

International Experiences of a TDIL committee member

Revd. Alison Shaw writes...

As a new member of the TDIL committee I've been wondering how much we ponder on all the international links we have forged in our lives? I'd like to share some of my thoughts.

Growing up, I soon learnt about my family in Australia: my mother's big sister married an Australian air force officer after WW2 and emigrated. Over the years I received a toy koala, story books and photographs and I imagined life there - eventually I lived it for a bit.

At 7 I lived in Singapore for a year, went to school there and my best friend was Chinese. Our 'amah' was Malay, she lived in a kampong. She cooked spicy meals for my parents. We missed the big freeze of 1962/3 in the UK!



Later we lived in Malta. I loved its history - visible back thousands of years with Neolithic temples and cart tracks over the edges of cliffs suggesting land bridges with North Africa and mainland Europe - and its people and their language 'Ferħan ħafna!'

In the Late 70's I went with VSO to teach in Sierra Leone, West Africa - such a sharp learning curve, learning fragments of Krio, Mende and Temne dialects in a humid and challenging country, prior to a devastating civil war. Here I met the man who became my husband. He worked in a leprosy hospital.

My journey towards discerning my priestly vocation involved Trinity College, Bristol where I first learnt a bit about Tanzania through Rev'd Dickson Cholongani (now a Bishop there) and not very long after, meeting Grace and then Festo Kanungha.

In the early 2000's, as Team Vicar in the Bodmin Team, my husband Tim and I joined Bishop Roy and others from this Diocese on an early fact finding trip to Mzimvubu - another amazing and eye opening visit. Preaching at a church of Rev'd Lungile (who'd been recently ordained in St Petroc's, Bodmin) and staying with him, with local headteachers and in Kokstad, the heart of the Diocese, were wonderful opportunities.

Around the same time, initially through my husband's work with Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, we made a visit to the Holy Land, thus beginning an enduring relationship with the 'Living Stones', our friends, our brothers and sisters and that beautiful, troubled land. Many pilgrimages have followed over the years.

So, there's a snippet of some of the international influences on my life - so far! It is said that travel broadens your mind, opening it to the endless possibilities and potential that our wonderful Creator has given us. In my travelling I have seen the best - and sadly, some of the worst aspects of our world. I've been truly blessed in the sites and sights I've seen and hugely encouraged by the amazing people I've met across our planet.'