

# "I HAD THE CHANCE TO CONDUCT A SERVICE FOR THE FIRST TIME, AGED 18"



## Rev Clephane Hume

- PRIEST AT ST JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH (EDINBURGH)
- FORMER NAZARETH HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER (1965)
- LONG-STANDING SUPPORTER OF THE NAZARETH TRUST

*Clephane and 23 others travelled from the UK to Israel by train. (Victoria Station, London)*

Not long after I left school, Keith, the Rector at my church, suggested that people might join a working holiday at the EMMS Hospital in Nazareth... I had applied for a place to train as an Occupational Therapist, and the connection with the medical world caught my attention. In the end, I was the only person who went!

Our travel arrangements to fly to Tel Aviv went wrong, and we ended up going overland. Twenty-four of us with two hampers of food! This meant stops in various places, including Istanbul on the way out and Athens on the way home.

A fantastic experience. We left the

train (the wood-burning Baghdad Express) in Aleppo and went on by car to Damascus.

There was no man's land between Jordan and Israel in those days. Sitting there being watched while waiting to cross into Israel was a very strange feeling. By that time, we had been to Petra, Bethlehem and Jerusalem but sadly couldn't see some of the holy places in Jerusalem. That came later!

Initially, we worked at an American mission farm near Petah Tikvah - the only time I have regularly got up at 3 am - to feed the calves. The main task was clearing land for cultivation.

[Points at the picture] Look how we're dressed for work. Now you'd be in shorts or jeans. The boys did the heavier work.

We then went on to Nazareth, where we stayed for three weeks.



*Clephane's friends and the cracks in the ground (American Baptist Centre Mission Farm near Petah Tikva).*





*EMMS Nazareth Hospital*

**Where did you stay while volunteering at the Nazareth Hospital?**

St Margaret's Orphanage; I think it was a boarding school. Miss Jones was the headmistress. Living at the top of the hill in Nazareth... Being there was so amazing.

**What sort of tasks did you do while volunteering?**

I was with a group where the men did the heavier tasks, such as creating a garden. The girls did various things. I remember painting the hospital fence, suitably clad, talking to passers-by. It was a pretty hot task in July, and we had a siesta each afternoon, sometimes entertained to coffee with the hospital joiners. We also darned blankets and went to the children's ward for a bit of playtime whenever possible. I think and hope that all in all, we did earn our keep.



*Clephane and friends painting fences (EMMS Nazareth Hospital)*

**What memories stand out from your volunteering experience in 1965?**

It was just such a wonderful experience to be in Nazareth: all the childhood stories coming to life. On our days off, we had the chance to go to Galilee and other areas. Just wandering around the suq and exploring the town was a real privilege. Something like 363 steps from the hospital into town!

I remember going, with a fellow Anglican, to communion at Christ Church one Sunday and seeing a blind lady singing her heart out. I can see her still. Her faith was just so impressive.

We also got to know members of staff who invited us to their homes. Each evening, on our way back up the hill to the Orphanage, we were stopped and welcomed by many people.

The group got together to have a party on my 19th birthday! A lovely surprise.

**How was the experience of meeting people from so many different cultures, religions, and nationalities?**

As a teenager, it was enriching and very impressive. There were some Christian nurses in training at the time. The hospital staff was like the United Nations. There were people

from all over the world with a common purpose, which was inspiring.

I've always been interested in other cultures. One of the things I did at work was trying to raise awareness about working with people from different cultures, back in the 1980s when people hadn't really travelled. I've written chapters of books and spoken at conferences. It's like being ecumenical. We had someone coming into St John's church pre-pandemic. She was a Muslim and asked, "Can I come in?" - "Of course, you can". I appreciate that's not necessarily a view that everybody would share. My international work with Occupational Therapy (OT) taught me a lot that way. I ended up in Malaysia at one point, at the end of Ramadan, the head of OT at the hospital told me she was going to



*EMMS Nazareth Hospital catering staff*

have a party, and she said, I'll just have it while you're here. There were Christians, Muslims, Hindus and "nothings", and it was a fantastic party.

**When you were at the Nazareth Hospital, did you meet Dr Runa Mackay?**

I didn't meet her in Nazareth. I met her in Edinburgh when she retired, through MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians) and various peace initiatives. An impressive lady. I totally respect her, everything she stood for. Dr Maddock was there [at the hospital]. It was wonderful meeting Dr Tester when he came back to Scotland and he joined the Health Advisory Service. He was going round to inspect hospitals. He came to inspect the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. He came into our



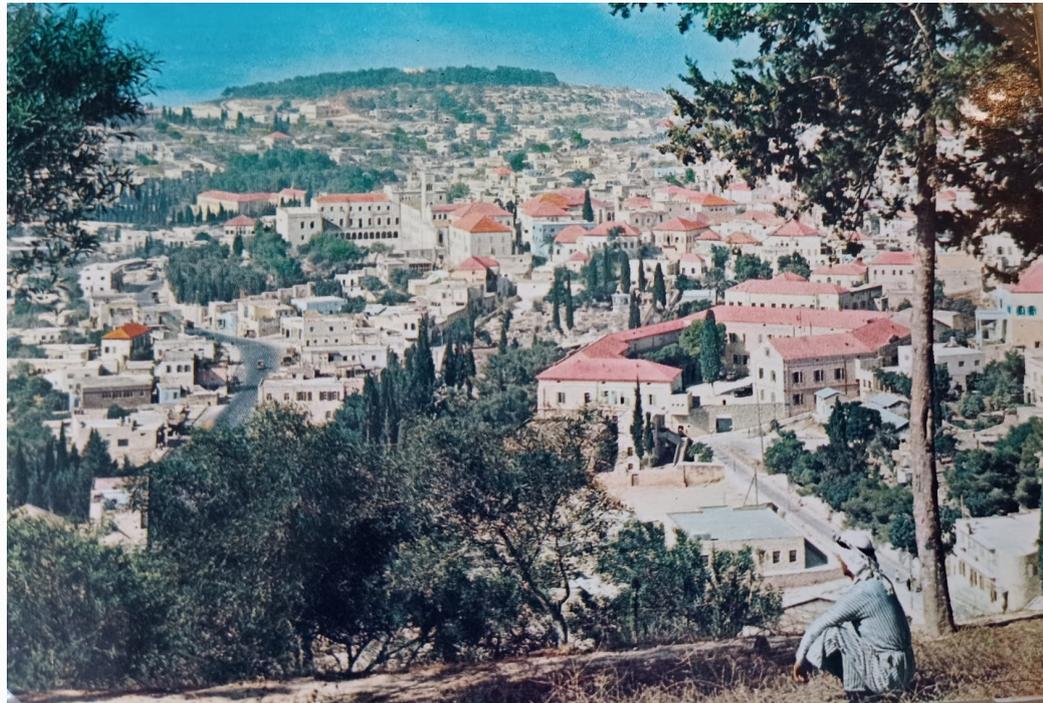
department, and he was walking around. And I said to him: "How are things in Nazareth?" And he said: "I knew I'd seen you before!". After that, I saw him a few times.

**Did you learn any words in Arabic?**

Hello [*Marhaba*], how are you? Alright. *Shukran* is thank you. I was able to try that with a Syrian refugee not long ago – I think he understood. I learned to write Arabic numerals, and that was quite useful. If you wanted to buy things you could write the number.

**Did the experience change you in any way?**

I grew up a bit! I don't remember if it was a farewell service, or if we were just asked to lead worship one Sunday, but I had the chance to



Nazareth

conduct a service for the first time, aged 18, at the carpenter's bench, and that has stayed with me. I didn't get ordained until much later (1992), but I know that my time in Nazareth, short as it was, was a formative experience.

And it was my brief involvement in hospice care at St Columba's Hospice (Edinburgh) that brought my faith and my profession together.

**After five weeks of volunteering, you went back to Edinburgh to train as an Occupational Therapist. But you returned to the Holy Land... two more times!**

I went to an Occupational Therapy congress in Jerusalem in 1978, which was a week, and then I did a week's Israeli bus tour.

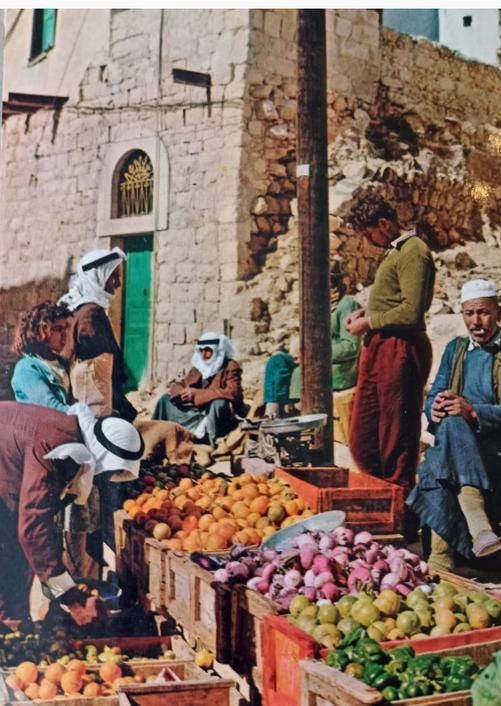
On the Israeli tour, we went to the Golan Heights. It was springtime, and all the flowers were out. It was just beautiful. The flowers were just like the flowers in the pictures in my storybooks as a 5-year-old. You could even wear the same stripy clothing that Jesus was portrayed in my books as wearing.

Going to the Holy Land is quite difficult. You see all these places that are labelled as being very specifically something. And you think: "Oh well, I'm not sure". But then we were able to walk on the hills and think: "This is it".

In 1989 I was able to return on a pilgrimage led by our former Rector, who had been in Palestine during the Mandate, our Rector at the time, and Dr Tester. A wonderful combination!

**What was the most memorable part of the pilgrimage?**

Walking through the suq in Nazareth and all the shopkeepers coming out and saying, "Dr Tester, Dr Tester!". You could see what his presence at the hospital meant to people.



The Arab Market (Nazareth)

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It was just such a wonderful experience to be in Nazareth: all the childhood stories coming to life.”



Ecce Homo Arch, Via Dolorosa (Jerusalem)



It was really moving. There were lots of things along the way: going to the Mount of Beatitudes, going to Galilee. Just being in the Holy Land. It's difficult to describe, but you'll feel it when you get there. One of the tour leaders had been in the British Army and had been in Palestine during the Mandate, so some of his recollections were quite interesting. Surrounded by the Sea of Galilee, our former Rector celebrated communion with a book on a branch of a tree. It was really special.

**What did you do after returning to Edinburgh?**

I became a deacon in 1992. At that point, I was working at Queen Margaret College as a lecturer training Occupational Therapists. Doing clinical work. Women weren't allowed to be priests at that point. I was ordained in 1994. Doing the two together was getting really tiring. I applied for early retirement and got it. And the idea was to do more at church, but I actually ended up at the Executive committee of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. I picked up a



*Church on the Mount of Beatitudes*

They wanted to know about mental health, which was my field.

I was visiting students on a placement. We visited a little boy who had polio. All the village came together, and they gave them a pep talk about getting the children vaccinated. There was lots of public health attached to that; trying to tackle things before they happen. Clean water, hygiene... All the things we've had thrust at us during the pandemic.

**How and when did you learn about the Nazareth Trust?**

I had always kept an eye on what was happening at EMMS and when the organisation divided, I wanted to continue knowing how things were developing at the hospital.

**What encourages you to donate regularly to the Nazareth Trust?**

I was impressed by the way in which all patients were treated, regardless of creed, colour or any other difference. And the way in which services have continued to develop, for example, palliative care. I don't think I would recognise the hospital now! And the Nazareth Village must be a source of inspiration to numerous visitors.

**Do you want to add anything else?**

How lucky I was to be able to do that. I mean, people could go on a pilgrimage, and that's special and I don't regret it at all... But actually live in the Holy Land... I could go to the town on my own, and greet people as I went.



*Clephane (bottom right) and friends (Chorazin)*

tropical bug and have never been the same since. That's why I have a fatigue issue.

**Can you tell us a bit more about your international work as an Occupational Therapist?**

I would usually find myself doing a bit of teaching. For example, I was in Bangladesh for a week at a hospital to help develop my profession.



*The Wailing Wall (Jerusalem)*

