

Fiona and Joel Kelling

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The call in action

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!

Dear Friends,

Spring has very much sprung here, as hopefully it also has for you. However, while most likely you will have already celebrated Easter, there is a good chance that we may not have yet, as in Jordan all churches follow Lent and Easter according to the Eastern calendar. While it is a joy to be united in celebration here, it does leave us a bit disjointed from celebrations with friends and family abroad (and even our diocesan colleagues across the river!) – but then the hope we share in Christ's risen-ness is for all time, so it remains true that he is risen indeed, alleluia!

It is also the case that despite the good news of the resurrection, we remain in a world enmeshed in cruelty, violence and oppression. While the invasion of Ukraine has had little material impact on our lives in Jordan so far (though it may affect flour subsidies and fuel prices in the near future), the shocking horror of our capacity to do harm to other humans, and our need to be reconciled to God, each other, ourselves and creation is all the more apparent.

All this seems pertinent in light of the trip to Northern Ireland that Joel was finally able to make with colleagues from the Diocese of Jerusalem. This was twice postponed by COVID-19, but finally took place in mid-March. Joel took a group of laity and clergy from Jordan, Palestine and Israel to Belfast to learn from a variety of churches who have been engaged in church and community transformation in partnership with Tearfund over the past decade. The trip was eye-opening and inspiring, seeing how the churches we visited were making a real difference in the lives of the people around them – whether with massive financial and human resources or very little – and how concepts such as debt advice centres, which are not common in Jordan, could be possible. Some of the remarkable work has taken many years to grow into what it is now, through inter-denominational work in both poor and wealthy communities. At the same time, some of the most amazing stories were the ones of simply being present, sharing the love of God in non-judgemental ways, particularly with disaffected teenagers, the isolated or infirm.

While there we also explored some of the histories of The Troubles and met with people who have “waged peace” in difficult ways and continue to strive for justice. The Palestine-Israel conflict has many similarities, yet in Northern Ireland there has been something of a binary split between Catholic/Nationalist/Republican



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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Leading the pilgrimage to Downpatrick

support for Palestine and Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist support for Israel. It was fantastic to have the space for our group to speak about the realities of life as Anglican Palestinian Christians, with incredibly complex identities. We had the pleasure of joining the St Patrick's Day pilgrimage from Saul (the site of the first church in Ireland) to his supposed burial place in Downpatrick, joined by fellow Anglicans and others and celebrating our family in the Body of Christ. Everywhere we went we were greeted warmly and shown great hospitality, sharing and learning from one another. Please pray for the continuing process of contextualising Tearfund's church and community transformation materials as well as the continuation of friendships and learning.

Joel was able to stop off in Kidlington on the way home for two nights, surprising his mum and finally getting to meet his now six-month-old niece Hetty for the first time. It was great to see most of the family together (albeit it without Fiona and the children) – and to be able to collect presents for Aidan's birthday later in the month!

The second long-delayed trip also finally happened, with Fiona's sister's family, and both of us have gained an additional child since it was first planned. Their original trip was scheduled a week into the first lockdown in Jordan in 2020, which was very sad to miss out on at the time. This trip more than made up for it, as we toured around Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea and Amman with four kids under four in tow! It was so good to spend time with Simon and Christina and for the cousins to play with each other. Their stay also fell over Aidan's fourth birthday, and it finally felt like we were able to celebrate it well (he wasn't able to have a party for the last two due to COVID restrictions). Many friends joined us in our decidedly tiny-feeling flat for pizza, games and an amazing dragon cake made by Fiona. Aidan is already excitedly working out what Nora might want for her birthday party and cake in June, though we're not convinced there has been much consultation yet!

Over the next weeks we will celebrate Easter, while it is Passover season in Jerusalem, and the month of Ramadan too. These festivals rarely all overlap so closely, and across the border there has been an increase in violence, alongside heavy restrictions on the numbers of Christians being permitted to worship inside the Old City of Jerusalem for Holy Week by the authorities. Please pray for peace, and equal application of freedom of worship.

Joel is preparing for an additional celebration, that of the provincial clergy and spouses' conference, which begins in Easter week, and is happening for the first time in many years. Following Egypt's independence from the Province as the Province of Alexandria, this is an opportunity to reconsider the mission and vision of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, and for clergy to meet, pray, worship and fellowship together – some for the first time. Please pray for a successful, enjoyable meeting... and that Joel might get some rest once it is over!

Grace and peace,

The Kellings



Photos from top to bottom: Diocesan group presentation in Newtownards; Joel, with his mum and brothers, meeting Hetty for the first time; Kellings and Hildrews at Amman Citadel; Aidan with his dragon birthday cake

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

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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

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