



# 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.

Hello!

As spring turned into summer, planning turned to action and we have had a very busy time since our last letter at Easter.

Easter Sunday itself was celebrated first at sunrise with the international congregation and then with the Arabic service in Ashrafiyeh, before travelling down to the Dead Sea for the provincial clergy conference in time to start greeting arrivals from across the province. This was the first such conference in eight years, with many new clergy having arrived in the intervening period. It was a wonderful time spent together, sharing experiences, praying and worshipping together, learning from our guest speakers and getting to know each other in a friendly and meaningful way across the two dioceses able to be present. The unfortunate absence of representatives from the Diocese of Iran was noted: pray that the next conference planned for three years' time will be possible with full provincial representation.

The convivial spirit of the conference continued into the provincial synod, where Archbishop Hosam was elected to be the next primate of the Province when Archbishop Michael concludes his time in office (May 2023). However, rather than resting as the conference finished, we instead took the opportunity provided by the Eid holiday to travel to Jerusalem, returning for the first time in three years. It was a delight to see so many friends we have missed and return to places that mean so much to us.

Not one week after our return to Jordan, Joel was off again, this time to represent the Province at the Middle East Council of Churches' (MECC) general assembly in Wadi Natrun, Egypt. It was fantastic to see Copts and Orthodox, Catholics and Evangelicals all coming together to support the Christian presence. It was also an opportunity to spend more time with the Anglican archbishop of Alexandria and develop our work together in the run-up to COP27 in Egypt in November. With support from his Arabic-speaking colleagues, Joel was able to draft a clause into MECC's statement on caring for God's creation and calling for a greater response by national governments to the climate crisis.

In late May and early June Jordan hosted further Anglican gatherings that Joel was involved in – the Safe Church Commission (moved at late notice from Sri Lanka due to political instability), and Jerusalem's diocesan synod. The synod was a joyful occasion, not only as we were gathering in person for the first time in three years, but because of how it was designed with renewed focus on worship and prayer and workshops to explore mission. There was also exciting news on ministerial formation: it was announced that women will now be



*Nora enjoys her owl birthday cake!*

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To the edges**



commissioned as vocational deacons in the diocese, which is good for both the inclusion of women in leadership and encouraging lay leadership within the church.

At the same time, it was announced that Joel has been approved as a candidate for ordination! He has begun the online training offered through the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf and will continue working in his current roles for the next two years while also pursuing studies. Do pray for us all as Joel begins this journey, particularly in balancing family life, work, and study.

Joel also got to experience single parenthood for a change as Fiona travelled to Geneva to attend the global Shelter meetings at the beginning of July, including a gathering of the women's collective that she helped initiate. She also recently became a trustee for a UK charity working to support refugees and vulnerable populations in Jordan. Pray that she would be able to continue to engage in the humanitarian sector, making links between mission and humanitarian response, and challenging unjust structures.

In addition to work travel, we have also been on the move as a family, as we relocated from our central first floor apartment of the past four years to a ground floor apartment with a garden in the west of the city, which is nearer to public parks and the kindergarten Aidan will attend from September. We are sad to leave the home where both our children spent their baby years, and the neighbourhood where we are known and welcomed. But we are also excited about the prospect of a bigger home that suits our family's needs and allows us to offer more hospitality and host Bible studies or other gatherings. Because of the timing of other events, we only moved a week before flying to the UK for the summer. As a result, we still have a lot of boxes to unpack when we return!

We are now back in the UK for a brief time to celebrate Joel's parents' 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and to visit family and friends. We are also reflecting on the past few months and pausing a bit before gearing up for what looks like an equally busy autumn.

While we're back in the UK Joel will be helping to staff the Lambeth Conference along with his Anglican Alliance colleagues, before attending their annual retreat. Please pray for a convivial gathering of bishops from around the Anglican Communion, that forms a basis for continuing to build God's Kingdom on earth. Our family will then return to Jordan via Germany, where Joel will be representing the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East at the World Council of Churches general assembly in Karlsruhe. This also happens to be home to the German side of Fiona's family, who we will be taking the opportunity to spend some time with.

We're so grateful that we've been able to travel again as we emerge from the pandemic and continue to build friendships and working relationships, both in the Middle East and beyond. Please pray we are now able to rest well in the company of our families before work picks up again.

Grace and peace,  
The Kellings



*Photos from top to bottom: At the top of the Austrian hospice in Jerusalem; Archbishop Hosam and Aidan lead the way up to Mount Nebo at the provincial clergy and spouses conference; Rev George al-Kopti introduces the statement on creation care at the MECC general assembly; Joel hosts members of the diocesan synod on a tour of the Amman Citadel*



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