



Celebrating Tabeetha School

It was 10 years ago in 2014 that, as two recently retired 'heidies', we had the privilege of visiting Tabeetha. The visit was of necessity brief but what we saw and heard whetted our appetite to return at some point in the future.



We didn't have long to wait. A 2017 Church of Scotland trip, expertly led by The Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan and Maureen Jack, took us back to Tabeetha and to a warm welcome from Head Teacher, Margaret MacDonald.

Engaging, entertaining students were excellent ambassadors and delighted to share their pride in their school. In the entrance, a poster said: *Will you pray for it?* followed by *Living without fear. Everyone able to trust. All walking hand in hand. Children playing together. Each has a hope for the future.*

Wherever we went there were positive messages: *A flower does not think of competing with the flower next to it. It just blooms. Dream Big, Aim High and Achieve Success.* We smiled at the Maths Dept where the message might as easily been in a Scottish school: *Leave your issues outside. We have enough problems to solve.*

Elsewhere, there were celebrations of pupils' artwork on walls and there were texts: *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Psalm 34:14.*

There was even a 'Wit and Wisdom of the Scots' poster: *We're a' Jock Thomson's bairns. Whit's fur ye will no go by ye. Tell the truth and shame the dei'l.*

We were mightily impressed. We felt at home. It was good to have been there.

What follows is a celebration of this bright beacon in the current darkness and our hope that it will be supported to continue on to its bi-centenary in 2063. Enjoy!

Calum MacSween and Douglas Simpson



A Message from Our Convener



I have only once met a Mayor of Chelsea and Kensington, and I only met him for a short time. But I will not forget him – because of his name.

It was at the special celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of Tabeetha. I was excited because I always enjoyed visiting Tabeetha and because I was to be preaching at the anniversary service. I confess I was also looking forward to being made a fuss of (only a little looking forward, of course!). After all, I was Convener of The World Mission Council of the Church of Scotland who owned the school, I was representing the Moderator, and I was a former Moderator.

But it was soon clear that I was not the guest of honour. Who was this stranger whose arrival was being celebrated so much? We were introduced “Andrew, this is the former Mayor of Chelsea and Kensington.” Then they told me his name – and I understood. “Please meet Richard Walker-Arnott.”

Imagine hearing that name on that day in that place! Imagine walking with Richard Walker-Arnott across to the grave which many still remember and honour today; and in silence paying our respects to his distant aunt. Jane Walker-Arnott was such an exceptional woman, and that day was her day. No wonder they made a fuss over the Mayor of Chelsea and Kensington!

It was a great honour to preach the sermon that day. The text was easy to find. It stands above the entrance to the school. *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.* Tabeetha was founded on trust in God, it has thrived on trust in God, it has overcome great difficulty through trust in God, and it is trust in God which we celebrate to this day

What kind of children grow up in Tabeetha? When my wife, who was a teacher, first visited Tabeetha she said: *I am not able to assess teaching standards in the time I have: but you only need fifteen minutes to know that this is a happy school.* Happy schools build trusting people.

Jane Walker-Arnott was absolutely right to put trust in God at the centre of Tabeetha. She founded the school on trust in God. She ran the school on trust in God. She expanded the school on trust in God. And she made it possible for generations of young people to learn that trust is stronger than fear. People sometimes say that the opposite of faith is doubt. It is not true. People sometimes say that the opposite of faith is unbelief. It is not true. The opposite of faith is fear. That is why the most frequently repeated command in the Bible is “Do not be afraid.”

Jane Walker-Arnott more than one hundred and fifty years ago, and the Church of Scotland for the last century, committed Tabeetha to being a place where children learned not to be afraid. Whenever you walk through the door you read *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.*

Tabeetha - a Star Shining Bright

Tabeetha School is a unique Christian School in Jaffa, Israel, run by the Church of Scotland. It is the only mainstream school the Church of Scotland runs anywhere in the world. You might say it is an accident of history, as it came under the Church of Scotland's governance because its founder Miss Jane Walker- Arnott left her school to the Church in her will in 1911.



Today, Christians, Jews and Muslims study together. They know their own identity as Palestinians or Israelis or Ukrainians or Russians, as Greek Orthodox or Catholic, and they are not afraid of difference. They talk about how to explore difficult topics; recognising multiple viewpoints and assessing sources for reliability. It is no wonder these young people go on to brilliant careers in business, commerce, diplomacy, medicine and law.

Miss Walker-Arnott had left her native Scotland to live in Palestine because of her delicate health, but she and her sister in 1863 started a school in her house with 14 girls as students, Christian and Muslim together, learning reading and writing, arithmetic and lacemaking. Thomas Cook, the travel entrepreneur, was so impressed that he gifted the Walker-Arnotts land and enough money to build a proper school. In 2023, 160 years later, the school had 330 students from kindergarten to grade 12, studying in English and sitting A levels.

You might say it is an accident of history, but because of this legacy there is a Christian school in Jaffa where Jews, Christians and Muslims learn together and live together as living proof that the intractable and polarised issues that hold the whole country of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory in a terrible grip can be challenged and overcome.

Yet, while the difference can be celebrated it also leaves the school vulnerable. Tabetha receives a smaller grant from the Ministry of Education than other Christian schools because it does not follow the bagrut: the curriculum specified by the Israeli government. This in turn increases reliance on income from fees. It is hard to get the balance right to employ the best teachers and staff and keep the fees within reach of ordinary people. The school buildings, built in the airy Ottoman style of Old Jaffa, are beautiful: but not fit for purpose. A multi-million-pound refurbishment is needed.

Within the Church of Scotland, Tabetha is not perhaps as well known as it should be. It is a witness to unity in diversity which should be highly prized. In a recent assembly at Tabetha School I described it as a tartan school: made up of many colours woven together in a unique pattern and as a Christian school, threaded through with love.

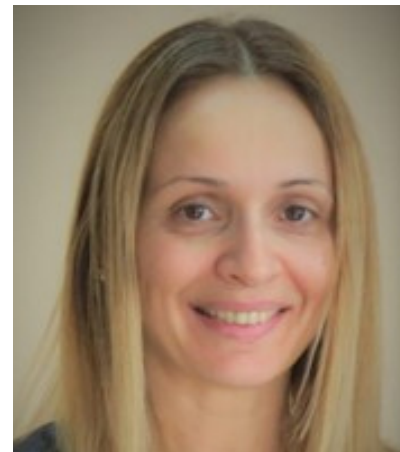
I believe Tabetha School is not an accident of history but a witness to the world. The question is: How do we support and develop and create the conditions where Tabetha School can continue to flourish? Are there church partners prepared to support and invest in Tabetha? It is our hope and prayer that the school will continue to be a good news story and bring many to believe that new life is possible.

Rev Muriel Pearson

Adapted from an August 2024 'Life and Work' article

A Message from the Principal

It is a profound privilege to lead Tabeetha School, a place that holds deep personal significance for me. As an alumna of this extraordinary institution and a local Christian from Jaffa, Tabeetha has always been my home. My three daughters have also had the blessing of attending the school and I've seen firsthand the transformative power of a Tabeetha education—both as a student and as a parent.



Since my appointment as Executive Director in 2020, I've had the unique opportunity to guide this school through some of the most challenging periods in its history. From the COVID-19 pandemic, which began my first month in the role, to the security tensions and conflicts that followed, Tabeetha has faced multiple crises. Despite these challenges, we have continued to thrive. With the unwavering support of our dedicated staff, we quickly developed distance learning platforms in English, enabling our students to continue their education safely and seamlessly. These innovations were essential to maintaining our commitment to academic excellence and ensuring the well-being of our students.

For over 150 years, Tabeetha has stood as a beacon of hope, peace and unity in this diverse community. It is a school like no other, where students from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other diverse backgrounds come together, not just to learn academically but to grow as individuals in an environment that fosters mutual respect and understanding. Our Christian values of love, peace and justice are at the heart of everything we do.

As Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, **“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”** This teaching guides our approach to education and I have had the privilege of witnessing our students carry these values into the world. **Tabeetha's impact is seen not only in academic achievements, but in the character of our students, who leave here as compassionate, thoughtful individuals committed to building a better society.**

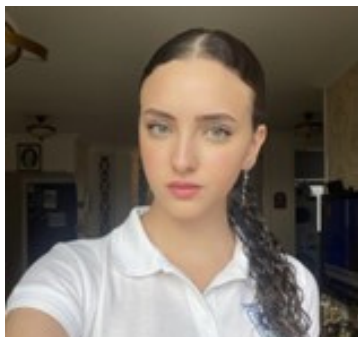
Mona Ashkar

What Tabeetha Means to Me



Tabeetha is more than just a school to me; it feels like a second home. It's a place where I've learned not just from textbooks but from experiences and friendships that have shaped who I am. The teachers and staff go above and beyond to help every student feel supported and the sense of community here is something truly special.

From my first day as a young student, Tabeetha has been a constant in my life. The friendships I've built, the lessons I've learned and the memories I've made here will always be a part of who I am. Every day at Tabeetha is a new opportunity to grow, whether it's academically or personally. The school's values of kindness, respect and hard work are lessons that will stay with me long after I leave. I'm proud to be a part of this community, and I know that the experiences I've had here will help me in everything I do in the future. **Aboud, Grade 11 4**



What Tabeetha Means to Me.....

Tabeetha School in Jaffa holds a special place in my heart. It wasn't just the school I attended—it became a place where I truly grew and discovered who I am. From the moment I walked through its doors, I felt seen, special and valued, not only by teachers but by a diverse community of students from all over the world. Tabeetha offered me a sense of belonging that was deeply rooted in its celebration of diversity. It developed my confidence and helped me discover my strengths. This school is where I learned to believe in myself, not just academically, but as a person. The support and encouragement I received from both teachers and my student friends helped shape me into the person I am today. They walked with me through challenges, celebrated my achievements and made me feel that I was capable of more than I could have imagined.

As an international school, Tabeetha promotes cross-cultural friendships and understanding. It's not just a place for learning, but a safe haven where students from diverse backgrounds—Arabs, Jews, Christians, Muslims and more—come together, respecting and accepting each other's differences. During times of conflict, while others were afraid, I confidently attended school, knowing that peace and co-existence thrive at Tabeetha.

The school brings together students from different backgrounds, cultures and faiths, creating an environment where co-existence and understanding flourish. The diversity of perspectives in the classroom and in everyday life made my experience at Tabeetha truly special. We didn't just learn from books; we learned from each other. It taught us how to navigate a world filled with differences and how to appreciate those differences.

Tabeetha students are distinguished by their ability to think critically, act with compassion and build bridges across cultures. We are encouraged not just to succeed in our studies, but to contribute to society in meaningful ways. The emphasis on co-existence, peace and mutual respect prepares us to face challenges with open minds and open hearts. The friendships we formed crossed borders and barriers, giving us a unique outlook on the world.

What truly sets Tabeetha apart is the commitment of its teachers, who go above and beyond to help every student succeed. Their dedication creates a nurturing environment that encourages both academic and personal growth. I have countless memories of the moments when teachers, friends and staff stood by me, making me feel like I was part of a bigger family.

For me, Tabeetha is far more than a school—it's my second home, and the diverse community I was a part of will always remain in my heart.

Angelina, Grade 11





Proud to have been Tabeetha Teachers 1977-80



In May 1977, three teachers met at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. They didn't know each other but recognised each other as setting out on a journey to work in Tabeetha School. The friendship that developed amongst these young ladies has continued for almost fifty years. They believe a similar bond and outcome has come about for many who have worked in Tabeetha.

Alison and Elizabeth taught in the primary department and Gillian in the secondary. They would travel together by bus to Jaffa for the 8 o'clock start then home again after 2 o'clock, sheltering from the heat and sun and often with some bagels to enjoy with a cup of tea.

Alison, who taught the younger children, writes: 'My abiding memories of Tabeetha School are of a safe place for pupils and staff in an unsafe land. So many nationalities - 24 nationalities in my class one year. A Christian school, yes, but many faiths represented and respected. I remember the joy of celebrating the festivals of other faiths. We worked, played, learned, taught and cared for each other together in peace and friendship.'

Elizabeth, gifted in music, brought great joy to the school. She also taught older primary children. She wrote: 'So many memories come flooding back of the three years we shared in Jaffa and Tel Aviv. I loved the mix of nationalities we worked with, both staff and pupils, and the celebration of the cultures and special days of the various religions, while under the caring umbrella of our Church of Scotland.'

Gillian was appointed to teach biology and geography but soon found herself teaching religious studies and English as a foreign language. She comments: 'Being adaptable was part of the joy of teaching in Tabeetha. In the late seventies, the biology lab was L-shaped and I can't remember if I had one bunsen burner and two sinks or two bunsen burners and one sink, for sixteen A level students! Teaching religious studies to young people of so many faiths was a learning experience as I invited the children to tell us of their faiths and help us explore differences and similarities and respect for each other.'

Then the 'extras'. Children clattering through the hall shouting 'It's raining, it's raining', in the same way as Scottish children would have been shouting, 'It's snowing'. The practice sirens once a year when we went into the cellars with the young people. Then the Scottish Country Dance classes as we played records and taught the young folk to do an Eightsome Reel and the Gay Gordons, wearing tartan bands my mother made for us. And the tins of Grants haggis which dad sent out for a Burns Night celebration in our last year - heated in the laboratory incubator!

So many memories, often happy, some sad, yet all of them so much now an essential part of our life as it was for our pupils and colleagues. May God bless this work so that it can continue for many years to come, helping young people learn how to live together and respect each other for the special people they are.'

Thanks to Alison, Elizabeth and Gillian - Proud Tabeetha Teachers 7

Volunteering at Tabeetha

In early December 2003 I walked in to Tabeetha, having met the then Head Chris Mottershead, and offered my services as a volunteer.

We had recently arrived, on posting to the British Embassy, and it seemed a good fit for my wish to do some voluntary work with the Church of Scotland, during our three years in Israel.

My only experience in a classroom had involved being eyes for visually impaired children, or as a reading assistant in our daughters' schools. Nothing had prepared me for what I was about to undertake in Reception, under the guidance of Beth Dahan.



With about 25 4-5 year olds, most of whom spoke either Arabic or Hebrew as their first language, communication with me had to be in English – the main reason for my being taken on by the school. What fun we had sharing words and ideas, games and food.

My husband, AK, joined in too. His skills with wood, paint and design, came into their own. Creations such as a small shop, a dressing up unit with the clothes box and rail as well as a puppet theatre to encourage the children to speak English, contributed towards the Reception makeover.

Beyond Reception, when time permitted, I helped with older children in the library or assisting those who needed extra support in quiet spaces. And I was privileged to be invited to be a member of the Board of Governors.

I couldn't have anticipated how much I would learn from the children of multiple nationalities, and how their enthusiasm and mutual respect would make such an ever-lasting impression on me. Nor could I have anticipated the number of friendships I would make within the staffroom – many of whom remain firm to this day.

I was blessed when I first crossed the threshold at Tabeetha and continued to feel blessed each time over the many years when I have returned.

Carol Miller – November 2024



TABEETHA JAFFA



1863

A Recent Visit to Tabeetha

My husband Tom and I have been blessed to go to the Holy Land on several occasions, visiting many of the special religious places of interest. Last September 2023, we made our first visit without an accompanying group, and we travelled by ourselves with the aim of exploring and enjoying new experiences. One of our goals was to visit Tabeetha and we were very fortunate to achieve this when we stayed in Tel Aviv.

We had arranged in advance to visit the school. As you might expect, there is security at the gate so they were expecting us. We were greeted by the head teacher, Mrs Mona Ashkar. Mona told us that she was educated at Tabeetha herself and that her children also attended there, so she has a long connection with the school.

After being greeted and a meeting with Mona, we were shown to a room to meet 10 senior students; 5 boys and 5 girls. Rev Muriel Pearson, the minister based in Tiberias, also joined the meeting and facilitated the discussion. Tom and I were received as very special visitors (I could imagine what the Queen feels like!) and we found the pupils to be delightful and engaging young people. Some of them had been at the school since reception age.

The discourse was positive and uplifting, and I think that it is very telling that every single pupil who spoke about the school used the word 'love'. Side by side we met children who were Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Sikh and of no faith, who were bright and confident with a yearning for knowledge.

Afterwards, some of the children showed us around the school and we saw the classrooms. After the tour, we all met for the Friday assembly which was led by Muriel. Muriel engaged the gathering with a short film about Tartan (taken from the V&A Dundee exhibition) and then she went on to talk about the different coloured 'threads' that bring us together. The children finish at lunchtime on a Friday, so after the Assembly, Tom and I joined Muriel for a delicious lunch and a catch up near to the Jaffa port.

The morning at Tabeetha was an inspirational experience. We had the most joyful time and we shall never forget our visit. When we arrived home, we were full of enthusiasm for another trip this year. However, we had barely returned home when the war started on 7 October. Words cannot express our sadness.

Lisa Watson November 2024

Tabeetha is a truly international school, bringing together students from all corners of the globe. This diversity has enriched my education, allowing me to learn about various cultures and religions, fostering an environment of understanding and respect. The values we uphold here—integrity, compassion, cooperation and respect—have not only guided our interactions but have also instilled in me a strong sense of community and belonging.

Claire, Grade 11 Tabeetha Student



What Tabeetha Means to Me



Tabeetha School has always been my home away from home, a place where inclusivity is something real and lived, not just a policy. Growing up here, I've been surrounded by people from different backgrounds, beliefs and cultures, but instead of dividing us, that diversity has brought us closer together. Tabeetha has shaped me in a way that's hard to put into words, teaching me to look beyond labels and appreciate people for who they really are.

In many ways, Tabeetha feels like a bubble, separated from the world outside. Outside, the mix of Arab and Jewish cultures can feel tense and divisive, sometimes even harsh. But inside these walls, that tension fades away. What we experience at school, kindness, respect and unity, stands in stark contrast to the conflict and division that sometimes exists outside.

Tabeetha is more than just a school for me. It's where I've grown up, formed lifelong friendships and been supported by teachers who genuinely care. It's a community that has shown me what it means to live together in peace, despite the challenges of the world outside.

Yousef, Grade 11



Tabeetha School has been a cornerstone of my life for many years and I can't overstate how much it means to me. It's not just a place of learning; it's where I've grown up, surrounded by incredible teachers and friends who have profoundly shaped me into who I am today. Each day has been filled with lessons that extend beyond textbooks—lessons in empathy, resilience, critical thinking and the importance of community.

In the midst of the challenges posed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, Tabeetha stands out as a true sanctuary of peace. Here, students from different backgrounds come together, learning to coexist and appreciate one another in ways that transcend cultural and societal divides. It's a special place where our differences are not just accepted but embraced, teaching us that understanding and respect are far more powerful than division. The friendships I've formed here have broken down barriers, showing me that our shared experiences unite us in ways that words often fail to express.

Tabeetha isn't merely a school: it's a vibrant community built on the values of tolerance, compassion and mutual respect. It has provided me with a safe space to express myself, explore new ideas and develop my passions.

The lessons learned at Tabeetha extend far beyond academics: they have instilled in me a deep sense of responsibility toward others and a commitment to fostering harmony in the world around me. I carry these invaluable lessons with me every day, and as I look ahead, I know that the foundation built at Tabeetha will guide me in my future endeavours.

Zoya, Grade 11

What Tabeetha Means to Me - some younger thoughts

I feel very welcome at Tabeetha. I feel like I live in Tabeetha because I have been here for six years. Tabeetha. When I go home, I miss Tabeetha a lot. I eat here, I play here and I learn here. I like Tabeetha a lot because my class is like my second family. - Adel, Grade 6

At Tabeetha we have lots of wonderful teachers. The teachers have a unique style of teaching. They motivate us to achieve our goals. I achieved many goals in this school. It's really special and memorable. - Norelle, Grade 6

What Tabeetha means to me is every day I get smarter and smarter from our teachers who educate us. Tabeetha is very special to me and all the students. Tabeetha is very safe - I wish every school was as safe, special and educational as Tabeetha. - Joe, Grade 6

followed by some adult perspectives:

During these tragic times our decision and conviction to live together, to study together, to share friendships and share our destinies is stronger than ever. Our school and the Jaffa community give our state a true hope of co-existence. We are proud to be part of Tabeetha's family and we cherish what the school creates and represents. - Parents of a Tabeetha Student

There are schools who are known for their very high level of education. There are schools that are famous for bringing an international spirit to the table. There are schools that are appreciated for being rooted in the local community. However, there is one school that brings a high level of education, an international spirit and a position rooted in the local community and that is Tabeetha. There is no school like Tabeetha.' - Nicola Trezzi, Director and Curator at CCA Tel Aviv-Yafo and father of a Grade Two student

I went through an extremely difficult and cruel period of chemotherapy, surgery and recovery. The support from the bursary programme allowed my child to continue their education, sports and friendships during the hardest time of our lives. You gave us hope and the strength to move forward. With Tabeetha's board decision, I realised there are still good people in the world. You truly made us feel part of your family. - Parent of a child supported by the bursary programme.

Finally, a promise to any potential supporters:

'The Board of Governors recognises how important it is to make sure that every contribution is used for the benefit of the pupils, and the Board is extremely grateful for any contribution to the funds of the school. Be assured it will be put to good use and will enhance the quality of academic experiences for pupils of Tabeetha School. Your support of the community of Tabeetha is hugely valued.' - Professor Bart McGettrick, Chairman of Board of Governors



Supporting the Next Generation at Tabeetha

Taking on the role of Development Officer at Tabeetha School feels like a natural continuation of a journey I hold close to my heart. Having worked as a teacher at Tabeetha for five years, it remains one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life—an opportunity for which I am deeply grateful. The privilege of teaching lies in the ability to shape the hearts and minds of future generations, and at Tabeetha, this privilege takes on a deeper significance. Here, we are not just building futures for individual children, but actively contributing to a better tomorrow for a divided and complex society.

There is something profoundly unique about seeing children from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other backgrounds form genuine relationships, grounded in mutual respect and understanding. These bonds offer hope for the future—a glimpse of what peaceful co-existence can look like. **It reminds me of the words of Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."** This teaching echoes through the hallways of Tabeetha, where we see young people from different faiths and cultures come together as one community.

Tabeetha is unlike any other school in Israeli society. It stands as a living, breathing expression of the Church of Scotland's Christian mission, a place where hope, love and justice are not just taught but lived. Muriel and Stewart, our Chaplains, play a vital role in nurturing this environment, ensuring that Tabeetha remains a beacon of peace and faith. In this divided world, it is imperative that Tabeetha continues to inspire and build bridges that will lead to a better future.

We are inviting you to join the 'Tabeetha Supporters Group'—a new initiative, similar to the Friends of St. Andrew's, aimed at keeping those connected to Tabeetha informed about the school's progress and mission. This group is not focused on donations but on engaging with the ongoing work at Tabeetha. If you are interested in becoming part of this network, please get in touch with Rebecca McGonigle at rmcgonigle@churchofscotland.org.uk.

As I step into my role as a fundraiser, I am reaching out to you because your support is critical to ensuring that Tabeetha's unique mission endures. Whether you contribute to a bursary for a child in need, sponsor a classroom, or donate to enrich the curriculum, every gift—large or small—makes a tangible difference. Together, we can ensure that Tabeetha continues to be a place where children learn, grow, and thrive, where the seeds of peace and unity are planted for future generations.

Please join us in this mission. Your generosity will help secure a brighter tomorrow, not just for our students but for society as a whole. **For more information contact me, Kate Freedman, at kfreedman@tabeethaschool.org Please stay connected:**

Website: www.tabeethaschool.org

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