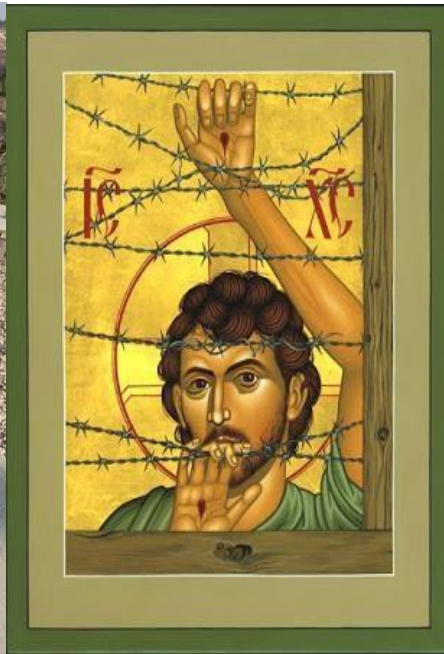




**Olive Grove Chapel
(Tent of Nations)**

We refuse to be enemies



A word of thanks to The Church of Scotland

So many congregations and individuals across the Church of Scotland have donated generously to the Olive Grove Chapel, which is growing amidst threatened olive trees, vines and fruit trees which are under a demolition order. The Nassar family have asked me to convey their heartfelt gratitude for your generosity, prayers and support.

Communion service & olive picking

On Friday the 30th of October 2020, I was privileged to join with some Jewish volunteers and other clerical colleagues to pick olives at the Tent of Nations. At the end of the day, we celebrated communion in the Olive Grove Chapel, which is being 'grown', as the Nassar's are not allowed to build on their own land, as it is in Area C.





Vines and young olive trees are growing all around the chapel, and in time, vines will cover the whole of the structure, forming the walls and roof. Situated directly opposite one of the surrounding Israeli settlements which is expanding all the time, the Olive Grove Chapel is a symbol of hope and resurrection, in a landscape threatened by the injustices of Occupation. Over the years, settler violence has destroyed many of their trees, in an attempt to push them off their land to make way for further settlement expansion, but the Nassar's *refuse to be enemies*. They are now surrounded by all sides, doing what they can to harvest their land and resist through non-violence.

I include below an extract from the communion liturgy, as it reminds us of our Saviour who spent some of his final hours beneath olive trees:

*Your Son Jesus Christ reveals to us the
face of God,
reminding us that we worship a God who is not distant
and untouched by human suffering,
but one who has come into our world of suffering and pain.*

*And on the night before your crucifixion, you
sweated drops of blood amidst the olive trees.
You chose to drink the cup of suffering for our sake,
and when the soldiers came and arrested you,
you refused to meet violence with violence, to
teach us a better way,
and to establish a new kingdom here on earth.
A kingdom where love conquers all.
A kingdom where all dividing walls are brought down.
A kingdom where love extends, even to our enemies.*



The Tent of Nations is a reminder of the fragility of beauty, growing amidst the structural injustice of walls, watch-towers, and barbed wire.... A refuge of natural beauty encircled by the militarised network of occupation, that forces itself on the fragile beauty of the land and its people, pushing shepherds and their flocks off the fertile hilltops, to build more settlements, fences and checkpoints, which scar the land.

In their witness to non-violence, and their refusal to dehumanize the other, the Nassar family lives-out the teachings of Christ in a very real way. Refusing to treat as enemies those who threaten them and their land, they embody the love of God.

Thank you for your generous support.

<http://www.tentofnations.org/>

John McCulloch

