

DURHAM CONFERENCE

24th to 28th AUGUST 2018

DAY FOUR



Unbelievably, this has been our last full day in conference. And what a day it has been! It started at 7.30am with Morning Worship in the college chapel followed by breakfast.

Next there came a Bible Study led by Bishop Munib Younan. It focused on a 'theology of crumbs' and at its heart was a consideration of Jesus's encounter with the Canaanite woman. It was insightful and challenging, and was followed by very lively discussion in small groups, so lively in fact that the feedback continued into the coffee break!

You can read his Bible Study by clicking the link on the Home Page.

After coffee we were richly served by Sam Slatcher, Regional Coordinator of Cities of Sanctuary. He was assisted by Rania Al Ali and Eliza Colin Hodges, two members of the 'Stories of Sanctuary' project, and Rania's brother Ahmed who recorded the session so that it could appear later in a podcast.

Sam's topic was '**Jesus is Alive! Really? Where do we find Him? In Cities of Sanctuary**'. He began by reminding us of the central place of welcome and sanctuary in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions. Then a slide of the 'Sanctuary Knocker' on the door of Durham Cathedral reminded us that for a thousand years people fleeing persecution or justice could always find sanctuary there. He and Eliza then sang 'City of Sanctuary', one of Sam's own songs that focused on the body of Cuthbert finding its way here, and the rich tradition of welcome Durham has always offered. You can listen to it on the 'Stories of Sanctuary' website.



Later in the presentation Rania and Eliza sang a second song written in a workshop run by refugees entitled 'Like a Butterfly' which is soon to appear on an album the group has produced. It ended 'I may have lost it all but I've not lost my soul, Oh I haven't any wings, but I can try, Try to fly, dance like a butterfly.'

It was an interactive and moving presentation and you can read the script by clicking the link on the Home Page.

Everyone then went off to find some lunch in the city. It was teeming with visitors due to the Bank Holiday, but everyone succeeded in getting fed.

During the afternoon about 20 people went to see the Meissen Collection in the Bill Bryson Library, part of the University Library whilst others took part in a poetry workshop. Anne Boileau coordinated a delightful session in which people read their own choice of poem and explained what it conveyed to them about the presence of Christ.

After tea we gathered for our final formal presentation. Paulina Hlawiczka, a Lutheran Pastor and an opera singer, tackled the topic '**Christ is Alive! Really? Where do we find Him? In Music**'. We hadn't quite expected to take part in a series of exercises that all singers do before they start singing, exercises that oxygen into every part of the body and which help to relax a person. But we all did them!

Her presentation was interactive, with people encouraged to butt in whenever they wished, and to answer questions Paulina put to them. So the script that Paulina was working from cannot possibly convey the liveliness or the humour generated during the session. But, nevertheless, you can read it by clicking the link on the Home Page.



Then it was time for the Conference Dinner. We were joined by the Rev Verena Jantzen, wife of Thomas who hosted us in Newcastle yesterday, by our guest presenters and by Dr Margaret Masson, Principal of St Chad's College. After the meal Dr Masson told us a little of the College's history and their hopes and plans for the future. At the heart of the college community is hospitality and a desire to enable young people who have often grown up with low self-esteem to achieve their full potential.



Thanks were expressed by Bishop Michael, our Anglican Moderator, to the College staff for making us so welcome and to those who had organised the whole event for us.

Tomorrow is our final Eucharist and then we return home. The conference seems to have appealed to all those who took part because of the unity of theme but the variety of approaches, and the challenging nature of most of the sessions. The worship in the chapel, the cathedral and the German Church has been rich and sustaining, and the Bible Studies varied in approach, illuminating and also challenging.

Bishop Michael has reminded us that the AGM will be in St George's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Southwark (London) on 23rd March 2019 (please get that date in your diary) and the next international conference is planned to be in Rome in 2020.

