

# ST. GEORGE'S UPDATE

An Annual  
Report of the  
British Regional  
Committee of St.  
George's College,  
Jerusalem  
JANUARY 2013

## EDITORIAL

### HAIL AND FAREWELL

A Happy New Year to all our readers!

*As Tennyson's famous poem put it:*

"Ring out wild bells. Ring out the old! Ring in the new!"

This year, Bishop Robin Smith will be stepping down as Chairman of the British Regional Committee after eighteen years of dedicated service. During this period he has led us with patience, geniality and skill in an era that has brought challenges and opportunities to St. George's College. A tribute to him appears elsewhere in the Magazine and we shall have the opportunity of saying "thank you" to him at the Annual Gathering on May 2nd 2013. At that time too we shall be welcoming his successor, The Rt. Revd. Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston, who will preach at the Eucharist. It is good that the Committee has been strengthened with the recruitment of the former Dean, the Revd. Dr Stephen Need.

A cause for concern is the declining numbers attending the Annual Gathering. Perhaps one reason may be the effect of "Anno Domini" on the most senior and loyal of our members. Are there difficulties which make it hard for more recent alumni to attend? Would it be better to hold this event at another time of the year, for example in October half term? Please let us know your views. Meanwhile, please will you try to be present in this particular special year We hope that the new Dean, Graham Smith will be joining us to report on his first year in office.

Some have detected a slight shift of emphasis in the raison d'être of the British Friends from being just a Reunion of former course members. Of course, it continues still to fulfil that purpose and we enjoy meeting up with old friends and hearing the latest news and hopefully having our minds stimulated by an eminent visiting lecturer.

This year it will be Colin Chapman who has lived with his wife, Anne, in the Middle East, mostly in Egypt and Lebanon, for 18 years in four different spells since 1968. He has worked with the Anglican Church and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students and taught Islamic Studies at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon.

In the UK, he has taught at Trinity College, Bristol, and the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham. During his time in Beirut he wrote "Whose Promised Land?", which was first published in 1983 and has seen four revisions since then. Other publications include: "Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenges of Islam" (IVP, 2007), "Whose Holy City? Jerusalem and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (Lion/Baker, 2004), "Islamic Terrorism: is there a Christian response?" (Grove, 2006). Colin has spent the last two Autumn Semesters teaching in the Middle East: in 2011 in Bethehem and 2012 in the Lebanon.

A further aim your committee has identified, is proactively to encourage those at the beginning of their ministry, or in the early stages of training for it, to attend

courses at the College. Many of you will know at first hand what a life changing experience this can be. The Jerusalem Trust has funds available to assist those interested to participate in a course. Three such grants were awarded in the past year to Lynda Kenny of the Yorkshire Ministry Course, Bridget Woodall of St. John's, Nottingham, both from 'York Diocese and Carl Melville, Trinity College, Bristol and St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich. This offer which was to mark the 50th Anniversary of the College, it is hoped to continue so if you know of anyone who might be interested, do encourage them to apply to our Treasurer, John Angle.

There has been a lot of deserved praise for Simon Sebag Montefiore's "Jerusalem - The Biography" which is reviewed in these pages by one of the Committee, Robert Nokes. The book is full of fascinating pieces of information. For example, about the way in the fifteenth century that pilgrims could arrange to be locked in the Holy Sepulchre for days and nights if they wished. They found (p.285) that the church resembled a bazaar-cum-barbershop with stalls, shops, beds and a large quantity of human hair; many believed that illness would be cured if they shaved themselves and placed the hair in the Sepulchre. Montefiore goes on: "Some pilgrims were convinced that children conceived within the church were specially blessed and of course there was alcohol, so that the dark hours often became a candle-lit hard-drinking orgy in which good-natured hymn singing gave way to ugly brawls". Such passages serve as a salutary warning to those who are inclined to view the past through rose coloured spectacles.

I am reminded of an earlier book, "Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel" by Eric H.Cline, (2004). He is Vice President of the American Schools of Oriental Research and reminds us that conflict has been a constant - feature of life in the Holy City throughout its history. He writes:

"There have been at least 118 separate conflicts in and for Jerusalem during the past four millennia - conflicts that ranged from local religious struggles to strategic military campaigns and that embraced everything in between. Jerusalem has been destroyed completely at least twice, besieged twenty-three times, attacked an additional fifty-two times and captured and re-captured forty-four times. It has been the scene of twenty revolts and innumerable riots, has had at least five separate periods of violent terrorist attacks during the past century and has only changed hands completely peacefully twice in the past four thousand years."

So continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for God's blessing on all who seek to serve Him there.

*Paul Conder*



# Bishop Robin's Swansong

With effect from the end of the Annual Gathering and Lecture in May I intend to resign the chair of the British Regional Committee after 17 years in post. It has been a fascinating time, witnessing the ups and the downs in the fortunes of the College, (the downs always related to the political crisis); and it feels good to be handing over at a time when the College is thriving once again with high hopes for the future, and the BRC is full of energy and ideas for promoting St George's within the UK in the years ahead.

I am delighted to announce that Bishop Richard Cheetham, Area Bishop of Kingston in the Southwark Diocese has agreed to take up the mantle, and he has been formally endorsed by Bishop Suhail, Chair of the foundation and his name warmly welcomed by the Dean of the College.

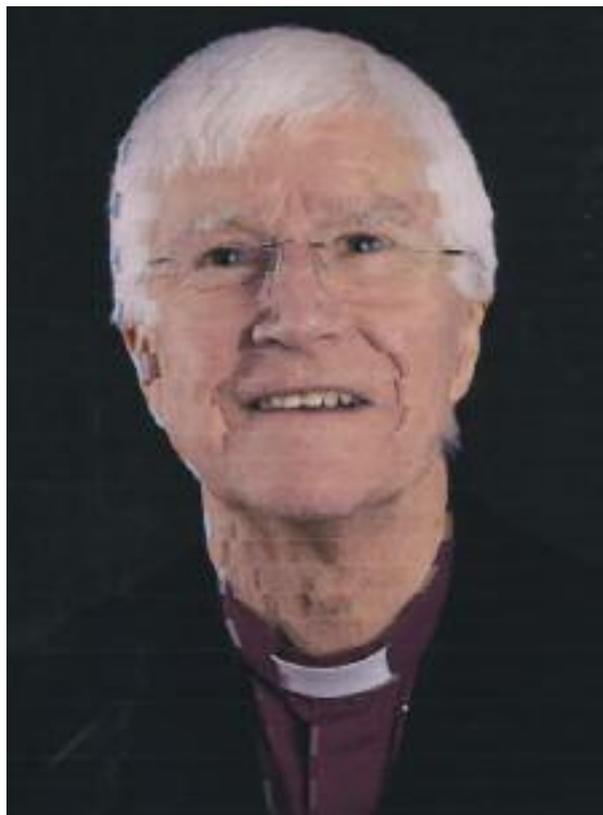
Richard is married to Felicity and they have two children. He and I worked closely together in the St. Albans Diocese, before his appointment to Kingston. He is a scientist by

training, with a passion to communicate the truths of the Gospel in words and images to which the world outside the Church can relate, and in the autumn he spent a Sabbatical in Berkley, California working on this theme.

In February last year Bishop Richard attended a course at St George's College, Jerusalem and like many of us before him, he was bowled over by his experience. He recognised in St George's a jewel in the Anglican crown, too little known and appreciated; and he is determined to do all he can to put that right. As a great start he and Dean Graham Smith have begun a firm friendship which will stand them and us in good stead in the years to come.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term as Chair of the BRC; but I have known for some while that it is time to hand over, and now that the ideal successor has been found I shall do so with thanksgiving and relief.

*Robin Smith*



## ROBIN SMITH - AN APPRECIATION

Humility and grace are qualities that we all admire and often aspire to. When these are combined with commitment and passion for a cause then blessings abound. The many people whose lives have been touched and changed for the better through the work of St. Georges College owe a debt of gratitude to Robin. For almost two decades Robin Smith has served the British Regional Committee with his own unique blend of patient insight, humour and a desire to see the work of the College grow in depth and breadth. The years since 1994, when Robin took over the chair, have had their challenges.

There have been changes in personnel in Jerusalem, in both College and Diocese, and there have been some careful negotiations involving other Regional Committees. At times it has seemed as if political and economic uncertainty would become a stumbling block to the work that St. Georges is called to. Throughout the changes and the uncertainty Robin has persevered in his commitment to promote the work of the College and to keep the British Regional Committee focussed on the task of supporting the Dean and his staff. With a calm presence and an eye on the clock we have been guided through some important discussions and come away from meetings of committee and friends feeling encouraged and blessed.

Robin came to the work of St. Georges with a wide store of accumulated wisdom all of which he has shared. One of his many gifts is to make people feel welcomed and at ease and this

has been very evident in his chairing of the Annual Meeting of Friends. I have cause to be personally grateful for the warmth of his welcome and his encouragement to members of churches other than the Church of England. Robin has worked hard to bring an ecumenical dimension to the work of the College and in so doing has helped others to regard St. Georges' as their own particular home in Jerusalem.

As we give thanks for the leadership that Robin has given we wish him well and know that we have been blessed in knowing him. The work of St. George's continues and I have no doubt that Robin Smith will continue to watch, listen and pray that the College might always be the window into the Jerusalem of The 1st and 21st centuries. That part of East Jerusalem, not far from the Damascus Gate, opposite the YMCA and within the grounds of the Cathedral has been a special place to Robin, as it is to all of us who know it. We are indebted to a man whose grace, humility and passion have been given with generosity to a special place.

*David Grosch-Miller  
(For the British Regional  
Committee)*



# DEAN'S CORNER

From the new Dean, Dr Graham Smith

St. George's College is enjoying a very fruitful year of high census, excellent evaluations from pilgrims and completely renovated accommodations. The next year is showing increased registration, new courses for ordinands along with an offering in March of "Islam and Muslims" and reaching out to Anglicans in the third world. We expect to welcome 200 clergy from the Diocese of Madras in India!

As we approach Advent, I recall a deeply moving experience that took place last year at the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Those of you who have been there will remember well the many icons of the Blessed Mother given by various countries. I always like to ask the pilgrims to look for the icon from their native country.

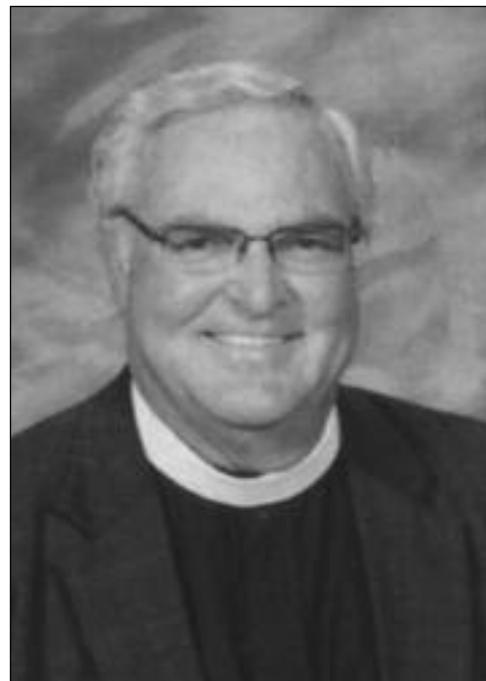
On this particular day, a woman with parents from Poland was on the course. When she saw the Madonna from Poland, it was very different from the others. Instead of portraying the mother and child, Mary was surrounded by many children. The woman began to cry. She cried because the story told in the painting was the story of her life! The story depicted the children who were orphaned during the Second World War after the Nazi and Russian invasions. These Polish children, who had lost their parents, were taken in by people of neighboring nations and given a new life. Mary was depicted as the protector of children from all over the world.

This woman on our course was the daughter of two of those orphaned children that her mother and her father 'would meet years later and marry. Had it not been for the miracle of her parents' salvation, she would never have been born!

When you are on pilgrimage at St. George's, there is no telling what surprises you will encounter or how much your faith will be transformed. A pilgrim encounters many holy icons which draw out of us sacred ground on which we have walked in our past. This Advent, as we ponder Mary and the risks she took to give birth to Jesus, we might also ponder the risks our grandparents and parents took in order to give us life so that we might glorify God as disciples of Jesus.

Perhaps this next year may be a time when you come to St. George's for a pilgrimage with your church. 'We would love to welcome you. For those of you who have already come, you might wish to come again, either to bring a group or to take a different course. The list of courses for both 2013 and 2014 are on our website as well as in this magazine. Thank you for being a part of our family, for sharing in our mission of bringing Christians to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and for keeping this ministry vital so that others may come, just as we have.

*Faithfully, Graham M. Smith, Dean*



## Encouraging support from the Friends of St George's College in UK.

### Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has supported the College with their gifts in the past year. It is much appreciated. Many of you give faithfully month by month and some give periodic gifts or donations as a result of speaking at a church about their visit to St George's. Your annual subscription is also a great help. We are grateful also for the continuing support of the Jerusalem and Middle East Churches Association (JMECA).

As a result this year we have been able to run the Trust and lay on the special day at Heythrop College in London and what is more important give bursaries to ordinands, ministers and lay workers for courses at St George's. Nine individuals have

followed courses at St George's and in the summer we had three ordinands who were given a special Jubilee Scholarship (twenty applied — it was hard to sift them to just three!) which covered the full cost and travel expenses to the Palestine of Jesus course in the summer.

Just a final thought on giving — have any of you considered leaving a legacy to the Trust for its continued work. We believe in life after death! This is a way of ensuring that we too can bring life after our deaths to the College through contributing to the training and development of Christian ministers and workers of the future.

*Rev John Angle (Hon. Treasurer)*

# Sermon by the Rt Revd John B. Taylor

*formerly Bishop of St. Albans, at the Annual Eucharist of the Friends of St George's Jerusalem 3rd May 2012*

Very few people choose to drive through the middle of Baldock these days. Why would anyone want to? But the time was when it was on the route of the A1 and that wide High Street carried an endless trail of cars, coaches and heavy lorries on their way up the Great North Road. Today on its western side is to be seen a massive Tesco's laid out in extensive grounds behind a Georgian façade. I still treat it with reverence, for it used to be the headquarters of Kayser-Bondor, the manufacturer of the best fully fashioned silk stockings a lady could hope to be given.

The managing director of Kayser-Bondor was John Goodenday, who is still remembered in Baldock as well as further afield. For in the 1950s he endowed an annual scholarship to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem which was eventually awarded to me in 1954. So here I am as the first John Goodenday Senior Scholar of Jerusalem! (Pause for drum-roll) And thus began my lifelong love affair with that Holy City and its people.

Arriving in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, I soon met Professor Norman Bentwich's son-in-law, Zecharia Kallai, who guided me round the synagogues of Meah Shearim on the concluding day of the Feast (Simchat Torah) in the company of a young Israeli scholar, named David Flusser. In no time at all a whole new world began to open out before me. I was captivated, with the scholarship, the scenery, the history and the echoes of the past, with Jesus and with the Bible. I could imagine no finer preparation for ordained ministry than the spell in the Holy Land that I was now privileged to enjoy.

Most of you here have sampled that heady brew thanks to a stay, long or short, at St George's College and on one of its courses. Part at least of our thanksgiving at this annual Eucharist must be that we give thanks to God for what we have experienced in days past and the lasting influence that has had upon our lives ever since.

Before going to Jerusalem I had studied Classics Part 1 at Cambridge followed by three years of Hebrew and theology as well as doing my compulsory two years of military service, but the Hebrew that I had learnt at the feet of Henry Hart and Winton Thomas bore little comparison with the Hebrew of the Jerusalem lecture-rooms and on the streets of Israel. Fortunately I could make use of my classical Greek and Biblical Hebrew to look into the way in which the Septuagint was translated in the second century BC and I had the benefit of an outstanding Septuagint scholar in Professor I. L. Seeligmann to guide me in my research.

But the bare fact of living in Jerusalem for a full year and travelling the Land was the lasting legacy for which I give thanks today. I remind myself that I was more than a visiting scholar, more than a tourist. I was on pilgrimage. My aim and my hope was to draw forth from the land of Israel and its Holy City all that it had to offer to feed my spirit and to sustain my Christian faith. So there was a cautionary text from the Old Testament that I kept near me and feel moved to share with you this morning. I have never preached on it before and I am not quite sure that I am going to do it justice today, but the text is more important than what I shall say about it.

It comes from 2 Samuel 14. 28 and the story of the conflict between David and his son Absalom. A laconic sentence: "Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem and saw not the king's face".

For me this verse carries undertones that hint at far more than the bare meaning of the words. For Absalom Jerusalem represented the place of his upbringing, his father's home, the city from which he had been expelled but to which he had graciously been allowed to return as a prodigal son. He was restored to privilege but not to favour. His father, the king, was

there but was not available. No forgiveness, no invitations, no reconciliation, certainly no hint of a fatted calf. The memory of past rebellion lingered on - as much in his mind as in his father's. The father-son relationship had fractured but was not yet fully healed. What point was there in living in Jerusalem when the king's face could not be seen?

And what value is it to pay a visit to Jerusalem, whether for two whole weeks or for two full years, and to miss the very point of being there? To meet with God. to see His face and to cultivate the life of the Spirit. As a tourist centre, Jerusalem has much to offer, almost too much. We can go there to study it as a place of human conflict, to try to understand the background to the age-old hostilities between Jew and Arab and usually far too soon to begin to take sides. We can absorb ourselves in matters archaeological which have a fascination all their own. We can get to grips with the complex history of the civilisations which have flourished and faded in that part of the Middle East, and can find a degree of satisfaction in discovering where they have led and what their legacies are to this day. But for me this is not what Jerusalem is all about. It is about God and His people, about His Son, crucified and risen there, it is about His Spirit poured out in that place like a huge overflow of grace. And I say to myself, Beware that I may be living in Jerusalem but am missing out on those unique features of the place which are its special blessings for the Christian pilgrim. I am there but am failing to see the King's face.

Jerusalem should be the place where people meet with God and have their vision of Jesus deepened and renewed. It has been that for me many times and that is why I can still give it the ambiguous name of the Holy City. However many possible sites there are for the Upper Room or for Golgotha or for Emmaus or for any biblical episode that later generations have attempted to commemorate, I am less concerned about strict topography or an accurate grid-reference on a map. I want simply to be able to believe that it could have been here (or near here) that the Saviour of the world, my Saviour, breathed His last or broke bread or rested in the tomb and I want to be able to worship him with tears of adoration in my eyes. That is what it has meant to me to be seeing the king's face.

I have St George's College to thank for one of my most poignant moments as a bishop. At what appeared to be the mid-point of my 15 years as Bishop of St Albans I spent two months on sabbatical at Tantur, figuring out that with the Lord's help that would set me up for the rest of my time until retirement. Thanks to David Praill, a staff member of St George's, my wife and I joined a St George's party that went down to Sinai to stay at St Catherine's Monastery as guests of the monks. We climbed the mountain in silence, repeating the Jesus Prayer as we did so; we visited not only the basilikon but also the world-famous library, we knelt down in the chapel of the Burning Bush with our shoes removed from off our feet. But also and most memorably, Linda and I rose up in the early hours of one morning and went out into the desert to pray. We wanted to bring our lives to God and to dedicate ourselves to Him for as much of life as was left to us and as much of ministry as the Lord should in His mercy grant to us on our return home.

That was a meeting with God that will never leave me. For months I could not speak of it to anyone without breaking down. Why should I speak of it? It was an intimate moment between us and God. It was like seeing the King's face, a kind of second Damascus Road. Infinitely precious. A holy moment. Jerusalem, Sinai, Galilee and Gethsemane give off experiences such as these for those who go looking for them. It is one of the reasons we go there as pilgrims, and it is what we rightly give God thanks for in our worship today.

# CORRESPONDENCE

To: The Committee, Society of the Friends of St. George's College, Jerusalem.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the generous bursary which enabled me to attend the course 'The Palestine of Jesus' from July 19th to August 2nd Having the opportunity to learn from the Rev. Dr. Kamal Farah about the culture and context of the teachings of Jesus was an experience far beyond any expectations I had held. The visits to the Holy sites were interesting and thought provoking.

All the staff were excellent: Bishara the liaison officer who tended to us as if we were his chicks and he a mother hen – it made us all feel incredibly safe in a foreign culture. Honey the hospitality minister who greeted Bridget and me at half past midnight with a warm hug and a plate of food. David, the chaplain, whose pastoral care and meditations were brilliant. Joseph the cook and all the staff who maintain the college and care for the needs of the guests so well.

I had the opportunity to meet the Bishop and have a private meeting with the Dean of the Cathedral concerning fund raising for the Palestinian refugees. It truly has been a life changing experience. Please see the attached letter sent to the Church Times for consideration of publication.

Thank you so very much for this opportunity. I would dearly love to attend the course next year entitled 'Children of Abraham' from September 6<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> taking a day or two out of the course when visits are made to sites I have attended, to work in the diocese with Honey on women's issues or in the hospital in Nablus as a nurse.

I would be very grateful to hear how to apply for funding to do this from any sources you may know of.

Many Thanks



In another letter, Lyn recounted more of her experiences;

...Visiting Hebron to study the Patriarchs' and tombs at the Makhepelah, we encountered a building that has been divided in the middle - on one side the Muslims worship in a mosque and on the other side the Jews worship in a synagogue. It is perhaps symbolic of what is occurring in the Holy Land that there is a green door through which one could access both places of worship if it were opened. But it is not.

To access the synagogue we walked past an armed Israeli soldier. The restroom was staffed by a Muslim woman who greeted us effusively with hugs and smiles. There was no toilet paper or soap, and only trickling tap water in a broken sink, but she offered us individual squirts of hand soap and toilet paper with the graciousness of someone inviting an honoured guest into her home. Very small children were trying to sell their wares. They were shabbily dressed but very happy to have visitors there.

Just ONE HUNDRED METRES away we passed another armed guard and entered a beautiful grassy area, with shaded courtyard, leading to the synagogue. Afterwards we saw little Israeli children all beautifully dressed and happily playing, attended by what appeared to be nursery teachers. The toilet they were using had toilet paper and soap and plenty of running water. The teachers, literally, pushed us aside to shepherd the children in first.

This was a theme repeatedly witnessed during my stay in the Holy Land.

My whole experience has prompted me to respond to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian People, disregarding political issues. With the blessing of the Dean of Jerusalem, and full knowledge of my sending Bishop, I have immediately created a basic website, Facebook page and twitter account with the hope, shared by all 38 of the course attendees, of raising funds to respond to the witnessed basic needs of the people e.g. nappies (diapers), milk for infants, medical aid and equipment to set up small businesses.

This site, OLIVE BRANCH, is a conduit to direct funds via the diocese of Jerusalem to assist hospitals and to the Shepherd Society, via a social worker for the Bethlehem Bible College.

Politics aside I would ask you to please visit the website [olivebranchonline.co.uk](http://olivebranchonline.co.uk) for details or email [olivebranchinfo@gmail.com](mailto:olivebranchinfo@gmail.com) for further information. No response will be made to political opinions; this is a peaceful response to Jesus' teaching 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

# "Ways in the Wilderness"

September 2012 ~ Diana Glover

I'm sitting on the roof top of St George's College in the afternoon sunshine. To my right I glimpse someone ringing a hand bell at St George's School. It's the end of classes for the day. Ahead of me are the towers of churches and hotels stretching to the Old City. On my left, the now familiar streets of East Jerusalem and behind me the reassuring tower of St George's Cathedral reminding me of England back home. This has been my base for the last three weeks and the start of my three-month sabbatical.

I'm thinking back to 18 months ago and recalling the question I kept asking myself: "What shall I do for my sabbatical?" Presented with my one and only opportunity to take such a break from parish ministry I felt like a child in a toy shop who had been told I could have anything I wanted. I had been overwhelmed by the array of choices in front of me. That was until my sabbatical adviser told me about "Ways in the Wilderness" run by St George's College and then I knew that the course was for me.

My growing interest in pilgrimage attracted me to the possibility of following in the steps of the desert fathers and mothers, of visiting ancient monasteries and biblical sites and sleeping under the stars in the desert. I was lured by the sayings of those early monastics: "Go to your cell and your cell with teach you everything". My cell would be somewhere in the wilderness places of the Holy Land and an opportunity to discover solitude ... or so I thought!

As I look back on the course and my extra week at the college after it I realise that "community" rather than "solitude" is the word with which I would sum up my desert experience. I could not have anticipated the sense of community that I would have experienced with my fellow travellers, with the college staff and perhaps most of all the challenge to live as community that was presented to us by the Bedouins we met on our pilgrimage.

In his opening lecture our course director, Father Kamal, reminded us that in the Eastern Churches monastic life began not with the Desert Fathers and Mothers but with Abraham, Moses and John the Baptist each of whom responded to God's call to set out into the unknown. Each day we were to follow in their steps as we left Jerusalem, travelled south through the Negev (sadly avoiding Sinai because of the political situation there), crossing at the tip of the Red Sea into Jordan where we travelled through biblical Edom and Moab until we reached John's baptismal site at the River Jordan before preparing for our return.

There were thirteen of us including St George's staff, our tour guides and driver; a mixture of Americans, Palestinians, two Australians, one from Spain and myself—the only English member of the group. These differences of background faded as we got to know each other, took turns to sit next to each other and together discovered the beauty and awesomeness of the landscape through which we were travelling. It became clear that the desert is as multi-faceted as any city. The wilderness is a place of life — of wild animals and plants hidden at first but as the eye becomes trained so the greenery becomes visible. I had not anticipated the birdsong that would accompany our first two nights at Kfar Hanokdim and at Zman Midbar. In contrast, the sandy desert mountains at Ein Kerem or the red Jordanian rocks seem stark and silently beautiful.

We experienced Bedouin hospitality in our first encampment, drinking mint tea and listening to the village chief describing how meat (not part of a Bedouin's everyday diet) would be cooked in a hole in the ground outside the encampment, ready to be offered as a sign of welcome to any passing traveller. Many of us wanted to sit in silence and contemplate the approaching sunset at Zman Midbar with its strategic location perched high up in the wilderness with the Dead Sea and Jordanian hills in the distance. How different from our later experiences of covering ourselves with black mud as we floated and laughed in the Dead Sea, of swimming together in the warm waters of the Red Sea or of dancing with Bedouins at the Wadi Rum encampment.

So what was the highlight of the course for me? I will never forget the day that the Spanish member of our group and I decided to walk to the monastery on the top of the mountain at Petra. This was to be some achievement as we are both in our sixties. We had agreed

to walk in silence but soon discovered that this would be impossible. Along the way, Bedouin children walked alongside us, asking our names, inviting us to buy jewellery from their "shops" that lined the steps up to the monastery. At first my British reserve found this difficult. It was a bit like wanting to avoid the "Big Issue" lady on any high street in England. But somehow these children won us over. They knew every crag and path of this ancient Nabatean city. Their command of foreign languages and their horsemanship were impressive. Their heightened senses enabled them to spot other members of our party on distant peaks. Father Kamal had told us that if you are lost in the desert, ask a Bedouin for help. The Bedouins challenged me to accept their sense of community, so different from mine, and this was for me a greater achievement than reaching the top of the mountain.

So I look back on "Ways in the Wilderness" not as the experience of solitude that I had expected but as an invitation to community. At times it was challenging to step out of culture, particularly when being offered Bedouin hospitality or being asked to buy or dance. I remember fondly the staff at St George's each of whom used their gifts to ensure our physical and spiritual well-being. Their hospitality will stay with me. Before I set out on the course I remember wondering who the other participants would be. Now they have not only names but have become new friends. Perhaps they have discovered, like me, that the ways in the wilderness lead to relationship with fellow travellers from around the world.



The Monastery at Petra

# Trip to Jerusalem



I have often wondered about travelling to Israel to learn more about the context and culture the Bible was written in. As a first year ordinand I was awarded a scholarship from St Georges College Jerusalem Trust to attend The Palestine of Jesus course in July 2012 as part of my contextual theology placement. This was not my first time abroad but was the first time I had visited the Holy land. Here are some of my impressions and a summary of what I have learned from the whole experience.

I travelled to Jerusalem on my own, and didn't know anyone else on the course. Having said that before I left Manchester airport I had already met one other ordinand who just happened to be sat in the seat in front of me! The course had many church groups on it and about 8 independent travellers. I really valued the people I met, the friendships made through this shared experience. Throughout the two weeks it was great to discuss different issues which arose from this learning opportunity, we were from a real variety of church backgrounds and had a range of approaches to theology, which gave a real diversity and richness to the long discussions we all enjoyed.

We visited many places where tradition and scholars think the actual sites we read of in the Bible are. Some of these included the place of the annunciation, the nativity, the crucifixion, the garden tomb, Lazarus tomb, Emmaus, Bethany, Nazareth, Mount of Beatitudes to name but a few. Most places have a church built on the spot believed to be the place, many of which go back to the Byzantium era, the history of this place is fascinating.

The course also allowed us to hear about some of the complex history of Israel, we gained valuable exposure to some of the tensions and issues which continue to be so real in the modern Jerusalem. The lectures from the extreme Jews were contrasted with visits to the Palestinian refugee camps and to the Mosques. We visited Hebron the place where it is thought that Abraham's shrine is. The barbed wire fences and armed security border between the Jewish and Muslim side of the Temple were a very visual and challenging experience. Literally the temple is divided in two between Muslims and Jews with very high security, we saw Abrahams tomb half in each side of the Temple and the Mosque. This was a challenging experience as it was

visually a picture of the tension which lies between the Jewish people and the Muslim Palestinian people. The apparent affluence of the Jewish side of Hebron with the obvious poverty of the Muslim side of the site was for me challenging and deeply disturbing. That said, the benefit of these challenges are I now feel I can pray and lead intercessions with a greater understanding and insight into this complex situation, hopefully without bias to either religious group.

The course leader Father Kamal gave talks about the culture and context both before and during the many visits to the Holy sites. The course Chaplain led times of prayer and reflection and services throughout the trip. These times were a real oasis, time to stop and hear God amidst the 'busyness' of the course and learning. For me they were the richness of the experience. When we visited the site where the Garden of Gethsemane was thought to be, we entered a beautiful church with very ornate and elaborate decoration, I found a real peace and space to really encounter God. We all found God in our midst speaking into our lives in different places and ways. What was striking was often these churches or sites did not for me feel Holy, they were busy bustling places, but it was as I stopped to consider that I found God the Holy One amidst the busyness, the bustling!!

So what has changed, what have I learned from the experience of visiting Jerusalem? What amazed me was how close some of the places were to each other and I have a much better understanding of how the places in the Bible actually fit together, which really helps me to understand and explain it to others. I have found both in prayer and preaching I now have the ability to imagine and picture where and what Jesus was and is saying to me. I am a person who really values being able to picture and imagine things in order to understand what I am learning; the experience has enabled me to understand the first year of my Theology degree in a deeper way, it felt like lots of facts fell into place throughout the trip. I would encourage anyone to experience The Palestine of Jesus, it is both an informative and formational experience.

*Bridget Woodall  
St John's College Nottingham*

# Holy Land Sabbatical 2012

## *The Revd Robbie McFarlane*

The notion of studying in the Holy Land first surfaced in June 2011. I was returning from a short 'orientation' visit prior to leading a church group on a pilgrimage the following year. While looking forward to sharing a pilgrimage with the congregation, 'It would be wonderful to spend some individual time on guided study.' I confided to my wife. Within a week of our return, there was an article in a Church of Scotland publication inviting ministers to apply for funding to visit the Holy Land. God works in mysterious and wonderful ways!

The article went on to describe the criteria, but also stated that the approved course was available as study leave. This leave is granted to Church of Scotland ministers, and I had accumulated a number of weeks. The plan was beginning to come together. The leave consisted of a month in Jerusalem – two weeks at St Andrew's Church of Scotland and two at St George's College. Both of these were available through generous assistance from the charity 'Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem' and St George's College, both of whom I thank for their wonderful kindness.

The time with St Andrew's would be with the minister George Shand. He gave unstintingly of his time as we engaged in some parish work, but also took time to see some of the work which the various Christian churches were involved in. From Sabeel, the ecumenical centre for liberation theology, to the work of the various local groups providing income through using their skills as weavers, seamstresses and woodworkers. This was very much a time to see what they call the 'living stones' of the Holy Land.

While the time with St Andrew's was structured, yet flexible, the fortnight with St George would involve participating in a course, but which one? After various debates with myself, I decided that 'Pilgrimage and Spirituality' seemed to be what I was looking for. It consisted of visiting various sites of special significance to Christian pilgrims and taking time in Bible study, history and reflection. There was also an element of looking at pilgrimage from a Jewish and Islamic perspective. The whole area of course holding enormous significance both spiritually as well as politically for all three monotheistic faiths.

Our group was small in number – five of us. A wonderfully intimate experience, but sadly probably not viable in economic terms to be repeated in a similar format. It did however afford us the opportunity to talk and listen together in the wonderful leadership of Rev Dr Kamal Farah. He opened by saying that the usual tour brochure's heading is – 'Walk where Jesus walked.' Then he pointedly continued 'They should say Run where Jesus walked!'

So it was that 'Father Kamal' would lead us for the next fortnight. His love for the area, its history and his faith was evident at every moment. He encouraged us in our reflections and personal journey, was patient with our questions and in his own questions at times gently exposed our lack of in-depth knowledge.

His pace of delivery, wide knowledge and most importantly his timing of visits allowed us to take time to reflect on where we were and literally absorb the moment. Taking photographs is one thing, but being allowed time to simply 'be there' was wonderful and a great blessing.

Perhaps the most memorable of these was a Bible study followed by a time of personal reflection in the grounds of the Church of the Beatitudes. Despite a number of people visiting the place, we found a quiet area and spent time considering the words of Jesus.

To list every place visited and my personal experiences would read like a diary or tour guide. I would simply highlight two. The first is the night we spent in the wilderness. The total lack of any greenery and the hard, flinty earth was so unlike what I imagined it to be. My thoughts were always that it would be more like a sandy desert - still barren, but that the ground would be soft, yielding beneath my feet. How travel in a minibus makes us forget the difficult journeys undertaken by John, Jesus, the disciples and so many others as they walked from place to place.

At night, it was brought home to me that it had been a long time since I was in a place where there was no light pollution. I had forgotten how many stars there were. Each one made by a creator God. A time to be still before God and appreciate the wonders of the universe.

The second place is Emmaus (Abu Ghosh). While the Crusader church is an amazing place, looking back to Jerusalem from the hill and remembering the words – 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?' (Luke 24: 32 NIV) made such an impression. There are so many churches and 'sacred places' to visit on a pilgrimage it can almost be overwhelming, and the most moving moment can simply be looking back to Jerusalem and recalling the words of the disciples.

Time and facilities at college were geared very much to allowing us space and time to consider the day's events. To call what we were on a 'course' sounds dry, it implies academic work, perhaps even with a test at the end. It was however very much a pilgrimage, made with others, but very personal nevertheless. It was wonderful being able to read, think and reflect, away from the responsibility of having to do so in order to prepare for a sermon or talk.

Naturally our journeys took us through various checkpoints and reminders of the difficult political situation in the area. Despite living there, not everyone has the luxury like us of spending a month there in quiet contemplation. These times made me, and I think the group, so much more aware of the privilege to talk about and live out our faith in relative freedom.

My thoughts therefore are often with the people we left behind. There were many people who helped us on our way and mentioning some means omitting others, so my apologies. A quick word for the ever patient and knowledgeable Bishara. While we were few in number, a phrase that came to mind was his job was like 'Trying to shepherd cats'. If you ever had one you will know what I mean!

Finally, was there a moment when everything came together, a sudden blinding light? Not really, and I am fine with that. A number of months on and I am still working though the experience. At times certain thoughts come back. Some are personal, others I share with the congregation. It was certainly a deeply wonderful time.

Would I recommend this? Absolutely! Though I realise I am fortunate to have had study leave and a family and congregation who encouraged and supported me.

More importantly would I return – well, I already did when we went on our church pilgrimage this year. The lessons learned from my month there was wonderful as our pace was very much 'walking, talking and listening' and certainly not running.

So would I return again – yes. Will I? I hope so.

# The Palestine of Jesus

March 14 - March 27, 2012

*What was from the beginning,  
what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked at and touched with our hands,  
concerning the Word of Life and the life was manifested,  
and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life,  
which as with the Father and was manifested to us -  
what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also,  
so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed  
our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son  
Jesus Christ*

Making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land under the auspices of St. George's College brought to mind this passage from 1John. During the two weeks of the Palestine of Jesus course, we heard, saw and touched with our hands the scriptures, the sights, the very steps that our Savior walked. The very steps in some cases and in others at least very near to the very steps. It was a powerful time. Wow!

I have frequently prayed for the curse of procrastination to be taken from me. It is, unfortunately, still an unanswered prayer as I was asked to write about my experience of the Palestine of Jesus course for the annual St. George's Update not long after returning from Israel and it is now the end of October with the deadline weighing heavily upon me.

The struggle in writing this article was to find a different way in reviewing the course that wouldn't be repetitive to the readers of past issues. Those of you who have been a course participant would surely favorably testify to the amenities of the campus, the graciousness and skill of the staff, the purposeful, well directed and varied course curriculum. Five stars all round.

But when I think back after seven months have passed, the fortnight comes to me in flashes of memorable moments.

I remember the look of shock on my husband's face when he discovered at our first group evening meeting that he was not a tourist but "a pilgrim". I had failed to use the term when I booked us for the course as I hadn't wanted to cause alarm. We eventually learned that of our 37 course classmates, 15 were practicing clergy and if you counted the spouses as clergy-ish, we ordinary folk were a minority much to our surprise.

We were issued with name tags to accelerate the bonding process. The name tags merely stated the wearer's first name. One evening, husband Mike and I sat across from a couple of Americans named Laura and Kirk. I asked, "Hey Kirk, so what

business are you in?" "Oh, he replied, I'm the Bishop of Arizona." Mike shot me a worried look that said, "and I'm here, why?" Fortunately, we soon found we were part of a laid back, fun and friendly crew.

Visiting the Holy Land had been at the top of my "bucket list" and the impetus to go this year was largely due to the newly installed Dean of St. George's College, the Very Rev. Dr. Graham Smith. We knew him a short time back when he was Father Smith, our rector of St. David's Church, Glenview, IL. It was so great to be back in the company of him and his wonderful wife Sherry who are just loving their time at the College. Under their guidance we have no doubt that the College will go from strength to strength.

The timing of our pilgrimage coincided with the first anniversary of my mother Edith's death. I could not have been in a better place this March 22nd than on a bus with our fellow travellers when at the request of the Dean he asked everyone on board if they would join in a prayer for my mom. That was very special to me.

And on that day, we visited the Church of the Transfiguration atop Mount Tabor. If you Google Earth Mount Tabor, you will probably wonder how one maneuvers a coach to reach the summit. The group exits the big bus and disperses into mini-vans driven by unflappable drivers who steer these vehicles around 37 switch back, hair pin turns. And this is a two way road! The fact that our driver came equipped with only one arm made more than a few of us a bit tense.

Recollections are frequent and come often such as the fascinating optional trip to Masada where a band of Jewish rebels held off the Roman army for two years after taking residence in one of Herod's hilltop fortresses. Two options to get up there: walk - dare you - or the gondola. You will have a chance to take a dip in the Dead Sea. Personally, I preferred to have some refreshment at "The Lowest Bar in the World" while viewing those who chose to get covered in mud and float about in the brine in the chilly March weather.

Actually, I recommend the cooler months of the year to do a course. You will be climbing hundreds of stairs, trekking about in desert areas, and can be shoulder to shoulder with people in cramped, crowded conditions at various holy sites.

As a practicing chiropractor, I also advise that if you are unfit or in anyway handicapped, these courses are not for you. The sites are not wheelchair or handicap friendly. They are not suited for people with lower limb problems. Those afflicted with painful arthritic hips, knees or feet should not take even the basic Palestine of Jesus course. And I believe other courses offered are more arduous as the St. George's website states. The old city of Jerusalem with its ancient, worn stones are very slippery when wet and the narrow streets include almost invisible steps which are precarious to surefooted visitors. So if you are now an able traveller, make plans to go while you are fit.

I offer my apologies to my friend and spiritual mentor, Graham Smith, if my review does not include more spiritual revelations. I leave that to others more capable of imparting that very important - the most important - part of being a pilgrim. I loved and cherish my time with you and Sherry and Honey Becker and Kamal Farah and Bishara Khoury and all the fellow pilgrims we were blessed to meet.

God bless you all and may we meet again.

*Gail Bown, Lyminster, Hants*

## As others see us...

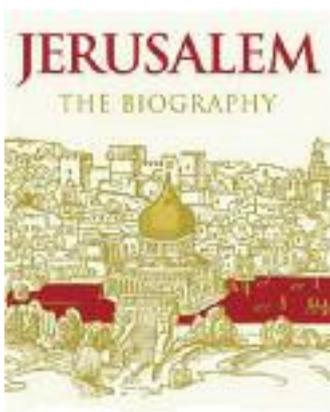
The former Anglican Bishop. Here, during the Cathedral of Saint George, with its frigid twentieth-century Gothic, has seen many colourful imperial rites, but is now a simple parish church, where the Lord's Prayer is said in Arabic by a Palestinian Jew - clerics of all major denominations except Roman Catholic', including the Moslem grand mufti and one

of the two Jewish chief rabbis, attended services on December 9th of every year, the anniversary of General Allenby's conquest. They all came; the service was mainly in English, but portions were read in Arabic, Hebrew, Greek and Armenian. The services, discontinued after Samuel's

departure, are remembered by those who care about such things as the last time the assorted clergy all met in one house of worship - or for that matter, in one room.

*Amos Elon,  
"Jerusalem, City of Mirrors"  
1991.*

## ~ BOOK REVIEW ~



### Jerusalem - the Biography by Simon Sebag Montefiore

To describe this 638 page book as 'comprehensive' is a massive understatement. After a brief survey of the pre-Davidic centuries, culled from the evidence of archaeology and the known history of the surrounding area, the author takes the story from the young David to the present day. (The

very last incident he mentions is, as it happens, the deposition of the Greek Patriarch Irenaeos at Easter 2005, an event which those of us who were on the 'Holy Fire' course that year will always remember). He divides the story into nine parts from 'Judaea' (David to the death of Nero) through to 'Zionism' (Hertz, to the present).

The author comes of course from a very distinguished Jewish family. Indeed, one member of it, Sir Moses Montefiore, plays a significant part in the story. Do not, however, conclude from this that the story is written from a Jewish point of view. So far as I can see it is entirely objective. A note on the dust jacket begins 'Jerusalem is the eternal city, the capital of two peoples, the shrine of three faiths.' That is the spirit in which the book continues.

Sharing a land between two peoples is, as any reader of 'St.

George's Update' will know, complicated and painful enough in itself, but the situation has been made infinitely more complicated and tragic by the succession of outsiders who have taken control of the place down the ages. St. George's alumni can probably list the main nations who have taken possession at one time or another, but the subdivisions within each regime are baffling (to me at any rate). Did you ever know, and if so can you remember, the differences between the Umayyads, the Abbasids and the Fatimids? If not, this book will tell you.

Despite the book's length, it is far from dry. The author approaches the story through the individuals who influenced the city's history. This gives him the chance to talk about who in turn influenced them. Usually these are powerful leaders. When, for example, family scandals affected the course of history, as seems to have been the case frequently, most of all in the middle ages, we are given the gory details. The author has a dramatic turn of phrase: at one point, during the Frankish kingdom, he says 'Jerusalem politics began to assume the menace of a Mafia family in decline.' Sometimes the individuals who interest him are relatively obscure. In the early twentieth century, he makes much of a character called Wasif Jawharyeh, who had started out as a lute-player.

I had two contrasting reactions to this substantial volume. One was pleasure at how it tells the long story in such a fascinating way; I often found it difficult to put down. The other, however, remains a great deal of horror at the actual story, so much of which is gruesome.

The book itself is compelling, but it does provide an even deeper understanding than before of why Our Lord wept over the city. 'If only you had known the things that belong to your peace.'

*Robert Nokes*

# No. 1, Hart House, Farnham.

In a quiet corner of a Surrey town there is a door that opens into the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. 1 Hart House, The Hart, Farnham is part of a tastefully renovated period property. The plates on the door discretely announce the address of JMECA and JEMT. (Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association and Jerusalem and the East Mission Trust Ltd.) Inside, the Administrator, Mrs Shirley Eason, keeps the four Dioceses of the Province in touch with supporters in the UK and elsewhere, and provides a vital link in the complex relationship between a number of charities administered by JEMT and their beneficiaries.

JEMT, a Trust Corporation established in 1929 to act as a trustee for charitable bodies, is not itself a charity, but administers the assets of JMECA and a number of other charities that provide support for the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Charities and funds support clergy in the Province, religious training, including bursaries for St George's College, medical care and education. A substantial amount of land and property used by the church in the dioceses is also registered in the name of JEMT or JMECA, some of it dating back to the Ottoman Empire.

The largest charity, JMECA, was established in 1887 by Bishop Blyth as The Jerusalem and the East Mission to maintain and develop the Diocese of Jerusalem. JMECA expanded to encompass the whole Province when this was formed in 1976. Now the benefits of modern communications allow the Administrator to publicise the charities' work for the Province in a graphic and instructive form. A visit to the website: [www.jmecca.org.uk](http://www.jmecca.org.uk) will provide you with an illustrated view of the principal charity and an idea of what goes on behind the door of 1 Hart House, Farnham.

*Richard Owens*



**For many years we have become accustomed to similar depressing headlines, despite the valiant efforts of those involved in the Decade of Evangelism, Alpha courses, Back to Church Sunday, Faith in the City and other attempts to reverse the trend. Perhaps we can learn some lessons from the first eras of church history about what made Christianity grow so successfully.**

In his monumental "Decline and fall of the Roman Empire" written in 1776 and rarely read nowadays, Edward Gibbon, himself no uncritical admirer of the religion, identified five causes which brought about the phenomenal spread of the early church, namely exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of rigid virtue and the constitution of the primitive church.

Gibbon writes about "the inflexible and ...intolerant zeal of the Christians" - a concept totally at odds with the current spirit of secularism and multiculturalism. We recoil and rightly so, from the bigotry of Islamic or any other form of fundamentalism. Globalisation and instantaneous communication produce a hesitancy about being too definite in proclaiming our beliefs or pressing them upon others. It has not always been so. John Wesley preached "as a dying man to dying men". How many sermons like that have you heard recently?

The motto of Harvard University is: "Veritas" - Truth. Jesus proclaimed Himself: "the Way, the Truth, the Life". Christians through the ages have chosen to die rather than deny this faith. Indeed the early church had to discourage believers from deliberately seeking martyrdom, such was their zeal. The same zeal is evident in parts of the world today. Following Christ meant Pastor Aliya Tammavong in Laos paying a high price for his faith. A victim of persecution by the repressive regime of that country, he spent three years hiding in the jungle and watching his son starve to death. Through him and leaders like him, the church in Laos has almost doubled in size in the last ten years.

A similar situation is found in Vietnam where, according to the Bible Society the two main Evangelical denominations alone estimate they need 50,000 bibles to disciple the passionate young Christians who worship with them. In China in two years time more new converts are anticipated to have been added than the current number of people attending British Anglican Churches each Sunday.

The second reason Gibbon gave for the spread of Christianity had to do with the doctrine of the Resurrection and belief in the after-life or as he put it, "the immediate expectation of another world". What happens when we die? We all have to wait to find out. Time will tell whether the Christian view is well founded or not. Which is preferable? Stephen Hawking's opinion that there is no after-life and Christianity is merely a fairy story for those who are afraid of the dark? or the early church's view that the day of death is the birthday of eternity? Our grounds for belief are founded on the promises and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each must decide for him - or her self whether we believe His words are credible. St.Paul was in no doubt. "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain and so is our preaching" he told the Corinthians. That message carried power and produced results then. It still does.

Next to be considered, according to Gibbon, was the claim of miracles. By definition a miracle is something unusual, something to wonder at. In the ancient world such events were seen as a sign of, or proof of, supernatural intervention, of divine activity. Particularly since the Age of Enlightenment more sceptical attitudes have arisen and miracles became more a source of embarrassment than persuasion. Yet the more that science discovers, the more deeply it leads into further

mysteries. An essential qualification for sainthood in the Roman church is to have performed a miracle of healing, as witness most recently the latest candidate, Pope John Paul 2nd. At the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum, in the University of Pasadena, a whole department is named "Signs and Wonders and Church Growth".

Gibbon's fourth explanation for the rapid expansion of Christianity was the pure and austere morality of the first believers, or "the practice of rigid virtue" as he puts it. Gibbon emphasises the role of repentance for their past sins and the praiseworthy desire to live up to the high standards of their calling, or in modern parlance, not to let the side down. Not that St.Paul, for example was under any illusion about the faults and failings of his flock at Corinth (1 Corinthians 6,v 9-11). It is noticeable

that in his letters the Apostle in the first section usually addresses theological matters and then goes on to spell out the practical ethical application of those doctrinal issues.

It reminds me of the small boy who was watching a Vicar building a fence. "Are you interested in carpentry?" he asked the lad, who replied, "No I just want to hear what a preacher says when he hits his thumb with a hammer". Of course, we all fail at times to live up to the standards we profess but the Gospel is about acceptance and forgiveness. The Christian can say "I may not be perfect but I am redeemed, loved and accepted by God". By the same token we are required to show those very same qualities to those with whom we have to do. That's all part of the deal.

The final point Gibbon makes as to why Christianity spread with so much success in the Roman empire was the constitution of the primitive church. This "united their courage, directed their arms and gave their efforts that irresistible weight which even a small band of well trained and intrepid volunteers has so often possessed over an indisciplined multitude".

Of how many of our congregations could that be truthfully said today? The Church as an institution comes in for a lot of criticism from time to time. "Jesus - yes; the Church - no" typifies a view not uncommonly heard. Books with titles such as "Saving Jesus from the Church" have made their appearance. Of course there are things in its history for which it should be deeply ashamed and which have brought discredit on its Lord. That is because the Church is composed of human beings,

sinners with all our imperfections.

But the Church is an anvil which has worn out many hammers. As we look at 2,000 years of history the achievements of the Church as a power for good in the world have been immeasurable - and all inspired by the person of Jesus of Nazareth and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. So much of our culture is based on Christianity, in the realms of education, healing, art, music, architecture, philosophy, yes and science too.

How much do you owe to the churches which have played a part in your life? Whether it is as a Witness to the faith, preserving and passing on the truth of the Word to successive generations; as the guardian of the sacraments; as a base for fellowship and support or as Christ's agent to serve the world which He loves so much that He died to save it - these surely are the grounds on which Christ's promise "whoever believes in me will do what I do. Yes, he will do even greater things because I am going to the Father", is justified. Edward Gibbon, being long dead, yet speaketh. From each of his five reasons for the growth of Christianity I believe we can learn important lessons for our mission in the world today.

Paul Conder

# Church in crisis

“Numbers of  
communicants  
and confirmation  
candidates fall again”\*

(\* According to the Statistical Unit of the Archbishop's Council" the annual number being confirmed each year is now less than one eighth of those confirmed in 1960. In 1960, the figure was 191,300. In 1980 it was 98,000, by 2000 it had fallen to 36,000 and in 2010 it was just 22,349. Nor is the Roman Catholic Church immune. In 2012 it suffered a record 181,000 defections which outnumbered those baptised into the Church.)

*From our own correspondent...*

BRC Treasurer John Angle and his wife Janet report on their recent visit to Israel and Palestine.

# It's Christmas!

## "Peace on Earth, goodwill to all"?



There is an old Sankey hymn of dubious rhyming quality which has the verse "Peace perfect peace with loved ones far away, in Jesus' keeping we are safe and they!" The first part of our visit to Israel/Palestine with a group of 16 lovely friends was certainly that - peaceful Visits to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, walking the Via Dolorosa, browsing the souls of Jerusalem and Hebron, cable car up Masada, Boating in the Dead Sea, dipping in the Jordan, sailing on Galilee and climbing Mount Beatitudes, visiting Capernaum, Nazareth and Caesarea on the coast. A beautiful peaceful, often deeply spiritual experience.

And we met people — lots of local people with whom we are involved in the Hope Christian Trust. The children and teachers in the Hearing Impaired Unit at a Hebron primary school, students at Bethlehem Bible College, leaders of the Anglican Church and a Family Support Centre deep in the northern West Bank. We nursed abandoned babies in an orphanage in Bethlehem and talked to local people living under the shadow of 'The Wall'. We worshipped with Christians at Cheinisan Monastery in a simple communion service on land about to be stolen from them by Israelis to build yet another section of wall.

And then on Wednesday 14th November as we relaxed by the Sea of Galilee mobiles were ringing, e mails were coming and families "at home" were worried because it appeared "a war had started in the south of the country." The group were never in any danger, however, and Janet and I delivered them safely to Ben Gurion airport. The airport had been closed for a few hours the day before because of rockets reaching from Gaza towards Tel Aviv! The group came home and we drove in Bethlehem and that was the end of our peaceful time in "the land of the Holy One"

That night we visited the leader of the Palestinian Bible Society in Jerusalem to the sound of Israeli air raid sirens as rockets landed having got through Israel's 'iron dome' of defence. We had planned to visit Gaza that weekend to be with the Christians there but this was now out of the question — even if we got in, there was no guarantee we would be safe or get out as those in the border coordination office

on the Gaza side of the border had all fled for fear of being killed. We did however travel through the military exclusion zone right to the border on two occasions to take a young Gazan friend back in to Gaza whose permission to be "out" was expiring. The first experience was not pleasant - it was early evening, dark and eerie at the border Checkpoint with the sound of Israeli drones overhead. Two huge explosions from Israeli gun fire about two miles away made us both jump. Our friend was refused entry this time thankfully and so another trip to the border was required the following morning— When he got home his mother rang us in Bethlehem — both she and Janet cried on the phone with thankfulness to God that he was safely home in spite of the dangers.

Back in Bethlehem the road outside our accommodation (on the third floor of the Bible College) one hundred -yards from the wall surrounding Rachel's Tomb became the place for clashes by frustrated and angry young people — angry at the rising death toll with their Palestinian brothers in Gaza — and the Israeli Army. Stones and molotov cocktails were thrown (ineffectively of course) at the watch tower and the soldiers retaliated with shooting tear gas and on occasions rubber bullets down the road at the crowd (one hit a fence just above John's head one afternoon as he tried to get back to our room!) Several youngsters were injured and one boy hit in the head and killed outside the College. Janet and some others in the College tried talking to the youngsters but then had to retreat, sniffing onions to counteract the effects of the gas — it was not at all pleasant, occasionally breathing it in produced a horrible choking sensation.

We left on Wednesday evening 21st November just as a truce was declared with deep sadness in our hearts- Gazans had seen 150 people killed — half of them civilians and the majority of these women and children and many buildings and homes had been completely destroyed. In Israel five people had died and some homes damaged. Both Israelis and Palestinians had been subject to the fear and trauma of rocket attacks and whilst there is no excuse for attacks on civilians in this situation the threat from Gaza to Israel and Israelis is no comparison to the harm that was being inflicted on Gaza. The

disproportionate impact on Gaza is clear for all to see.

We have received news since we were home that our friends in the Christian community are safe — there is some damage to their homes mainly glass being shattered by nearby rocket attacks. The church building where John was to preach on Sunday is safe and only has some shattered glass, (although it is right next door to a police station — the target for many Israeli rocket attacks!)

Pray for the people of southern Israel but particularly for Gaza. The British media (following the USA) constantly justify Israel's action as their "right to defend their people" and that is true. But what we are often not aware of is the fact that Israel controls the airspace, waters and Borders of Gaza, the electrical and sewage infrastructure and how much food, fuel and other supplies can arrive and leave, giving it almost total control over the economy. Israel holds 1.7 million people captive in miserable conditions.

Israel claims that this is a war against Hamas but many civilians — over half in this recent situation — have been killed and injured. And who started this latest escalation? Consider this fact: until November this year one Israeli had been killed by fire from Gaza in 2012 while 78 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli attacks. The media constantly refers to Israel's right to defend itself — if this is true does Gaza have the right to defend itself from Israeli attack in the same manner? There is clearly a double standard at work.

The United States (followed by the British Government of course) continue to support Israel. US taxpayers are funding the Israeli attacks on Gaza — I wonder if they realise this? Israel could not continue their assaults if the Obama administration and Congress did not approve — a sad indictment on US foreign policy. Israel uses its military might as a deterrent to Palestinians in Gaza, The West Bank and East Jerusalem to rebel. But when will the world realise that an unjust occupation and subjugation of an entire people cannot be maintained by military force alone. The only long term solution, for Palestinians and Israelis is one that offers freedom and dignity for all the people of Palestine and Israel.

In our Benefice Bible Studies in October we were reading about how the Beatitudes speak of those that are blessed who are peace MAKERS! And how can one make peace with an enemy without going to them. Israel, the U.S. through Hilary Clinton and others refuse to talk to Hamas whom they call terrorists. There is always a certain vulnerability in talking to an enemy but if peace is to come on earth and goodwill be shared by all — this has to happen and what better time to make peace with an enemy or someone you dislike or has hurt you whether on the international scene or within the community or a family is at Christmas when "the Prince of peace was born."



Severely damaged buildings in Gaza

If anyone wants to know more about our trip or continue to support the Hope Christian Trust in its ministry in the place of Christ's birth this Christmas time please get in touch. We are hoping to raise funds to give some support to members of the Christian community in Gaza whose homes have been damaged. John plans to visit again in mid-January.

Ring John & Janet Angle 01934 733695 or email: [hopebethlehem@btinternet.com](mailto:hopebethlehem@btinternet.com)

## A sad passing

St. George's College has lost an eminent friend with the passing of Bishop Kenneth Cragg who died in November aged 99. Coming from conservative, evangelical roots, he was best known for his ground-breaking work in opening up for Christians a deeper understanding of the world of Islam, chiefly through his two most famous books; "The call

of the Minaret" and "Sandals at the Mosque".

A large part of his wide-ranging ministry was spent in the Middle East and much of it at St. George's College. From 1970 to 1973 he was Assistant Bishop in the Jerusalem Archdiocese before returning to England as Reader in Religious Studies at the University of Sussex.

He finished his active ministry as Vicar of Helme in Wakefield Diocese but continued to

write and lecture as he did for an Annual Gathering of the British Friends some years ago. He published his 60th book in 2011.

Would that Islam possessed scholars of his calibre who could interpret Christianity as sympathetically to their constituency as Cragg. That would surely lead to a much deeper, happier relationship between the two faiths.

Please visit the new St. George's BRC Website:  
[www.stgeorgescollegejerusalemtrust.org.uk](http://www.stgeorgescollegejerusalemtrust.org.uk)

## 2013 COURSE SCHEDULE

Schedule of courses for the year 2013 - Prices in US dollars.  
Prices include ALL meals, accommodation, and fees.

Course members are expected to be in residence at the College by 18:00 (6:00pm) the night before the course begins and until breakfast the day following the course.

N.B. Prices may vary due to fluctuating exchange rates.

<b>1. Palestine of Jesus - Seminararians</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Tuesday, January 15 – Monday, January 28		
<b>2. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Tuesday, February 5 – Monday, February 18		
<b>3. Palestine of Jesus - Lenten Journey</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Thursday, February 28 – Wednesday, March 13		
<b>4. Islams or Islams Today</b>	8 days	\$ 1750
Wednesday, March 20 – Wednesday, March 27		

Western Easter 31st March

<b>5. Palestine of Jesus - An Eastertide Journey</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Thursday, April 4 – Wednesday, April 17		
<b>6. Retreat on the sites</b>	10 days	\$ 2260
Tuesday, April 23 – Thursday, May 2		

Eastern Easter 5th May

<b>7. St Paul and the Early Church</b>	14 days	\$ 5760
Tuesday, May 14 – Monday, May 27 (Entire Course in Turkey)		
<b>8. Ministries and Human Rights in the Holy Land</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Tuesday, June 4 – Monday, June 17		

Ramadan begins 9 July

<b>9. Youth Course</b>	8 days	\$ 1550
Tuesday, July 2 – Tuesday, July 9		
<b>10. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Wednesday, July 24 – Tuesday, August 6		
<b>11. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Thursday, August 15 – Wednesday, August 28		

Yom Kippur 14 September

<b>12. Children of Abraham</b>	12 days	\$ 2310
Friday, September 6 – Wednesday, September 18		
<b>13. Ways in the Wilderness</b>	14 days	\$ 5200
Tuesday, October 1 – Monday, October 14		
<b>14. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$ 3050
Thursday, October 24 – Wednesday, November 6		
<b>15. Women's Programme</b>	10 days	\$ 2260
Wednesday, November 20 – Friday, November 29		

Thanksgiving Day 28th November

<b>16. Palestine of Jesus Advent in the Holy Land</b>	14 days	\$ 2260
Tuesday, December 10 – Thursday, December 19		

## 2014 CALENDAR

(Updated Nov, 2012)

St. George's College Jerusalem

Schedule of Courses for the Year 2014 — Prices in US Dollars

Prices include ALL meals, accommodations, and fees.

Course members are expected to be in residence at the College by 18:00 (6:00pm) the night before the course begins and until breakfast the day following the course.

N.B. Prices may vary due to fluctuating exchange rates.

<b>1. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$
Tuesday, January 14 — Monday, January 27		
<b>2. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$
Tuesday, February 4 — Monday, February 17		
<b>3. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$
Tuesday, February 25 — Monday, March 10		
<b>4. Islam and Islams Today</b>	9 days	\$
Tuesday, March 18 — Wednesday, March 26		
<b>5. The Bible and the Land</b>	12 days	\$
Monday, March 30 — Thursday, April 10		
<b>6. Risen with Christ</b>	9 days	\$
Sunday, April 13 — Tuesday, April 21		
<b>7. Men's Programme</b>	11 days	\$
Friday, April 25 — Monday, May 5		
<b>8. St. Paul and the Early Church</b>	14 days	\$
Thursday, May 15 — Wednesday, May 28 (Entire Course in Turkey)		
<b>9. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$
Dates to be confirmed		
<b>10. Retreat on the Sites</b>	10 days	\$
Tuesday, June 3 — Monday, June 12		
<b>11. Palestine of Jesus (St. Peter's Lakewood)</b>	14 days	\$
Thursday, June 26 — Wednesday, July 9		
<b>12. Youth Course</b>	8 days	\$
Monday, July 14 — Monday, July 21		
<b>13. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$
Tuesday, July 29 — Monday, August 11		
<b>14. Children of Abraham Christian / Jewish / Moslem</b>	12 days	\$
Thursday, September 4 — Monday, September 15		
<b>15. Palestine of Jesus</b>	14 days	\$
Tuesday, September 23 — Monday, October 6		
<b>16. Ways in the Wilderness</b>	14 days	\$
Tuesday, October 14 — Monday, October 27		
<b>17. Nov and Dec New Courses to be determined</b>		
Prices on application		

## St. George's College, Jerusalem ~ British Regional Committee Members

Position	Title	Name	Address and Post Code	Telephone	Fax and Email
Chairman (from 2 May 2013)	The Rt. Revd.	Richard Cheetham	25 Albert Drive South Fields London SW19 6LS	02087 892318	bishop.richard@ southwark.anglican.org
Treasurer	The Revd	John Angle	Bethany 14 Farthing Combe Axbridge Somerset BS26 2DR	01934 733695	01934 733695 johnangle@btinternet.com
	The Revd.	David Grosch-Miller	URC South Western Synod The Manse Norton Filzwarren TAUNTON TA2 6RU	01823 275470	moderator@urcsouthwest.org.uk
Secretary	The Revd.	Paul Conder	112 Strensall Road Earswick YORK YO32 9SJ	01904 763071	01904 763071
	Ms	Susan Cooper	28 Headstone Lane HARROW HA2 6HG	0208 863 2094	08700 516752 scooper@hedstone.demon.co.uk
	Ms	Anne Barker	Ilex Holm, Ditton Road, Surbiton, SURREY KT6 6RJ	0208 399 4078 07971 184 009	anne-barker@ukf.net
	The Revd Dr	Stephen Need	The Rectory 19 Abbey St, Stock Ingatestone CM4 9BN	01277 840442	
	The Revd	Robert Nokes	92 Western Drive Hanslope Milton Keynes MK19 7LE	01908 337939	r.nokes@easykey.com
	Canon	John Westwood	Vicarage Squires Hill Rothwell NN14 6BQ	01536 710268	revdjohn.westwood@tesco.net
	Mr	Richard Owens OBE	September Cottage 29 Chipperfield Road Bovingham Herts. HP3 0JN	01442 833589	richard@rjowens.plus.com
	The Revd	Jeremy Frost	40 Vanburgh Park Blackheath London SE3 7AA	07725 014345	j.frost@gre.ac.uk
	The Revd Canon Dr	Michael Sansom	101 Churchfields Drive BoveyTracey Devon TQ13 9QZ	01626 836773	michaelsansom123@btinternet.com

### Annual Gathering of Friends of St. George's College, Jerusalem at Heythrop College, Kensington Square, London on Thursday 2nd May 2013



10am - Assemble. Coffee  
 10.30am - Reports from Jerusalem Diocese College Cathedral  
 11.40am - Eucharist. Preacher: The Rt. Revd. Richard Cheetham  
 12.45 - Lunch  
 1.45pm - UK Regional Committee Business. Lecture by Colin Chapman  
 2pm - Christians in the Middle East living under Islam  
 3.30 - Depart

*Any contributions of material for next year's edition of the Update will be welcomed by the Editor,  
 Paul Conder whose address is above.*

#### ADDRESS FOR ALL COLLEGE CORRESPONDENCE

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 Email: registrar@stgeorges.org college website: sgjerusalem.org