



Message from the Convener

I did something recently I have never done before.

I was speaking at a Church of Scotland Guild meeting (that I have done about a million times before: what was new was that I was speaking about The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias.) This was my first attempt at speaking in public about The Friends and it was a success. It was a success according to everyone who spoke to me afterwards: and it was a success not because of the quality of the speaker but because of the interest of the subject.



We got off to a good start. Not only was the Guild itself a Member of The Friends (did you know that Guilds can be Members?), but the person in the chair was herself a Member as well! The event was such a happy occasion: there were no hostile questions and every comment was positive.

I had some stunning pictures: pictures which looked even better displayed on a big screen. Pictures of the **two churches**, of **our ministers** Stewart and Muriel, of **Jerusalem and Tiberias**, of **Bethlehem** and the **West Bank**, pictures of some of our **partners**. So even if attention wandered from the speaker (which of course it never did!) there was still a feast for the eyes on display.

But it was the content of the talk which held the audience. The story of the two congregations, springing out of a War Memorial and a hospital, and their present life. Mention of the military connection and of our scholarships. Some comments on the social and political background and the current impact of the occupation. Some words about Christians and their difficulties throughout the area. And the stories of a couple of our partners. How could I have failed when I had the **House of Grace** and the **Tent of Nations** to inspire the audience? We had new Members the next day.

I would love to give the talk again. If you know of any group that would like to hear about the Friends please ask. If I am not free I promise that someone from the committee will come.

Better still, **would you give the talk yourself?** We can send you the pictures and the notes to go with them. Even

more of an impact when audiences are listening to people they know speaking about something that matters to them. Someone I know spoke to her Kirk Session about The Friends. The Session insisted that she speak to the whole congregation and the whole congregation was fascinated. So much so that they held a Retiring Offering for The Friends on Easter Day and received a remarkable amount. **Would you think of doing that sort of thing for The Friends?** We would give you all the help you need.

The Very Rev Andrew McLellan

The Friends' AGM Friday 19th May 2023 St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh

11.00 Coffee

11.30 AGM

12.15 Sandwich Lunch

13.00 Daoud Nassar – [Tent of Nations](#)

All welcome to join us to hear his remarkable story

[Click here](#) for our website with details including streamlining options

Words from our Ministers

Rev Dr Stewart Gillan

Moving, challenging, gutting, inspiring

- last night's joint Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day event. Muriel and I attended at the invitation of the **Parents Circle-Family Forum**, with which the Church of Scotland



is in partnership. Some 15,000 gathered in Tel Aviv's Ganei Yehoshua Park, with approximately 150 Palestinians having obtained permits to be present. This following an intervention by Israel's High Court of Justice, overturning an attempt by Israel's Defense Minister to prevent Palestinians from entering Israel for the event.

The joint memorial ceremony is highly controversial among Israelis, its attenders viewed as 'traitors' on a day when Israel remembers its war dead. A small but loud group of right-wing protesters kept up a constant barrage over a loudhailer throughout the speeches until the police stopped it. As we entered the park we had been treated to a blast. When I asked someone who had come in with us for a translation, he said the words were, 'Rabin is waiting for you!' Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's fifth Prime Minister, assassinated in 1995. Conversely, Palestinians who participate with Israelis in the joint ceremony leave themselves open to the charge that they are normalising the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.



But inside what awaited us was a company of people committed to the dignity, well-being and future of both Palestinians and Israelis in the land that is home to both. We heard words, yes, of

horrific killings, terrifying loss, and keenly remembered loved ones. But we also heard heart-breaking, soul-making accounts from speaker after speaker of a strong resolve to break cycles of revenge and seek in grief to make peace with each other, to create a new reality, in law and in life.

Among these words of grief and hope, I found myself writing down a shattering observation spoken by an Israeli man who had lost his sister, Tamar: 'Faith in a jealous and vengeful God draws every effort at reconciliation into the vortex of violence.' It cut, it indicted, it convicted, like the prophets of old. Is this what faith has come to, then? An agent of the vortex. Is this all it has to offer? Will this be the legacy that prevails? In all three Abrahamic faiths? Questions whose edge is sharper by the day. There are many here who want not freedom of religion but freedom from it. Jesus, we might agree, did not come to save religion. But we may take no refuge in this. Who are we and what are we doing in his name? What good news are we bringing amid the bad? In the meantime, thank God for people who come out for the other, for each other, on Memorial Day.

25th April 2023

Grace and peace to you – Rev Dr Stewart Gillan



Rev Muriel Pearson

'Welcome to worship here on the shores of Galilee! We are glad to have you with us.' It is one of the delights of being a 'pilgrim' church that we can practice hospitality.

Some folks are with us for only one Sunday and others for longer, but each brings their story and perspective and enrich our time together. We have a new custom (started when I was at home in Scotland in January!) of taking a



photo to capture the unique composition of the congregation each Sunday and a look at our visitors' book shows that pilgrims have come from all over the world.

I am particularly glad to welcome pilgrim groups who wish to use the sanctuary of St Andrew's Tiberias or who invite me to take part in worship or a conversation with them. There is so much to see and do here that often groups start very early and finish quite late, and can find themselves with very little time for reflection and asking themselves what it all means.

Recently, I led a communion at Tabgha, the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, for a group from Scotland, and this encouraged me as well as, I hope, helped them.



First launched in 2009, the Kairos Document, <https://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php> (a joint plea for attention from the Christian churches in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to challenge the injustice of occupation and claim the human rights of Palestinians) asks pilgrims not only to visit the buildings and holy sites, but to meet the 'living stones'. We are always glad when groups plan ahead and ask us for suggestions of places to go and people to meet. Often this can be the most striking part of a visit.



Visiting House of Grace in Haifa, for instance, and learning about the Shehade family's commitment to living out Matthew 25, is **humbling** and **challenging**.

In our Easter gospel from Matthew, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were invited by the angel to look into the empty tomb and see Jesus' absence for themselves, then they were sent as messengers to tell the disciples he had been raised and would meet them in Galilee.

Galilee is the place of our ordinary living, where we meet the Risen Lord in daily encounters. The invitation to the women at the Tomb is an invitation to us also: **Come and See; Go and Tell**.

Rev Muriel Pearson

Introducing our Committee

New members to The Friends committee will be introduced over the next few editions. First up, Alison Jack.

Alison is Professor of Bible and Literature and Principal at New College, Director for the Scottish Network for Religion and Literature, a Church of Scotland minister and a resident of Dunblane.



Her hope for 'The Friends' is to see the Scholarship scheme flourish and develop to offer as many people as possible the opportunity to experience life in the Holy Land in an authentic and life-changing way. In her own words, "We are trustees of a wonderful resource, and I hope that we can share this with the people who can make a difference there and in Scotland too."

Welcome aboard, Alison!

Friends come from across the globe



The Rev Grace Woodward is a Presbyterian minister in Washington D.C. and a member of The Friends – one of what we hope will soon be many Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias in the future. Here, Grace reflects on a recent visit to Israel / OPT.

On March 19th, I was delighted to worship at St. Andrew's Jerusalem for the second time. Jerusalem holds a special place in my heart, as I imagine it does for every member of The Friends.

As a young pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and living in Washington, D.C. I admire how my denomination has taken definitive steps towards denouncing the cruelty of the Israeli occupation. My denomination is strong in her stance against Israel, and yet we often choose not to notice the amazing peacebuilding work happening in the name and heart of Christ throughout Israel and Palestine.

During my visit, Rev. Muriel preached about the choices we often make to not notice what's right in front of us. She remarked that many people don't notice that Arab Israelis aren't participating in the massive protests sweeping Israel. Their voices aren't included because they've never been included in Israel's attempt at democracy. When we - American and Scottish Presbyterians - choose to look at Palestine and Israel and see only suffering and injustice we miss the resistance, hope, and joy of the people who call this beautiful place home.

As Christians, we are compelled to see Christ whenever hope shines through oppression and violence. Christ is

surely at work in the ministry of St. Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias! The Church of Scotland's pastors in Jerusalem and Tiberias are invaluable partners in ministry and are connected to vital organizations promoting peace throughout Palestine and Israel.

It is my sincere hope that more American Presbyterians feel as inspired as I do by the work of our mission partners on the ground in Palestine and Israel, and join me in supporting The Friends of St. Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias!

Rev Grace Woodward rev.gracewoodward@gmail.com

The Strength of Sindyanna

Trish Archibald has recently returned from a Friends' scholarship funded trip to Israel / OPT. Here she recounts a memorable few days with the women of Sindyanna.



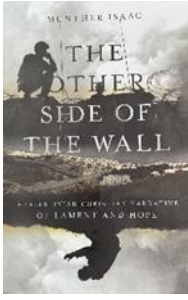
Sindyanna is run by women from Jewish and Arab backgrounds where high quality olive oil and other olive products are produced, marketed and sold - the money made helps local people, particularly Arab women who struggle to find employment.

In this way, Sindyanna beautifully reaches across the barriers of religion, background, and culture. Many groups come from all over the world and hear personal stories both from the Jewish and Arab women. I had the privilege of working in Sindyanna for several days and learned that **Sindyanna means oak tree. The oak tree is strong, with deep roots, an important tree to both communities.**

The strength of Sindyanna is in building genuine and sincere relationships across a deep divide. There is a very real **sense of family**, and we spent much time laughing and talking about what we all had in common. Here women have the strength to work together, to eat together, to treat each other with **mutual respect**. Each lunchtime everyone would bring different fruits and vegetables from their own gardens and homes, everything was put on the table so we could all eat together. We shared everything we had.

One of the Arab women I met told me she had never had the opportunity to go to school, but because of her job at Sindyanna she has been able to pay for her daughter to go to university and her youngest daughter is about to start at university this year too. **Sindyanna is changing the lives of women in Kfar Kana and I will never forget my time there.**

Thank you, Friends



The Other Side of the Wall *Munther Isaac*

Rev Munther Isaac is assistant pastor at the Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church and Dean at Bethlehem Bible College. His most recent book, *The Other Side of the Wall* is a **thought-**

provoking, compelling read on what it is to be a Palestinian Christian in the modern era.

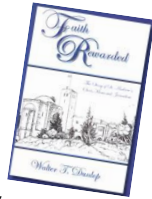
Isaac has no truck with visiting Christians who describe the current situation as 'unfortunate', he debunks any suggestion that The Wall is for security and is dismayed by those who justify the oppression of Palestinians and current apartheid as the fulfilment of prophecy.

The book is a fascinating mix of the personal, the political and the theological and culminates in an epilogue which ends with words of hope: "Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day."

It's an excellent read but if you buy a copy make sure you also have a highlighter. You'll want to use it!

Faith Rewarded...excerpt

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



The building of St Andrew's Jerusalem was very largely the result of the energy and effort of Ninian Hill, a Greenock business man. "Faith Rewarded" gives his background.

"He attended St Andrews University and Oxford. It was during this time he developed his interest in music and fine arts, spending time in Paris and Rome studying modern languages...In addition to his shipping business, Hill supplement his income by letting out the twenty-five properties he owned in Greenock. He was elected, at the age of twenty-seven, as a Councillor in the Burgh".

(In 1976 the current convener of The Friends was elected a councillor in the same town).

Prayer *Is this place holy because you walked here, died here, were raised to life here to bring us life? Or because in this time, in this world of trouble and longing and hope, you are alive? Is this a holy place because several true churches have come to fight and worship here, each hanging separate lamps to burn for your divided glory? Or is this land, like all lands, holy, where people pray and work, raise babies and seek justice, and expect a future? (Janet Morley)*

Memorial Plaques inside St Andrew's

The 52nd Lowland Division, composed of Royal Scots, Royal Scots Fusiliers, Highland Light Infantry, Argylls, Scottish Rifles, Black Watch and supporting Services, witnessed major combat in the area in November 1917. 2,433 were wounded and 85 were missing. Over 625 soldiers were killed - never to return to Scotland.



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 commemorate those in the Scottish regiments, who will never be forgotten.

World Day of Prayer

The materials for the World Day of Prayer on Friday 1 March 2024 on the theme 'I beg you bear with one another in love' have been prepared by Palestinian women.



Look Forward in Faith

June 17th, 2023 10.30-3.30

St Matthew's Church, Perth

Speakers include Rev Muriel Pearson, St Andrew's Tiberias and a Palestinian representative

Register by 31 May treasurer@wdpscotland.org.uk
More information [here](#).

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>

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