

September 2010

Dear Friends

I am writing this from our UK home in Bath, having been away from the Garden for almost 4 weeks, two on holiday in France with our young ones, and two back here in the UK on GT business.

I have had hardly any contact with the Garden itself which indicated either that all is at peace there and/or that Steve Bridge who arrived the day before we flew back to Europe, is doing a cracking job as the new Deputy Director. Surely the latter.

Rosalind and I are so thrilled to have Steve and Sue arrive. While this month Steve has been getting his feet under the table in a general way, Sue has been beavering away taking over running the Shop from Liz who as you know has been doing so much for the GT with consummate effectiveness over the past 18 years. We have split Liz' job into four linked but separate parts

Shop Manager

Visitor Reception

Group bookings

Staff rotas.

Sue will in her 3 days/week run the Shop. Steve will be handling rotas, and I will return with excitement to see how the team has decided to carve out the other two of Liz' rôles which handle the ¼ million visitors coming the Garden Tomb each year.

Giving that huge number of visitors each year a wonderful visit is my most important goal – we are there to serve them, and woe betide us if ever we lose that focus. Hopefully you have gathered that we are aiming for every visitor:

- To be touched by the Lord when they come to the Garden
- To have their best experience in Israel when in the Garden, and
- To be guided by our cadre of great guides in their first language – longer time, hugely challenging yet a noble goal.

You may remember that I am working on bridge-building with the more traditional elements of the Christian tapestry in Jerusalem, many of whom are suspicious of the Garden Tomb, preferring the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as their focus on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The 'Latin' or Roman Catholic Patriarch as well as all the colourful array of Orthodox and 'high' Protestant denominations. I have been courting Bishop Suheil Dalwani who is the Palestinian Anglican bishop of Jerusalem; he came to us at the beginning of September and seemed so delighted that he said he would encourage all the other patriarch to visit us. We do want them all to see that the Garden offers their brethren the most wonderful

and peaceful place in all the hurly burly of Jerusalem, a place for extended worship and communion in the individual style of each group.

We left with Ramadan $\frac{3}{4}$ completed.....what a new experience. I lived in Turkey and had some fringe exposure, but being on the Nablus Road with 25,000 coming down the street every Friday to attend prayers on the Temple Mount was just like a flood tide of humanity in all manner of islamic dress. They do not eat or drink all day so in the long and very hot days of summer it must be very challenging. They seem to party every night to make up, not that this affected us much; what did was the 500dB canon that fired at 0415 & 1930 daily not more than 100m from our apartment....seldom did we return to sleep after the morning one so 'benches and paths' were often tackled early. Strange that the pinnacle of Waqf negotiations occurred during Ramadan so meetings tended to be after 2015 when they had had their supper.

I am delighted that no work on the Wall and above Golgotha has advanced while I have been away. The 5m wall is now off the Waqf's agenda; they suggested 3m wall, and then a 2.4m wall, both of which I declined before leaving Israel. I did hear last week from the Municipality that they had agreed that the Waqf can build 2m wall, but I have only released them to build a 1m wall. This will no doubt feature in the October 'To Be Done' list. If you haven't yet seen it, then click on this for a 4 minute explanatory video clip:

<http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/shows/cwn/2010/September/Garden-Tomb-Threatened-by-Muslim-Construction/>

The 2010/2011 sixteen month calendar (Jewish +Christian year) is now selling fast in the shop, and has been distributed to everyone in the UK who has asked for copies. (Do let me know if yours have not come). Everyone seems very pleased with it – I guess the dissenters have been too kind to me not to tell me of their dislike! In the shop they sell for "three for 99NIS"; here they are £7.50+P&P or "five for £30+P&P".....and if you'd like to place some orders in good time for Christmas, please do as I will need to use UK-bound couriers to bring them to the UK for you.

Thank you as ever for your considerable interest in all the affairs of the Garden and the wider scene in Jerusalem, Israel and the international interest in the Land. Having been away this month, we have no additional insights that you will not have picked up in the media, regarding the peace talks and settlement building freeze/thaw. Will the scene be as settled as now when we next write, or will there have been activity to hit world headlines – in Jerusalem, you never can tell!

This is the first month with a re-invigorated distribution to those who have actually asked to be included.

With our sincere best wishes and Christian agapé love

Richard Meryon

www.gardentomb.org

