

## Malta Learning Reflection

It was a privilege to attend the Church of Ireland Theological Institute's 2024 study tour to Malta. Not only was this a time to be educated about Malta's history and link with the Apostle Paul, but was also a time to reconnect with staff and fellow students before the new term began at CITI, albeit in a slighter warmer climate!

I enjoyed learning about the Anglican presence on the Island of Malta when we visited St Paul's Pro-Cathedral in Valletta where we learned about its history and its current ministry today. Whilst Malta was one of the most heavily bombed lands during the Second World War, the Cathedral endured minor damage with only the roof collapsing. Thus, we learned that this place of worship stood as a beacon of hope for the Maltese people then and indeed still stands as a beacon of hope now, as it bears witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was also a joy to board the minibus and depart from the hotel to various locations on the island, such as the Tarxien, Hagar Qim and Mnajdra Temples. These fascinating sites were excavated during the 19th and 20th centuries and their construction and architectural design provides interesting insight into their age and the people who inhabited them. While on this minibus tour, I was amazed by the spectacular landscape of Malta and especially the views of Filfla from the southern end of the island. Even this lone island, as we learned from our knowledgeable and friendly tour guide, is not without its historical significance.

As a group, we also journeyed to Rabat where we entered St Paul's Catacombs. While there, I thought of the early Christians who faithfully passed on the Christian faith from one generation to another, many of whom were killed and persecuted. It was fitting and a joy to conclude our final morning in prayer, reading the Scriptures and hearing a talk, perhaps not surprisingly, from Acts 28:1-10, Paul's shipwreck on Malta! Of course, Malta is massively associated with Paul for this reason and Luke writes in verse two of that chapter, "The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold." Truly, the people of Malta showed us kindness and were hospitable as we visited their island. I am thankful to the staff at CITI for organising and planning this study tour and thankful to God for the opportunity to have explored, learned from and enjoyed this little island that appears in His Word, Malta.