

Arthur and Louise Brown

Prayer letter, February 2016

bmsworldmission.org/albrown



Dear Friends,

Thank you to all of you who have been in contact with us or praying for us over the last few months. It is wonderful to know that we have such good friends supporting us.

Since our last letter we have had a wonderful family Christmas. Arthur's mother came to stay and enjoyed the light-saber fights (each child got their own one, unfortunately the parents have to ask permission to borrow them) and the Christmas cake baked by the girls. Church was a delight. Worshiping alongside new believers from across the region and watching the young people of the Learning Support Project sing for us. I was given the most amazing Christmas present, the opportunity to return to the UK for a few days to see my Mother over her birthday and into the New Year.

The Learning Support Project continues to flourish. The young people performed a Christmas concert for their parents. Something taken for granted by many of us but an opportunity many of our young people had never experienced. The parents loved it! The atmosphere was electric and the pride on the parents faces a privilege to witness.

Since the last prayer letter had a specific focus on refugees this time we decided to focus on Peace Building. Specifically The Feast which is an Interfaith youth initiative and the upcoming Middle East Consultation. Arthur is directly involved in both of these as part of his role as Associate Director, Youth Initiatives within the Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) at The Arab Baptist Theological Seminary [ABTS]. The Feast was started in Birmingham, UK, about 10 years ago. The aim of the project is to help young people learn to talk about their faith, listen to those of other faiths and talk positively about each others differences and similarities. To develop understanding, respect and friendships across faith divisions. Arthur, along with partners at World Vision Lebanon and Lebanon Youth For Christ launched the project in Lebanon two years ago. To learn more about The Feast in Lebanon visit: IMESLebanon.wordpress.com/TheFeast.

As you will know Lebanon is a country that experienced a seventeen-year civil war. While our teenagers never

experienced the war itself, the divisions and mistrust that enabled the war to begin still exist today. Unfortunately many of those same divisions we are now witnessing tearing our neighbour Syria apart. Therefore, IMES as part of its mandate to seek positive transformation in thinking and practice between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and beyond, saw The Feast as an example of positive Interfaith youth work that could be adapted to the needs of our situation. The Initial pilot project brought young Sunni Muslims from Sidon and Evangelicals from Beirut together. Last year The Feast brought young Evangelicals, Maronites (a Christian denomination in communion with the Roman Catholic Church), Sunni and Shiite Muslims together every other Friday for about nine months. This group learnt to trust their traditional "enemy", listen respectfully as others talked about their faith and to talk openly about their faith. Significant deep friendships were built across the sectarian lines and future leaders were identified for training. A real vision for the project and its aims has grown amongst the youth and their leaders. IMES is now planning to turn The Feast, over the next two years, from a project to a movement. Equipping young people from the different faith communities to lead other initiatives bringing young people together to grow in understanding, respect and friendship for the other. Please pray for the funding bids, that are awaiting approval, which will enable this vision to be turned into reality. Please also pray for the identification of the staff and volunteers who will take The Feast Lebanon to a new level. If you are interested in exploring how The Feast could work within your own community why not visit their UK website at: TheFeast.org.uk

This month Arthur will travel to Egypt to have meetings in three cities with leaders of different faith communities who are interested in exploring how The Feast might work in their context. Please pray that God will go before Arthur inspiring and bringing hope to the leaders that he will meet. May he also have wisdom as he listens



to the needs and desires of those he sees. It is exciting to see the vision for peace building and understanding spreading.

What makes The Feast unique are its really helpful dialogue guidelines. These include the commitments to:

- Speak positively about my own faith, rather than negatively about others people's
- Respect other people's views, even if I don't agree with them
- Not treat people here as a spokesperson for their faith
- Not tell others what they believe, but will let them tell me
- Acknowledge similarities and differences between faiths
- Not judge people here by what some people of their faith do

The Middle East Consultation 2016 [MEC 2016]

The Middle East Consultation is an annual consultation hosted by IMES and ABTS. The purpose of the Middle East Consultation [MEC] is to equip participants to respond in prophetic and Christ-like ways to the many challenges facing Christians and Muslims in and beyond the Middle East. Arthur, commenting on this year's MEC recently said,

"I am so excited about the Middle East Consultation 2016. It seems to me that God is calling His church to respond in a new and prophetic ways to the refugee communities, wherever they may be found. In the Middle East churches have stepped up to the mark, in many cases rediscovering who they are called to be in the midst of very challenging circumstances. Europe is currently experiencing the largest people movement since World War II, and it is the church that is taking a

lead role in advocating for the rights of these people and demonstrating God's compassion in action. MEC 2016 will provide the opportunity to step back and not only reflect on what God has been and is doing in and through His church, but also to envision the church of the future – a church where people of diverse social and religious backgrounds find unity in Christ."

As usual we will have local, regional and international participants and contributors. The two critical questions we will be exploring, given what is happening in many churches in Lebanon these days, are:

- From a theological, biblical and sociological perspective, to what extent do non-Christian refugees need to be integrated into the previously established church?
- How might a biblical expression of church – made up of new believers from non-Christian backgrounds – be fostered in such a way that it would flourish within a non-Christian context?

MEC 2016 comes at a critical time in history for the church in the region. Furthermore, what is already happening in the Middle East has the potential to happen further-afield. Will the Church – will our churches – be ready? If you are interested in joining us for the consultation [a number of people from the UK are already signed up] please visit: ABTSLebanon.org/MEC2016 for more details and information on how to apply.

Once MEC is completed we will be traveling back to the UK on Home Assignment. We are really looking forward to the opportunity to share what we see God doing in our midst. We are also looking forward to hearing about what God is doing in your lives.

Thank you again for your ongoing love and support.

Salaam / peace,
Louise, Arthur, Jessica, Naomi, Jack & Jonathan Brown

If you would like to support Arthur and Louise by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



Arthur and Louise will be on home assignment in the UK and available to request as BMS Speakers from 12 July to 7 August and from 19 to 29 August 2015. Churches wishing to request Arthur and Louise as BMS Speakers should use the online speaker request form at

bmsworldmission.org/speakers or call the Church Relations Team on 01235 517600. Please submit your request by 21 March 2016.



PO Box 49 129 Broadway Didcot Oxfordshire OX11 8XA Tel: 01235 517700
mail@bmsworldmission.org bmsworldmission.org

Baptist Missionary Society: registered as a charity in England and Wales (number 233782) and in Scotland (number SC037767)