa)** which is led by Franciscan monks every Friday. We prayed at many of the stations which are marked by churches of different traditions, ending at the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre** where Jesus is believed to have been crucified. The procession was solemn and reverential despite the hustle and bustle around. There must have been over 150 people- worshippers and interested tourists together.



The Old City of Jerusalem from the roof of the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Guest House, in the early morning

2) Some lesser-known Christian Towns/Villages

According to the Lutheran ecumenical institute Diyar Consortium, there are 51,710 Christians in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. They comprise roughly 2% of the population in the West Bank and 1% in Gaza. "In 1948 Christian population in the Holy Land was more than 18%, today it is less than 2%." Numbers have declined sharply, mainly due to emigration as a result of the difficulties of living under Israeli military occupation. One might be forgiven for assuming that the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel enjoy the same rights and privileges as their Jewish compatriots, but it is not so, as our visit to Ibilin showed. Visits from pilgrims and tourists who are interested in meeting residents of these areas and learning something about their life are greatly appreciated.

Taybeh: which is only about 14 km north east of Ramallah, has an interesting and ancient history. It is believed to be Ephraim, the place where Jesus rested with his disciples on his last journey to Jerusalem before his Passion. Further back, it is associated with Ofra, (Joshua, Judges, I Samuel) one

of the five places of sanctuary mentioned in the Old Testament. There are ruins of a Canaanite temple for sacrifices, and mosaics from a Byzantine church from Crusader times. We attended the liturgy in the **Greek Orthodox Church of St. George**, where they were celebrating the feast of the Baptism of Christ. The service was in Arabic (with some English translation for our benefit), joyous, exuberant and well nigh two hours long! The congregation of local Palestinians, whose roots in the area go back centuries, was about 80 strong. After our service we visited the nearby Taybeh Beer factory established in 1995, where Mr. Khoury the owner and his daughter explained to us the difficulties they face in carrying out business under strangling bureaucratic stipulations imposed by the Israeli Government. We rounded off our visit with a delectable Palestinian lunch in a restaurant in a restored traditional house/museum – ‘Peter’s Place’.



Items retrieved from gardens in the old part of Taybeh, now in Peter's Place museum

Beit Sahour: After Bethlehem, it is perhaps the best known and oft visited of the Christian towns and villages, and traditionally believed to be the site where shepherds ‘lay a watching their sheep. The population of the town is predominantly, if not exclusively, Christian. Since the building of the wall around Bethlehem, residents have suffered greatly from restriction of movement. We visited the **Al Basma Centre** for disabled young people, meeting them and seeing them at work making little rugs, producing beautifully textured paper, and crafting olive wood items. We were able to buy these beautiful products and support their work.

Ibillin: I was excited to visit Ibillin. I had read the book **Blood Brothers** written by the charismatic Melkite Bishop Elias Chacour, in which he describes the challenges which faced him in his work as parish priest. Although Ibillin is within Israel, it faces building restrictions and farmers have lost several acres of agricultural land to the Israeli government under one pretext or another. Denied permission to build a school or facility for higher education, Abuna Chacour had nevertheless gone ahead with his plans. Today the Mar Elias Educational Institutions offer school and facilities for higher education for Palestinian Arab children for miles around who cannot take advantage of Israeli educational facilities. We were able to meet some members of staff and students, and see the new church with its beautiful icons and frescoes. *[see Update on page 14]*

Zababdeh: A few miles from Jenin at the northern end of the West Bank lies Zababdeh. We met Fr. Higazeen from the Latin Church, who informed us that farmers in this once fertile agricultural area had suffered much due to loss of their land, restriction on water supply and lack of opportunities for economic growth. Many as a result had left the area. There are priests from three different denominations in the village who work well together, and under difficult circumstances, do their best to minister to their flock. There is a local soap making enterprise and we were happy to boost their sales.



View over Zabadeh from the school to the American University of Jenin

Abu Ghosh: On our second Sunday, we attended a service in the **Roman Catholic Benedictine Crusader Church** which has still the remains of ancient frescos and mosaics. This area is one of those believed to be a possible site of Emmaus where the risen Jesus walked with two of his disciples. It is also where the Ark of the Covenant is believed to have rested.

3) Heroes and Heroines in the West Bank and Israel

In the Palestine/Israel context all Palestinian men, women, and children are in my eyes heroes and heroines. Despite the dehumanising conditions to which they are subjected on a daily basis, they manage to retain their dignity, their faith in humanity, their hospitality and humour, and resist the Israeli military occupation through non-violent means. Those Israeli Jews who stand up in solidarity with their Palestinian brothers and sisters, in the interest of freedom and justice, risking social censure or in many cases imprisonment, are no less so.



On our pilgrimage we also met those, who because of their writings, or public activities, are able to exert a wider sphere of influence. How I would like to introduce them all to you! But I mention just two from Ramallah: **Jean Zaru**, a Palestinian Christian theologian, a relentless peace and justice activist, a Quaker wholly committed to non-violence, a mother and grand-mother and finally a fearless and outspoken critic of the Israeli military occupation. I commend to you her enlightening book **Occupied with Non-violence**.

And **Dr Mustafa Barghouti**, a physician, activist and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who gave a presentation about the effects of the Israeli military occupation on the lives of Palestinian civilians, and who was impressive in the clarity of his presentation, his lack of rancour at the blatant injustices perpetrated on his people and his total commitment to non-violent means in ending the Israeli occupation. Meeting someone like him was truly hope-inspiring.

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UPDATE: Icons and Frescoes at Ibillin Church of the Beatitudes

At the Living Stones AGM in November 2013, Sr Bernadette Crook spoke movingly about the design inspiration, preparation and installation of the icons and frescoes for the new church at Mar Elias, next to the school (now also a university) founded by Fr Elias Chacour in Ibillin in the Galilee. Our



2014 pilgrimage group was able to see the work in situ.

If you would like to read more about the icons, the book *'Rooted in Galilee'* gives details of all the designs and some information about the members of the British Association of Iconographers who assisted Sr Bernadette. *'The Ibillin Beatitude Icons: meditations and icons'* gives information on the mural sequence around the church, with Sr Bernadette's reflections drawing on contemporary Galilee life.

Information on the work can be found at: <http://www.bai.org.uk/members-work-sr-bernadette-cook.php> and there is a link to buy the books.

There will be another opportunity to hear Sr Bernadette's talk, at the British Association of Iconographers AGM at St Saviour's Church, Pimlico, on Saturday 21st June from 10am. (Details from Mrs E Whitmore 020 7262 9531).

The pilgrimage group visit the Church of the Beatitudes at Ibillin, January 2014.

REPORT: Theology Group

Prof. Mary Grey

The Theology Group met at Heythrop College, University of London, on April 2nd. Here we held a lively round-table discussion with Dr Fiona McCallum, a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of St Andrews in Scotland and Dr Alistair Hunter, from the University of Edinburgh. Their research focuses primarily on the political role of Christian communities in the contemporary Middle East. This includes government integration policies towards Christian communities, identity issues, Christian political participation in the region, Muslim-Christian relations, religious leadership and diaspora. Dr McCallum is currently leading a collaborative interdisciplinary project funded by the European Union entitled 'Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe' with partners from Denmark, Poland and Belgium.

Although the research is still at an initial stage, there was a far-ranging discussion focusing on theological issues raised by the project. The discussion was followed by a public lecture at the Centre for Eastern Christianity, chaired by Anthony O' Mahony where again, the project was presented. The next meeting will be on October 15th, at Heythrop College, where Revd Dr Vrej Nersessian, an eminent Armenian scholar and theologian, will lead a discussion on Armenian Christology.



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 Yearbook 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. **Personal Details:**

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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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 3. If you pay tax at the higher rate, you can claim further relief in your Self-Assessment tax return.

**LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST
and
THE CENTRE FOR EASTERN CHRISTIANITY**

**MICHAEL PRIOR ANNIVERSARY
ACADEMIC CONFERENCE**

***Friday 11th and Saturday 12th July 2014
The Loyola Room
Heythrop College, University of London
Kensington Square, London W8 5HN***

Michael Prior (15 March 1942-21 July 2004) was a priest of the Vincentian Congregation, Professor of Biblical Theology at Saint Mary's College (now Saint Mary's University Twickenham), liberation theologian and well-known figure in the Catholic Church in Britain. This July will mark the tenth anniversary of the death of Michael Prior and a number of international scholars and speakers will engage on topics raised by Michael in his work and publications. These will include: the Bible and Colonialism; the Bible and Liberation Theology; Zionism and Christian Zionism; the current situation of the Christian churches in the region and the future of Christianity in the Middle East.

Speakers who have already agreed to participate include:

Naim Ateek, Ilan Pappé, Perry Gildea CM, Michael Kirwan SJ, Peter Miano, Anthony O'Mahony, Huda Nassar, Don Wagner, Michael Marten, Sr Bridget Tighe, Suha Rassam, Mariam Tadros and Peter Colwell.

Details of other speakers and of conference programme and arrangements will be available soon.

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