



## Message from the Convener

**At last**, we have two ministers in place! Muriel Pearson has been in Tiberias since last spring; and Stewart arrived in Jerusalem on Christmas Eve. You will read news from each of them in this Newsletter. I have no doubt that one of the primary purposes of The Friends is, and should be, to **support our ministers**: and the members of the Committee take that seriously. Members of The Friends might occasionally want to send them a message of encouragement: their email addresses are [SGillan@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:SGillan@churchofscotland.org.uk) and [MPearson@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:MPearson@churchofscotland.org.uk)

I hope you will sense from this newsletter that there is a **good deal of energy** around The Friends at the moment: it can be exhausting being a member of the Committee! One highlight I am proud of is the **launch and success of our [new Facebook page](#)**: "The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias". It is already proving popular: an excellent way of keeping up to date with news of our churches and ministers and of The Friends and of wider stories. Please "Like" our page!

You would have been able to see pictures on the Facebook page of the recent visit to Scotland of **Jamal Shehade**. You will read more about it in this newsletter. Many of you will have met Jamal. He is the Director of the [House of Grace](#) in Haifa, a partner in Haifa, where people coming out of prison are welcomed and supported on their way to a new life out of prison. **Jamal's visit was partly funded by The Friends**.

He toured the country for ten days with Muriel Pearson: together they addressed meetings, had lunch with the Moderator, met all sorts of people involved with prison and rehabilitation issues; and **raised consciousness and pricked consciences**. The meeting in Perth,



organised by The Friends, was attended by about one hundred people.

There are other good things happening, as you will discover in this newsletter: and there are hints of other good things still which may be about to happen.

Please come to our **AGM** at St Cuthbert's Church Edinburgh on **Friday May 19th at 11.30 am**. More details and a streaming link will be sent to members nearer the time; we are delighted that Rev Dr Stewart Gillan will be the main speaker.

*The Very Rev Andrew McLellan*

## News from our Ministers

### Rev Dr Stewart Gillan

*Stewart's patience was rewarded – he finally arrived in Jerusalem in mid-December and paints a picture of his first two months.*



I am enjoying the weekly celebration of the sacrament, something new for me, and the time of sharing **'Hearing the Word together'** that I have introduced. I am struck by how different the stories of origin are of the Tiberias and Jerusalem Churches. What has been the legacy of our two founding stories, and where do we wish to take our congregations now, I have been asking myself.


Our numbers in Jerusalem are very low, averaging 12–14. On three Sundays we have been over 20, but on other Sundays we struggle to get into double digits. We will have to work hard and well to rebuild a congregation.

I am keen to explore digital means of **sharing worship**, reaching out and telling our and our partners' story, and to enhance our worship space itself for those who attend, thinking an approach to The Friends would be in order once we know what we want to do.

Along with Lilian (Manager), Tony (Head Reception) and Chef Wadie, we are establishing healthy working relationships between Church and Guesthouse.

Together with Muriel I have been taking Assemblies and beginning to build relationships with staff at [Tabeetha School](#). Christmas Assemblies provided an opportunity to meet some of the parents as well, and to see students in action in front of peers and parents.

#### Highlights with partners:

- The **ordination** of the Rev Sally Azar, the first Palestinian woman to be ordained a Pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.   
*Read Stewart's report in March Life and Work – or [here](#)*
- Visiting [Tent of Nations](#) and beginning to journey with the Nassar family. We have set Monday 27 February as a date for the resumption of our Communion Services in the Olive Grove Chapel.
- Opportunities to meet people from the broad ecumenism among the Churches in Jerusalem including ecumenical worship during **the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**.
- Meetings with **Wi'am** staff regarding a proposed bible study series in Bethlehem with Christian and community leaders.
- Visiting the Bedouin community **Umm Al Khair**, south of Hebron, and meeting local leaders.
- Attending **Praying Together** in Jerusalem on two occasions, which meets on the first Thursday of each month in a Jewish, Christian or Muslim holy place.
- Attending the handover ceremony of **EAPPI**.

Finally, on a personal level, my A-3 Clergy Visa was extended on 26 January for 12 months, multi entry, for which I give thanks. I have begun to study Arabic twice weekly in Bethlehem – colloquial not classic!

*Grace and peace to you – Rev Dr Stewart Gillan*

#### Rev Muriel Pearson



*Since her last report Muriel has been busy with activities around Christmas, a visit home to family and the visit to Scotland of Jamal Shehade in January 2023.*

I was glad to join staff from the Scots Hotel for their Christmas meal out which was a very

happy occasion. We also had a very good meal on Christmas Eve at the Hotel with members of the congregation and their families.

A **'Welcoming the Light'** event in December combined Advent with the end of Hanukkah and went very well with about 80 attending plus the choir. Feedback confirmed folks appreciated meeting people beyond their usual circle. And the fish and chips ran out!



The attendance at the Watchnight service on Christmas Eve and the Christmas Day service was boosted by the event, with members of the Messianic community from Porrihiya joining us.



Yakfie, the flat above the manse, is almost always occupied. The EAPPI volunteers, and others, have been

advertising it via social media! At present the accommodation is offered free and guests can, if they choose, eat in the staff dining room in the hotel. I hope this will continue to be the case.

#### [The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel \(EAPPI\)](#) have

been reporting more incidents of settler harassment and violence than ever before and have themselves been on the receiving end of increasing aggression, although they are simply observing. When there is an aggression by a Palestinian the response is brutal and punishes family, extended family and friends as well as the perpetrator. It is hard to see how this can end well.



Over the next few months, alongside welcoming a number of pilgrim groups I will be working to make an action plan around development of the **Upper Rooms at St Andrew's Tiberias** and developing a **concert programme** at the church in conjunction with the hotel.

I have just finished reading **Stranger in my Own**



**Land** by Fida Jiryis - the story of one Palestinian Israeli family who spent time in Lebanon and Cyprus before returning to their family village in Galilee. I found this book **confirmed and explained** many of the things Jamal shares about being an Arab Israeli and is helpful in explaining attitudes on all sides.

*Rev Muriel Pearson*

## Visit to Scotland by Jamal Shehade, House of Grace, a partner of the CoS

The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias sponsored Jamal's visit in January 2023 Jamal writes:



I really appreciate the great effort Muriel invested in that visit and is still doing. I feel really blessed to have her as a friend. Having her **as partner and supporter** on the visit made it much easier and more comfortable.

The visits we had and the meetings we attended gave me a lot of material to think of and consider. Personally, I found the encounters very **interesting and enriching**.

Professionally, the meetings with Crossreach, [Vox Liminis](#) and [Hot Chocolate](#) gave me some tools to think about and discuss with our staff to try and use those in our work and widen our intervention ways with our "clients", to try **being extra creative** in what we can offer them.

On the issue of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship dealing with the conflict, I think the importance of introducing my perspective to communities in Scotland was very clear. The knowledge there **about our challenges and our role in living with the effects of the conflict**, is lacking; therefore pointing out this information and sharing our stories gave me the feeling that it has been enlightening for many. For me this is a great success, because I think we have an important role that needs to be supported and the awareness about it should be raised.

I think that we were able to touch and achieve good results mentioned in the goals we set before leaving. Some goals will need more time to develop.

From my point of view this visit widened our circle of friends in the Church of Scotland and people know the House of Grace better as well. Hopefully this **will encourage communities and groups to visit in the future**.

### Muriel's response

It was an excellent project and a very good use of resources. The whole trip, including a generous gift to host families, cost £1,400 and some additional costs for events covered by Presbytery of Glasgow and The Friends of StAJ&T.

It was great to be able to accompany Jamal, not only because **I learned so much**, but because it gave me an opportunity **to meet and share** too.

I would like to **see the model repeated**, with the emphasis being awareness raising about Israel/oPt, perhaps once a year. Perhaps next year Stewart could accompany a Palestinian from the West Bank.

*Jamal was interviewed for March edition of Life and Work – [read it here](#).*

## Introducing our Committee

*In this edition we meet The Very Rev Andrew McLellan, Convener of The Friends*

I really enjoy my part in the life of The Friends: on the Committee we are **a lively and committed team**. To have regular contact with our two ministers, and occasional contact with some of our partners, **is exciting and humbling**. I came to know Jerusalem and Tiberias well when I was part of the Church of Scotland's World Mission Council: I have been thrilled on the occasions when I have been invited to preach in each of our churches. I was a parish minister in Greenock and Stirling and Edinburgh: then I was for seven years HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland. I was Moderator of the General Assembly in 2000.



## Scholarship Programme

The Friends offer a wonderful **opportunity for a minister or theology student**, studying in Scotland and with links with the Church of Scotland, who wish to enrich their studies by visiting the Holy Land.

Applications for the **2023 Scholarship** are now invited: [www.standrewsjerusalem.org/friends/scholarships](http://www.standrewsjerusalem.org/friends/scholarships)

As **Trish Archibald, our 2022 scholar**, takes up her award, she reflects on what it means to her. *"I am incredibly grateful to The Friends for awarding me the scholarship. I am now counting down the days until I travel and am very much looking forward to learning more about the invaluable work of two Church of Scotland partners, [Sindyanna](#) in Cana and [Wi'am](#) in Bethlehem. This opportunity to learn from them and to spend time with Muriel and Stewart is a privilege and I am sure is something which will stay with me for the rest of my life."*



## Tabeetha – First impressions Grades 9 and 10



... the friendly atmosphere. On the first day I was scared to go to a new school but when I arrived, I found I'd worried in vain. *Taisiia, Russia*

It felt comfortable right from the start and found things easy to adapt to *Nicolas, South Africa*

I love studying here with people from all over the world. *Sofia, Mexico and Norway*

Tabeetha is an international school and so you get to learn about other cultures and religions and traditions. I find that very thrilling. *Amr, Israel*

The teachers seem to be passionate about their subjects and the pupils are very welcoming. *Vincent, China*

My first impressions were how lovely the school is - the building, the teachers and the pupils. *Alessandro, France and Canada*

My English would never get that well (sic) if my parents didn't send me to Tabeetha. *Melissa, Russia*

## Faith Rewarded...excerpt

*(The history of St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem – available for £12 from friends@standrewsjerusalem.org)*



On Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1979, the Rev Tom Houston led the service of worship with US President Jimmy Carter and the First Lady in the congregation. Rizek (Session Clerk) recalls that he had the opportunity of greeting them and showing them to their seats.

"President Carter said he did not want to sit in the front row, so I led them to a row behind. As I handed him the Bible I noticed that by chance I had chosen for him the seat which had on it the name 'Cairo'" As it happened the purpose of his visit to the Middle East was to explore the options for peace in the region and as part of that process he was travelling to Cairo the next day.

## We Will Remember Them



Immediately following the capture of Nebi Samuel in 1917, the 52<sup>nd</sup> Lowland Division was ordered to retrace its steps to Ramleh. On 28 November 1917 the Turks mounted a fierce attack with 500 men at El Burj. **2Lt Stanley Boughey of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers** counter-attacked with his platoon. The Turks fled, with Boughey hurling Mills grenades as they did so, and 30 Turks surrendered to him. He then turned to obtain some more grenades but was mortally wounded in the head and died soon afterwards. For his conspicuous bravery, he was **awarded the Victoria Cross**.

St Andrew's, Jerusalem, **the only Church of Scotland built as a War Memorial**, is dedicated to the Scots who lost their lives in the region. Plaques throughout the church identify those, such as 2Lt Stanley Boughey, who will never be forgotten.

**Meet Doha Asous** – a truly inspiring Palestinian farmer from Burin, near Nablus  
**Monday 6th March 2023** at Edinburgh Central Mosque, 50 Potterrow, 5.30pm and



**Tuesday 7th March 2023** at **HADEEL** Shop, 123 George Street, Edinburgh at 10.00am.

## Keep in Touch

- **Our brochure.** We'll send you lots for sharing: friends@standrewsjerusalem.org
- **Our website :** standrewsjerusalem.org/friends
- **Facebook :** <https://www.facebook.com/The-Friends-of-St-Andrews-Jerusalem-Tiberias>
- **Life and Work :** the latest editions

**Follow Stewart** on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/stewart.gillan.7>

**Muriel** on Twitter @murielpearson60 or through her blog: <https://wordpress.com/view/murielpearson.com>

## Prayer

*God bless those who have left home to serve you in foreign lands. Among them we name Muriel and Stewart. Breathe peace into their hearts and their homes. When they are tired or low in spirits lift them up, when they are afraid give them courage. When the sun shines on them may it warm them with your love; when they struggle to see the way ahead lead them by the hand. And may we at home not fail them nor forget them.*