

SLN Gathering November 2026

Week 1: Messages from Companions

As part of our preparation for our Gathering in November we invite you, over the coming week, to reflect on some of the Messages from our Companions.

The link to the video for Week 1 is <https://youtu.be/3VSTofmNtaI>

Overview of video:-

00:00	Introduction and <i>Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus</i>
05:24	Message from Omar Haramy
08:53	✠ Silent Reflection
10:52	Message from Alison Phipps
16:36	✠ Silent Reflection
18:35	Message from Hyab Yohannes
25:05	✠ Silent Reflection
27:05	Message from Khawla Badwan
29:52	✠ Silent Reflection
31:52	Final Message
32:12	Total Length

We would very much welcome your feedback, even if you are not able to participate in the Gathering, your 'promptings of the Spirit as you listened to the messages will help us discern the way forward.

Link to **Promptings of the Spirit ~ Week 1** <https://forms.gle/ejvNJtzzmaAKB3xi6>

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Omar Haramy

Dear friends,

It is not so much the sessions themselves that remain with me, but the invitation behind them. At two particularly difficult moments in our recent history, during the COVID-19 pandemic and then in the aftermath of October 7, whose devastating consequences continue today, you invited us to speak, and more importantly, you chose to listen.

In times of crisis, listening is a profound act of solidarity. You gave us your ears, your time, and your presence. You created space for voices from Palestine to be heard, not as experts to be consulted, but as friends to be accompanied. That, to me, is what true companionship looks like.

A good companion does not necessarily have all the answers. A good companion shows up, listens, and remains present. The Scottish Laity Network did exactly that. You were there when it mattered, and for that I thank you. You have been friends indeed.

I must confess that making a video is not easy for me, so I hope these written words will suffice.

As you discern the future of the Network, only you know the realities, challenges, and opportunities before you. Personally, I would encourage you to continue, because spaces of listening, friendship, and faith-filled solidarity are needed more than ever. But that is not an expectation. You know your circumstances best, and whatever decision you reach, I trust it will be made with wisdom and integrity.

Thank you for your friendship, your witness, and your companionship over the years.

With gratitude and prayers,

Omar

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Alison Phipps

Thank you so much to all of you in the Scottish Laity Network and especially to Rab and Rosa and the team who have been leading the Core Group over the last few years and who generously invited me to act as a companion with you over several years and reminding me as well of the different Journeys we've been on together at different points.

In Advent in December 2020, where we were reflecting on being *Forced to Flee Like Jesus Christ* and *How We Might Sing in a Foreign Land*. In 2021, thinking about being *Disciples of Our Own Destiny* and *What we Have to do to Give Hope to Refugees and Migrants*.

In December 2021 we were speaking of Advent, as a *Time of Hope and Promise*. In 2022 of *How We Might Build a Future With Migrants and Refugees*, looking at *Liturgies of Solidarity and Hope*.

Then in November 2023 we were thinking about *Waiting in Grief for Peace - the Power of Lament*.

In many of these sessions, I've been joined by dear friends and colleagues by Hannah, the exquisite painter of icons in the renaissance tradition, reflecting on the violence, done to women when they flee. By, Hyab who has survived so much himself and rights with such clarity and passion and faith and courage of all that faces those who dwell, as he puts it, in the Refugee Abyss.

And then finally, with Khawla, as we experience the genocide in Gaza together through a call and response of prayerful voices, as a Muslim voice and mine, the voice of a Christian and member of the Iona Community and where prayer was what we were reduced to, as Walter, Wink speaks of it.

So as you are responding and reflecting on the journey you have been on together. I want to say to all of you that it's been a genuine privilege and a grounding for me through what have been five of the hardest years of my life in being alongside migrant and refugee communities. This hasn't got any easier and as I'm speaking to you I do so on the day after mass arrests were made in Glasgow of violent members of the public who have been attacking our friends.

These aren't easy days and often we wonder what it is we might do, what it is we might say.

Many these days are shrugging their shoulders and saying but there's nothing more I can do, I've done everything I could. But we are people who pray and people who sing in the face of death, we are people of the Resurrection not people of the Crucifixion. We know deeply our own part and hand in that journey to Golgotha and the journey of the crucifixion.

We Are Witnesses, we bear testimony and we act in the aftermath of the worst of the things that humans can do to bring a sense of the full human personality and dignity that is accorded to those we love , who are our neighbours.

Having these chances in Advent and in Lent to speak with you as often for me being a time of sustenance, of growth, of clarity, of understanding, and I've been deeply moved by your

witness, your tenacity and your courage in the work you have done and I have felt genuinely and constantly uplifted and held in prayer and in your mass intentions.

So thank you for this journey, you've undertaken, and I wish you well, in the next steps that you wish to take.

God bless you all.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Hyab Yohannes

Dear companions.

It's a privilege to be invited to offer a few words at this moment in the journey of the Scottish Laity Network.

Reflecting on the years we have travelled together I keep returning to one word - companionship. And that for me, has been the gift of our encounter over these years. We have not simply gathered to speak about *Refugees and Migrants - Displacement in Waiting, Grief and Hope*, we have gathered to allow ourselves to be encountered by these realities and through that encounter to become different, to act differently, to pray, to listen, and sometimes, simply to sing together.

Running through all these encounters has been a deeper question: What does our faith require of us, when another person suffering, interruptus the comfort of our being?

Christian theology begins in many ways with displacement; forced displacement in fact. Abraham leaves his homeland. Mary and Joseph flee with their infant Jesus. The stranger is already within it. And in the Incarnation, God closes distance, God enters our vulnerability and God becomes exposed to the world.

This teaches us that we do not become fully human alone. We become human with and through one another. This is also why Lament has been so important in our shared journey. To lament is to say, I see you, you're suffering matters. It's an act of theological resistance, it refuses the disappearance of suffering into silence. And in that refusal, hope becomes possible. Hope is what becomes possible when we refuse to let suffering have the final word.

One of the greatest gifts of the Scottish Laity Network has been decoration of spaces where stories of pain could be spoken without being consumed by despair. When grief could be acknowledged without extinguishing possibility. And where faith could encounter the wonders of the world and still ask: What might we do differently?

And here I think of Martinique philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant's invitation to 'Act in your place. Think with the world.' I love it. I love this because it asks us to be both grounded and open.

To act in your place is to accept responsibility for where you stand, for your communities, your history, your relationship and particular all that is entrusted to you. But to think with the world is to recognize that no place exists alone. Every place is already entangled with other places, every history touches another history, every border contains traces of movement that came before it .

We can begin here in Scotland in our communities and churches in our particular places and histories and yet remain open to the world. Because the world is always arriving at our doorstep. And perhaps the spirit of companionship works by placing us in one another's

paths. A conversation, a story, a wound, a question, a stranger. And suddenly the paths we thought we were walking alone becomes a shared Journey.

So I want to say to you, thank you, thank you for the invitation to accompany you, and companion you. Thank you for the trust. Thank you for creating spaces where different stories could be told. Thank you for keeping lament alive. And thank you for refusing to surrender hope.

And so, I want to end with a small poem I wrote about gifts.

I call it Gifted Within Drifts.

We meet not at the borders
but in the drifts, where ages are not fixed, but flawed,
I am not whole without your gifts.
Nor you without the taste of my coffee.
At rest, we sleep through opacity refusing the violence of purity.
Our breakfast tangling shared dreams.
Languages folded into the lingua of unfamiliar words and worlds.
And still we speak for each other.
No single centre holds us.
No single order defines us.
We're islands connected by tides, multiple traces, trembling, alive.
Perhaps our world's remain entangled, our differences sustain our relation.
For in the gift of every crossing, we arrived together.

Thank you.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Khawla Badwan

Dear all,

When we gathered online as part of *Telling of Gaza*,
we found words of witnessing, remembering, praying and reflecting
at a time when words were expected to remain unspeakable.

We held our togetherness
even as we battled our fears, anguish, anxiety, despair, and helplessness.
It was not easy to come together but it was very important to do so.

I was honoured to be in your company as a teller of Gaza, of Palestine, of the Holy Land,
of prayers, of goodness and of stubborn commitment to refuse the normalisation of evil.

It was a lesson in how interfaith dialogue holds faith as a source of communion,
not as a cause for division.

Keep Telling of Gaza remains the ethical imperative
to speak up against the injustices of the world.

We hold Palestine, the land of the Abrahamic Religions,
as the anchor for our struggles towards justice and peace.

With you, your words, prayers and commitments, we keep telling
so we don't accept a world of indifference and cruelty.

Thank you for your company, witness and presence.

We keep on going on.

All the best wishes and prayers.

We stay in companionship.

Khawla