

# Holy Ground

## Take Off Your Shoes

Holy Ground is a collection of shoes and stories from Christians all around the world. The stories are short statements about what it means for each person to believe in Christ in their particular situation. Among those represented are: a thief, a refugee, the despised, the rejected – people who Jesus specially sought out – as well as those who have known great opportunity, wealth and success. There are those who are beautiful, those who are disabled, those struggling to make a living and raise a family, those who have known great loss and tragedy, and those asking the deep questions of life. All have encountered the living God, arriving at a place of holy ground; where they must, metaphorically at least, remove their shoes in acknowledgement of God's holiness.

Some contributors are persecuted and despised for their faith, yet retain confidence in the living God. Several people need to be anonymous due to the lack of religious freedom in their lands. For others, anonymity allows them to speak more easily. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5/10).

For some the idea of giving up their shoes for this project seemed amusing and culturally odd. For others it was costly to give their only pair of shoes in exchange for another. For some it was an honour to be featured in this way, to have their story told to represent others from their situation. For many, it was an expression of thankfulness to be able to share their stories with others.

At the burning bush, God said to Moses, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3/2-5). Similarly, acknowledging God's holiness is the beginning of life as a Christian. But as a believer follows Jesus Christ, he or she finds that this holy God is also a servant king, humbly and lovingly attending to one's needs, just as when he washed his disciples feet (John 13/3-5).

As testified in many of the stories, Christians are encouraged to bring this gospel to others with "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6/14-15) and thus they realise the prophecy of Isaiah, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation" (Isaiah 52/7).

I trust this collection of shoes and stories will show the rich variety of believers across the world, their strength of faith despite hardship, and their joy in knowing Christ. The collection also demonstrates God's love to all types of people, and is a testimony of how the gospel has spread - often at great cost - throughout the world over the last two thousand years, and how it is reaching every part of the globe.

Please pray for these people and others like them – many of whom make great sacrifices and take great risks to follow Christ where they live. I am struck, in looking at these shoes, by Jesus' words, "Many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10/31).

### Paul Hobbs

*The Church Mission Society is delighted to partner with Paul Hobbs on this project. It gives a window into the challenges, struggles and faith of Christians all round the world. When Paul first spoke to us about the project we were excited because we share the same passion for Christ and the global church. It's turned out even better than we hoped. The shoes and stories are wonderful. We hope that the project inspires and challenges many.*

*The Church Mission Society is a community of mission service, living a mission lifestyle, equipping people in mission and sharing resources for mission. CMS supports over 800 people in mission and works in over 60 countries, with offices in Abuja, Kampala, London and Nairobi.*

*Jonny Baker, CMS*



# Holy Ground

## Guidelines for Holy Ground Shoes Project

The Holy Ground Project is available for hire, and could be used in a number of different settings including conferences, schools, festivals and churches. The exhibit could be hired with the artist in attendance to help talk to visitors, give talks or lead related workshops. The exhibit could also be loaned for a number of days. In either case, the artist would need to set up the exhibit.

### Set-up and Modes of Display

There are three principal ways the exhibit can be shown:

1. Full scale. 6.5m diameter circle of shingle or carpet with "tree" at centre and 30 pairs of shoes at the edge of the circle.
2. Medium scale. 3 - 4m diameter circle of shingle or carpet with "tree" at centre and 12 -16 pairs of shoes at the edge of the circle.
3. Four cabinets to be arranged in line along a wall or formed into a square in the middle of a room, and containing 16 pairs of shoes.
  - o The stories may be displayed on the walls nearby, or in the exhibition catalogues, or inside the glass cabinets.
  - o The artwork is to be set up according to the artist's plan of display.
  - o The exhibit may only be shown indoors.

### Curating Guidelines

1. At least one person must be looking after the exhibit all the time the venue is open to the public or otherwise in use.
2. It is recommended that whoever is curating should make themselves familiar with many of the stories, and be willing to welcome people and to engage them in conversation about the artwork as appropriate.
3. Visitors are not to touch the exhibit or walk on the edge of it. [Should this happen, the curator is to restore the exhibit to its original set-up.]
4. It is hoped that Holy Ground Catalogues and CD Roms will be sold at the venue. A small percentage of the price of sales may be retained by the host venue.

# Holy Ground

## Use in Services

The artwork maybe used in church or school services, either as a full or partial installation, or by using some of the pairs of the shoes individually – subject to prior discussion with the artist.

## COSTINGS:

### Artist attended Exhibitions

Paul Hobbs to set up and attend for a day with the exhibit	£300 + Travel Expenses
PH to attend 2nd day	£240
PH to attend subsequent days	£120 per day

### Loaned Exhibitions/Customer Curated

Paul Hobbs to bring and set up the exhibit	£300 + Travel Expenses
Agreed number of days to hold the exhibit	Free
Disassembly and collection of the exhibit	£240 + Travel Expenses
Returnable Deposit for Loaned Exhibitions	£360

## Contact and Bookings

To book the Holy Ground Installation, contact Paul Hobbs direct on:  
01452 543976 or [paul@arthobbs.com](mailto:paul@arthobbs.com)

Paul Hobbs 2021

---

## HOLY GROUND COMMENTS

'I kept returning to the art work Holy Ground. There was something very special about the personal stories and experiences of the individuals represented. I was fascinated, too, to see people from different backgrounds and of different ages stopping to read and reflect on the stories and their meaning for them.'

*Dame Janet Trotter, Principal of the University of Gloucestershire, 2006*

'Great to have the privilege of being linked with Holy Ground. Many students and others have found it to be incredibly moving. The stories have reached many minds and hearts! We had fifty people praying around it this morning. The late night opening has been really special.'

*David Cooper, Minister of the Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford, 2007*

'I sat on the floor at Holy Ground on Friday night and I didn't want to leave to go home. It was about 11.00pm and the Installation was surrounded by students and some others, reading the stories and just sitting or kneeling at that place of connection with God and his Church. The previous day, I had been at morning prayer on the other side by the sandals of the lady who had helped the relief workers after 9/11. I looked out across the installation to other stories that I had read and suddenly it was as if I was not looking at shoes but at people and I realised that this is our amazing, wonderful, suffering, loving and celebrating church. And I realised how much we belong to one another.

Thank you so very very much for bringing the installation to Oxford. It has made a significant impact on many peoples lives. For some it will be something they look back to for the rest of their lives. For students, the morning prayer worked really well and the night time slots were very important indeed.'

*Margot Hodson, Chaplain of Jesus College, Oxford, 2007*