

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 8: September 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

Contact: admin@livingstonesonline.org.uk

Website: www.livingstonesonline.org.uk



From the Editor:

*Dear Living Stones
members and friends,*

The Living Stones Trust exists due to the inspiration of Michael Prior, CM, whom Canon Paul Oestreicher described as a “passionate liberation theologian ... who saw no conflict between scholarship and political commitment to the oppressed” and who particularly espoused the cause of justice for the Palestinian people.

We are an “ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries” with “the primary aim of advancing education about Christianity in the Holy Land and countries around, by: raising awareness.... educating and informing.... promoting contacts.... and cooperating with [others]....” (to extract from our current publicity leaflet).

In faithfulness to our founder and to our charitable purposes, this issue of the Living Stones Newsletter has a profoundly practical emphasis. We ask you to help us with your time and/or your talents and/or your money – the time-honoured ‘stewardship trio’.

1. Time: to advocate for justice in Israel-Palestine and the wider Middle East (see pp 2-4), to join us on pilgrimage (p8)
2. Talents: would you like to join the executive? Can you manage a simple website*? Do you have speaking or writing skills? Are you a good networker? An academic? A fund-raiser? Are you persuasive? Incisive? We need you! Come along to our Members’ Day (see pp 5 and 12).
3. Money: we a small charity which relies on its supporters to carry out its work, through membership, legacies and donations, yet we support several Palestinian students engaged in higher academic studies, both in theology and in other subjects of benefit to their communities. As you will see (p 9) over a third of our expenditure is on scholarships, and more than half of our total expenditure is on various other educational and outreach activities – including this newsletter. Occasionally we make a one-off grant to a particular project, and we invite you to help with one such donation, described on p 5.

Thank you!

* Our website is under reconstruction at present, using WordPress. We hope to relaunch it at our Members’ Day in November. Please send in any suggestions to admin@livingstonesonline.org.uk.

1. Time: for advocacy and other actions

An unprecedented ecumenical gathering at Lambeth Palace hosted by The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the instigation of His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, said:

The Middle East is the birthplace of Christianity, and home to indigenous Christian communities that have been an indispensable part of its history. Despite the challenges, Christians in the region were and are a stabilising and reconciling presence. Today, particularly in Iraq and Syria, they are at great risk from violence fostered by extremist ideologies which no longer see them as being part of the future. The Middle East is in desperate danger of losing an irreplaceable part of its identity, heritage and culture.

(You can read the full statement at: <http://copticcentre.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/press-release-unprecedented-meeting-of.html>).

What to do?

As Christians we are called to be peacemakers and to stand against injustice and oppression. Leaders of the various churches, and of other faiths, have asked for **our continued prayers** and, most importantly, for **our voices to be heard by our political leaders** to use their international influence to bring about a fair, just and permanent resolution to the problems of Christians and other minorities throughout the Middle East region.

Be informed: a variety of sources from among many!

Dr Mustafa Barghouti, witnessing to his experience in Gaza during the summer, prior to the mass lobby of Parliament on 9th September 2014:

<http://www.palestinecampaign.org/moving-powerful-mustafa-barghoutis-speech-destruction-gaza/>

Kairos Britain: (www.kairosbritain.org.uk)

full statement on Gaza 'Hope for Gaza? Only if justice prevails'

(<http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk/resources/documents/Gaza-statement-July-2014/Kairos-Gaza-statement-Aug-2014-FINAL.pdf>)

Caabu - Advancing Arab-British Relations (<http://www.caabu.org/>)

Since 1967, Caabu has taken on a strong political, educational and media role. A cross-party organisation, Caabu works to advance Arab-British relations through its support for international law, human rights and democracy. Sign up for a daily news digest drawn from UK broadsheets.

Medical Aid to Palestinians: (MAP):

(<http://www.map-uk.org/news/archive/post/140-gaza-crisis-recovery-mapas-response>)

Israeli Committee against House Demolitions: August 2014:

(<http://us7.campaign-archive1.com/?u=a3728e1a8014d53820403ca12&id=e9b41e9879&e=81686e7cc7>)

Scroll down for links to Jeff Halper's key messages on Israeli policy and practice in Israel and Palestine.

Church Times article 5/9/2014: After the truce, Gaza faces new challenges:

(<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/5-september/news/world/after-truce,-gaza-faces-new-challenges>). It will take 20 years to rebuild the housing stock in Gaza...

EmbraceME (formerly Biblelands), including volunteer opportunities: (<http://www.embraceme.org/>)

Caritas International:

(<http://www.caritas.org/2014/09/middle-east-crisis/>)

Zaytoun: fair trade organisation, report a disquieting land grab in the West Bank:

(<http://www.zaytoun.org/uncategorized/israels-biggest-land-grab-in-west-bank-since-1980s/>)



Palestinians start their day inside the St. Porphyrios Church in Gaza City, during the holy month of Ramadan. (AP Photo/Lefteris Pitarakis)

<http://news.yahoo.com/ap-photos-church-haven-muslims-gaza-012242798.html>

"Together, Christians and Muslims, are one family, the Palestinian nation, so we try to help our people to have a place to stay," said Archbishop Alexios.

"We try as much as we can to help, to give love, that's it. This is the most important, to give love for those who are in need." <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/gaza-church-opens-doors-to-war-refugees-563762>

Seek out and support personal contacts:

Our emphasis so far here has been on the Palestinian population, but this should not blind us to the dire needs of Christians in Iraq and Syria, as executive member Aziz Nour writes:

Until 10th June 2014 Mosul (Iraq) was a city which embraced the largest Christian population of any city or town in the Middle East. Now it is Christian-Free. The entire 2000 years old Christian community have been subjected by ISIS to the most ruthless ethno-religious cleansing known in the region, which in fact mount to a Genocide.

Currently, to say the least, the international community is largely indifferent to magnitude of their plight; even the UN considers them as only being Internally Displaced (the most convenient, cheapest and the lowliest rank of immigration status). Therefore, many still not been accommodated in tents even.

So far they have even been in their entirety in the blind spot of the ecumenical community.....

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

Palestinians ask us to support this global campaign, started in 2007. See, for example:

<http://electronicintifada.net/content/gaza-we-say-outcome-our-battle-depends-you/13835>

You can find out more about the BDS campaign at <http://www.bdsmovement.net/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boycott,_Divestment_and_Sanctions

For help with shopping, see <http://www.inminds.com/shopping-can-kill.php>

Make our voices heard by our political leaders:

Send an email to your MP calling on them to vote to **recognise Palestine**. It only takes a minute or two using a model letter. All you have to do is visit <http://act.palestinecampaign.org/lobby/Palestine> and put in your postcode - easy as that.

Meet or write to your elected representatives: <https://www.writetothem.com/> is a useful site where you can find out who represents you at all levels of local, national and European government, and email them directly. Or try <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>.

To check whether your MP has relevant financial or other interests, you can look at the most recent Register of Members' Financial Interests at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/contents1415.htm>

If you are contacting the media or your MP, here are some facts and questions you might like to use:

Quotable facts from UN sources updated to 4th September:

(http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_04_09_2014.pdf)

- 2,131 Palestinians killed during 50-day war
- 501 Palestinian children, 1 Israeli
- 1,473 Gazan civilians killed (84%), of whom 279 were known members of armed groups (16%),
- 71 Israelis killed, soldiers 66 (93%), civilians 5 (including one child, one foreign national) (7%)
- Approximately 110,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) still remain in UNRWA emergency shelters and with host families.
- 373,000 children in need of psychosocial support
- 18,000 housing units destroyed or severely damaged (5% of stock) leaving approximately 108,000 people homeless.
- 111 UNRWA buildings or other installations damaged
- Cost of rebuilding Gaza £4.8 bn and cost of war to Israel £1.5 bn
- 11,100 Palestinians, including 3,374 children, injured
- 1,500 children orphaned
- over 1,000 children disabled for life
- 485,000 Gazans displaced at height of conflict (28% of population)
- 450,000 households (20-30%) still unable to access water supply

Some issues you might like to raise with your elected representatives:

- Will the Government now recognise the State of Palestine?
- Will the Government stop trade with illegal settlements?
- Will the Government support the Deputy Prime Minister's call for a suspension of arms export licenses to Israel?
- Will the Government condemn the Israeli war on Gaza as disproportionate?
- Why was the Government so reluctant to describe the Israeli war on Gaza as disproportionate when 1,473 Palestinian civilians were killed and five Israelis?
- How can the Government regard it as morally defensible to kill 1,473 Palestinian civilians in response to the deaths of five Israelis?
- Will the Government support the prosecution of UK Citizens who have committed war crimes on either side in the recent war in Gaza?
- Will the Government condemn unequivocally the killing of 501 children in Gaza?
- Does the Government accept that one cause of radicalisation among British Muslims is the Government's failure to condemn disproportionate attacks on Gaza?
- What estimate has the Government made of the damage or destruction of buildings or projects funded by the UK taxpayer during the war on Gaza?
- Will the Government seek compensation from the Israeli government for UK-funded buildings or projects destroyed during the war on Gaza?
- What assistance will the Government provide for the reconstruction of 25 schools destroyed or badly damaged in the Gaza conflict and the repair of 230 schools affected by shelling?
- What assistance will the Government give to the removal of thousands of unexploded remnants of war left in civilian areas in Gaza?
- What emergency help is the Government providing for the estimated 108,000 Gazans whose homes were destroyed or made uninhabitable in the recent conflict?
- What contribution will the Government make to the need for trained psychosocial counsellors to help 373,000 traumatised children in Gaza, requiring specialised psychosocial support?
- What is the Government's estimate is of the cost of the reconstruction of Gaza?
- What assistance has the Government provided for British physicians and nurses to work on short missions in Gaza during the present crisis?
- What is the cost to the taxpayer of UK assistance to repair damage caused by the war on Gaza?
- What assistance can the Government provide for the estimated 1,000 Gazan children whose injuries from the war will leave them disabled for life?

2: Talents:

Living Stones needs skilled trustees. Do you have time to attend a few meetings each year? (typically 4-6 meetings, with travel expenses if needed – the meetings are usually in London, but do not have to be!).

Do you have skills to contribute - can you run a website? fundraise? speak at meetings? write articles?

Do come along to our Members Day on 15th November to hear more about what we do and discuss how we could be more effective.

3: Money: contribute to a project:

In Syria: Awareness Foundation Leadership Training

We need financial contributions to the Michael Prior Memorial Fund right now and wondered whether you can help:

We have just agreed a grant of £3000 from the fund to help provide a Leadership Training Programme among young Christian men and women in Latakia, Syria (see box below). The Awareness Foundation

www.awareness-foundation.co.uk was about to cancel the programme which was due to start in week beginning October 2nd for lack of funds. They had £7,000 of the £15,000 needed but could deliver the

workshop for £10,000 with faith that the remaining £5,000 for mentoring could be found in the next few

months. Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust agreed to meet the shortfall from the Michael Prior Memorial Fund for the education and training in leadership requested for the Christian community in Syria.

However, with all the other demands on the funds for scholarships for Palestinians and for support of Christian community in the Middle East we are running low on reserves and are inviting members to help.

Several Trustees have promised £100 each towards the fund in response and we would like to encourage you to contribute whatever you can afford, by sending a cheque to Living Stones, 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, BR6 9UE, or transferring by BACS/FP to LIVING STONES Account No: 8913 7808; Code: 09-01-55 with the reference MP FUND DONATION.

Leadership Training in the Middle East: see <http://www.awareness-foundation.co.uk/index.php/ltp>

The Arab Spring promised so much for the people of the Middle East. Tragically, it has delivered chaos and fear rather than freedom and hope. Diverse communities that lived peacefully together for centuries are now polarised by politics and faith. For Christians, the choice can seem to be very simple: *to stay and suffer*, or *leave*.

Awareness Foundation are building a Middle East-wide network of young Christian Leaders who can be catalysts for peace, building bridges of mutual respect and understanding in their diverse communities. The Programme will teach young Christians to help and guide their communities on the path to peace and reconciliation, to contribute to the healing and strengthening of the fabric of society in the Middle East; to benefit everyone, whatever their faith!

To find out more, please contact Huda Nassar, Director for the Middle East at middleeast@awareness-foundation.com or on +44 (0) 20 7730 8830.

In Iraq: Iraqi Christians in Need: September 2014:

(<http://www.icin.org.uk/> and <http://www.icin.org.uk/donate/> and www.icin.org.uk/events/mosul-crisis)

The situation on the ground is such that following the occupation of the Nineveh plain, the inhabitants of all the Christian villages are now refugees in Ankawa and Dhok. At least a hundred thousand people are homeless and in dire need of help for basic needs such as water, food and shelter. The Chaldean and Syriac Catholic and Orthodox church leaders have formed a committee to coordinate the distribution of relief effort and organise direct help to the needy. In addition and with the winter months being imminent, plans are afoot for either the erection of "temporary" camps or finding homes for rental to house the refugees, many of whom are sleeping rough in churchyards, streets and public parks.

Conferences Report: (Jo Simister)

Just the briefest account of my trinity of conference attendances this summer, in chronological order:

'Creating Peace in a Violent World' Woodbrooke, Birmingham 23rd to 25th May: a tussle with trying to uncover a common desire for peace, while asking ourselves what kinds of commitments this might lead us into, with diverse engaging and sometimes provocative inputs from speakers such as David Gee and Peter Tatchell.

'Michael Prior Anniversary Academic Conference', Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust with the Centre for Eastern Christianity at Heythrop College, London 11th & 12th July.

We celebrated the life and work of the founder of Living Stones, the Revd Dr Michael Prior CM, with endearing and challenging presentations from a number of speakers whose lives and work had been touched by Michael – a wonderful opportunity to meet with speakers from around the world – and we hope to publish some of the proceedings in the next Yearbook.

(See p10 for details of the Memorial Lecture on Monday 13th October 2014, and p11 for publications of Michael's writings.)

Orthodox Christianity UK Pan-Orthodox Conference, Swanwick, Derbys, 2th-27th July.

Yes, there is a distinctive British Orthodox tradition (see <http://britishorthodox.org/>) and if like me you have ever had some instinctive feeling that Celtic traditions have an affinity with the Orthodox approach, well one of our talks mapped the evangelisation of Europe (including the British Isles) by the earliest missionaries – and they were from the Coptic tradition.

Using the theme of the Trinity, we deepened our understanding of the earliest traditions of the churches, discussed in small groups, ate and slept well, and nourished our souls with the Jesus Prayer. The weekend was attended by about 60 people of all ages from a number of Orthodox traditions, and originating from a number of other countries – including Gaza.

This family conference was the first organised by Orthodox Christianity UK, as a result of a meeting at St.Bega in Cumbria the previous year, to discuss how the full communion of all the Orthodox families could be brought about within one Church. (see report at <http://britishorthodox.org/4631/pan-orthodox-conference-25-27-july-2014/>) and I hope to be able to attend again.

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre



Clergy at Swanwick Pan-Orthodox Conference

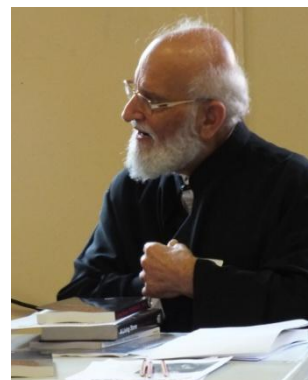




Living Stones trustee Professor Mary Grey addresses the conference

(All Photos: Alan Ball)

Michael Prior Anniversary Academic Conference
Living Stones and the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College
July 11th and 12th 2014



Chris Doyle , Don Wagner and Peter Miano; Patriarch Gregorius; Don Wagner, Anne Clayton and Canon Naim Ateek; Reem Kelani; Dr Swee Ang Chee, Tarcicius Mukuka.

Pilgrimages 2015:

Throughout our encounters with Christian communities in the Middle East we hear a recurring invitation to 'come and see'.

In 2015 we are offering two wonderful opportunities to learn more about the Christian communities in Jordan, as well as Israel and Palestine.



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 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.
- Fuller details from: Duncan McPherson (Living Stones) <Duncan@deaconduncan.com>

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity PILGRIMAGE to JERUSALEM, BETHLEHEM & GALILEE arranged by the Living Stones Trust Weds 21st Jan – Sun 1st Feb 2015

Participate in the 2015 Jerusalem Week of Prayer for Christian Unity programme, worshipping with a wide range of local Christian denominations and finding out about the challenges Christians face and how we might support them from outside.

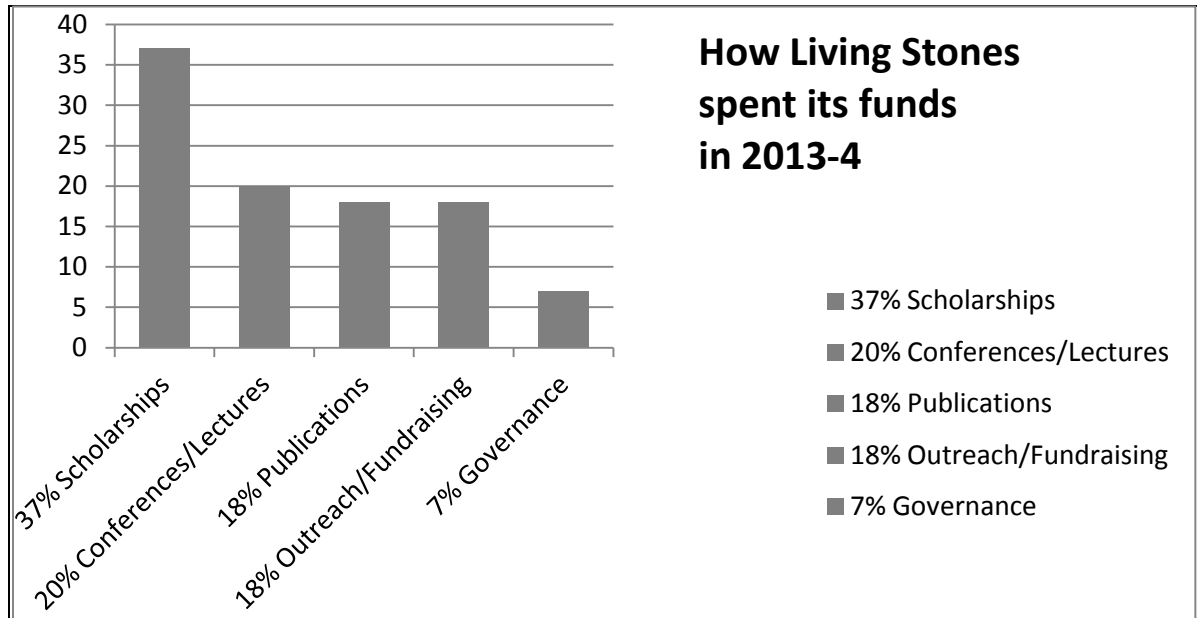
We shall encounter the wider work of the various Christian communities, visiting educational, health and social care centres and workshops, for example – with opportunities to buy embroidery and crafts – and support local religious communities and businesses.

There will be time to explore the Old City and visit some museums, participate in the Stations of the Cross, or simply soak up the experience.

**Queries and expressions of interest to: Ms Jo Simister,
josimister@yahoo.co.uk; 07796 410 850**

Membership Information

Living Stones is a small charity which relies on its supporters to carry out its work, through membership, legacies and donations. Please fill in the forms below to help us continue our work. You will receive our regular newsletters, a copy of the Living Stones Yearbook, invitations to our conferences and other major events, news of our scholarship programme, notifications of pilgrimages and much more.



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LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST



You are invited to The Michael Prior Memorial Lecture and book launch

Remembering Michael Prior: Loose Ends

6.00 pm on Monday 13 October 2014 in THE SHANNON ROOM at

Saint Mary's University, Waldegrave Road, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham TW1 4SX

BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR

**The 2014 memorial lecture will be given by Professor Prior's friend and colleague
Dr Duncan Macpherson who will re-examine Michael's contribution to our understanding
of controverted issues in political theology and contextual biblical studies**

This occasion will also mark the launch of *MICHAEL PRIOR Ten Years On: Selected Essays and Addresses* with an introduction by Duncan Macpherson. The tenth anniversary of his death is marked by this volume of his writings and lectures, that are not otherwise generally available.

A Living Stone: Selected Essays and Addresses by Michael Prior CM first published in 2006 is now re-issued in paperback. 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. The themes of Michael's writings include the Bible and Colonialism, the Bible and Liberation Theology, Zionism and Christianity and the situation of the Christian Churches in the Middle East.

RSVP to admin@livingstonesonline.org.uk



A LIVING STONE
Selected Essays and Addresses
MICHAEL PRIOR CM



and
REMEMBERING
MICHAEL PRIOR
TEN YEARS ON
Selected Essays and Addresses

both volumes edited with an introduction

by
Duncan Macpherson

Vincentine priest, biblical scholar and human rights activist Michael Prior was Head of Department of Theology and Religious Studies and Professor of Bible and Theology at St Mary's University College, Twickenham.

He was co-founder and chair of The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust.

These two commemorative volumes of essays and addresses by Michael Prior represent a comprehensive testimony to the immense contribution of a fearless and 'passionate liberation theologian ... who saw no conflict between scholarship and political commitment to the oppressed' (Canon Paul Oestreicher).

He is the author of *Jesus the Liberator: Nazareth Liberation Theology* (1995), *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (1997) and *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (1999). With Naim Ateek he edited *Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee: God, Justice and the Palestinians* (1999). Other books he edited include *Western Scholarship and the History of Palestine* (1998) and *They Came and They Saw: Western Christian Experiences of the Holy Land* (2000).



THE LIVING STONES of the Holy Land Trust
 (Regd. Charity no. 1081204)

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Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust
Members' Day: The Stones Cry Out
and 2014 Annual General Meeting



10am – 4pm, Saturday 15th November 2014

at Amos Trust, St Clement's Eastcheap, 1 St Clements Court, Clements Lane, London EC4N 7HB
(nearest tube Monument and Bank, or Cannon St; see www.amostrust.org/contact/ for more details).

Programme for the day:

- 10.00 - 10.15 Registration, refreshments.
- 10.15 - 11.00 Annual General Meeting
- 11.00 - 13.00 What we do: Living Stones work, discussions led by trustees, on Scholarships & Grants; Publications; Pilgrimage & Outreach.
- 13.00 – 14.00 Lunch break: bring your own sandwiches, etc, and something to share if you wish; beverages will be available.
- 14.00 – 15.30 **'The Stones Cry Out'**: film.
(trailer at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YyuujlgZE)
- 15.30 – 16.00 Closing Prayers

*Palestinian crafts will be on sale in aid of the Michael Prior Memorial Fund.
There will be a bookstall of Living Stones publications.*