



Oliver O'Donovan on *Living in Love and Faith*

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ADVENT ISSUE

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logical questions which so often make even dialogue – let alone agreement – about them so difficult.”

Bishop Christopher Cocksworth is a member of the Living Church Foundation.

Briefly...

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has demanded that a British bishop resign over the bishop’s criticism of the funeral of a cat. **Doorkins the Magnificat**, a much-beloved 12-year-old tabby, was interred in the churchyard of Southwark Cathedral in late October. Bishop of Burnley Philip North took umbrage, asking if the ceremony was “a joke.” PETA, apparently not joking, said the bishop should be fired for speciesism.

Arsonists touched off fires that destroyed two churches within hours of each other in southwest Ontario,

Canada. The current rector of one of the churches, St. Andrew’s Anglican in Muncey, said the blazes may be the result of anger over a **disgraced former** priest who committed sexual assaults on young boys procured there in the 1970s and 80s. The ex-priest, David Norton, was already incarcerated for a similar crime when he was convicted in 2018, so it is not clear why the fires would be set now.

The **Anglican Diocese of Tasmania** will make a payment of \$3.65 million in compensation to survivors of sexual abuse, part of what is believed to be a total liability of \$23 million. The Australian diocese is expected to sell properties to fund its obligations under the National Redress Scheme.

Correction: The Rev. Inez Velarde, whose picture graced the cover of our November 1 issue, was incorrectly identified as a lay pastor. She has been a priest since 2013. We apologize for the error.

Training Young Leaders to Wage Peace in the Holy Lands

By Kirk Petersen

“If you want lumber, you have to plant trees.” That’s how the Rev. Canon Nicholas Porter describes the mission for Jerusalem Peacebuilders, the inter-faith, non-profit organization he has led since 2011. JPB hopes to help create a next generation of leadership in Israel and Palestine that will be devoted to coexistence and peace.

In past years, the centerpiece of this effort has been a series of residential summer programs in the United States, bringing together Israeli and Palestinian high school students from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze backgrounds for two weeks of “intensive, residential, peace and leadership training,” he said.

The programs have other purposes, of course: travel, have fun with a bunch of other high school kids, and create lasting friendships that transcend religious and political differences.

Then came COVID-19.

It was obvious that “we can’t put them together in that kind of pressure cooker,” Porter said, so the organization designed a one-week hybrid program for August, primarily online, but including some socially distanced, physical gatherings.

It made no sense, and might not have been possible, to send kids from the relatively healthy Mideast into the maw of the world’s worst pandemic in America. So the programs was be based in Israel, with the in-person components in Jerusalem and Acre, a coastal city about 20 miles from the border of Lebanon.

Then at the 11th hour, the Israeli government tightened its restrictions on public gatherings, so that the pro-

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Summer campers in 2019 (above and below)

Jerusalem Peacebuilders photos

gram would have to be entirely online.

Let's pause here for a thought experiment. Think back to a time when you had a youth-group experience, overnight or longer, that was spiritually or intellectually fulfilling. You may remember sharing games, activities, and meals with kids you had just met. Maybe some mischief occurred. Maybe you stayed up until 2 a.m. having earnest discussions.

Then imagine trying to recreate that experience entirely online. The idea doesn't inspire optimism, but Porter was surprised by how well it worked. He said the kids adapted well to the Zoom platform, and he noted that it's easier to attract quality speakers for an online seminar than for a physical visit.

The newly consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Jerusalem, Hosam Naoum, took part in a panel discussion with prominent representatives of the Jewish and Muslim faiths: Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, a Palestinian Islamic scholar at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem.

Despite the lack of personal contact, the summer program even managed to tick the 2 a.m. box. Sarah Aweidah, a new regional co-director at JPB, said at the end of an evening session, the kids "wanted to stay, so we left Zoom open" — and some of them stayed up talking until 2 a.m.

Aweidah is a 25-year-old Palestinian — "almost 26," she said — from East Jerusalem, with a degree in engineering. She was pursuing a career in hotel management at Jerusalem's storied King David Hotel when she took some time off to help lead the JPB summer programs in 2019.

"I realize they had something special, so I made an abrupt career change," she said. She joined the JPB staff and enrolled in law school at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, a Tel Aviv suburb. She plans to use her law degree in the service of peace efforts.

Jerusalem Peacebuilders is not a one-and-done summer camp, it's a

four-year program. Kids who join in the ninth grade are asked to commit to it for four years, and "we have about a 92-percent retention rate," Porter says. There were 61 participants and staff in the 2020 summer programs, including 20 Jews; 12 Christians; 27 Muslims; and one each Druze and Alawi, the latter of which is a branch of Shia Islam.

The organization started out as a summer program in 2011 with 11 participants. "That was all we could get," Porter said. In 2016 JPB began working with the Israeli school systems to offer classes in peacebuilding, communications, conflict resolution, and social justice. They are active now in more than 30 schools in the Holy Lands.

"Schools in Israel are segregated," Porter said starkly. There are schools for Jews and schools where Christians and Muslims study together. JPB seeks to build bridges across the communities.

"I'm not naïve enough to believe that JPB is going to 'bring peace to Israel and Palestine,'" Porter said. But "we can contribute to that change."

Between the summer programs and school-year classes, "we've had direct impact on thousands of young people," he said. "We have trained, empowered, and energized individuals who will be agents of change in their society."

Jerusalem Peacebuilders is a partner of the Living Church Foundation.

