



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.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!

We are once again out of sync with Easter timings, as at the time of writing we are in Holy Week, while you have all celebrated the resurrection already! Nevertheless, the timelessness of the greeting remains true!

We can hardly believe it is Easter already. 2023 got off to a rapid start, with Joel on the road for three consecutive weeks from late January, as he travelled beyond the boundaries of the Middle East.

His first trip was to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to address the USPG International Consultation, entitled Set My People Free: The Call of the Church

Against Human Trafficking. He spoke about the work of the Anglican Alliance and the relationship between the Middle East and East Africa, which is an emerging departure point for economic migrants to the Gulf. It was a remarkable gathering of church leaders from the Americas, the West Indies, Africa, Europe and Asia as well as those involved in combatting the exploitation of others. It allowed the group to also engage in discussions on the historic forms of slavery, specifically analysing the East African slave trade and the trading of human lives across the Indian Ocean and into Arabia. The group visited Christ Church in Zanzibar, built over the largest slave market on the island, and had some serious and challenging conversations on the legacy of slavery and colonialism within Anglicanism.

Joel has concurrently been re-engaging with this issue within the Middle East, beginning a project with the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the Dutch organisation Kerk in Actie to more intentionally equip the Church with theological and practical responses to modern slavery.

The next week, he travelled to Cyprus for the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf's synod, using the time to begin conversations on how the Church will engage in the COP28 climate conference, which will take place in Dubai in December of this year.

Less than 24 hours after returning from Larnaca, he headed back to Africa, this time to Ghana on the west coast for the 18th Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), as the lay representative of the Province. With the meeting happening in Ghana, there was a strong emphasis on engaging with the issue of the transatlantic chattel slave trade, and Joel presented with Canon Kofi deGraft-Johnson (Secretary General of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa) on similar themes as in Tanzania. They visited Cape Coast Castle, epicentre of the British-controlled trade in human lives, which was a necessary but distressing experience. That was followed by



*Memorial beside Christ Church
Cathedral on Zanzibar*

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With each other
To the edges**



a service of reconciliation in the adjacent cathedral. Do consider exploring the relationship between the slave trade and the Church where you are, and look to join the conversation more widely.

Joel was able to introduce two resolutions to the council, one on safe migration and the other a response to the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, which has heaped more devastation on an area already vulnerable. Please continue to pray for Syrian refugees in Turkey and remember the damage caused, even when it ceases to appear in your news. The Diocese

of Jerusalem has directly engaged in the response, initially donating \$10,000 to be distributed through the relief efforts of ecumenical partners in the area, including the MECC.

The Anglican Church in Canada also provided two resolutions at ACC18 in relation to the situation in the Holy Land, particularly in support of the Christian presence and the resumption of a meaningful peace process. It was good to feel supported by friends from across the world, and for increasing tensions to be recognised. Please pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Archbishop Hosam Naoum of the Diocese of Jerusalem was elected as the vice-chair of the Anglican Consultative Council, so we can imagine more of Joel's work with him being in this space in the future.

Wonderfully, Joel was able to break up his return travel from Accra in Doha and spent a day with Stanley Alfred – who is part of his cohort in the Exploring Faith course – being shown the city and meeting the staff of the Church of the Epiphany. The building itself has a number of chapels and the compound hosts up to 50 different congregations every weekend, representing all of the denominations present in Qatar. Fiona had actually seen the church under construction back in 2010, so it was great to be able to visit the completed site.

Joel continues in his theological development outside of work hours, with the most recent module, appropriately, on mission and service. He also preached last week (our Palm Sunday), working alongside the pastor of the International Church to develop and refine the sermon. It was a real privilege to get to preach, but more than that, to spend quality time developing it. Joel will begin serving more at the Arabic congregation of St Paul's, Ashrafiyeh, engaging in more formation work with the Rev George al-Kopti there.

Since all the busyness of February, March was more sedate, despite some ongoing problems with our residency permits (please pray that this gets resolved soon!). Fiona has been keeping busy with work while Aidan turned five at the end of March. He enjoyed his first "proper" children's party at home very much. Nora has since been regularly asking when it will be her birthday, and is learning just how long two months can feel! Before then there is some travel scheduled – for all of us, not just Joel!

Elsewhere in the family, Joel's dad is continuing to receive chemotherapy, though has recently moved to a different type, following a CT scan that showed the tumours had grown rather than shrunk in some places. Please continue to pray for him (Martin) and Diana, Joel's mum.

Lots of love, The Kellings



Photos from top to bottom: Visiting Cape Coast Castle in Ghana; breakfast with Stanley in Doha; Aidan with a present on his birthday; Nora enjoying a blue birthday cupcake



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Jesus never gives up. Neither should we. We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup

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