

Fiona and Joel Kelling

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The call in action

Dear friends,

Greetings from an increasingly sunny (if not yet warm) Amman!

Since we last wrote to you we have had our share of wonder and encouragement as well as frustration and exhaustion, with the emergence of “Omicron” and our oft-repeated but still surprising complaint of the incredible cold of winter in Jordan!

The optimism that we might be able to celebrate Christmas in the Holy Land was dashed within hours of our submission of the relevant application forms for travel, as borders again were closed to international travellers. Instead we revised plans and shared a wonderful Christmas with both the English and Arabic congregations we worship with, on Christmas Eve and Day respectively, and then Christmas dinner (including crackers!) with friends. We took time off between Christmas and New Year and, thanks to the generosity of some of our supporters, were able to stay at the Dead Sea for three nights and really get the chance to relax. We also made a long-anticipated journey east into the desert, to visit Azraq and the castle made famous by TE Lawrence, along with the wetlands and wildlife reserve, where endangered animals, including the wonderful Arabian Oryx are being protected. The wetlands have been partially restored after their destruction in the 1960s (but still remain in a state of precarious existence).

The time was genuinely restful, which was good and necessary replenishing for the month that followed! The children were only in nursery for a handful of days in January, due to COVID-19 closures, cold weather(!) and eventually a huge snow storm, which blanketed the city in up to a foot of snow. In fact it was so heavy that it broke or brought down many trees with the weight, which is very sad in a city that is not that green to start with. It also severed power lines in many parts of town, with some of our friends losing heat and electricity for more than a day. We were very grateful that we did not lose power and for the cheap (if smelly) gas heaters we use to stay warm(er!)

The disruption of having the children out of nursery was exacerbated as Fiona’s consultancy deadline was at the end of January. This meant it fell to Joel to get Aidan and Nora out of the house during the day to facilitate her productivity and squeeze his own work into nap times and evenings. While frustrating initially, it was on reflection very good to get to spend so much time with the children. It is a privilege and pleasure to watch them grow into opinionated and curious individuals, and seeing Nora imitate Aidan’s actions has been particularly charming (for the most part!).

Despite being together, we didn’t feel like we were able to be particularly present with one another for much of the month. Towards the end of the January, Joel embarked on his first work trip in almost two years, to Egypt. Then with only three days at home – filled with childcare while Fiona frantically worked



Name: Fiona and Joel Kelling

Location: Amman, Jordan

Our call: To support and strengthen Christian communities in the Middle East, reaching out to poor and marginalised groups (especially refugees) and encouraging reconciliation through interfaith exchange.

Our role: Working alongside local churches and institutions to provide practical and spiritual care to vulnerable groups to strengthen the mission of the Church within the Middle East.



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Celebrating on Christmas Day.

to finish off before another week of nursery closure – shortly made his second, this time to Cyprus!

After two years of no work travel, it was amazing to sit with people in person, dream dreams together and map out the possibilities in the year ahead. Egypt will host COP27 in November and so he met with the new Anglican archbishop there to explore how the church can begin to engage theologically and practically in response to the climate emergency. We discussed the development of a Green Anglican Movement in the country and Province and explored options to host Anglican African theologians and green advocates to help in this effort in the coming year. We also discussed the importance of ecumenical and interfaith approaches to this in Egypt. Joel was also able to meet with both Coptic and Evangelical Christians to explore this further and begin planning for events to encourage understanding and develop capacity around creation care in the lead up to COP27.

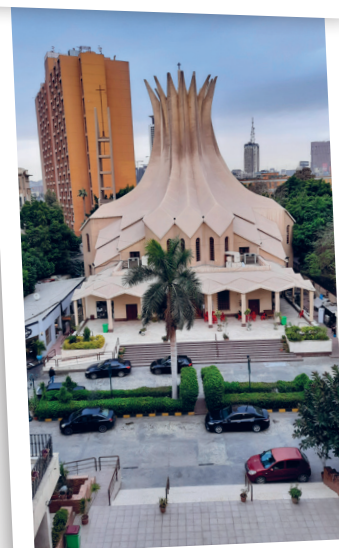
The trip to Cyprus was for the diocesan synod, to support the technical facilitation and present his work over the past year. It was wonderful to be led daily in reflections by the Rev Canon Dr Rachel Mash of the Anglican Province of Southern Africa, and for her to share a theology of creation, challenging and inspiring the Synod to more action corporately and individually in caring for God's creation. The trip also allowed in person meetings with the archbishop, the diocesan social concern officer and others, to discuss the opportunities around creation care as well as safe migration in the diocese, and to plan for the upcoming Provincial clergy and spouses conference Joel is helping to organise in April in Jordan.

Joel returned to Amman and the news that the planned regional climate conference in Dubai at the end of February has been postponed, meaning Joel now has a full month before his next trip! Please pray that this upcoming, rescheduled travel to Northern Ireland with a group from the Diocese of Jerusalem can go ahead with all participants in March, and also that Fiona's sister and her family are able to join us here for a visit (originally planned for two years ago!)

We hope that with things returning more to normal and the children back in nursery, we can restore some balance and rhythm to life, and that we can enjoy each other's company all the more. As our year "really begins" after a challenging start, we pray God guides us in the plans and decisions we make, and in the ways that we rest.

Grace and peace,

The Kellings



Photos from top to bottom: Enjoying some warmth down at the Dead Sea; Nurturing a love for ruins from an early age; Mourning the damage to the little green there is locally; View of the Anglican Cathedral in Cairo from the guesthouse.

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Are you pondering a call to cross-cultural mission? We'd love to connect and help you discern what God might be saying. Find out more about how we can help you to step into God's mission at churchmissionsociety.org/explore

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

You can give to Fiona and Joel at:
churchmissionsociety.org/kelling

Contact details:
fionakelling@gmail.com
joelkelling@gmail.com

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