

# Fiona and Joel Kelling

Link Letter no. 12 | November 2020

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## The call in action

Dear friends,

We can hardly believe that summer has been and gone and we are already into autumn. Not that it really feels like it here with temperatures currently still approaching 30 degrees most days... although the mornings and evenings are getting cool.

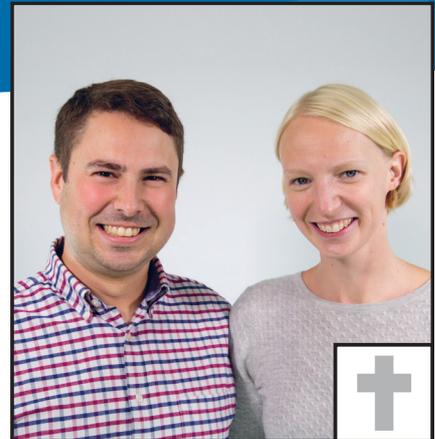
Nora is now four months old though and growing by the day. It has been wonderful seeing her develop the ability to hold and grab things and to smile and laugh, especially at her brother's silly antics. Aidan continues to be the doting older sibling – who sometimes doesn't know the difference between loving and smothering, but at least there doesn't seem to be any conscious envy!

Joel was able to take a full month of paternity leave, which gave us lots of time as a family, albeit without the energy to go very far! The summer has been a very hot one, with wildfires happening across the region and maximum temperatures going above 40°C each day for over a week on a couple of occasions. By August we were very happy to get away for a long weekend in celebration of Fiona's birthday – it is only an hour's drive to the Dead Sea, but we were excited to enjoy other people doing the cooking and washing up and the child-friendly swimming pools. Since then we have made small excursions to the north of Jordan, enjoying the hills and trees and a cooler breeze than in the dense urbanism of Amman.

It has also been a wonderful coincidence of timing that a number of other families from the international church have had babies around the same time as us, including one family whose second child was born two days before Nora. It has been a blessing to be able to spend time with other families experiencing the same challenges (general parenting ones as well as continental separation from wider family and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions) and sharing in the joys!

While Nora's birth coincided with a letting up of restrictions here, we have just re-entered a period of full weekend curfews again as Jordan is experiencing a resurgence of cases, although at over 1,000 cases a day it is actually much more marked than the initial outbreak. Like everywhere, the government is now trying to balance the health risks with negative economic impacts. Churches were meeting again in person for a while, but we are now back to online meetings. As we're sure you've experienced, these can be good spaces of communal worship, but there are challenges, and we particularly experience this when the service is in another language.

Joel also returned to working from his office, albeit only in the mornings, as Aidan's nursery reopened in August. However, schools went back to distance learning again a few weeks ago and we had a brief scare when it was announced nurseries would close for the rest of the year. Thankfully this decision has now been reversed. Please pray that they would stay safe and open, as Aidan has really been enjoying it (as have we!). We are also lucky in that Joel can work very flexibly, unlike many others who have found themselves

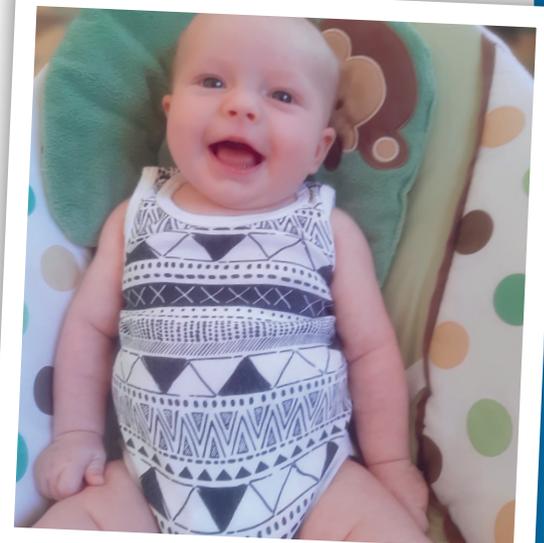


**Name:** Fiona and Joel Kelling

**Location:** Amman, Jordan

**Our call:** To support and strengthen Christian communities in the Middle East, reaching out to poor and marginalised groups (especially refugees) and encouraging reconciliation through interfaith exchange.

**Our role:** Working alongside local churches and institutions to provide practical and spiritual care to vulnerable groups to strengthen the mission of the Church within the Middle East.



Nora at 8 weeks, showing off her laugh

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in more difficult situations. Joel can often be found standing at his desk in the bedroom in the afternoon, laptop perched on top of the six thickest books in the house, with Nora cocooned against him in a baby carrier to get a good long nap in!

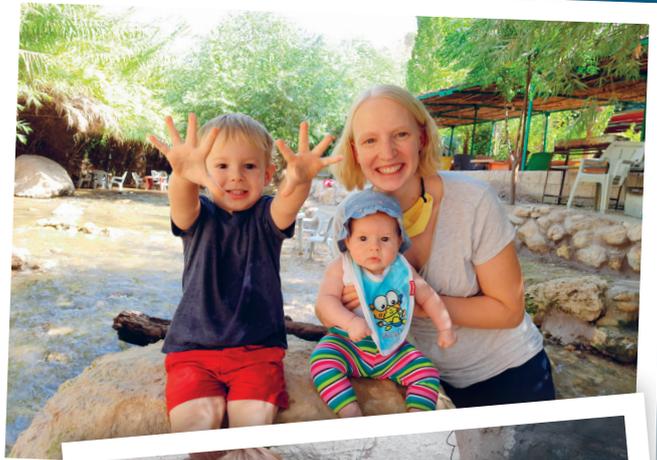
Among all of this Joel has managed to get some work done, despite its largely virtual existence. The relationships developed through travelling to the Anglican churches across the region have reached a point of trust and understanding that work has been possible while far apart, although at some point it will become necessary to refresh this. In the meantime, the report from the January consultation on Safe Migration in the Gulf has been published here: <https://anglicanalliance.org/safe-migration-into-the-gulf/> and this work is ongoing, as well as big picture questions on how the church responds to matters of health and race in light of this year's events. Joel is also excited to be working with Tearfund on initiating the development and contextualisation of their Church and Community Mobilisation course with a small group of clergy, ordinands and parishioners in the Diocese of Jerusalem. It is a slow process which is still in its very early days, but the fruit of over a year of work from the initial envisioning day hosted by Tearfund back in August 2019. We hope that it will be possible for parishes to begin the facilitation process across the diocese sometime in 2021. Please pray for the successful completion of this process and wider adoption by the parishes of the diocese.

Alongside this work, Joel has been working as the lead of the ACT Alliance's Climate Working Group and in September brought together clergy from a number of churches in Jordan with Christian NGOs for a workshop on climate justice. Through a multi-site in person meeting (to comply with regulations) and guest speakers coming in via Zoom, three days were spent talking about both the theological and technical approaches to stewardship of creation.

Joel is unlikely to have any more in person meetings until 2021, and Fiona is starting to think about returning to the volunteering she was doing before Nora's birth, although the local NGO she has been helping with are not currently able to operate their community centres. Our current plan extends as far as trying to make it back to the UK for Christmas, although we are not too sure what circumstances will await us there, or indeed beyond!

With love and prayers,  
The Kellings

*Photos from top to bottom: Escaping Amman and enjoying nature at a wadi just outside Salt; Aidan filling in the time in his sandpit during weekend curfew; Joel's default afternoon working pose; Participants engaged in discussion at the climate justice workshop.*



## GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION

**Are you pondering a call to cross-cultural mission?** We'd love to connect and help you discern what God might be saying. Find out more about how we can help you to step into God's mission at [churchmissionsociety.org/explore](https://churchmissionsociety.org/explore)

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email [supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org](mailto:supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org) or call 01865 787400

You can give to Fiona and Joel at: [churchmissionsociety.org/kelling](https://churchmissionsociety.org/kelling)

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