

# 'In the footsteps of the Holy Family'

**Bishop Christopher joined an ecumenical group on a pilgrimage to Egypt from 27 January to 1 February.**

**Richard Austen reports:**

The pilgrimage was led by Archbishop Angaelos, the Coptic Archbishop of London and an Ecumenical Canon of Southwark Cathedral.

'In the footsteps of the Holy Family' visited several sites in and around Cairo, Alexandria and the Nile Delta, where ancient tradition holds that the Holy Family rested during their flight from Herod after the birth of Jesus. We had an Audience with His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and met a wide range of Coptic Christians. This was a very moving week for all of us. We were all struck by the resilience and determination of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt.

Christianity in Egypt goes back to the first century, when St Mark founded the church in Alexandria. Coptic Christians make up about 15% of the population of Egypt and 80% of the Christian population of

the Middle East. The Church is alive and going through renewal as it rises out of persecution. It has a vital role to play in building bridges in Egyptian society. Although there have been several attacks on churches in recent years by extremists in which both Christians and Muslims were killed, the Christians in Egypt realise that the vast majority of Muslims are their friends and do not support terrorism.

We were struck by the love for one another displayed in

the Church, the living out of the Christian message daily and the dynamic faith of a people who know they will have suffering in the future.

We were also touched by the genuine affection openly displayed to the Clergy and Bishops, particularly by young people. Coptic Orthodox Christians show a deep faith and hope in the face of adversity. They are truly a light shining out in the darkness.

This week was also a wonderful ecumenical

experience with such a diverse group brought together by our solidarity with our persecuted sisters and brothers. The group included representatives of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches, the Church of Scotland and representatives of the Awareness Foundation, Premier Christian Radio, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Aid to the Church in Need, the Conservative Middle East Council and Christians in Government.

The hope is that this will be the start of future collaboration between our Churches on the issue of religious freedom.

**Richard Austen is a Reader at Kew United Benefice.**



# Caterham's Lego churches build momentum



In June 2018, St Mary's and St Lawrence's churches in Caterham launched a Lego building project to help them raise funds for urgent repair works. The initiative involves building a model of both churches in Lego, selling each brick for £1.

The finished model is expected to take 5 years to complete, or until £50,000 is raised to cover repair and maintenance costs including fixing St Mary's church spire and installing a flushing toilet at St Lawrence's.

To increase awareness and engage the local community, the model is to go on tour to local schools and events such as the Caterham Festival and Caterham Street Party.

Hilary Clark, Churchwarden and Lego fundraiser at St Mary's, explained: "The Lego build is coming on really well and we are confident that the tour will help us achieve our target that much quicker."

Andy Parr, who is also backing the project, adds: "I've supported this exciting project from the start."

"I'm sure St Mary's and St Lawrence's will achieve their goal if we all pull together, like the Caterham community always does."

For further information, visit [www.stmary-caterham.org.uk](http://www.stmary-caterham.org.uk)

Photo Andy Parr and Hilary Clark and the model outside St Mary's Church, Caterham

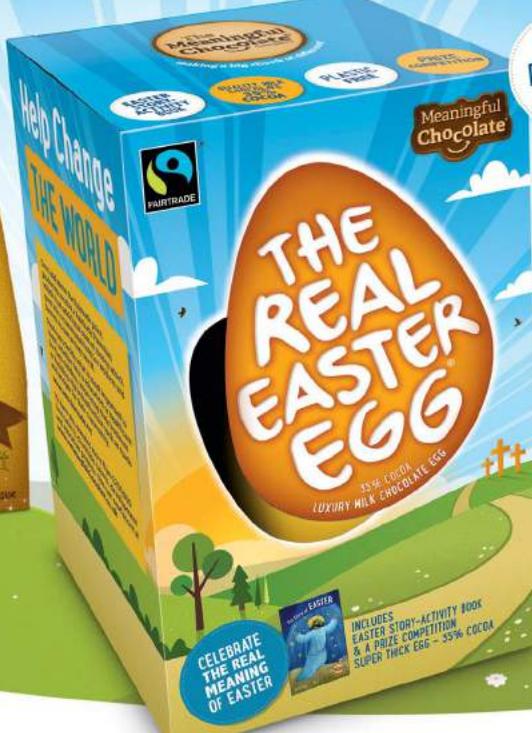


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