

UPDATE newsletter

DECEMBER 22 2011

Welcome to *UPDATE*, the Church of Scotland World Mission Council's email newsletter which highlights news pertinent to our partner churches and organisations. Please feel free to share any of the following items in your newsletters, bulletins and prayer diaries. Where appropriate, please cite the original source as well as World Mission. You can contact us at wmeditor@cofscotland.org.uk. Find out more about World Mission on the Church of Scotland [website](#) or join our Facebook Group [here](#).

Please note: *UPDATE* will be taking a short Christmas and New Year break and will return during January 2012. A blessed Christmas to one and all.

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Africa

East Africa famine: Minister says aid helps protect UK

Aid sent to east Africa over Christmas will protect UK security as well as save lives, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell has said. Britain is funding 9,000 tonnes of food and medical supplies for the Horn of Africa, where millions remain in danger as a result of drought and famine. Mr Mitchell said the aid was "not only about saving lives". He said it would also help prevent terrorism and disorder in Somalia which was a "direct threat" to the UK. "This is not only about saving the lives of huge numbers of vulnerable babies and children, it is also about doing the right thing to promote British security."

Source: BBC NEWS ■ You can read the full story from the BBC [here](#)

South Sudanese 'press-ganged' by rebels in Khartoum

Young South Sudanese men living in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, are being forcibly conscripted by militia groups, according to numerous sources. It is alleged they are forced to fight for rebels in South Sudan, which split from the north in July. South Sudan's information minister believes Khartoum is directing the rebel groups and the kidnappings. According to South Sudanese community leaders, church workers in Khartoum and politicians in South Sudan, men have been snatched from universities, the streets and even their homes by armed gangs. UNHCR says it has raised the matter with the Sudanese government.

Source: BBC NEWS ■ You can read the full story from the BBC [here](#) ■ The Presbyterian Church of the Sudan is the partner church of the Church of Scotland in Sudan and South Sudan

Christmas CD earns £10,000 for Malawi

A home-made compact disc featuring Christmas carols and seasonal Bible readings has raised more than £1000 for a Christian Aid Partnership Project in the north of Malawi. The CD, "Music and Readings for Christmas", was recorded in the autumn by more than 50 members of Gladsmuir and Longniddry Parish Churches in East Lothian, under the auspices of the Longniddry congregation's Young Christians Group (YCG). The cast of readers, singers and musicians was drawn from across the churches, with everyone from tiny tots to OAPs performing such classics of the season as "Away in a Manger" and "Hark! the herald angels sing". Each disc sold for £5, with profits benefiting the Christian Aid Partnership Scheme in which Gladsmuir and Longniddry are taking part. This aims to provide an HIV education programme for the people of Karonga, a remote town in the north of Malawi.

Thanks to matched funding from the Scottish Government International Development Fund, the £1000 raised from the CD project will be joined by a further £9000, making a grand total of £10,000 from this fund-raising venture alone. The Robin Hill, minister of Gladsmuir linked with Longniddry, is overwhelmed by the success of the teenagers' project: "YCG has done us proud with this lovely Christmas CD. The music and readings are excellent, bringing the true meaning of Christmas into people's homes. It's also good to know that what started out as a home-spun fund-raiser has ended up is making such a fabulous amount of money for Karonga - the perfect Christmas present all round!" As a result of a wide array of fund-raising events, Gladsmuir and Longniddry hope to reach their £5,000 target by Christmas Day, resulting in a grand total of £50,000 being raised for their Christian Aid Partnership in nine months.

■ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian is the partner church of the Church of Scotland in Malawi

Asia

South Korean church leaders hope for peace following Kim's death

Leaders of a South Korean church council expressed on 19 December "sincere condolences" on the death of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il. "We ask [the] international community to cooperate continuously, not taking this for breaking of security on the Korean peninsula, but for building peace in the region of North East Asia," said General Secretary the Rev Kim Young Ju and the Rev Kim Ki Taek, chairperson of the unification committee of the National Council of Churches in Korea, based in Seoul.

Source: [Ecumenical News International](#) ■ The Presbyterian Church of Korea and The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea are the partner churches of the Church of Scotland in Korea

>> The Convener of the Church of Scotland's World Mission Council has sent a message of support to our partners in Korea, saying, "The Church has a long-standing commitment to peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula ... Your prayers, witness and advocacy on this issue are backed by actions, for example, the recent delivery of 180 tonnes of food aid to the north. We give thanks for your action to support the vulnerable people of North Korea. As Christians around the world celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace in a few days be assured that the Church of Scotland joins with you in prayer for justice and peace for all people on the Korean peninsula."

Middle East

Moderator's Christmas visit to Bethlehem

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is continuing a two-week visit to Israel and Palestine this week which will include worship in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. David Arnott and his wife, Rosemary, accompanied by Ian Alexander, the Church's World Mission Council Secretary, are meeting with a number of heads of churches, dignitaries and officials as well as local peoples.

Ian Alexander has sent us this report today:

"As we come to the end of the year and a small hiatus as staff enjoy the Christmas break, the Council Secretary is accompanying the Moderator on his travels representing the Church in meeting the Christian Community in Palestine and Israel. He reports visiting Gaza yesterday and being inspired by the commitment of the people they met.

After touring the Anglican Al Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City, and hearing about its work and witness from the Director, Dr Suhaila Tarazi, the group met with women with breast cancer, men with kidney problems, children with terrible burns. The key issues were the lack of modern equipment, access to necessary drugs, and the money to provide both. What struck the Moderator's group most was the absolute dedication of the staff to do whatever they could for "our people living in this giant prison".

"Dr Tarazi, one of 1,500 Christians living amongst 1.6 million Muslims, emphasised that the hospitals treats all people equally, and their compunction to do so comes directly from the history changing event which happened in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. Jesus came to this earth with a message of wholeness and healing, not to Christians alone, but to all. Dr Tarazi and her colleagues see their role as living out the love of Christ through offering medical services in Christ's name to all who are in need.

"As the Moderator heads to Bethlehem to share in Christmas services with the Christian community there, the Christian community in Gaza shows us all how to live the message of Christ's birth in our lives and communities today.

"The World Mission Council sends you warmest wishes for a good Christmas, one richly blessed with all the things which the man who was born in a cave in Bethlehem would wish for us all: love, joy, peace; and opportunities to serve in his name."

David Arnott has also sent a report posted on the Church of Scotland World Mission blog. He says "Gaza was not what I had expected. The transfer from Israel into Gaza caught me by surprise." You can read the full post here: <http://cofswmc.wordpress.com/>

Syria unrest: Arab League observers set to arrive

Monitors from the Arab League are due to arrive in Syria under an initiative aimed at ending the violent crackdown on anti-government protests. The UN says some 5,000 people have been killed in Syria since protests began in March but right groups say the figure is much higher. Damascus blames the unrest on "armed gangs" seeking to destabilise Syria. Russia is coming under pressure to speed up work on its draft UN resolution condemning the violence. Russia - along with China - vetoed a European resolution in October which threatened sanctions against Damascus if the killing continued. But last week, it submitted its own draft, which condemned both sides without mentioning sanctions. Western nations said the proposal was not tough enough but that they were prepared to work on the document. There has been little progress since.

Source: BBC NEWS ■ You can read the full story from the BBC [here](#) ■ The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon is the partner church of the Church of Scotland in Syria

Climate Change

BBC Radio interview with Adrian Shaw

The Church of Scotland's Climate Change Officer, Adrian Shaw, was interviewed on last week's Sunday Morning with Cathy Macdonald programme on BBC Radio Scotland. The programme is available to listen on BBC iPlayer until 24 Dec and the interview can be found approximately 1 hour into the programme. Listen here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/console/b018cqww>

Events & Opportunities

[THE BETHLEHEM PACK](#), an annual resource pack for Christmas from [the Amos Trust](#) has been updated with new reflections, prayers and facts about life in 'the little town' as well as links to video clips and music, all to get churches talking about the current situation in Bethlehem.

By reading out a reflection written by Palestinian Christians living in Bethlehem or showing a video clip of images of modern Bethlehem in a Christmas services or carol concert, we are all responding to the request of Palestinian Christians not to be forgotten this Christmas. [Download the pack here](#) to use it in a church service this Christmas.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFER from Hadeel, fairly-traded goods from the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon. 5 litres Palestinian olive oil - Fair Trade £62.00 and Fair Trade Organic £76.00. (Free Delivery before Christmas to areas Edinburgh EH1 to EH17) www.hadeel.org

FAIR TRADE STALLS - goods supplied by The One World Shop. Please consider holding a Fair Trade stall in your church. Producers across the world need your help and support more than ever in this recession. The One World Shop provides Sale or Return stalls for churches in Glasgow and Edinburgh and can quickly arrange a stall to suit you. Contact: Elaine Coakley (Glasgow) Tel: 0141 337 6117 Email: elaine@oneworldshop.co.uk / Lorna Kelly (Edinburgh) Tel: 0131 229 4541 Email: info@oneworldshop.co.uk www.oneworldshop.co.uk

CHINA TOUR with the Amity Foundation 2012. You have a chance to find out more about modern China by joining the next Amity Tour for 2012, which will take place during 18 - 26 April 2012. The focal points of interests will be development work and Church life in Hunan where Amity has served for over 20 years. Young leaders in churches and Christian circles may find the visit particularly helpful in understanding the actual situation in China as they confront a century when the world has to engage China actively and meaningfully. Contact the [World Mission Council](#) for further information.

Prayer Focus

As ever, please use our news items above as a basis for your prayers. Remember all our Mission Partners and their families, overseas charges, and partner churches and organisations.

When we can dream no more
because we expect too much

When we can dream no more
because every thought is filled with promise

When we can dream no more
because there isn't enough time left

Then you are being born among us
on our streets
in our neighbourhoods
through our actions

When we can dream no more
because the dream is becoming flesh right now

Then dare we shout alleluia
dare we believe the prophets
dare we look for you expecting to find you
here

now
among us

with a name that tells us who you are
Emmanuel

God
in flesh
among us
with us

When we can dream no more
may we realise the dream is over
and you are arriving along us.

Among the hungry,
among the homeless,
among the friendless,
come to make all things new.

Among the powerful,
among the spoilt,
among the crooked,
come to make all things new.

In halls of fame,
in corridors of power,
in forgotten places,
come to make all things new.

Ray Simpson

Almighty God
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share in the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

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World Mission Council Blog

<http://cofswmc.wordpress.com/>

Mission Partners' Blogs:

Joel Githinji in Nepal <http://joelgithinji.blogspot.com>

Colin Johnston in Israel / Palestine <http://colinintiberias.blogspot.com>

David & Rebecca Morton in Malawi <http://davidrebeccamorton.wordpress.com>

George Shand in Israel / Palestine <http://georgeshand.wordpress.com>

Ida and Keith Waddell in Zambia <http://idaandkeith.blogspot.com>

Tabetha School in Jaffa (Antony Short): <http://tabeethaschool.blogspot.com>

World Mission, Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH2 4YN
T: + 44 (0) 131 225 5722 F: + 44 (0) 131 226 6121

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The WMC is the channel through which the Church of Scotland responds to the command of Jesus "Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15). The Council works in many countries worldwide, usually on the basis of partnership with national churches and institutions and always with a view to involving church members in Scotland in the development of the work. Our mission is to empower everyone to discover, experience and share the challenges and opportunities gained by connecting with the World Church.