



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.

Dear friends,

We are happy to be back in Jordan after a marathon of a summer. Being on the go for 10 weeks and in as many locations did allow us to spend time with every one of Fiona and Joel's immediate families, but it was also a lesson in limiting the scope of any future trips! Aidan and Nora handled it all really well, but were very tired by the end and overdue some stability. So it is good to be home and setting up our new house for the coming years.

However, there was much good in the time away, both with family and with work. Joel ended up doing most of the preparation for his parent's anniversary party as his dad had been unwell, apparently battling an infection, though thankfully had recovered enough to enjoy the party when the time came. We then travelled north via Sheffield to Scotland, seeing extended family and friends, with Fiona remaining in Scotland with the kids while Joel headed back south to the Lambeth Conference.

In Canterbury, Joel had various roles to fill: supporting the Anglican Alliance stall in the resources centre and facilitating seminars; helping the Province of Jerusalem prepare to lead one of the Eucharist services; and facilitating the participation of bishops who had been unable to travel to the UK because of COVID-19, or who had tested positive during the conference and were confined to their rooms. Through this he was able to listen to the conversations and "calls" that were proposed and discussed. Despite what the press had to say, there was much positive good will and unity around the vast majority of the calls, which focused on issues such as mission, Anglican identity and creation care.

The day after the more infamous human dignity call (which was actually a good moment of willingness to walk together in diversity, deftly facilitated by the Archbishop of Canterbury), everyone headed in to London for a day focused on creation care at Lambeth Palace. The Anglican Alliance had been deeply involved in preparations, with the development of the Communion Forest, worship and prayer walk throughout the gardens. After so much talking, it was a real privilege to pray with people from all over the world, recognising the injustice in the places they are from and putting God at the centre of our actions and attention.

It was truly amazing to be a part of and to engage with so many from across the world on issues of deep significance to our faith and mission. The faith and servant-heartedness of the stewards – young volunteers from around the Communion who had offered their time to help things run smoothly throughout – gave me much encouragement for the future of the church, and as the Anglican Alliance engaging with them was as important to our work as engaging with bishops and their spouses.



Aidan and Nora at the top of the Wallace Monument looking out over Stirling.

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



A lasting memory from the conference will be singing the Arabic hymns that I had helped translate and transliterate in Canterbury cathedral. It was also fantastic that Bishop Guli of Chelmsford joined the Bishops of Jerusalem and Cyprus & the Gulf celebrating the Eucharist to represent Iran, the other Anglican Diocese in the Province, which is in much need of encouragement. Please pray that they may receive new leadership in the country soon, to offer pastoral care, that the church may flourish once more.

After reuniting with Fiona and the kids and spending a couple of weeks back in Kidlington, Joel then headed on to Germany while Fiona

took a detour via her sister in France before joining him in Karlsruhe. We were very grateful during this time to be able to stay with Fiona's aunt, and we even got a date night at the light show in the *Schlossgarten*, thanks to Oma!

Joel got stuck into ecumenical matters at the WCC (World Council of Churches) assembly, enjoying the rhythm of daily prayer, worship and Bible study, singing with the 4,000 assembled in many languages and experiencing the vastness of the body of Christ. It was great to spend time with the extended Anglican family as well as the Middle Eastern church grouping, with focus on the issues of Israel-Palestine, Lebanon and Syria major talking points of the whole assembly. Joel also joined the ecumenical conversation on water and climate justice, and built new friendships with ecumenical leaders on the issue, which will be particularly useful in developing church activities and responses at the upcoming COP27 on climate change in Egypt.

Since our return we are slowly emptying the boxes while the kids make the most of the trampoline in the garden. They are settling in well to their new nursery and kindergarten and Aidan is also really enjoying singing in the children's choir. However, we don't really feel like we've stopped since we got back, with Joel going straight into facilitating the WEA/Lausanne movement's Middle East conference on creation care in the north of Jordan and then the upcoming church and community transformation facilitator training with Tearfund. Fiona has started a new consultancy, as well as actively engaging in the Jordan Advisory Group and UK-based board of Mosaic Middle East. Joel is really enjoying his theology classes online, and we have also restarted Arabic classes together. Pray that we are able to progress in our learning, both in class, and in practice, as well as in resting at some point! Please also pray for the long-term impacts of the conference and training, as well as for a vocal, Christian witness at COP27 in November, especially that justice for the most vulnerable states can be acquired.

Finally, and most in need of prayer, is Joel's dad. The tests that were done following the infection he had back in July revealed that he has bowel cancer. Saying goodbye knowing this was really hard, particularly not knowing what the prognosis or treatment would be. He will begin chemotherapy soon, so please pray for peace for him and Joel's mum at this time.

Grace and peace,

The Kellings



Photos from top to bottom: Fiona's extended family gathering in Scotland (minus Joel); Alliance staff and eco-bishops launching the Communion Forest; Worship in the prayer hall at WCC; Kids reading with Grampy in the den.



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