

Harvest

Awareness Foundation: healing communities through education

www.awareness-foundation.com

We welcome HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO, our new Royal Patron

We are delighted to announce that Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex GCVO has graciously accepted our invitation to become our Royal Patron. She is the wife of Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, the youngest son of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

The Revd Nadim Nassar, Director of the Awareness Foundation, said:
"It is a great honour to welcome Her Royal Highness as our Royal Patron. We are thrilled, and we look forward to her involvement as we focus this year on encouraging peacebuilding and reconciliation in the Middle East and in the West."



Photographs of Her Royal Highness's recent visit to our centre

Delegation to Lebanon, April 2017

We took opinion leaders from the UK and North America to experience life, faith and culture in Lebanon.



A special part of our Awareness Forum is our Delegation programme, bringing Western thought-leaders to the Middle East to experience life, faith and culture there and to spend time with Christians and Muslims. In addition, this is an ideal opportunity for us to introduce our own work to Middle Eastern leaders and seek their help and cooperation.

Our week-long trip to Lebanon in April 2017, with a mix of Canadian and British business, civic and religious leaders, was many months in planning. We should like to thank all of our friends in and around Beirut, especially **Mrs. Soulaf Kanaan** and **The Revd Dr Habib Badr**, who worked so hard to make this a great success.

The delegation had a very auspicious start: on the day we arrived, we were very fortunate to meet **Patriarch Moran Mor** (Bechara Boutros al-Rahi) the **77th Maronite Patriarch of Antioch**, the head of the Maronite Church. He was very welcoming, he listened to our message and he talked about the situation of Christians in the region. We were delighted that the Patriarch offered his support for our work in the future.



On **FRIDAY** we met **The Revd Joseph Kassab**, the General Secretary of the Synod of the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Syria and Lebanon. He spoke to us about the mission of the Church there,



especially their involvement with the Syrian refugees. We were then taken by **The Revd Ramzi Abou Assali** to the **Bekaa Valley** to visit a Syrian refugee family. There, we heard first-hand about this family's journey and the great suffering and loss they had endured.



We also visited a **school for refugee children** where the Baptist and the National Evangelical Churches are working together to bring hope, love and a sense of security back into the children's lives. The delegates were greatly moved by the children's stories.

In the evening, we were invited by one of our Trustees, Mr George Kanaan, and his wife Soulaf for a

formal dinner at their home with some of their closest friends. It was wonderful to see Dr Sami Khiyami, the former Syrian Ambassador to London, and to talk about our work to such an encouraging audience.



On **SATURDAY**, we met **Abdul Latif Deryan**, the **Grand Mufti of Lebanon**. **Dr Mohamad Sammak**, a Muslim scholar, and **The Revd Dr Habib Badr**, Chair of our Middle Eastern international consultants, joined us for this meeting. We discussed the **Al-Azhar Declaration on Citizenship and Coexistence**, and we learned much about how religion plays a central role in maintaining community harmony and stability in Lebanon. We are very proud that Dr Sammak was appointed as the Grand Mufti's personal representative to the Foundation.



We wanted the delegates to experience the life and culture of Lebanon; after this important meeting, we visited the **Gibran Khalil Gibran Museum** and then travelled on to the **Forest of the Cedars of God** and the ancient city of **Byblos**. Beside the sea, we had a wonderful dinner and time to reflect on all that we had experienced so far.

On **SUNDAY**, we worshipped at **the National Evangelical Church of Beirut**. The service was led by **The Revd Dr Habib Badr** and one of our Canadian Delegates, **The Revd**

Canon Peter Walker, was invited to preach. Revd Badr's church invited us to join them for a traditional Lebanese lunch.



After lunch, we went to the world-famous *Jeita Grotto*, a series of breathtaking limestone caves carved over millions of years by the Nar el-Kalb river, and *Harissa*, a key Christian pilgrimage site with a shrine dedicated to the Lady of Lebanon. We returned to Beirut via the *Teleferique cable car* system; the views were amazing!

On **MONDAY**, we met with **Mr Habib E. Ephrem**, a highly respected Christian businessman who is the President of the Syriac League in Lebanon. He told us about his wonderful work with Iraqi and Syrian refugees. He brought a special treat, *Al Man wa al Salwa*, from Iraq for the Delegates to try. This is the same food that was called 'manna' in the Old Testament! Mr Ephrem also presented the Foundation with an icon of St. George.



We then had the pleasure of taking lunch with **HE Michelle Cameron**, Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon. We spoke about the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and how religion plays a big role in the life of the Lebanese.



Our last meeting of the day was with **The Revd. Professor Fadi Daou**, the chair of the Adyan Foundation and one of the Awareness Foundation's international consultants. We learned much about Adyan's work to promote a culture of acceptance of difference and appreciation of diversity, which stimulates creative interaction and social cohesion.



On **TUESDAY**, we visited the *Near East School of Theology (NEST)*, an Protestant seminary serving the evangelical churches of the Middle East. We were hosted by **Dr George Sabra**, the President of NEST, who introduced delegates to the work of NEST, in particular their role in the Christian-Muslim dialogue in the region. This was a very special connection for us, as this is where Nadim trained in theology in the 1980s - and Dr Sabra had been his teacher!



We then joined the NEST students for a short service and then lunch together.

After lunch at NEST, we travelled to the remarkable museum home of **Princess Hayat Arslan** to meet some exceptional people who are active in the community. Princess Hayat talked about empowering women to play a political role in Lebanon in addition to their multi-social, economic and humanitarian role. **Linda Ghaddar** of the Interfaith and Interreligious Forum spoke about her school programmes to educate students about pluralism and the acceptance of the other, and **Dr. Husen Aboud** told us about

Mary's Path, an Islamic-Christian movement that aims to spread a culture of friendship and peace among the Lebanese.



WEDNESDAY began with a meeting with **The Revd Gabriel Hachem**, one of our international consultants, who welcomed us and led us to our audience with **HB Gregory III Laham**, the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Alexandria and Jerusalem. The Patriarch emphasised the important role of peacemakers and reconcilers that Christians should fulfil in the Middle East.



We then visited the *Liqaa Centre*, an extremely well equipped centre for international, interreligious dialogue.

Afterwards, **Father Boulos Wehbe**, a priest at a local Greek Orthodox Church told us about his ecumenical work. We were very moved by his words and his generous spirit.



Finally we met with **Elie Haddad**, the President of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary. He showed the breadth and openness of the

vision that the seminary is following, focusing teaching on Jesus Christ rather than on 'Christianity'.



On THURSDAY, it was, sadly, time to say goodbye to Lebanon and split up, four of us going home to Canada and the rest of us flying back to the UK.

Throughout our time in Lebanon, we stayed at the *Deir El-Chir Convent of St. George* in Aley. We had a wonderful and unforgettable time



at the Convent; we genuinely cannot thank **Fathers Tony and Joseph** enough for their generosity and hospitality.

Special thanks are due to Mr. George Sara, who made us all so welcome when we visited Chateau Ksara in the Bekaa Valley. It was a unique experience.

Finally, we should like to thank all of our hosts for making us so welcome and for sharing their time with us, and our delegates who who were brave enough to take our challenge! Each delegate went home with a wealth of experiences and stories to share with friends, family and colleagues, stories of people of faith who live side-by-side, working together to defeat sectarianism and preserve Lebanon's famous multi-cultural and multi-faith diversity.



Hope and enthusiasm: Sunday School Teachers

Sunday School Teachers

Over 30 young Christians came to a monastery in Western Syria to learn how to teach children and teenagers about their faith.

Teaching Sunday School in Syria today is not like teaching Sunday School in Europe or North America. The message has had to change, to emphasise what it means to be a Christian in a land torn apart by sectarianism, shortage and armed conflict. Before the war, Sunday School teachers attended training conferences in the Middle East and in the West, but travel is now almost impossible. Many of the most experienced Sunday School teachers have left Syria, and inexperienced teachers have had to take charge at a time when their churches, especially in the relatively safe Western coast

of Syria, have welcomed hundreds of additional children, the children of the dispossessed who have fled their homes in fear and despair.

In May, we ran a Sunday School Teacher Training Programme for more than 30 young teachers from all denominations to enable them to plant seeds of love and hope among the children in their churches. Our goal was to equip them all to be agents of peace and reconciliation in their communities, great sources of support and encouragement to the children.





Over three days, we concentrated on what it means to be a Christian, what should motivate a good Sunday School teacher, how to plan and present lessons, how to be creative and innovative over a long period, and what are the best ways to meet the children's spiritual, cultural and intellectual needs. We also advised them on how to use the very limited resources now at their disposal, for example how to use nature's own gifts such as leaves, stones and flowers, to tell stories from the Bible.

The training was led by professionals in the field of children's education and development, including Mr Adip Al-Khoury, Dr Abed Rayess, Ramia Ibrahim and Huda Nassar.

The young people were thirsty to learn, and they were very keen to be challenged by us to step out of their comfort zones. Most of the Sunday School teachers are just starting on their journey and every one of them showed a real desire to do their best for the children in their care.

We used a mixture of lectures and

interactive workshops to inspire and educate the young people, and they particularly enjoyed the hands-on activities when they had a chance to show just what they could do!

Everyone greatly enjoyed finding new ways to unfold the Bible stories and present them in original and inspiring ways.

An important part of our work was to nourish the young people spiritually to help them cope with the challenge they face in their communities and to share this with their children.

They went home filled with hope and enthusiasm, newly encouraged and freshly equipped for their work with Syria's new generation.



Introducing PAX

Announcing our new online video channel!



Today, the internet provides huge opportunities for education and communication. Unfortunately, online media is saturated with negative, incorrect or sectarian messages about faith.

It's time for a counter-narrative!

We are delighted to introduce PAX, our new **online video channel** that encourages young people to become **better informed, more tolerant and less apathetic** concerning matters of faith.

Through PAX, we are tackling huge generational problems concerning faith, such as ignorance and extremism. **We are passionate about enabling Christians to live their faith confidently in a diverse world, demonstrating that faith should be a force for good and an agent of peace.**

We have already released 10 videos and we have many more in production. Each video lasts between 90 seconds and 5 minutes, covering a wide variety of relevant topics from 'How can we be salt & light in politics?' to 'Cake, Copernicus and Christ: What does science have to do with faith?'



Our PAX Producer, Josie Child (*photo, above*) works within the Awareness team to produce professional quality videos featuring **experts in Christianity, inter-faith relationships, and peace-building**. These include:

- The Revd Nadim Nassar
- Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi
- Alan Scotland
- The Revd Canon Chris Chivers
- Professor John Bryant
- Imam Dawood Masood

and representatives of the Council for Christians and Jews, and Christians in Politics.

We have big plans, and we have received such encouraging feedback from churches and our viewers

online. In particular, we would like to say a big thank you to Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church in California, and United Christian Broadcasters, whose support has helped this project to thrive.

We would love for you to get involved! Please watch our videos, share them with your friends and family, and let us know if you find them helpful!

You can find our videos here:

WEBSITE:

<http://www.awareness-foundation.co.uk/index.php/pax>

FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/PaxVideos/>

YOUTUBE:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvYgbfCvddBYO4cZfaMFI2Q>

TWITTER:

<https://twitter.com/PaxVideos>



Awareness in North America

Fund-raising and Awareness-raising in the United States and Canada



Nadim, Col. Hadfield and Adrienne Arsenault on stage

We really have been very active in North America this year, with our friends in Toronto and San Francisco working hard to raise both awareness of our work, and the funds to enable us to carry it out.

On Thursday 2nd February 2017, The Revd Nadim Nassar was joined by **Col. Chris Hadfield**, famous Canadian astronaut and author, and **Adrienne Arsenault**, News and Documentary Emmy Award-winning CBC journalist, for a special fundraising event in **Toronto, Canada** (photo, top).



Hosted at the prestigious Gardiner Museum (photo, above), Nadim and Col. Hadfield spoke about their

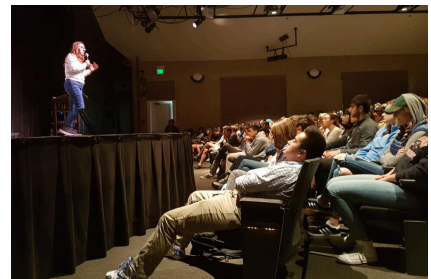


meeting at supper with HM The Queen at Windsor Castle in 2016, and the unique perspectives on life that their very different experiences, in the Lebanese Civil War and aboard the International Space Station, have given them.

Col. Hadfield very generously brought two signed photographs of Canada, taken by him while in space, which were auctioned. We should like to thank Col. Hadfield and Adrienne Arsenault for their amazing contribution to this wonderful evening. Special thanks are due to Christopher Bunting, James Appleyard, Bob Davies, Fred Parker and our many friends at Grace Church-on-the-Hill for organising this spectacular event.



The very next month, The Revd Nadim Nassar, Director, and Huda Nassar, our Director for the Middle East, took part in a packed programme of speaking and teaching in **San Francisco and the Bay Area**. The visit was organised by our dear friends Douglas and Nancy Wolcott and their team of helpers.



Engagements ranged from speaking on “Life for Christians in Syria Today” at a special event arranged by **New College Berkeley** to addressing school students in their assemblies and classes. They also taught at Dominican University, led a forum at St. John’s Ross, and Huda spoke to a women’s group. **“The amount of encouragement and enthusiasm we received was amazing,”** Nadim said.



At **Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church**, Nadim and Huda spoke at a special forum event on “Communicating Love in the Face of Hatred and Arrogance.” The clergy and congregation of LOPC are very special friends and supporters of our ministry.

We were delighted that **Sir Jony Ive** found some time in his very busy schedule to see Nadim, Huda and Nancy; Nadim and Sir Jony met at Windsor Castle last year, and Nadim was very happy to renew such an unusual connection!



Nadim and Huda also had an excellent meeting with the Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.



We should like to thank Douglas and Nancy, and the very many friends and supporters who helped to make Nadim and Huda's trip such a success. Special thanks are due to The Revd Chris Rankin-Williams and his team at St. John's Ross for their tremendous, continuing,

support for our work. The love and encouragement we received in California has been a great inspiration to us all.

The wonderful successes in Canada and California this year have been a great encouragement to us, and to our friends in North America.

Building on this, the Board of Awareness Foundation America will be meeting this month for a two-day meeting to plan a new strategy for the next two years, focussing on raising awareness and funds.

We are very grateful to Christopher Bunting, Chair of Awareness Foundation America, and his Board for undertaking this important task.

Gala Dinner 13th November 2017

We shall be holding a very special **Gala Dinner** at the Copthorne Tara Hotel London in Kensington on the evening of **Monday 13th November 2016** in the presence of **HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO**.

We can promise you good food, a great speaker, a fun raffle with loads of prizes, an auction and some great entertainment. Your presence will be greatly appreciated,

Please book your tickets - or tables - either on our website or by calling our office.

Tickets are £95. *Last year we were completely sold out, so don't leave it too late!*

United States

Awareness Foundation America is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

GIVE BY CHECK: Please send checks, made payable to Awareness Foundation America, to:
Awareness Foundation America, PO Box 217, Ross CA 94957 USA.

Please enclose a note requesting that the funds be used for the Awareness Foundation's programs.

Please contact us directly at awarenessamerica@awareness-foundation.com if you have any questions, especially regarding possible tax benefits related to donations made in North America.

UK and Hong Kong

GIVE BY CHEQUE: Please send **cheques**, made payable to the Awareness Foundation, to:
Awareness Foundation, Lodge House, 69 Beaufort Street, London SW3 5AH
Please mark your cheques "Little Heroes".

OTHER METHODS: Please contact us if you would like to make a gift **online** using your debit/credit card or PayPal, or **electronically**, directly from your bank.

Gift Aid: If you are a UK taxpayer, please contact us as Gift Aid could add at least 25% to the value of your gift.

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Royal Patron: HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO

Patrons: The Rt Revd & Rt Hon The Lord Williams of Oystermouth, Earl Cadogan KBE DL, His Grace Bishop Angaelos, The Most Revd Paul Kwong, The Revd Dr Lord Griffiths of Burry Port, and The Most Revd Kevin McDonald KC*HS

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