

## FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE SISTERS OF JOY

An ecumenical Foundation of Prayer, Peace and Reconciliation

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My dear Friends

Summer days have finally come to Cambridge, interspersed with some much needed rain. I am sitting in the Regent Hotel, a little Italian family establishment, at a table overlooking Parker's Piece, a large patch of green where the Country Fair has just taken place.

We are in the middle of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, when the Torah was given to Moses on Mount Sinai and we have just celebrated Ascension Day and the Christian Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles in Jerusalem in the form of a mighty wind and tongues of fire.

It has been a good week for Jewish-Christian relations: I have just given a Concert for Peace and Reconciliation in the chancel of Michaelhouse, formerly St Michael's, where prayer has been going on for 700 years. The church, which has a beautiful acoustic, is in the heart of Cambridge among several colleges. Members of the Jewish community attended, including a nice American Jewish lady I had not met before. Also present were some friends from my local Catholic church and some friends from the little Protestant church round the corner from my home. Quite a few people turned up whom I didn't know.

I sang several pieces in Hebrew-a love song with a lilting tune which is now used across the Middle East for belly dancing! And a beautiful song about the Divine composed by Hannah Senesh, a Hungarian who emigrated to a Kibbutz in Palestine. She returned to Hungary in World War II to fly a plane and was captured and killed by the Nazis. I finished the performance with psalm 133 in a round: *'Behold how good and pleasant a tribe of brothers living in unity.'*

At least I thought I had finished the performance, but the audience wanted to sing again the song I had started with-*Blowing in the wind*.

*Yes 'n how many times must the cannonballs fly, before they're forever banned,*

*The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, the answer is blowin' in the wind.*

It was very moving to hear them all singing with me, and the communal voices rose up in a prayer for peace.

Over the past few months, I have made contact with some students from the Islamic Society at Cambridge University. I attended some of their events, including an interesting talk on *Love and relationship in Islam*. Reading the Qur'an has given me a deeper insight into what we share and our common striving for holiness, as well our differences on the themes of Salvation and Redemption. Over a cup of coffee I asked my young Muslim friend if he thought we could live together and he replied: '*Of course, we have done it in the past!*' I was also privileged to be present at one of their prayer meetings and I am hoping to accompany one or two of the Muslim students to the Synagogue.

Speaking of which, I accompanied three of my Catholic friends to a service at the Reform Synagogue. They were a young girl from Eritrea and her mother, and an English lady. They were all captivated by the service and made to feel very welcome. The Ark with the Torah scrolls was particularly fascinating and after the service we were shown a scroll with its unpointed Hebrew lettering, and its mantle of breastplate and bells.

Thank God for an interesting life!

Have a wonderful summer

Shalom from your sister

Gila