

Diocese of Jerusalem

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Jerusalem Archbishop Hosam Naoum

Israel and Jordan have made it possible to visit the traditional site of Christ's baptism by St John. It was also so encouraging to see several new churches on the Jordanian side.

On our first two visits our guides had been nationalistic Israelis, whilst in the more recent visits they were Palestinian Christians. We therefore learnt steadily of the latter's problems as second-class citizens in Israel itself and especially the West Bank. Most disturbing was that so many of the younger generation were planning to emigrate. We first saw the West Bank Wall on our way from Tel Aviv airport to Tiberius in 2017 and of course we were to encounter it much more when we reached Jerusalem. We also learned of the steadily increasing numbers of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.



On our last two visits we were able to attend Sung Eucharist at the Cathedral of St George the Martyr in Jerusalem. At a reception afterwards, I first learnt of the Al Ahli Hospital which the diocese runs in the Gaza Strip. It struck me how vital its work must be in such a desperately poor area especially in treating women's cancers.



What could I do to help? On our return to England, I gave this much thought. I had for many years walked parts of the South West Coast Path which runs from Minehead in West Somerset round Land's End in Cornwall to Poole in Dorset. I must have covered about 100 miles of it but by the spring of 2017 I realized that with my 70th birthday less than two years away I had better get on with completing its 630 miles. In doing so, why not ask friends for sponsorship and thus raise funds for the hospital? So, over the next five summers I spent three or four days each month walking a section of the path till I reached Minehead last October. To my delight my friends were very generous and I burst my original target of £1 for each mile I walked with a final total of £860! I initially sent payments via Embrace the Middle East and then by JMECA.



What of the future? A friend and I will be walking Offa's Dyke which runs for 177 miles along the English Welsh Border this summer and I will be appealing for more sponsorship. Thereafter who knows! There is a path round the Welsh coast which at 850 miles would keep me going till I hang up my boots. All I can say is that I am determined to continue to raise all I can for the Ahli Arab hospital.

Philip Hooper

Course Director changeover



Bible lands joins with St. George's College, Jerusalem and many around the world in sending a huge 'thank you' to the Rev Canon Dr Mary June Nestler who has recently retired from St. George's College as Course Director and Lecturer in Contextual Biblical Theology. Her inspirational teaching has been appreciated by all on college courses – and all in the close. Thank you, Mary June – and all best wishes for the future.

Rev Dr Rodney Aist, her successor, took up the

position on 1st May this year and has been on the college staff before. Rev Aist said, 'I'm grateful for the opportunity to return to St George's College. As a pilgrim, guide and scholar, my most transformative moments in the Holy Land have always been in the company of others, and as a place of gathering, it's the people, the staff, pilgrims and the Living Stones that



makes St George's College and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem special.' We wish Rodney and his wife Janet well for their future at the college.