



Fiona and Joel Kelling

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Location: Jordan



What we do: Working alongside local churches to care for vulnerable groups to strengthen the mission of the Church in the Middle East



Equipping and encouraging where followers of Jesus are in a minority

Dear friends,

We are sad to report it has been a hard few months on top of a hard few years. It has been good to visit congregations in Reading, Thame and Warfield and provide some updates in person. However, since we last wrote in April, the situation across the region has worsened yet again. The Iran–Israel conflagration in early summer upended Joel's anticipated trip to *majma* in Jordan, which had promised both connection and solidarity. Instead, the fractured peace in the Holy Land and surrounds has instead settled itself inside our own home and relationships. The various pressures and traumas of recent years combined with new challenges in the UK have seemingly caught up with us, and we currently find ourselves in the very uncomfortable place of contemplating what this means for both our present and future.

For Joel, this has meant taking a temporary step back from his work with the Anglican Alliance. After years of travel and investment, the balancing of regional networks, theological training and family life became overwhelming. Against the grief of personal loss, the horror of unfolding events in Gaza and the strain of coordinating a response, a rest was somewhat belatedly enforced. The college has been understanding, supporting time off in the last term before the summer. Joel will return to his studies at the end of September, solely focusing on this for the time being. However, over the summer, he was able to take part in a parish placement at Bradford Cathedral, where he witnessed the ways a diverse city congregation is wrestling with questions of belonging, hospitality and faithfulness in a multicultural setting. He also participated in the Centre for Muslim and Christian Studies summer school in Oxford, which strengthened his theological grounding and practical experience of inter-faith engagement.

Fiona has continued the volunteering she started in the springtime, becoming a regular advisor at a local hotel which houses asylum seekers, supporting those who are granted refugee status to find housing. She has kept this up alongside a short-term research role focusing on supporting decolonisation in international development. This work, which began in late April and runs through November, has provided a space to bring together her academic interests, practical experience and long-held passion for amplifying voices too often silenced in the current global order. It has been a good opportunity, but has stretched her both intellectually and emotionally, especially while trying to balance personal and family needs amid ongoing uncertainty.

In June, we bid farewell to the majority of the other families at the college. Over the summer, Fiona and the children spent time in Scotland with their cousins and Oma, enjoying "the fringe" festival feeling in Edinburgh,



Family holiday in Rome in May

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



as well as an uncharacteristically warm August that facilitated swimming in a loch in the Trossachs! At the end of August, we joined with friends again at Greenbelt. Returning to the same group we camped with last year was a poignant marker of being back in the UK, stimulating reflections on what has changed, not only in the world but within ourselves. Amid the music, art and conversation, we were grateful for the space to reconnect with others who are also navigating faith, doubt and hope in complicated circumstances.

September brought new beginnings for the children. Aidan has moved up into Year 3, carrying a giddy excitement about the anticipated topics (the Stone Age! Egyptians!). Nora began Year 1, a little apprehensive about making new friends. However, their innocent giggles and unhindered enthusiasm are a good reminder that joy coexists with pain in difficult times. At Cuddesdon, a new term is also about to start, and a new family has moved in next door – much to the delight of Nora. The student community is smaller this year, which will hopefully foster the opportunity to deepen relationships with those around us. Please pray that we might use this season well, cultivating friendships and learning from one another in this temporary but formative community.

The coming year also marks a time of discernment for us as a family. There are many questions about the future and how to balance both individual and family needs and ministry. We do not have easy answers, but we are practising holding on to hope, whatever the outcome. In this, we are grateful for your prayers, that we might have wisdom, patience, kindness and courage to keep walking, even when the path remains clouded.

Not forgotten, our friends in Gaza, the West Bank and the wider region remain in our hearts. We ask you to continue praying for those caught in cycles of violence, displacement and loss, and for those working tirelessly to bring relief and advocating for change. The church continues to bear witness while themselves being under attack – please see [this recent piece](#) by Archbishop Hosam. Pray for the remarkable ways they remain present, providing hope through offering shelter, listening ears and steadfast commitment.

As we write, we are deeply aware of the need for joy in the darkest of times. The words of the apostle Paul come to mind: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.” May that promise hold true for us and for all those whose burdens feel heavy in these days.

Please hold us in your prayers as we navigate the coming months. Pray for Joel as he resumes his studies and for wisdom over engagement with the Anglican Alliance. Pray for Fiona as she completes her current contract and considers next steps. Pray for Aidan and Nora as they grow in confidence and curiosity. And pray for us together as we discern the best decisions for our family and our future.

Grace and peace,

Fiona and Joel, Aidan and Nora

A note from CMS: Thank you so much for your support of Joel and Fiona, they are always grateful to receive messages of prayer and encouragement. However, if you have any questions or requests, we would love you to send them to us at hello@churchmissionsociety.org as we support the Kelling family at this time.



Photos from top to bottom: Appreciating the changing seasons in the landscape around Cuddesdon; a visit to Stonehenge in the summer with Daddy and Grandma; Aidan practising his balancing skills near Blackford Hill in Edinburgh; classic Greenbelt photo of Aidan and Nora with their cousin Thalia



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We've been encouraged to hear from others who are part of our wider area of work. Recently in Lebanon, three Muslim women have turned to Jesus and discovered their own mission calling, and in Nepal a young man called Amit has chosen Jesus over fame and fortune. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/equip