

Dear Family and Friends

Rosalind and I are so touched by your considerable interest in Jerusalem, or in the Garden, or in us. You are so kind to appreciate her monthly missives but I am afraid that this month you have me as she is already back in the UK.

Every second or third Sunday afternoon, Rosalind and I have been meeting with Moshe who is a young Orthodox Jew studying in a Yeshiva near here. We enjoy ice cream with him, and asking him questions about his studies. This week with Rosalind already in the UK, I had a marvellous conversation with him about The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Israel, how the Messiah will be the King of Israel, and what in his view this land will be like a month after Messiah returns. We started exploring the OT prophecies that relate to the Messiah and have agreed to chat next time about how his Messiah will fulfil them.

You would have laughed to watch all the Garden staff do a fire practice at 0800 one Friday recently. The staff were great, and so plucky. We mustered in the Garden where all the fire fighting equipment was laid out; then we charged all the hoses and everyone manned a charged hose and shot the water down the Cistern. I say 'manned' but it was dear Esther from the Netherlands who is also a professional flautist who volunteered to do so first, then all the men, and finally two of our older women who are in their 60s and 70s. So now we all trust the kit.....in HMS TORQUAY on the day that my first nephew was born (Alex Hebert), I once had a fire in an ammunition magazine, so the expression 'ammunition is safe until you forget it's dangerous' was ringing in my ear as I thought that with adequate training, and the Lord's cover, we need now have no fear if fire breaks out on our boundaries.

Another evening last week we had 48 neighbours from up and down the Nablus Road in for an evening Garden Party. It was wonderful to watch Father Hervé Ponsot of Ecole Biblique meeting for the first time Pastor Jacques Elbaz from the French Protestant mission across the bus station. All the nuns from the White Sisters meeting the Paulus Haus nuns at the Schmidt school. And Pauline, the Palestinian believer who owns the Jerusalem hotel as well as Nashan from the Palestinian Pottery, neither of whom had ever in all their 50+ years in the road ever been here but both have now asked to use the Garden.....then all the shop keepers like the Fraij family at the bottom too.

Great excitement on Saturday as Angela Crompton, who has been working with us these past two months while on 'special unpaid leave' from the Foreign Office, received the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours – well done, Angela!

Never a dull day in this city, and certainly not in the Garden.

Gaza has of course erupted this month. Here in the Garden we never make political statements, nor take sides on any issue that is not central to why we are here. As demonstrated by that Garden Party, we are here to build bridges and not barriers, so remaining publicly impartial avoids any ugly and unhelpful spats. That does not mean we do not have personal opinions, but we are here as guests in the country which grants us our special visas, to do a particular task for which we need the goodwill of both our Palestinian neighbours and the Israeli authorities. Others who

are not called to do what we do may feel called to take stands that they consider are important. I hope you would not hereby feel we are compromising ourself; in my experience, were we to take a biased position, the credit we would gain from its proponents would be far outweighed by the damage we would do in the eyes of its opponents.

As ever, my huge appreciation and gratitude to you for standing with us. The Lord indeed reigns in His Kingdom Garden here in the heart of this amazing city.

Richard Meryon

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