

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 13: Autumn 2017

An ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries.

Contact: admin@livingstonesonline.org.uk or the editor at newsletter@livingstonesonline.org.uk
Website: www.livingstonesonline.org.uk; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/livingstonesonlineuk/>

THE FUTURE OF LIVING STONES

One characteristic of our Trust is the unique bill of fare that it serves. Members and friends will be well aware of special nature of what we do. The Living Stones of The Holy Land Trust satisfies its primary objectives of promoting contacts between Christians in Britain, the Holy Land and the wider Middle East in particular ways. It has the unique privilege of safeguarding the Michael Prior Memorial Fund which makes possible

- Funding of postgraduate students from the Middle East in their studies
- Publication of a Yearbook
- Support for occasional visiting speakers from the Middle East
- Sponsoring an annual memorial lecture, alternately in the UK and Jerusalem or Bethlehem

In addition, the Trust:

- Arranges a pilgrimage to coincide with the World week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Jerusalem. This has a flavour all its own, bringing us into the very heart of Christian worship in the Holy Land
- Publishes a regular newsletter
- Shares news about Christians in the Middle East on its facebook page, and diverse resources on its website

The Trustees have become increasingly aware of the difficulties we face in future and maintaining this level of activity in the face of a number of constraints. In our AGM on 25th November (see back page) and over the coming months we will be exploring what the future holds for the Trust in order to preserve the treasures which we hold dear.

Your prayers are asked so that we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our deliberations.

We hope to see you in London on 25th November!

A WEEK IN THE WEST BANK – observations (Part 2)

Bridget le Huray, one of the Living Stones trustees, went on a study tour during March, in conjunction with the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network. The itinerary was designed for professionals from the field of mental health.

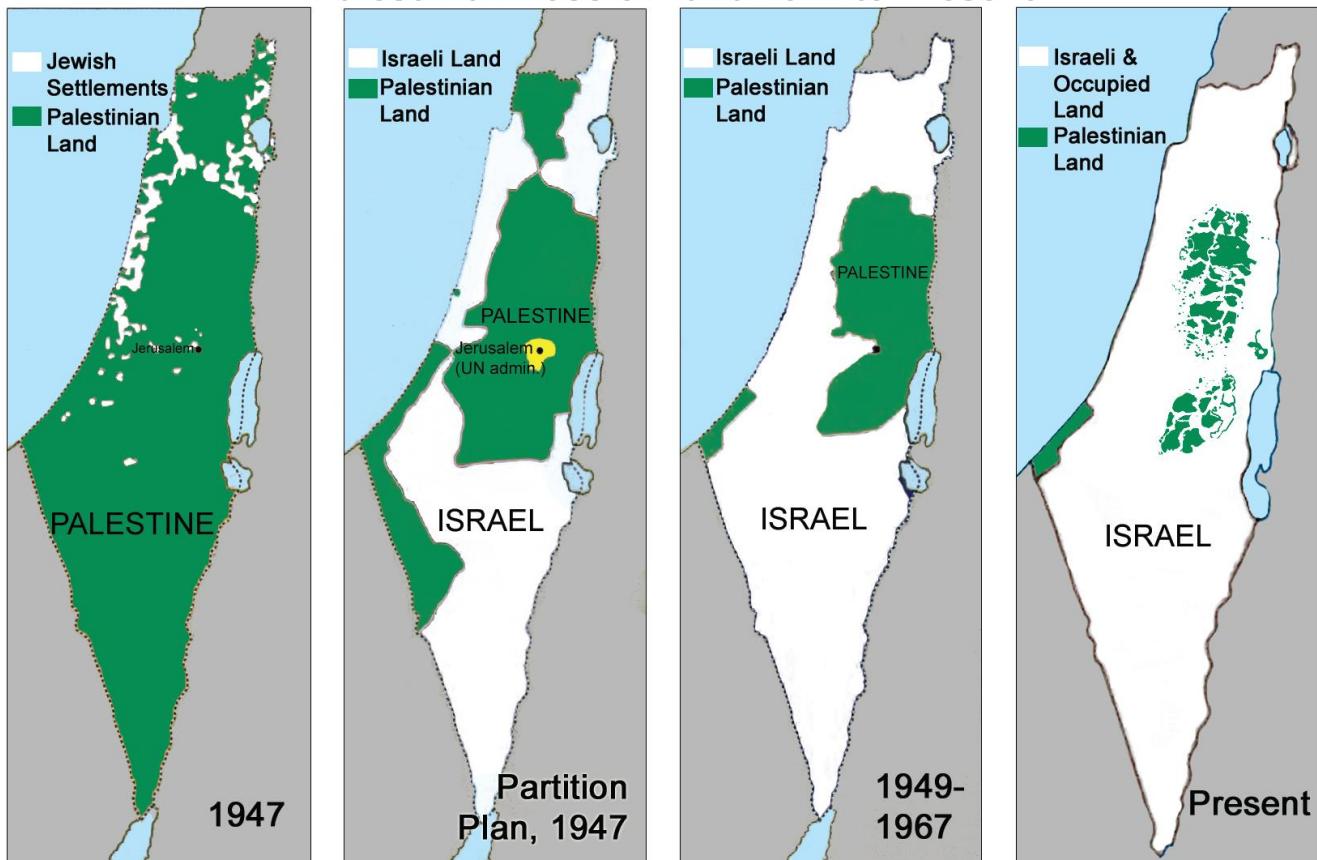
On our third day, we went on to an innovative guidance and training centre for children and families, and ended with a visit to a refugee camp. There, just outside the gate was established a cultural centre to offer play, music, library, IT and summer camps. But first I have to explain some political background.

The history of Zionism is rooted in the 19th century in two distinct strands, one secular, imperial, elitist, colonial and European. These were well-educated & well-off. The other strand were much humbler folk who adhered to their Jewish ethnicity but were also not religious. The latter were seeking equality and lack of discrimination in whichever country they lived.

Nowadays all Jews can claim the "right of return", (to make 'aliyah'). It is no longer required to have a Jewish mother. Any one grandparent suffices. E.g. In the '90s one million Russians arrived of whom maybe half were not really Jewish. There are ambassadors in every country out to recruit: the US has "Birthright" which brings youngsters aged 18-30 to Israel for free 2 weeks to show them its attractions.

Judaisation is the principle of maintaining the demographic majority over the Palestinians in Israel to keep it 4:1. When West Jerusalem and East were divided by the UN in 1948, the west was Jewish, the east was Arab. In 1967, the Israelis defeated the Jordanian army and expelled them from both East Jerusalem and the West Bank of the River Jordan (back across to the east of it) thus occupying the West Bank. In 1967 all east Jerusalem was Arab and Judaisation is constantly working towards the policy of 7: 3 there by a) expulsion b) property confiscation c) bringing Jewish families in.

Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present



I mentioned the Judaisation of Jerusalem; however, we know that it's not just Jerusalem where evictions and disposessions happen. All over the west bank I see settlement building. And this occupation is all about land theft and colonialism. Something said in the Old Testament doesn't make God a real estate agent.

The demolition before the demolition eats away at normal life for Palestinian families. You receive a court order saying your dwelling is illegal / needed for military or security purposes/ near some ancient site/ site of future public park (the list goes on and on). Engineers, police, municipality turn up occasionally to survey, photograph etc. You are engaged in a court battle that you will lose. These can go on for years but eventually you will have to leave. The Palestinians always lose - 100% of the time. So with nowhere else to go, families wait in hope. And remember that, given its impossible to get a building permit and the family unit often contains multiple generations, this is the psychological demolition before the demolition.

Eventually the soldiers show up at dawn with the bulldozers. You have 40 mins to empty your house - how would that feel and what would you grab?

What follows is a story as told by Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian who is a longtime anti-violence, native Palestinian-Armenian feminist activist and scholar who we met with on our last Friday. She gave us tea and home made cookies in her home in the Old City.



Photo: Jo Simister from 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity pilgrimage.

Letter to a Lemon Tree.

"The family had been evicted and I went to meet with them with some of my students. We brought paper and crayons for the children. We have found that this provides a way for the children to express themselves in a way we can engage with them.

"A 3 yr old girl drew a picture of her house with the soldiers. In the picture were members of her family. I asked her to point out who was who in the picture. She pointed out her grandfather, grandmother, sisters, brothers and her mother. 'Where's your papa?' I asked. 'I didn't ask him to be my father', she replied. 'He just stood there smoking when they demolished the house'."

The Professor described this as 'pulling his licence' as a father. Parenting is not parenting in Palestine. Fathers are not able to protect. The little girl turned to her grandfather for this role. And so the normal family relationship breaks down. The invisible elements like this are our biggest concerns.

The professor has continued working with the little girl who is now nine. She recently wrote a letter to the Lemon Tree that was in her garden to say sorry for leaving it behind with the settlers.



http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_18VtlywkU-c/TDLUiQ-WkI/AAAAAAAEEU/pk4ND2OdZFA/s1600/Israel+%26+Palestine+087.jpg

The World's Biggest Key

Here is more about the refugee camp we visited on day three.

Aida Refugee Camp was established in 1950 following what Palestinians call the 'Nakba' (catastrophe) of 1948. The catastrophe was the forced evacuation of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes

following the establishment of the state of Israel. 'A people with no land for a land with no people' is a term often associated with this time. The only problem was that Palestine was not a land with no people. And so began the plight of the Palestinian people.

The key is hugely symbolic to the Palestinians. On being forced to flee their homes in 1948, women locked the doors behind them expecting to return to their homes when the 'world' came to their aid. They still claim their "right to return" almost 70 years on and this remains a major sticking point in reaching peace.

Aida camp is right on the edge of Bethlehem abutting the 'Wall'. The camp 'hosts' over 5800 people (categorised as internally displaced people - IDPs) in an area roughly 3/4 that of Wembley Stadium.

Whilst they initially lived in tents, their displacement has lasted so long the structures are now concrete and going upwards given they cannot expand. (The saying goes here that Israelis live horizontally and Palestinians live vertically). The first concrete 'houses' were 3m X 4m which provided dwelling for up to 7 people.

Despite being in a Palestinian designated area there are constant incursions by the Israeli military where tear gas is frequently used. Being short on natural materials, the elderly in the camp (50% are under 18) use the spent tear cartridges to help plant and water vegetables in their roof top herb and vegetable gardens.



Clowns in Rebellion, a group of 40 artists from Spain, Brazil and Chile, held the International Festival for Children in different Palestinian areas including Aida camp, where they engaged with local children and held different performances to spread the joy and happiness among them. (from <http://www.lajee.org/index.php>

Children are entertained by a community based grassroots group called Lajee Center that was set up in April 2000. Check out their facebook page to see what 'sumoud' (steadfastness) looks like, and their website: <http://www.lajee.org/index.php> .

Here is another story told to us by Professor Nadera:

Frozen Fingers

Baha Ilyan's mother continued to have nightmares. She kept waking up thinking her fingers were frozen.

Her son had been shot for an alleged stabbing attack on a soldier in what's been dubbed as the Knife Intifada. (Young teenagers, reportedly devoid of hope, attempt to stab Israeli soldiers who are heavily armed and wearing stab protection vests. There is zero chance they will succeed in harming with a kitchen knife or scissors and therefore many see their attempts as nothing other than suicide bids.) Professor Nadera was providing counselling and support to the bereaved family. Meanwhile, the body was being held by the Israeli's following a directive from Netanyahu to his defence minister. The mother knew the body is being held in a freezer. The family made desperate pleas to the authorities to release the body so they could bury it, and pleaded not to get the body back frozen.

Professor Nadera tells us how she received a whatsapp message late one night from a friend of the family telling her the body was finally being released. There were the usual conditions to that release (e.g. no photographs, no more than 20 people to attend funeral, which must be held at night...) Nonetheless she was relieved that the family could bury the body and fell back asleep.

The following morning she received a message saying the burial still hadn't taken place and immediately went to the family home. The father was sitting in a chair breathing in a gasping like way. The mother was upset. The father had been to the mosque and been criticized for not showing respect to the dead. Professor Nadera took him to one side to find out what happened.

He had received the body back in a frozen state. It was in a poor state and the arms and legs were in positions that would prevent burial. He couldn't break the frozen limbs in order to put his son's body in a suitable position for burial. And he couldn't tell his wife why..... [a solution was found and the burial happened a short time later.]

[Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian is the Lawrence D. Biele Chair in Law at the Faculty of Law-Institute of Criminology and the School of Social Work and Public Welfare at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian is also the Director of the Gender Studies Program at Mada al-Carmel, the Arab Center for Applied Social Research in Haifa. Her research focuses on femicide and other forms of gendered violence, crimes of abuse of power in settler colonial contexts, surveillance, securitization, and trauma in militarized and colonized zones. Her most recent book is entitled: "Militarization and Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: The Palestinian Case Study" published by Cambridge University Press, 2010. Shalhoub-Kevorkian plays a prominent role in the local Palestinian community. As a resident of the old city of Jerusalem, she engages in direct actions and critical dialogue to end the inscription of power over Palestinian children's lives, spaces of death and the trauma of adult lives"]

CONGRATULATIONS TO Usama Salman from Jerusalem, on successfully passing the viva for his PhD at University of Wales, Lampeter. Usama's thesis is on '*Analysis of the problems that face Palestinian Christians on their presence and identity in Jerusalem*' and Living Stones contributed full fees and expenses.

Usama says "I would like to thank everyone that participated to make this come true."

MORE NEWS ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS AT OUR OPEN DAY!

THE LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST

BECOMING A MEMBER: Please complete your details in all sections below (*please print clearly*), including the Standing Order mandate if you wish to continue your membership (*you can terminate it at any time by notifying your bank*). Please sign all relevant sections. Then send the form with the cheque (payable to Living Stones) for £30 for your first membership payment to: Living Stones, 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, BR6 9UE.

(*NB: if you make a donation or arrange the Standing Order online we will still need your signed Gift Aid declaration.*)

MAKING A DONATION: Please complete your details (*please print clearly*) including the Gift Aid declaration (*if you are a UK tax payer*) and sign below. Then return with a cheque (payable to Living Stones) for the amount of your donation to: Living Stones, 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, BR6 9UE.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

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If you are a UK tax payer please ALSO complete this Gift Aid declaration.

I am a UK tax payer, and authorise Living Stones to collect Gift Aid on this and any subsequent donations.

Signed: Dated:

STANDING ORDER MANDATE: (for automatic annual payment of membership)

To the Manager of (*name of your Bank/Building Society*)

Address:

Postcode:

Please pay the sum of thirty pounds/ £30 immediately, and thereafter annually until further notice in writing:

From: *Your account name:*

Your account number:

Your Bank Sort Code:

To: **LIVING STONES Account No: 8913 7808; Code: 09-01-55**

Signed: Dated:

Name: (*please print clearly*).....

Address:

..... Postcode:

REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

METHODISTS FOR WORLD MISSION CONFERENCE

In June, Living Stones was invited to participate in the Methodists for World Mission Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire. The theme of the Conference was “*Moving People: Moving Stories*” and we chose for the title of our workshop (shared with Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability) “*The Moving Finger writes and having writ moves on*” .LS and ABCD administrator, Alison (Driscoll) introduced the charities and then Living Stones Vice Chair Jo (Simister) gave an excellent presentation on our work with particular emphasis on Christian communities in the Middle East, the conflict in Syria, and refugees worldwide.

During the second half of the session Firas Sarhan (ABCD’s Project Manager) gave a moving testimonial about the developing partnership with the refugee camp in Jalazone, near Ramallah where he was born. This was followed by a lively question and answer session. The two charities also shared a sales table. Many attendees who were interested in being more fully informed about Christians in the Middle East took copies of various Living Stones publications. The advocacy proved extremely fruitful – not only have we gained new supporters but also it looks as though we’ll be at the MWM again next year!

LIVING STONES SUPPORT TO REFUGEES IN JORDAN FROM IRAQ

Our Honorary President, Duncan Macpherson writes:

The Roman Catholic Sons of Divine Providence in Zarka in Jordan have provided a lifeline for a number of Iraqi Christian refugees, and my two visits there, the second time with a Living Stones pilgrimage group, led to the decision by Living Stones to establish a fund to support this work. So far, more than six thousand pounds has been sent to the Sons in Jordan. Most of this sum was raised as a result of preaching appeals made at Saint Francis de Sales in Hampton Hill, Saint Margaret of Scotland in East Twickenham, Saint Thomas More in Eastcote, the Methodist Church in Hampton and the United Reformed Church in Twickenham.

In his latest email, Father Carlo reports that he has now had to discontinue the distribution of food vouchers to needy families due to lack of funds. We know that congregations are frequently overwhelmed by charity appeals but in view of an urgent need I am asking if you would commend this cause to your parish council or charity committee. If it is thought helpful, we may be able to arrange for a preacher come to your Church to combine a preached appeal with a homily on the readings for the particular Sunday. [Please contact admin@livingstonesonline.org.uk for further information.]

RETURN OF SYRIAN CHRISTIANS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

Vice-Chair Jo Simister writes:

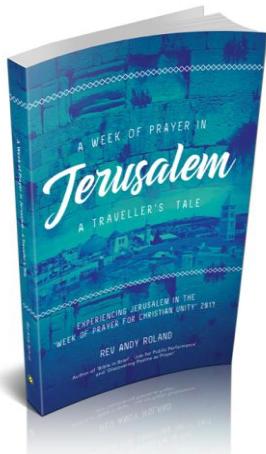


I made a return visit to Syria in September, visiting Damascus, Homs, Malloula and several monasteries. I was very encouraged to hear that families are continuing to return to the towns and villages, rebuilding their homes and churches. It is much more positive than the bleak situation I reported on a year ago.

We spent a peaceful night in the 6th century monastery at Qara, still with bomb damage and sandbags but free at last from siege by ISIS.

The brothers and sisters are able to go into their kitchen garden for the first time in two years, and production of their famed rose water will resume next year. Do read the astonishing story of the courageous work and survival of this monastery, at . <https://www.maryakub.net>

'A WEEK OF PRAYER IN JERUSALEM' BY REV'D ANDREW ROLAND



In 2017 the author made his third visit to the Week of Prayer with members of Living Stones, and his seventh to Jerusalem.

He walks with the reader through Jerusalem to the Christian pilgrim sites, the Muslim and Jewish Quarters, the Israel Museum, as well as to Tel Aviv and Bethlehem.

With him you will meet ordinary Jerusalemites: a Muslim cobbler, an Armenian money-changer, a Jewish taxi driver, a 90 year old Palestinian Christian lady, and two Israeli soldiers.....

He goes to each of the extravagantly different evening services, celebrating with Lutherans and Roman Catholics, and with the Orthodox churches of Armenia, Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia, all joining together in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Jerusalem is a fascinating and joyous celebration of diversity, which typically includes Ethiopian, Armenian, Coptic and Syrian congregations alongside the more familiar Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox and Melkite congregations.

The dates of the core Week in 2018 will be Sat 20-Sun 28 Jan and we are arranging an 11-night itinerary (Fri 19-Tues 30 Jan) which will cost £1100 shared / £1400 single (not including flights) assuming the dollar rate remains at around £1: \$1.3.

Besides the main worship programme, there will be opportunities to join local congregations for various liturgies, and visits out to the Negev, Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus and the option of an extra night or two in Sebastiya. The itinerary is aimed at people who have made a conventional pilgrimage and would now like to prioritise encounter with the 'living stones'. The primary focus is five-fold: to Encounter Christian communities, to Understand the context in which they exercise their faith, to Encourage by being present and engaged, to Reflect and pray, and to Witness by sharing what is experienced.

Please contact pilgrimages@livingstonesonline.org.uk for more information – and please circulate the leaflet enclosed with this newsletter.





The "Just Walk to Jerusalem" is a modern-day walking pilgrimage to the Holy Land to mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, 50 years of military occupation of the Palestinian Territories and the need for full equal rights for everyone who calls the Holy Land home.

The 2000-mile journey from London to Jerusalem will be accomplished between June and November 2017. Pilgrims can walk the entire route or choose to join in at different stages of the journey. We'll travel through Britain, France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Jordan, following the ancient pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem. Our pilgrimage will enter Jerusalem from the West Bank on 2nd of November – a hundred years on from Balfour's Declaration.

The walk is an act of:

- Solidarity
Walk as an act of solidarity with Palestinians who do not have freedom of movement.
- Peace
Walk with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists on the long road to peace and justice.
- Penance
Walk as an act of penance for Britain's 100 year-long failure to ensure Palestinian rights.

Seeds of injustice

On 2nd November 1917, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, declared:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."

The seeds of today's injustice, inequality and violence were sown by the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Amos Trust want to mark the anniversary with a bold act of solidarity and a call for peace with justice.

Speakers for our Open Day and Michael Prior Memorial Lecture Saturday 25th November 2017



Sir Vincent Fean, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1975 and served as British High Commissioner to Malta 2002-2006, Ambassador to Libya (2006-10) and latterly as Consul-General in Jerusalem (2010-14). Now retired from the Diplomatic Service, he focuses on the Middle East and North Africa region, particularly the Israel/Palestine conflict and Libya's future. He has become a Trustee of Medical Aid for Palestinians, and Patron of the Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network. He is also a Fundraiser for St John's Eye Hospital, Jerusalem and Advisor to the Balfour Project



Anthony O'Mahony is Reader in the History of Christianity & Director of Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, University of London. He is involved in various ecumenical endeavours especially as it relates to realtions between Eastern and Western Christian churches and has published and lectured extensively on Christianity in the Middle East, Christian-Muslim relations and Ecumenical relations between Eastern and Western Christianity. His most recent publications are:

- Christianity in the wider Levant Region: modern history and contemporary contexts, in: Kail Ellis (ed) *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries: Arab Christians in the Levant*, London, PalgraveMacmillan forthcoming)
- 'Eastern Catholics in the Middle East', in: Mariz Tadros (ed) *The Edinburgh Companion to Christianity in West Asia and North Africa*, Edinburgh University Press;
- 'Eastern Catholicism in the Middle East' & Eastern Orthodoxy in the Middle East', in: Erica. C.D. Hunter, (ed.) *Religious Minorities of the Modern Middle East: A Complete Survey of Non-Muslim Communities*, London: I.B. Tauris.



John Pontifex: As Head of Press and Information for Aid to the Church in Need (UK) since 2002, John has travelled to countries around the world where there are violations of religious freedom, affecting Christians in particular. He has made many trips to Asia (notably Pakistan and parts of India), parts of Africa (notably Sudan, Nigeria and Eritrea). He visited Syria in early 2016 and January 2017, and in September 2017, he made his fourth trip to northern Iraq, visiting communities decimated by Daesh (ISIS) to where Christian families and others are now returning. John is Editor-in-Chief of two ACN research projects produced every two years – the *Religious Freedom in the World* report and *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith*. The 2017 edition of *Persecuted and Forgotten?* launched in the UK House of Lords, London, on Thursday, 12th October, highlights the growing struggle of Christian communities trying to survive persecution. John represents ACN UK in its role as a stake-holder on the All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Religious Freedom or Belief. As a qualified journalist, he reports regularly on Christian persecution and religious freedom matters and has appeared on the BBC (Radio 4 'Sunday'), LBC Radio, Christian broadcast and print media. He is a regular contributor to *The Tablet* and the *Catholic Herald*.



Carole Bourne is an Anglican priest. She served in Guildford Diocese before she retired from full time ministry in 2012. Her academic background lies in History and Politics and her doctorate looked at the way children form their ideas about politics, with reference to television news and fictional narrative. She continues to help in the parish of St Andrew's and St Mark's Surbiton, working as a street pastor in Kingston, and for the Joel Community, a project concerned with homelessness. Before she was ordained, Carole worked in schools and colleges for some thirty years.

Since she retired she has worked in St George's College Jerusalem and has recently returned from three months spent working as an Ecumenical Accompanier in the West Bank. She represents the Church of England on the National Committee of the Women's World Day of Prayer and, in this capacity, will be attending meetings of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

The Balfour Centenary:

Britain's Broken Promise: **Time for a New Approach**

Methodist Central Hall Westminster

near Westminster Abbey, London SW1H 9NH

Tuesday 31st October 2017

6.30pm - 8.30pm (approx)

Please join us at this unique event marking the centenary of the Balfour Declaration.

In words, film and music, it will acknowledge Britain's historic responsibilities in the Middle East.

It will be an opportunity to commit ourselves to support Palestinians and Israelis in building a peaceful future based on equal rights for all.

- Speakers: Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Hon Tom Brake MP, Richard Burden MP, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Sir Vincent Fean, Rabbi Danny Rich, Dr Imad Karam, Rt Revd Christopher Chessun
- Buy tickets from [Eventbrite](#): £12; £8 (senior citizens); £5 (students/unemployed)

Balfour Project is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation reg. charity no. SC047090



Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust

Open Day with AGM

10.30am to 4pm on Saturday 25th November, 2017
in the Great Hall, 114 Mount St, Mayfair, London W1K 3AY
(nearest tube stations: Bond Street and Green Park)

incorporating the 2017 Michael Prior Memorial Lecture:

“Why do Christians in the Holy Land want Britain to recognise the State of Palestine?”

- 10.30: Arrivals & Registration: Refreshments and Sales/Book Tables
- 11.00: Michael Prior Memorial Lecture: Sir Vincent Fean, Retired British Diplomat, Previous Consul General in Jerusalem, followed by Q&A: Introduction and Chair: Dr Lesley Dawson
- 12.30-1.30: Lunch break* incorporating AGM
- 1.30-3.00: Round Table Panel of Experts, with Q&A: Chair Dr. David Toorawa.
- Anthony O'Mahony: Reader in History of Christianity, Director of the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, University of London
 - John Pontifex: Head of Press & Information, Aid to the Church in Need
 - Carole Bourne: Retired Anglican priest, Anglican Representative of Women's World Day of Prayer
- 3.00: Summary & Vote of thanks: Professor Mary Grey
- 3.10: Refreshments and Sales/Book Tables
- 3.45-4.15: Evening Prayer led by Deacon Duncan MacPherson

* please bring a packed lunch. Beverages etc will be provided.