

Vicar: my horror at state of Holy Land

A VICAR from our diocese saw firsthand the desperate situation in the Holy Land.

The Rev Andrew Ashdown, vicar of All Saints' Church, Denmead, visited the West Bank for 11 days over the summer as chairman of Sabeel UK, a Palestinian Christian theological movement.

He met Christian leaders in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and key figures in the Israeli and Palestinian peace movements.

And he spent a week with the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions re-building the West Bank home of a Palestinian fami-

ly that has been bulldozed four times by the Israelis.

He was also taken to visit stretches of the security fence that is being built by the Israelis to encircle the Palestinian territories.

"Conditions are as bad, if not worse, than they have ever been," he said. "The expansion of settlements on Palestinian land continues apace. The building of 'bypass' roads for use by settlers and Israelis alone is carving up the territories and cutting off villages from their lands.

"The building of the 'security fence' - in many parts a wall many times the size and length of the Berlin Wall - is cutting off numerous villages from the

lands that are their livelihood and from their water supplies.

"The scale of the destruction being wrought on the West Bank and in Gaza has to be seen to be believed. Innocent civilians continue to be killed daily by Israeli forces. Dozens of family homes have been demolished without compensation.

"Closures and curfews are making life for ordinary civilians almost impossible, and with civilian and governmental infrastructures almost totally destroyed by the Israeli army, the economic situation is desperate.

"In Bethlehem, hundreds of Palestinian

Christian families have emigrated and many of the Christian lands surrounding Bethlehem have now been occupied and destroyed by settlements and roads.

"In the West we only hear of the suicide bombings, and these are rightly condemned. But we hear almost nothing of the circumstances that create the despair out of which such atrocities are committed.

"Nor is there any condemnation of the atrocities and crimes committed daily against a civilian population by the Israeli authorities. Are there any signs of hope? I was deeply moved and privi-

leged to work with many

Israelis and Palestinians who are equally appalled by the injustices being committed and are working together in peaceful non-violent ways to bring reconciliation and hope between the communities.

"It is a struggle against all odds, and it is tragic that such people - Jewish, Christian and Muslim - who work for justice and truth receive such little recognition or support either from their own people, or from the international community."

For more information, see: www.icahd.org or www.sabeel.org.

Songs are picked for BBC show

THE BBC has chosen the hymns and songs to be sung during the filming of *Songs of Praise* in our cathedral on October 22.

The line-up features the songs *My Jesus, My Saviour*; *Jesus Is The Name We Honour* and *All I Once Held Dear*, all accompanied by a professional worship band. The hymns are: *Christ Triumphant*; *Blessed Are The Pure In Heart*; and *Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us*.

The ecumenical occasion will be the first time in the programme's history it has featured a worship band in a cathedral. Tickets will be given this month to those who have applied for them already.

Tickets are available for the filming of a separate programme on October 23 for Remembrance Sunday. Ring 0161-244 3269 and leave a name, address, phone number and number of tickets wanted.



Visitors to the Black Tent in Portsmouth Cathedral

Black Tent will return

VISITORS to Portsmouth Cathedral were able to view a specially-commissioned piece of artwork during August and September.

Black Tent, by Nathan Coley, aimed to link the cathedral's 800-year architectural history to the original tabernacle built by the Hebrews around the 14th century BC.

The idea was to show how such a portable, tented structure, used by an ancient nomadic people, was the fore-

runner of every synagogue ever built. It was commissioned by Art and Sacred Places, an independent trust that aims to link art and religion.

And its tenure in the cathedral included a public discussion in which the dean, the Very Rev David Brindley, spoke of the relationship of the tabernacle used for public worship by the Israelites with the God who travelled ahead of them.

"If God's people are not

taking part in a continuous journey of discovery, they are lost," he said.

Black Tent was due to move to Gunwharf Quays from September 23-28, and to the University of Portsmouth's school of architecture from September 29-October 3. It will return to the cathedral for the launch of a book celebrating the commission on October 11 between 10am and 4pm.

For more information, see www.artandsacredplaces.org



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