

Bible Lands

Summer 2024

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

www.jmecca.org.uk



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THE JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST CHURCH ASSOCIATION

(JMECA)

Founded in 1887

'The Object of the Charity is to benefit the public by encouraging support in prayer, money and personal service for the religious and other charitable work of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East and the Episcopal/Anglican Province of Alexandria in communion with the See of Canterbury.'

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www.jmecca.org.uk

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Our website has information about the Church and its work in each of the dioceses with regular updates of news and stories from the region.

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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Association.

Front cover photo: St. George's Cathedral Tower, Jerusalem.

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Editorial

The Rt Rev Anthony Ball, Chair of the JMECA trustees, writes:

In the last edition of *Bible Lands* I noted that we were at a “moment in the unfolding story of the two provinces with the Primates each being the only diocesan bishop in their Church and therefore, between them, acting in that role for all seven dioceses supported by JMECA”. In this edition it is a delight to begin this message by saying that since the start of 2024 I have had the privilege and joy of participating in the consecration of three new bishops – in addition to my own translation. This means that, across the two provinces, there is now only one diocese (Iran) without a bishop. In the following pages you will find an interview with Bishop Sean of Cyprus & the Gulf and pieces on his consecration and those of Bishop Jeremiah of Gambella and Bishop Martin of the Horn of Africa.

You can read more about the consecrations and on the JMECA website where over recent months a collection of interesting features about aspects of the life of the various dioceses has been building up. We are particularly grateful to Archdeacon John Holdsworth, the JMECA Communications Consultant, for this material. He has been fulfilling this role for over a year now as we see communication as a core element of JMECA’s support for the dioceses of the two provinces within our remit.

Telling the unfolding stories of the life of the Anglican churches and promoting their connections with the wider body of Christ is both a privilege and a responsibility in which we can all share. Both Archdeacon John and the Editor are delighted to receive contributions or suggestions, particularly from those visiting or serving in the region, and can offer support in preparing them for publication. Dr Clare Amos is the “Lead Director” for Communications and, as we continue to focus on this aspect of our mission, she will be looking to develop prayer resources (including a possible “calendar of saints” connected with the provinces) as well as refreshing the website and exploring how this magazine might evolve. Don’t be afraid to be in touch with your news or views!

The concept of a “lead” or “link” director (or trustee) is one that the Board has introduced to foster stronger connections and ensure that JMECA and the associated charities are sensitive to the different needs and contexts across the whole range of our activities – whilst being realistic about the limits of both the human and financial resources that we can offer to support the dioceses. Each diocese has a board member who seeks to keep abreast of the life of the diocese and the ways in which we can best support its various ministries. They work with Board

colleagues who take the lead on our key focus areas (communications, grants, properties, safeguarding and training/theological formation – as well, of course, as the more internally-focused finance and governance matters). They also keep up the connections with key partners, especially the various diocesan “friends” organisations, and will be looking to develop our links with other charities working in the provinces. Do reach out if you are reading this and would appreciate such a connection.

Since the last edition, Canon William Taylor has stepped down as a trustee. We are grateful for all he has offered during many years of involvement with the charity – particularly through his ecumenical friendships. As JMECA completes a period of reviewing and refreshing the ways in which we support the churches we shall, over the coming year, be seeking to recruit some additional trustees. The trustees of a charity face many similar pressures and opportunities with those involved in diocesan or church leadership. They have a particular responsibility to steward its resources and safeguard its mission, ensuring compliance with all the relevant legislation (of which there is a growing body here in the UK alongside the significant and varied requirements placed on churches by the various states served by the two provinces). If you are UK-based and have a connection with or strong interest in the provinces we support and feel called to serve – as a trustee or in another capacity – we are keen to hear from you.

The legitimate requirements of good governance and accountability can create pressures to focus attention on internal matters of structure and process. Of course, that cannot be our principal focus, despite the temptation to turn inwards when we face substantial pressures from outside. Churches as much as charities can succumb to the temptation and allow internal squabbles to distract and detract from the demands of the Great Commission and Christian discipleship. We should resist the temptation. So, let my last word be one to encourage prayer for the ongoing conflicts and crises in Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, the Yemen, Ethiopia ... and in so many of the countries named on our (new) map on the back cover. Let us open our hearts to all those affected, those known to us by name and the many others who feel they are forgotten, and so make real the sense that we “are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (*Romans 12.5*).



Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East



The diocese of Jerusalem, a diocese of the worldwide Anglican Communion, extends over five countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Israel, within the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. There are 27 parishes that minister to the needs of their communities, centered on the Cathedral Church of St.

George the Martyr, in Jerusalem. The diocese supports 35 institutions, which include hospitals, clinics, kindergartens and schools, vocational training programmes, as well as institutions for the deaf, the disabled and the elderly, reaching out to interfaith neighbours in mutual respect and cooperation.



The Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza, owned and supported over many years by the Episcopal (Anglican) diocese of Jerusalem, continues to serve the whole 'family' (Ahl) of human beings in Gaza. It provides a vital service in an increasingly desperate situation. The hospital is committed to providing 24/7 health services for all people in need of medical care.

Al Ahli remains open to continue its humanitarian mission

Despite the challenges and damage to the hospital, staff are able to provide urgent medical care around the clock for hundreds of physically injured and traumatized. The bombing is continuing in places near the hospital area and shrapnel and debris are scattered everywhere. The number of wounded is also increasing and reaches 300 patients daily.

Ahli Hospital remains the only functioning hospital in the north of Gaza as other hospitals are out of service due to damage caused by airstrikes, and lack of fuel. Ahli hospital continued to implement a twenty-four-hour emergency response plan to meet the increasing number of wounded and traumatized. Staff hired additional health professionals to assist the Ahli team.

Currently the hospital wards are overwhelmed with patients and crowds who are occupying every space possible – with 150 in-patients catered for in an eighty-bed capacity hospital. Staff are having to treat the injured in makeshift spaces such as the hospital's church and library.

The staff treats around 300 patients and performs eighteen to twenty surgical operations daily, mostly in orthopaedics and plastic surgery with four functioning operation theatres.

Ahli is utilizing medical and surgery consumables, as well as fuel, purchased from local suppliers during the ceasefire, as well as an additional amount purchased after allowing the supplies trucks to get to the north. More fuel and food for patients and staff, along with medical supplies including bone stabilizers, antibiotics, and anaesthetics are needed as the consumption rate is extremely high. The inadequate hygiene practice as well as the intake of unsafe food and undrinkable water have dramatically increased the number of patients with critical infectious diseases. The overcrowding in shelters has resulted in increasing number of respiratory tract infection cases. This has increased the number of patients at the outpatients.

Families of patients are sheltered in the hospital grounds and Al Ahli provides sheltered families with food, lodging and other support.

CAN YOU HELP?

To donate, scan the QR code; to visit <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/24585>; or send a cheque (see reverse side of the mailing sheet).



News from around the diocese of Jerusalem...

Holy Communion and Confirmation at the Church of Our Lady in Irbid, Jordan



The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Rt Rev Hosam Naoum, recently presided over the service of Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Irbid, northern Jordan. He was assisted by Rev. Samir Said, parish priest, in the presence of a number of church pastors, parents, young people, parish families and friends. Al-Kanan Saeed welcomed the archbishop and his wife, Mrs. Rafa Naoum, and all the attendees.

In his homily, the archbishop spoke about the biblical dimension of the sacraments such as Confirmation and the Eucharist, which the Church practices in order to restore and relive what Christ and the holy apostles did. He also urged those who are confirmed to pay attention to the presence and Christian belonging to the Holy Land in which they live, and to take responsibility for preserving the Christian heritage through the living testimony of their faith. After the service, everyone participated in the reception and exchanged congratulations.

Pilgrimage to the Jordan River at Jericho

At the beginning of the Eastern Lent in mid-March, Archbishop Hosam Naoum presided over the service of Holy Communion on the western side of the Jordan River in the presence of the parishes of St. George in Jerusalem, Arab and foreign, and the parishes of St. Andrew in Ramallah and St. Peter in Birzeit, assisted by Rev. Wadih Al-Far and Rev. Brigadier General Richard Sowell. Archbishop Naoum's sermon revolved around the common denominator in the readings of the Holy Gospel according to the Western and Eastern calendars and the location of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, focusing on the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the 'Son of God' who came into the



world to save the world. He is the one in whom the Father was pleased to dwell and commanded us to listen to him. Just as Jesus

compared his death and resurrection with a grain of wheat, which, when it dies and is buried and rises to bear great fruit (John 12.24), so our prayer is that the Church's preparations for the beginning of Lent and Holy Week will be a holy journey with the redeemer, so that if we suffer with him, we will see the empty tomb and celebrate his victory over evil and death. After serving Holy Communion, Archbishop Naoum and the priests sprayed the people with Jordan water in preparation for the start of the holy season.

Archbishop leads clergy retreat at St. George's College in Jerusalem

The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem recently hosted clergy from the



diocese of Jerusalem for a three-day retreat (11-13 March) at St. George's College next to the cathedral in Jerusalem. Some in Jordan and Lebanon participated online. Biblical study focused on the Gospel according to St. Mark and was punctuated by the Daily Offices and Holy Communion. Visits were made to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Syriac Orthodox Church of St. Mark in the Old City.



Everyone attended an inspiring spiritual evening presented by Rev. Fouad Dagher in the cathedral, under the patronage of the archbishop and in the

presence of parishes and institutions from Jerusalem. On the evening of the second day, the Archbishop and Mrs. Naoum hosted everyone in their home for a reception.

The programme was praised by all who took part for its spiritual richness and fraternal love. Each returned to his home to serve with renewed vigour and determination.

Photos: diocese of Jerusalem

Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

From Nablus to Beirut: a training journey



When we think of a residential context for Ministerial Training, perhaps our thoughts are drawn to the leafy fields of Cuddesdon near Oxford's dreaming spires or the lofty grandeur and history of somewhere like Durham. Saba's context has been rather different. He lives in Nablus in the Occupied West Bank and is currently studying at the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut.

He follows a long line of distinguished alumni of the School. Anglicans have been involved since the 1940s. The Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem is one of several owners and managers of NEST. The present college building is in West Beirut and was dedicated fifty-two years ago. The then bishop of the diocese of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the Rt Rev Najib Cubain (the first local Arab bishop), was present. The School itself had seen various partnerships and locations since 1869, and between 1926 and 1962 it functioned as the Biblical Studies department of the American University of Beirut.

After the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank, travel between the state of Israel and Lebanon became more difficult, a situation not helped by the virtually continuous state of war in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, so there are fewer Anglican Ordinands there now than hitherto. In fact, currently, Saba is the only one, but he says, 'I love it. The community is amazing, the professors are profound scholars, and this is just a loving community'.

The community back home in Nablus is also dear to Saba. He says it is 'fantastic'. Although there are many challenges, relations are generally excellent between Christians, Moslems and Samaritans. (Nablus is on the slopes of Mount Gerizim, the holiest place for Samaritans, hence the presence of a Samaritan community there numbering around 800). Ecumenical cooperation is good, and the Anglican diocese is responsible for St Luke's Hospital and a kindergarten. At present the kindergarten has one Christian pupil and thirty-nine Moslem children. There are two church buildings used by a Christian congregation of around 120.

Saba came to recognize his vocation at a Diocesan Youth Camp – an annual feature of the diocese. More recently these have become more overtly vocation oriented. The next one is to be held later this year in Cyprus. Following his acceptance for training,

Saba spent nine months at St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem – a practical preparation for his time in Beirut.

The President of NEST, Dr George Sabra, says he welcomes the sense of liturgy that Anglicans bring to the college. He says they also have an ecumenical tolerance not always evident among students. Saba worships with the college community during the week and on Sundays attends All Saints' Church in the centre of Beirut. Dr Sabra would love to see more Anglican engagement with the college and would welcome overseas partners.



The diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf has held two Summer Schools at NEST and found it an ideal location. The library is excellent, the accommodation is good, and the teaching facilities are modern, techno-friendly and of various sizes. The recently refurbished chapel is dedicated to theologian and author Kenneth Bailey, the last Canon Theologian of Cyprus and the Gulf.

There has been a tendency over recent decades to earth theological training in the 'real' world of lived experience, in places where profound questions about humanity are raised. Living and studying in the West Bank and Beirut surely ticks that box.

NEST – further facts

NEST is an ecumenical theological college that trains ministers and laity, both women and men, for work in the Protestant Churches in the Middle East and Africa. The school has academic and administrative staff, offers graduate and post-graduate courses and contributes to Continuing Christian Education throughout the area.

The school has a complex background with roots going back to the nineteenth century when a seminary was first founded in Beirut. Other schools in Greece and Turkey also became involved and NEST was formed in 1932. After the Second World War, leaders of several Evangelical Churches in the region became directors, including the Evangelical Churches from Syria and Lebanon, the Armenian Evangelical Church, and the Lutheran and Anglican/Episcopal Churches.

NEST moved to its present buildings in West Beirut in 1971. Visit the webpage at www.theonest.edu.lb

Gosh! Is it thirty-four years? It only seems like yesterday!

Fr Hugh Wybrew is genuinely surprised when I remind him how long he was a JMECA director until his resignation last year. Hugh is a quiet, gentle, self-effacing priest (in his sixty-third year since ordination), giving little hint that he is also a fluent Russian speaker, an authority on Orthodox worship and a former Dean of St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem.



Those three facts are connected. When he was due to go to university in 1953 National Service was still mandatory, and on joining the RAF he discovered that people with two A levels in modern languages could apply to join a Russian language course. This was the time of the Cold War and the Intelligence services needed this particular skill. So, he says, most of his National Service was actually spent learning Russian, and it was that that brought him into contact with the Orthodox Church, a link that would lead eventually to Jerusalem.

Having completed his degree at Oxford, his present home, he spent a year at the St Sergius Russian Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, where, as he says, he became 'soaked in Slav Orthodoxy'. He was ordained in Southwark diocese and both there and thereafter became used to ministering to relatively large congregations at the Catholic end of the Anglican spectrum. After his curacy he spent a year as the Anglican Priest Student at the Catholic University of Louvain.

The appeal of Orthodoxy for him lay in its liturgy. Returning to Oxford as a tutor at St Stephen's House Theological College, he sang in the choir of the local Russian Orthodox church at the Divine Liturgy each Sunday (after first attending the College Eucharist). His university course had featured a paper in Early Christian Liturgy, and he confesses to being fascinated by the way the 'elaborate performance' of the Orthodox liturgy had somehow developed from the Last Supper! The appeal of the worship lay not only in its textual content but in its aesthetic appeal to all the human senses. And in 1989 he was to publish a book, *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharist in the Byzantine Rite*. I am reliably informed that in Russian translation, this book is a set text for

aspiring Orthodox priests in Moscow to this day.

After St Stephen's House he became Chaplain at the Anglican church in Bucharest, visiting congregations in Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, and then spent ten years as Vicar of Pinner. His informed interest in Orthodoxy and ability to speak Russian led to his becoming a member of the newly formed Anglican-Orthodox Doctrinal Commission, a membership that continued for thirty-four years (a recurring theme!). For three years he was the full-time Secretary of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. His time in Jerusalem coincided with the first Palestinian Intifada. Hugh remembers this in terms of the strike of shopkeepers for some months that left the Old City of Jerusalem feeling like a ghost town, rather than as a time of much violence in Jerusalem itself. In comparison with later developments he describes it as 'rather mild'. He thoroughly enjoyed his time in Jerusalem. 'It was wonderful to live there,' he says, and he made strong and enduring connections with St George's College, and with the many pilgrim groups that augmented the English congregation at the cathedral during the pilgrimage season. He was to return to the college on a regular basis as a lecturer. In the early 2000s he led the annual 'Holy Fire' course, introducing participants to Orthodox Holy Week and Easter celebrations. On one visit he also managed to join a party visiting the UNESCO Churches in Cyprus, interpreting their frescoes to the students. This background made him an obvious choice as a JMECA Director, and he became their main link with St George's College.

Now he spends his time in 'active retirement' in Oxford, helping out in local churches and reflecting on the state of things. He lectures on Liturgy at St Stephen's House and is pleased with the positive feedback he is still able to obtain there. He has seen a definite shift in the self-understanding of JMECA. When he joined, its main concern was with managing funds, but now it has recognised a wider vocation with each director having their own geographical brief, and their own category of interest: property, communication, theological education etc. He is intrigued to see how this develops. On the situation in Israel/Palestine now he is less optimistic. Whilst supporting a two-State solution he says he cannot see where the State of Palestine would be situated, since there are so many settlements on the West Bank. He echoes the words of the Secretary General of the United Nations that the current situation did not arise without a context. He fears that this is 'one of the few situations that is genuinely without hope.'

Hugh is continuing to serve JMECA as a Consultant.

Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East



The diocese of Cyprus & the Gulf covers Oman, the Yemen, the seven United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and the whole of Cyprus. In every part of the diocese, except in Cyprus and Iraq, the congregations are largely expatriate, made up of Christians from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, the

Philippines and the African continent. Many do not come from an Anglican background but find a welcome church home in our Anglican congregations. Through some intricate and special relationships, the diocese is often responsible for churches and congregations which are not Anglican, some of which are still working out their relationships to the Bishop and Synod. Worship is largely in English but in some locations we have liturgy in Arabic, Syriac-Aramaic, Tamil and Urdu.



From Gavin and Stacey... to a Place in the Sun: the remarkable story of Paul Carr

The Rev Paul Carr must be one of the few people who can think of Billericay in Essex without recalling the BBC series Gavin and Stacey, in which Billericay is the town where Gavin's family is fictionally located. For Paul it is the beloved parish which he has recently left to become the Chaplain at Paphos in the south-west of Cyprus – the job he describes as 'an adventure'.



He brings with him a very individual CV, which includes being a music promoter, a prison officer, a second row forward at a famous rugby club and someone with a following of hundreds (or did he say thousands) through his website and social media ministry.

Paul's accent locates him immediately as a man of the north-east. (Don't make the mistake of calling him a Geordie: they're from Newcastle. He's from Sunderland – he's a Mackem as they say in those parts!). His father was a disabled miner and Paul left school at sixteen to become the wage earner for the family. He now has an MA. His life was typical of teenagers in that area at that time, and when one of his best friends committed suicide at the age of twenty-one, he decided that something had to change in his life. He had been to Sunday School as a child as most people did in his age group at that time in the working-class areas of the north, but now he set out to find a new meaning in life and found it in Christianity. He insists that this was a rational choice, based on evidence and comparison with other religious groups that he tried. During the following years, as he puts it,



"It moved from my head to my heart. It was a movement that turned my life downside-up."

After a few years in sales management, as fortunes changed in the north-east, he applied for a job as a prison officer, and served time (so to speak) at Wormwood Scrubs and Walton prisons. A short spell at Durham was ended

because he knew too many of the inmates from his past! During this time, he had become more involved in church, becoming a house church leader, before he felt the call to be a prison chaplain, having seen the work they did, and hearing other people tell him that it would be just the job for him.

His wife Paula was very supportive, so first he became confirmed and then went through a selection process before arriving at Oak Hill Theological College in London. Oak Hill is notable as a 'low church' college, which suited his outlook, as a convinced evangelical, though he jokes that it was the proximity to the Saracens' Rugby ground that swayed him. In fact, he played in the second team / veterans as second row during his time there.

After ordination and a curacy, prison chaplaincy having lost its appeal, largely because he had been seriously injured in an incident during his final days as an officer, he thought about other forms of chaplaincy. He says he had never been attracted by the prospect of parish ministry, but found he loved every minute of it. 'God had His hand in my life,' he says. The fact that he spent more than fifteen years in his last vibrant parish speaks for itself. He saw his role as being an interface between the worshipping community and the wider community, and that sums up his entire approach to parish ministry. Since arriving in Paphos he has already been appointed as Chaplain to the Royal British Legion and has made contact with the local Rotary Club. He hopes to engage with many other groups and societies over the coming months. His view is that there are lots of organisations that seek to serve the common good and he wants the Church to be recognised by, and counted among them.

One special way in which Paul interfaces with the wider world is through his website (revPACman.com). Following an operation in 2016, as a way of spending

his convalescence, Paul set up the website, initially in a small way, but now it has grown beyond his expectations. The Vicarage they occupied in Billericay had a large garden and another way to 'meet the public' were his regular 'Gigs in the Garden' and music concerts in his churches. All of his events ended with a blessing. Paul has a tremendous interest in music and has been a promoter since his twenties. He speaks of 'house gigs' in his lounge (capacity crowd 40). Those gigs included a warm meal and dessert. Both their children are talented musicians and often acted as the 'warm up' for the main act. His favourite style of music is 'Americana' but he enjoys both playing and listening to all kinds of rock music, and his repertoire includes playing in a brass band. Over the years some famous people have been part of the entertainment, including Ricky Ross, lead singer of Deacon Blue (as if you didn't know) and someone he describes as 'Nashville Royalty,' Beth Neilson-Chapman. All Paul's events were great fund raisers for the church. Look out Paphos!

When the children (Ben and Annabel) left the nest, Paul and Paula were itching for a new horizon and that was what brought them to Paphos. Paul was licensed at Synod where he recognised just what he was part of in his new diocese. Though he has never worn vestments before, he is loving worship at Agia Kyriaki. 'They are training me', he says, and when he considers that he is worshipping in a church that has seen worship for seventeen centuries, all he can say is, 'wow!' He laughingly refutes the rumour that he had a reputation as a 'hard-nosed screw,' but he is happy to claim:

"Once I locked people up; now I am helping to set people free."



The Anglican Church in Paphos

Founded in 1976, the parish is within the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. Geographically, the parish covers the Administrative Area of Paphos District on the western side of the island, from Pomos in the north to the Akamas in the west, Kouklia in the south to Arsos in the east, serving a potential population of some 90,000. There are three churches: Ayia Kyriaki (by St Paul's Pillar), Kato Paphos; St Luke's, Prodromi (between Latchi and Polis) and St Stephen's in Tala.

One of many things that we treasure in our cluster of

three Anglican churches is the variety of types and styles of Christian worship services we are able to provide. They range from formal sung Holy Eucharist to 'Songs of Praise' events with accompanying choir, and morning worship services with hymns, prayers and a sermon.

All our services will be recognisable to those who are Anglican from any part of the world, including Church of England / Church in Wales / Episcopal Church of Scotland and the Church of Ireland, from which the majority of our members come.

All are welcome

Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

Interview with the new bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf



The Rt Rev Sean Semple was in conversation with Dr Helen Perry:

HP *Your path to becoming the Sixth Anglican Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf has taken you through many countries and places. Have there been any experiences or people that have been a particular source of inspiration on your journey?*

SS My experience attending a Roman Catholic school in South Africa in the 1970s and '80s left a deep impression of how Christian convictions can inspire distinctive and courageous living. The school was quietly but committedly multiracial during the height of the Apartheid era. It was so transformative an environment that even to a child, the significance of its work was clear. Looking back with the perspective—and vocabulary—of an adult, I am humbled by the prophetic challenge the school and its staff offered to wider society. A similar awe was inspired by the courage, humanity and joy of Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

HP *How would you describe your spiritual journey and sense of vocation?*

SS During my childhood I recognised a deep sense of belonging in the Church, of being at home more in the Church than in any other place or group. Somewhat paradoxically, since I was a shy child, I enjoyed serving God at the altar. Although I rejected any thought of vocation until I was in my early 20s, and indeed have even felt on occasion wounded by Christians and the institutional Church, I have nonetheless always found my place to be with the Lord and the Church.

HP *And now your call has led you back to the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf as its Bishop?*

SS Yes, this sense of call has been most unexpected but strongly felt. I have been reminded of the Celtic image of the Holy Spirit as a wild goose. Sometimes the Holy Spirit moves in unpredictable ways that upset our lives and the *status quo*, but such moves lead to new adventures with God.

HP *Where do you feel most at peace?*

SS Very often in nature – a walk through the Wye valley or along a coastline, but also on a rambling road trip with my wife, Jenny, listening to my favourite playlist.

HP *What moves you in ways you might not expect?*

SS Unconditional kindness.

HP *How do you carve out downtime from the demands of your vocation?*

SS In recent years it has been visiting National Trust properties with Jenny and going for a jog to maintain some fitness and to clear my head. I am looking forward to visiting new countries and learning about their history and culture, and I am hoping to re-engage with my passion for scuba diving.

HP *Is there a biblical verse or quotation close to your heart?*

SS A biblical verse that sums up my sense of vocation is 'Zeal for your house will consume me' (Ps. 69.9 and John 2.17). I recognise within myself a deep passion for God and his Church which often manifests itself as a frustration with the 'own goals' we score: those times when we fail to demonstrate even the most basic Christ-like behaviour.

Another saying that I love, attributed to St Francis, is: 'Preach Jesus always; if necessary, use words.' Our lives and behaviours are the only Bible that some people will read.

HP *What do you hope to achieve in the first year of your new role?*

SS I am planning to visit most if not all the chaplaincies of the diocese, to understand first-hand the triumphs and challenges of the church in each context. I will be listening and taking note of good practice that could be shared within the diocese and more broadly within the Anglican Communion. I firmly believe that in our interfaith, ecumenical and multinational ministry, we have gifts to offer others. I will also be listening for the challenges and frustrations experienced in each situation, and thinking about how our diocesan leadership can support and facilitate Christian presence and ministry.

HP *What are the immediate challenges facing the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, and how would you summarise your approach to resolving them?*

SS The primary challenge of every diocese and church is simply to practice an authentic Christianity.

I would like to encourage greater spiritual discernment, so that we avoid the mistake of assuming that our agendas are God's agendas.

The diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf celebrates its fiftieth year in 2026, and it will be important for our structures to be fit for purpose and fit for the future.

HP *Thank you very much.*

Actually, I'm an extrovert – but then you've probably guessed...

John Holdsworth meets the Rev Deborah Moorgas – recently appointed Chaplain in Limassol.



A conversation with Deborah can leave you feeling exhilarated but breathless. She says she 'hated school with a passion' but was 'captain of all the teams.' The ones she could remember were running, swimming, netball, cricket and football. In later years she has added Pilates to her interests. People

of Limassol, you heard it here first.

Deborah was born in Durban, in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, South Africa. Her father was Muslim and her mother Christian. So, her brothers went to the Mosque with their father. Deborah went to church with her mother; and that has given her a relatively unique insight into the possibilities of interfaith relationships, which she sees as perfectly natural and normal. There is a history of interfaith involvement in Limassol, developed by the Rev Christine Goldsmith, and Deborah is keen to build on that.

Deborah was involved in church activities and mission long before the possibility of ordination was suggested to her. She was a church warden and youth leader in her local church, and it is easy to imagine young people relating to her approachable style. Although a self-confessed extrovert, she is a good listener and has a deep interest in, and love for people. Around two hundred young people attended her Friday night sessions that included some informal worship alongside simply providing a safe space for young people to 'be' with their friends in a music-rich context and engage in whatever activities were on offer that appealed to them. She was a trusted confidante. As someone who, like many in South Africa, had been to a single-sex school, she saw the opportunities that a church group could offer, to help young people learn how to relate to the opposite sex, as a foundation for adult life. She looks forward to encouraging youth work in Limassol.

She was engaged in this church work whilst developing a career as a marine insurance broker. She is well used to port settings and is delighted to be coming to the main port in Cyprus, where she looks forward to making a contribution, alongside the senior port Chaplain, The Rev John Attenborough. Following ordination she continued to work as an MSE (Minister in Secular Employment), but felt an increasing sense of wanting to engage in parish ministry full time. Her opportunity came as the result of a chance meeting with a bereaved family member that she met at a funeral at which she officiated, who was working as a lay administrator in the church in Bahrain, and who was impressed with her pastoral care. That led to a placement during the interregnum in Bahrain in 2022. The fact that this coincided with the Pope's visit was something she took in her stride, even appearing on Vatican Television.

Covid presented a huge challenge for this extrovert priest, which she met by writing an online blog, over seventy days, each one focussing on something for which she could feel grateful. This was subsequently made available online as 'The Gratitudes: A Short Book of Prayerful Reflections.' This was quite an achievement, given that her own life had not been without challenges, as one of her brothers, who had been a drug addict, had died in 2015. Recognising and writing about those 'gratitudes' had been a life-saver for her. She said, 'I was in a dark place, and without this I don't know that I would have made it'.

She is looking forward to meeting her new parishioners and learning more about Cyprus. She says of her appointment, 'It is an absolute privilege. I am so grateful to God and to the church for taking the chance and giving me the job'. Few would question her reference to the book of Esther as she says, 'Hopefully, I am being called to this place at this time for a purpose'. We look forward to the Limassol Olympics!



Gaza, Israel and William Temple



Rev Dr Yazid Said reflects on the continuing war:

The scholarship on the judicial execution of Jesus of Nazareth under the Romans reflects a context in which the Judeans and the Romans in first century Palestine were concerned that there would be an explosion of violence that would be destructive for

all. The leaders looked for ways to avoid this and Jesus would have been a perfect scapegoat; they eliminated one common enemy.

For those who live in the Holy Land today this seems to be a painful reflection of the contemporary reality as yet another war wages on. We manage our fears with short-term 'toleration' of others at best. But the images we see from both sides this time make us feel less optimistic even about 'toleration' let alone a sustainable, more comprehensive settlement. The surprise attack on Saturday 7 October last year sent shock waves across the country and the world, especially with its cruelty towards innocent civilians. Political commentators have pointed to various possible reasons for their timing. Nonetheless, the local Churches in the Holy Land and the wider international community have rightly condemned the attacks.

At the same time, we do have before us the task of responsible and critical reaction not just towards Hamas, but also towards Israel's past policies and actions, and current reactions. So many western powers talk as if innocent children and women have not been and are not being killed in Gaza and that the blockade of Gaza over the last two decades is acceptable. One only needs to read the official reports of Amnesty international and UN agencies to learn of Gaza's devastation.

Whilst Israel has constantly argued with the support of the international community that it has the right to defend itself against enemies, various commentators have argued that the problem lies less with aggressive neighbours than with a failure to tackle the underlying issues about Gaza's stability, economically and politically. The former British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd once described Gaza back in 2004 as 'the most miserable place of human habitation I have ever visited'. This failure has encouraged a complex tit-for-tat policy of attacks. Hamas also believes that it has the right as an occupied territory controlled by Israel from outside, to defend its freedom. But this crude binary division reflects underlying delusions at work for both sides. We see these delusions at work when Israel

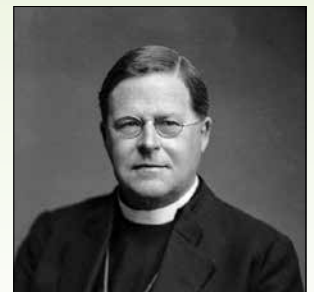
is surprised that Hamas still has the resolve to engage with escalation despite Israel's superior military power. Israel, nonetheless, continues to believe that its military might, and sophistication could determine the result of the conflict.

The economic embargo and blockade on Gaza by Israel, and Egypt on the south border, has not worked effectively and did not achieve its diplomatic goals. With or without Hamas, you cannot simply leave the population in some sort of political limbo. It's a recipe for endless conflict and suffering. On the other hand, Hamas' unfortunate delusion has been that further atrocities perpetrated by Israel could push the world to stand on its side. It lacks a secular vision for a political settlement. It does not seem to mind that the infrastructure in Gaza is ravaged – as if Palestinian lives are cheap enough to be slaughtered as part of a national strategy.

How do people cope in such circumstances on the ground? In previous confrontations, NGOs, United Nations agencies and Church institutions provided some immediate necessary support and repairs locally. The Anglican Church's Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza has continued to provide free health services (dependent entirely on external funding). But these services seem to be fatally challenged now.

Closer to home, we have also sadly seen some mindless backlash in some quarters in the UK towards both the Jewish and the Muslim communities. There is nothing to condone in these attacks. But the solidarity and common purpose for the various religious communities here in the UK is vital at this time of pain, sorrow and anger. More than at any other time, faith communities will need to stand and work together for the wellbeing of society and for our shared understanding of the life that God calls us to embody.

The William Temple Foundation often refers to the legacy of William Temple for some wisdom and he does not disappoint for this occasion either. As Archbishop of Canterbury during the Second World War, he is famous for his stand for the Jews and his patronage in the establishment of the Council of Christians and Jews when the Jews were facing the horrors of the Holocaust. A special issue on his legacy for interreligious engagement in Britain after the Corona virus pandemic was published by the *Journal of Church and State* towards the end of November last year. Whilst Temple stood up for the Jews in Europe, he was not supportive of the Zionist project in Palestine. In *Some Lambeth Letters*, he notes:



I do not think it is practical to think of Palestine as a Jewish State. The Arab population is too big, and too fanatical. I incline to the suggestion that Palestine should be governed by a Commission of the United Nations...as being a Holy Land for different religions, which between them cover a great multitude of Nations, and that we should try to develop a Jewish State elsewhere, perhaps in Cyrenaica.

Temple understood that you cannot evacuate native populations and expect peace and harmony even if you are dealing with the just cause of finding a haven for the Jewish people facing the atrocities of the Holocaust. The natives of Palestine included ancient Palestinian Christian communities whose presence goes back to the early Hebrew Christians in the first century. These comments are not irrelevant today. Whilst there was a strong historical support for the establishment of the state of Israel given the history, the application of that on the ground has meant that the fate of the Palestinian Arabs has also been one of the tragedies of the last century that tends to be forgotten or ignored.

The recent publication *The Holocaust and the Nakba* by Bashir and Goldberg shares some stories reflecting the entanglement of these two tragedies, which we do not seem capable of facing boldly today. The reactions to current deaths and tragedies among both Israeli and Palestinian commentators, however, have resorted in various ways to referencing both the Holocaust as well as the Nakba of 1948 in the same way. In 1948, such imagery spilled into the public domain and though they were often denied, you had at the time Jewish calls for self-critical engagement with that history too. Today, a great deal of those living in Gaza are refugees from 1948, and the fear on the ground now is that they could become refugees twice over as populations are asked to move. As the Palestinian authority sits stagnant and corrupt with little political clout to make any difference, the current ultra-right-wing Israeli government might believe that they can be recklessly indifferent because the assumption is that no one globally will do much, if anything, to challenge them.

Temple's other focus is his concept of 'fellowship'. Through his engagement with a variety of theological traditions and his belief in reason and natural law, he was able to propose a distinctive intermediate space for a vibrant civil society. His emphasis on community and public religious engagement was intensified during the Second World War and it was his famous *Christianity and the Social Order* (1942), a set of proposals for the reconstruction of Britain after the war, that became the blueprint for the welfare state.

As the rule of law is eroded in the Middle East, Temple might have something to say about the importance of law accepted by all as a guarantee for well-intentioned negotiations and the ability even to exercise one's

religious duties properly. His ideas would seem congenial to some classical Muslim thought, represented by the thought of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d.1111) who focuses on self-reckoning, *muhasaba*, for the true reform of the self, instead of finding solace with war and arguing that good order in the world is the only guarantee for the good order of religion.

Times of crisis and sadness like this can be moments where there is sufficient anger at the breakdown of current politics, sufficient awareness of the need to build greater resources to create good citizens in Palestine, and sufficient hope for what can be achieved by the wider institutions of Europe and America, to engage creatively with the peoples of the Holy Land. This moment requires a government in Israel that values the independence of a trustworthy legal system, to guarantee the truth and attention that human beings deserve.

The political philosophy in Israel at every level since Oslo has been dominated by a defence model, and less concerned with a building of good citizenship and encouraging stable flourishing and civic excellence among its neighbours. A lasting political system in any healthy society is one that pursues the building of virtue, not least in line with the Hebrew tradition, the pursuit of justice and wisdom under God, the knowledge that the good of Israel depends entirely on the good of Palestine and vice versa. Living under God and showing forth justice and wisdom was the whole purpose and challenge of the calling of the people of Israel in the Bible, a calling for which they had constant nagging from major prophets such as Isaiah and Amos. Indeed, the biblical prophets have a great deal to say to the current Israeli government.

We have seen numerous statements from various church leaders here in Britain and elsewhere which have shied away from taking a clear stand, or by expressing the suffering of one side without regard to the other. Neutrality is the position of Pontius Pilate, not of Christian leadership, and if leaders cannot be clear about where they stand, they should refrain from saying much. For now, a common religious witness from various religious leaders on the need for law let alone other humanitarian concerns would make a strong positive impact. A credible solution requires a workable secular vision for Palestine and an end to the current policies of Israel's government. How does that happen? I don't know. In the meantime, I shall be helplessly praying for all those who have lost their lives in vain and who have had no voice in this ongoing conflict. What is needed now is a declaration of firm policy from the UN and, more importantly perhaps, the State Department in Washington.

Yazid Said is Senior Lecturer in Islam at Liverpool Hope University and a Trustee of JMECA and of the William Temple Foundation

Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

News from the diocese of Thika in Kenya

by John Holdsworth

When I met the Provost of St Andrew's Cathedral in Thika, Kenya, on a recent visit I was able to tell him, "We remember you every week in the Nicosia cathedral prayers, Provost Joseph." He said, "Actually I'm Provost Stephen. Joseph left seven years ago." Obviously, this is a link in need of attention!

Over the years, the link has been very productive. The Diocese of Thika in Kenya, and Exeter in the UK form a three-way partnership in the Gospel that has resulted in joint meetings every three years or so, in each of the dioceses. The three bishops have also kept close contact, and Thika and Exeter each send a representative to the Cyprus and Gulf Diocesan Synod and give a report there.

My visit to Thika was the first link outside these meetings since covid. I was invited to lead the pre-Ordination retreat there this year and to combine that with some other speaking engagements. The Ordination takes place on Maundy Thursday, so my Holy Week schedule was organised in good time this year. The trip culminated with preaching at the main English service at the cathedral on Easter Day. I had last been in Thika for the consecration of the cathedral some ten years ago and was eager to see how things had developed in the meantime.



Thika is a relatively new diocese, carved out of other adjacent ones in 1998. At that time there were some fifty churches in the new diocese. Now there are two hundred and five, with new Church plants being



recorded currently at the rate of three per year. The main town of Thika lies some forty kilometers north of Nairobi. It is a bustling and attractive place which would probably qualify as prosperous. It is in the midst of the pineapple growing area and you can travel miles through fields of the fruit, extending as far as the horizon. At one time it was also a centre for coffee growing but with the collapse of coffee prices, that has died out almost completely. The diocese has played an important part in what has been a painful transition, with its support for micro businesses.



The retreat was held at the fairly-new diocesan Family Centre – a non-residential facility for meetings but also a place designed for a relaxing family day out, with a restaurant, children's play area and green spaces, which was conceived by the Mothers' Union. Called 'The Shepherds' Field' it is hugely popular and has an attractive setting next to a lake containing hippopotami, which I have to say captured my imagination. Hippos stay in the water during the day and come out to eat at night, but I did see one. Unfortunately, my first photo of it made it look like a log, which you had to look very carefully to see had two eyes. The locals pay little attention. They're just part of everyday life.



The day after I arrived there was a Mothers' Union

open air Rally at the Field, which attracted 4,200 members, all dressed in the identical blue and white uniforms of the organisation. Incredibly all of them were fed with breakfast and lunch and fed spiritually with a main address by the Bishop of Malindi and lots of singing swaying and dancing. Numbers are amazing by our standards.

The Chrism Mass and Ordination service at the cathedral, and at which I preached, had an estimated congregation of sixteen hundred. On Palm Sunday I had preached at a church in the vicinity of the University with a congregation of just under five hundred and thought that was a lot! Nine priests

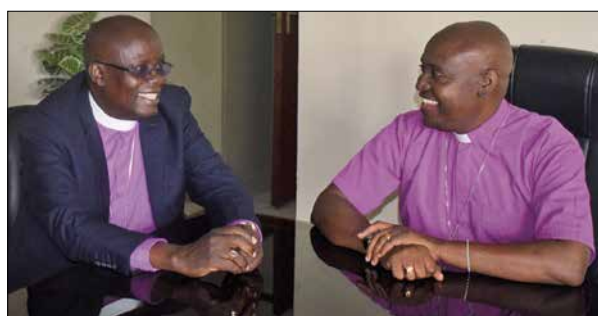


were ordained. Seven would be serving in the Diocese and two in the Kenyan diaspora, one in the USA and one in Ethiopia. After the service there were elaborate parties in a variety of sites. I attended one at the Shephard's Field for

Joan. There was a party atmosphere as a host of well wishers spoke and expressed their confidence in her.

The congregation at the English service in the cathedral at which I preached on Easter day was around two thousand. That was one of four throughout the morning. Liturgies are modern but the English hymns have yet to catch up. Many are sung to Welsh hymn tunes reflecting the history of missionary expansion in earlier times.

Bishop Julius values the link greatly. He and his wife Esther were gracious hosts. He would like to see more exchanges. We have much to share and to learn from each other. At least we've got his name right!



Consecration in Bahrain

Rt Rev Sean Semple becomes new bishop for Cyprus and the Gulf

The Rev Sean Semple was consecrated in St. Christopher's Cathedral, Bahrain on Friday 24th May. The diocese and the province welcome Bishop Sean and his wife Jenny.

The occasion was a first in several ways. It is unusual for a bishop to be consecrated in the cathedral church of the diocese in which he will be bishop. Usually, these occasions take place in the cathedral church of the metropolitan, in this case Jerusalem. It was the express wish of Archbishop Hosam that the service take place in Bahrain. This was the first consecration to be held in the Gulf. It was a first in other ways too. Sean is the first bishop from an African background, being born in South Africa. He has served in three provinces of the Anglican Communion and, among other awards he holds postgraduate qualifications in Spirituality and Clinical Psychology.



The sermon was delivered by Rt Rev Richard Jackson, Bishop of Hereford, the diocese in which Sean has served in the UK until recently. In his sermon he spoke of his own 'imposter syndrome.' He contrasted the early 'ego driven delusion' of Peter with the gospel account of his redemption and renewed call. The key is love. Jesus calls us less to a purpose than a person. Love redeems Peter to a new vision of God's purpose.

The bishop felt that the present time in the life of the Church was a moment like that facing Peter by the lakeside. The question for Christian leadership is about what we need to let go of, in order to pass from death to life.

The other bishops present joined in the act of consecration. They included the Secretary

General of the Anglican Communion, the Rt Rev Anthony Poggo, and the diocesan bishops of North Africa (representing JMECA) and Europe. The Act was led by Archbishop Hosam. The service was conducted in English, Arabic Tamil and Hindi and concluded with the eucharist, celebrated by the new bishop.

Bishop Sean's enthronement in the diocese's other cathedral in Nicosia will take place on June 22nd.

Diocese of Iran

Iran Vacant

News from Iran

The sad news is that the Revd Hussein Babamohammadi one of the three deacons in the diocese died in Isfahan on May 19th after a short illness. His funeral took place on 23rd May, and he was buried in the Armenian Christian cemetery.

Mr Babamohammadi, who was blind, had been licensed in March 2013 by Bishop Azad to serve as a lay preacher in the congregations of St Luke's Isfahan and in St Paul's Church Julfa (a largely Armenian suburb of Isfahan). Before Bishop Azad moved on from his ministry as bishop in Iran, he ordained Mr Babamohammadi as deacon to lead those two congregations in October 2015. He continued in this ministry until the church, along with other Anglican churches, was closed in 2020 because of the covid pandemic – and no permission has been given for any of them to reopen.

Mr Babamohammadi had been involved with the Farm for boys with visual impairment set up by the Christoffel Blindenmission and part of the diocese some miles outside Isfahan. At the time of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 he was in theological training in India but on return with the expropriation of the diocesan hospital in Isfahan he went to work in the X-Ray department of another hospital in the city. And it was in that hospital that he died.

He leaves his wife Zahri in Isfahan and three children who live outside the country, one of whom was able to be present at his funeral.

Two deacons remain in the diocese – the Rev Shahram Dezhbod in Tehran and the Rev Ashrafi in Shiraz, both of whom were ordained with Mr Babamohammadi in 2015.



A recent visit has been made to Iran by daughters of Mrs Robabeh Shirvanian, a former lay reader in the diocese and a remarkable witness for Christ, who died in England in 2023. They were able to visit Shiraz, where they laid a lock of her hair beside her husband and their

brother and placed a memorial stone for her.

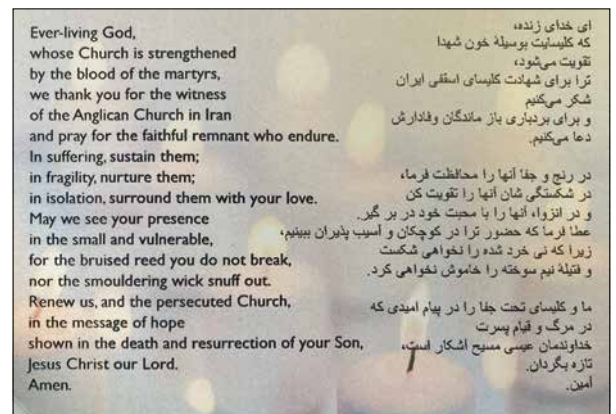
One of the issues in Shiraz is the problem of maintenance of the church building and adjoining

properties. The congregation has almost disappeared, is not able to meet and were reliant on funding which is no longer possible to receive from outside the country because of international sanctions. Deacon Ashrafi is also well on in years and without support. The Church of St Simon the Zealot in Shiraz, built by Persian missionary scholar Dr Norman Sharp is noted for its beauty and Iranian style but it has always been hard to maintain. It was also in Shiraz that the Revd Arastoo Sayyah was murdered in February 1979, the first Christian martyr of the Iranian Revolution.

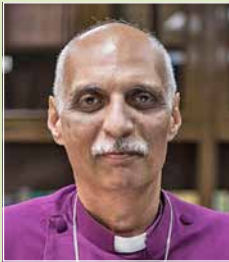


But now the beautiful church building itself as well as the church hall are in a sad state. The little old house where Revd. Sayyah was killed (Daftar-e keshish, [the priest's office] as it was known) is as good as ruined by wood termites. It has been a battle to keep the church garden and graveyard in good order. The beautiful one-storied buildings that used to make up the Christian hospital (expropriated in the revolution) next to the church has been almost completely demolished and a most unsightly building put up in its place, which has damaged the church's foundations.

Despite the problems with buildings and the closure of buildings a remarkable growth of Iranian Christians has taken place outside the country, while in Iran itself there are reports of the extensive growth of groups of new Christians meeting in small groups in houses. Human rights groups report that more than 50 Christians are serving prison sentences for their faith.



Province of Alexandria

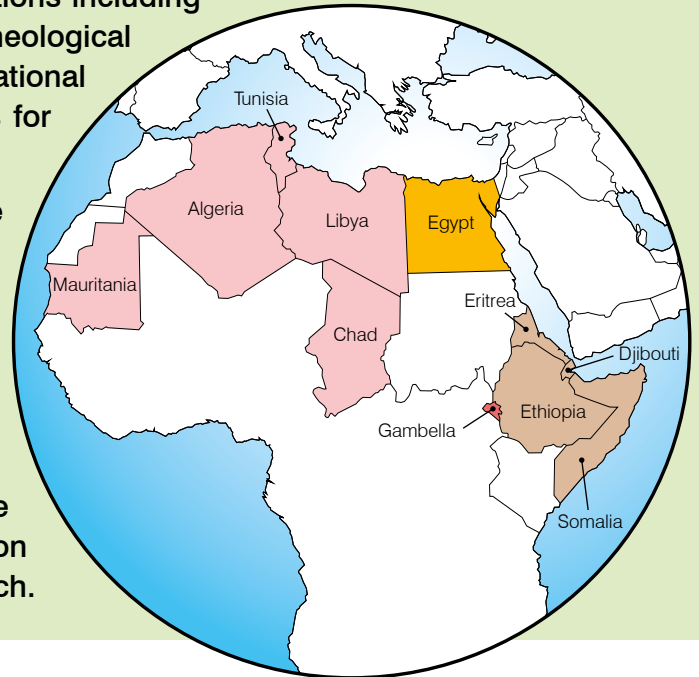


From its beginning in 1839, the diocese of Egypt was committed to serve others as Jesus did. The new Episcopal Anglican province of which the diocese of Egypt is now a part, continues this commitment to serving all people holistically regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically, we continue to grow and in this strategic part of the world we have a great opportunity and responsibility to be ambassadors of our Lord Jesus, demonstrating in 'Word and Deed' what our faith means to

us. The province supports numerous institutions including hospitals, clinics, nurseries, schools, a theological seminary, micro-enterprise ventures, vocational training programmes, as well as institutions for the deaf and the disabled.

The five goals of the province are: to reach the unreached with the Gospel of Christ; to grow Christ's church by making disciples and equipping leaders; to serve our neighbours; to work for unity among all Christians; and to dialogue with other faith communities.

Support from the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association (JMECA) to the province will be directed to helping with mission work, ordination training and medical outreach.



Good News from Egypt

Archbishop Samy was the 'guest of honour' at the annual Meeting of the Friends of the Anglican Province of Alexandria on May 2nd, held this year on zoom. Over thirty people heard his report on the province during the last year, concentrating on the Diocese of Egypt. He said that the diocese had been exploring further its stated intention to be 'A Living Church for a Better Society.' In the coming year he expected there to be an emphasis on 'Growth and Self-Sufficiency.' He said that while there were many signs of growth it was important that they be sustainable.

Among the events that provided positive evidence of that growth, he referred to the energy of the sector ministries. A children's conference on the theme 'God our Creator' had attracted 180 participants. From the Vocational Centre in Ras al Soda, Alexandria there had been 80 successful members of the vocational courses. The Myanmar congregation at the cathedral had now reached the stage of growth at which a Myanmar priest would be sustainable.

The Sudanese presence offered both a challenge and a gift. It was a challenge to feed and care for the numbers of Sudanese refugees arriving, but the Church was partnering with Refuge Egypt to play its

part in food distribution. It was a gift in that some 70 Sudanese adults had been confirmed at a service in the cathedral, at which there were also 53 baptisms! The Digital Church initiative aimed at deaf people, 'By Sign', was going from strength to strength with over 5000 people now signed up to it. The live equivalent has now also opened in Alexandria, complementing the work already being done in Cairo. A new partnership had also been forged with a school for deaf children in Germany.

There was lots to report on the ecumenical and interfaith fronts. The Friends saw pictures of the archbishop alongside other Church leaders on a number of occasions, and he had been pleased to announce, that thanks to a benefactor, the diocese was able to offer the Ali Samaan Prize for initiatives in ecumenism and interfaith relations. The first prize would be worth 100,000 Egyptian pounds. He paid tribute to Bishop Mouneer for his work in this field. One of the initiatives of Bishop Mouneer's department had been a joint Christian-Muslim gathering on the theme 'Who is Jesus?'

On other sector ministries, the archbishop referred to the expansion of prison ministry. He had himself

Province of Alexandria

visited a prison during Easter, and the Anglican Church was now licensed to visit seven prisons. He was also delighted to be present to open the new paediatric clinic at the hospital in Menouf.

The meeting also heard an account of the recent Friends visit to Tunis, and paid tribute to the work of Bishop Bill Musk, standing down as Chair.

Friends of the Anglican Province of Alexandria – Pilgrimage to Tunisia 2024

Eleven made the journey to Tunisia, to be welcomed by a country wanting to revive its tourist industry. Our first venture was to the Bardo Museum. Nothing quite prepares you for the wealth, brilliance and completeness of the hundreds of Roman mosaics. There's such a collection that only the best are displayed on the walls, not the floor. The run-of-the-mill ones are laid out for us to walk on; to walk upon genuine Roman mosaics as the Romans once did two thousand years ago.

Tucked away in one corner is an original early Christian baptistry, in the shape of a cross with steps down to the water and to death of the old life, and steps up renewed and restored to the new life in Christ.



Such a rich discovery in this now deeply non-Christian country provides another surprise. On Saturday afternoon we gather with the Arabic-speaking congregation of St George's Anglican Church in Tunis, Fr Frank presiding at Holy Communion, we sharing bread and wine with our brothers and sisters in Christ. After the service, we enjoy mint tea and local

cakes with the Arabic-speaking church members, hearing their stories of faith. This is the glimmer of hope for a new indigenous church, and just outside, in the quiet garden grounds is their baptistry, faithfully copying the early Christian one we saw before.



St George's Tunis holds its Sunday morning service at 10.30am. Sunday is the weekly day off for Tunisia, along with Friday and Saturday afternoons. Our service was as expected and tailored not to the leafy shires of England but to the wide-ranging English-speaking community. The Order was the Kenyan rite. The songs and hymns were mostly in English, but the rest in Arabic.

Lunch served in the church gardens was a delightful *cous cous*, lamb and salad. Conversation flowed freely, hearing the stories of those who found themselves living, working and worshipping in Tunis.

A visit to Carthage was among the most impressive of several that were made. Pilgrimage combined with study and fellowship made this a truly memorable experience.

*Revd Richard Hibbert
Vice Chair, FAPA
Tunisia Pilgrimage Tour 2024*

Next steps for Alexandria – province celebrates consecration of new bishops

For the diocese of Gambella there is Bishop Jeremiah Paul, (pictured right) and for the Horn of Africa Bishop Martin Reakes-Williams (pictured left). Bishop Anthony Ball (second left) was commissioned as bishop for North Africa. The service took place in Chad, on the feast of St Anthony of Egypt on the 17th January, 2024.

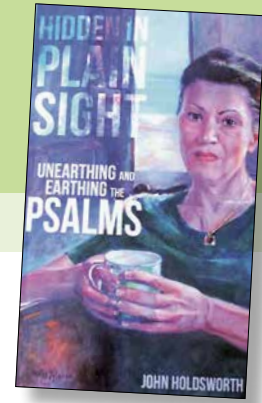
Former Archbishop Mouneer was also present. The service was conducted by the present Archbishop Samy (centre).



Hidden in Plain Sight: Unearthing and Earthing the Psalms

John Holdsworth

Sacristy Press, 2023



A combative, indeed defiant, motto that the practical and pastoral theologian John Holdsworth might care to own would be 'So, what?' Not a dismissive 'So what' but 'So, comma, what?' – meaning, above all of Scripture, 'So, what's that to us here and now? So, what is this passage and that book saying – to me and us? So, how shall we recognize it as speaking to us, how shall we be shaped and inspired by it, how shall we put it to use?'

In his latest book Dr Holdsworth, now Canon Theologian of St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia in the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, sets out his conviction that the Psalms of the Old Testament, seemingly familiar in Christian worship to the point sometimes of banality, are hidden in plain sight: their nature, meanings and implications need to be unearthed to reveal what they truly are, and then earthed, or perhaps re-earthed, in the life of the Church and of Christians.

He argues that in the Psalms we see a persistence of faith that is miraculous, considering what experience has thrown at the faithful, and that, so understood, they should resonate richly and with deep honesty with the lives of believers in similar cases today. Compiled in the troubled and often humiliating centuries long after the return from Exile, from material of various stages in the history of the people of Israel from the time of King David onwards, the Psalms are, he shows, dynamic, community-building, identity-asserting, adversity-defying songs or chants or poems or mini-liturgies that express the honest, sometimes apparently contradictory faith in God of ordinary believers, who are therefore ordinary theologians. He contrasts their theology with some of the official narratives of religious authority found elsewhere in the Old Testament. He invites us to reflect on how true that might be of the situation of the Church and its members today.

In six chapters he explores, using copious material from Psalms of all types, what I might summarize as the essentially defiant nature of the ordinary religion and faith that they express; the interplay between the anxiety of living and God as rock and refuge, with an exploration of chaos versus creation; the apparent absence of God from much lived experience, leading to scoffing at the faithful by unbelievers; fault, blame, theodicy ("if God's so great and so omnipotent and so good, can God be vindicated as such when terrible things happen?"), and the proper place for confession and the acknowledgement of sin; society, Covenant,

and the vocation of small yet persistently trusting remnants in times of great disillusion, cynicism, and despair; and finally the concept of Zion and Jerusalem, and the nature of the Kingdom of God. Throughout, he sees close parallels between the context of the compilation and use of the Book of Psalms and contexts familiar to many, perhaps most, Christian believers, as well as others, in the world today.

If you have read Dr Holdsworth's very powerful and personal *Honest Sadness: Lament in a Pandemic Age* (Sacristy Press, 2021) you will see once again his commitment to the grieving and to 'the poor of the land', understood both literally and metaphorically. Indeed, he asserts that 'the whole structure of Psalms assumes a default mode of lament. Mature worship grows from a base of despair'. (p.25). Increasingly in his writing this passionate practical theologian offers us glimpses or hints of himself and of his own lived experience, and we surely recognize the authenticity of a fellow member of the remnant who is also a pastor and priest, 'passing on the stories about the nature of God...so that they [will] not disappear or be lost from the communal memory' (p.132).

Hidden in Plain Sight, which benefits from striking, thought-provoking, and highly original reflective personal prayers or Conversations with God at the end of each chapter, is profoundly serious and at the same time easily accessible. It's hard not to commend a work of theology that namechecks both Leonard Cohen and the Boar's Head (Aberystwyth).

+ Michael Lewis

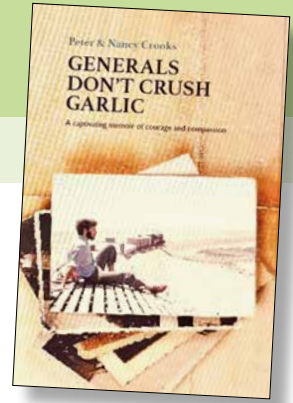
JOHN HOLDSWORTH is a practitioner theologian and Anglican priest. In addition to parish ministry, he has worked as a television presenter, University lecturer, College Principal and Executive Archdeacon in Cyprus and the Gulf. Author of several Bible-related books, he is a Visiting Professor of Theology and Ministry at Bishop Grosseteste University.



Generals Don't Crush Garlic. A Captivating Memoir of Courage and Compassion

Peter & Nancy Crooks

Lulu Publishing, 2024



Peter Crooks and I have known each other over many years. As Peter reminded me, when we were in contact over this book, he and I first met when we were both studying Hebrew as undergraduates at Cambridge University, under the tutelage of the Rev Andrew Macintosh. It was perhaps appropriate that we should meet through learning Hebrew since the 'thread' that Peter and I have had in common since then, has been the Middle East, which in one way or another has dominated both of our lives.

So I read this book with a sense of familiarity, but also enjoyed the new and different eyes with which Nancy and Peter enabled me to visit again some of my former haunts. Bishop Clive Handford has been a dear and much valued mentor so it was lovely to read his Foreword, offering his warm appreciation both of this book and of the Crooks' experience in the region. Indeed it was under the auspices of Bishop Clive, when he was Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, that they were called back to work in the region at the eye hospital and church in Yemen as the millennium dawned.

The book is formally credited to both Peter and Nancy, though my perception is that when the first-person singular is used it is largely Peter's voice and story we are hearing. But the book draws extensively from Nancy's letter correspondence with relatives over the years, and I am sure that many of the reflections come from their joint experience. In fact Nancy's letters are such a key source of material that I found myself pondering how this book reflected that bygone era before posted letters had been replaced by emails. There may be gains in that: as the book makes clear, and my memory of the lack of regular postal services in war-torn Beirut would acknowledge, the benefits that modern digital communications can offer are helpful in combating that sense of isolation that Nancy and Peter, and Alan (my husband) and myself, have experienced in the area at difficult times. Yet those contemporary reflections made through the medium of personal letters constitutes for me what is one of the 'treasures' of the book: its unvarnished honesty about aspects of the worlds in which the Crooks found themselves.

I was particularly interested in the reflections that Nancy and Peter share of their time in Damascus. They moved to Syria in 1985 when the systematic kidnapping of westerners in West Beirut made life there untenable for the family. The warning to 'get out' was signalled by a message left on the windscreen of

their distinctive Renault 4 car. The decision to move to Damascus was facilitated by the fact that over the previous few years first Alan, and then Peter, had regularly travelled to the city once a month to hold a service there, and so there were already the seeds of a congregation in the city, largely linked initially to the English-speaking embassies.

It was good to read how once Peter and Nancy were living in Syria, the congregation rapidly grew, and 'birthed' a group, initially largely comprising African students, which continued for several decades. Although my memories of Damascus were as a regular visitor rather than a resident, I can appreciate the enjoyment that Nancy and Peter (and their son Tim) had of living in this unique city, ancient and modern, in which in those days the variegated presence of different Christian communities made it such a fascinating place to exercise ministry. In terms of how the book reads, their Damascus experience feels like the positive 'centre' and 'heart' of the Crooks' story.

The book does not follow a chronological sequence, which I suspect may make it a more difficult read for those who don't have the familiarity that I do with some of the places mentioned. It begins with the Crooks' family's experience in Jerusalem in 1991, when Peter was Dean of the Cathedral there, during the events of the first Gulf war. The first few chapters seem to 'ping pong' between their experiences in both Jerusalem and Beirut, interspersed with family reminiscences: part of Peter's personal story is that his parents met when both working in then Palestine in the 1940s. In the course of this we also hear about Peter's and Nancy's life in Warwickshire parishes in the 1990s. And it is after all this that we then get to the fascinating account of the family's time living in Damascus (1985-89). Following this there are the tales of previous generations of Crooks who had served in the military, and Peter's own schooldays, with the final concluding chapter then focusing on their work in Yemen in the first decade of this century. I suspect a 'ruthless' external editor might have suggested some changes of order.

Yet if it has its flaws, this is a book that is also remarkable for its honesty, both as regards the personal difficulties that Peter, Nancy and their son

Tim sometimes faced living among the deep stresses of life in the Middle East, and for its willingness to acknowledge that the Anglican (Episcopal) Church in the Middle East, and especially its leadership, is not flawless either. It is a book that reminds us that history has a human face, and it will be a valuable resource for those who in the future want to write the story of the life and work of the Anglican Church in the Middle East.

And the title, 'Generals don't crush Garlic'? In case you are wondering about its significance – as I did for most of the book! – the phrase was coined by a four-or

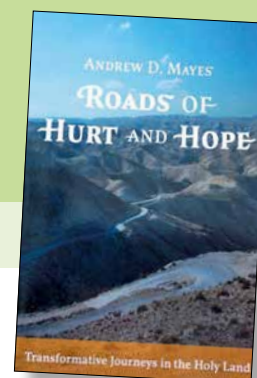
five-year-old Tim Crooks playing with his toy soldiers on the balcony of their apartment in Beirut, and being asked by his mother Nancy to come and help crush the garlic in preparation for the meal she was cooking. In an oblique way it nicely brings together the way in which this book marries the great military (often war-ridden) events it describes, with the reality that it is real human beings, men, women and even five-year-old children, who find themselves trying to live a 'normal' life in the middle of them.

Canon Dr Clare Amos

Roads of Hurt and Hope: Transformative Journeys in the Holy Land

Andrew D. Mayes

Resource Publications, 2024



There is a plethora of pilgrimage guides to the Holy Land: guides with maps, photographs and scripture reflections. However, Andrew Mayes' outstanding book takes a different approach and one which merits enormous praise.

Mayes really knows the Holy Land (as former course director of St George's College) and this is evident at every juncture in his book. He invites the reader to follow as a pilgrim five well-known biblical roads: the Way of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs; the *Via Maris* – the Way of the Sea; the desert road leaving Jericho and crossing the Judean wilderness to the Mount Olives; the *Via Dolorosa*; and the road to Emmaus. Each chapter contains historical research while biblical figures and scripture accompany us on these five journeys. A prolific author, Mayes brings the landscape of these roads alive with his vividness and attention to detail. Describing the Wadi Qelt, he writes:

Scorched by shimmering heat, the chiseled ravines are parchingly dry for much of the year, but in winter, rains from Jerusalem pour through them in torrents forceful enough to move great boulders, which litter the riverbed (p.31).

Mayes' brilliance moreover is the juxtaposed conversations along each of the five roads: not just exploring geography and holy scripture, but talking with those who live there today. There are honest and sometimes painful admissions. From an IDF soldier stationed at the third station of the cross on the *Via Dolorosa*:

This is a problem area. We're here to guard Jewish homes in the Muslim Quarter...We have to look out for anything – even Molotov cocktails. You can feel the tension sometimes. It's not good here, it's not fun, anything could happen (p.47).

The soldier insists the conversation with Andrew cease but not the woman we meet at the place nearby where Jesus fell the first time. Aneesa sits on a plastic crate selling her vegetables and spices with open hands, hoping to earn a few shekels to feed her family in Bethlehem. Her refrain is *Hamdulillah* – 'Thanks be to God.' Aneesa speaks quite naturally of a gratitude for life which I certainly learned from the Palestinian people and Andrew poignantly shares with us who are pilgrims with him in this book.

Mayes transforms our pilgrim journey by richly writing about real people who live on these five ancient roads today. He challenges us to see things differently – *metanoia* – "so the invitation is to go beyond our existing mindset, to go into the big mind, to allow ourselves, in the desert, to see things differently!" (p.33).

Mayes' writing stretches us spiritually to be vulnerable to the unknowings of the current volatility in the present Gaza War and in this way leads us as pilgrims to seek love for all God's creatures, from Bedouin to Jewish soldier. Mayes is both author and shepherd priest – we feel his heartfelt passion and love for the land and her people. He asks us penetrating questions like: 'How is it possible to deepen a sense of solidarity with people suffering some distance away?' (p.28)

By reading this book alone or as a group study one can feel the immense challenge to find peace in this conflicted land but remain, as Mayes does, hopeful in the journey. Inshallah! – 'God Willing'.

Susan Lukens, Associate Dean Emerita
St. George's College Jerusalem

Proceeds from this book go to JMECA for rebuilding of the Anglican Al Ahli Hospital, Gaza.

Praying round the Provinces



The Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East,
and the Province of Alexandria, home to the three Abrahamic faiths
and the centre of the world's political conflicts,
ask your prayers for...

PROVINCE OF JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

1st The Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The President Bishop of the Province, the Most Rev Hosam Naoum.

THE DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM

2nd The Archbishop and Dean of St George's Cathedral, the Most Rev Dr Hosam Naoum and his wife Raffa and family. For wisdom as he leads the church in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The administrative staff.

3rd The clergy serving the parishes and institutions in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and the congregations who keep the faith and sustain the churches in troubled times.

4th The hospitals and centres that tend the sick: the Diabetic Clinic Ramallah, St Luke's Hospital Nablus, the Ahli Arab hospital Gaza, and the Penman Clinic, Zebabdeh.

5th The schools that prepare the next generation: St George's Jerusalem, the International School Jerusalem, the Arab Episcopal School Ramallah, the Vocational Training Centre Ramallah, Christ's School Nazareth, St John's School Haifa, the Ahliyyah School for Girls, the Bishop's Kindergarten and the Bishop's School for Boys Amman, the Schneller Vocational Training Institute Amman, St Saviour's School Zerqa, St John Baptist School for Integration of the Blind Irbid, and St George's School Lod.

6th The centres of healing: the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf Salt, the Jofeh Community Rehabilitation Centre Jordan Valley, St Luke's Centre for the Mentally Disabled Beirut, the Home for the Elderly Amman, the Episcopal Home for Children Ramallah.

7th The guest houses that provide hospitality and refreshment for pilgrims and all visitors: St George's Jerusalem, St Margaret's Nazareth, St Andrew's Ramallah, the Schneller Institute Amman and Christ Church Jerusalem.

8th Those who work for peace: the Peace and Reconciliation Movement, Kids4Peace, Sabeel and people from all sides who seek peace and pursue it.

9th St George's College Jerusalem and its courses: the dean, the Very Rev Richard Sewell and his wife Julieann, the Course Director, the Rev Dr Rodney Aist, the chaplain, and their families.

*Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed,
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all your people the true love of peace.*

THE DIOCESE OF IRAN

10th All in leadership roles in the Church in Iran.

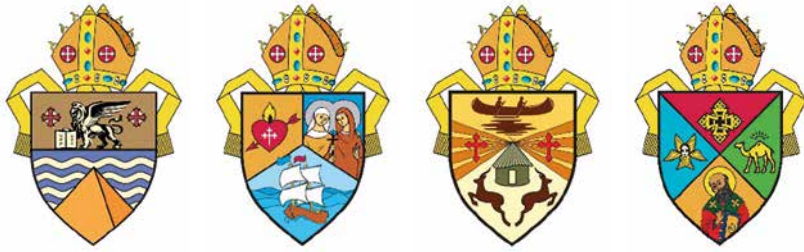
11th The political leadership of the nation. The wellbeing of all people in Iran.

12th The congregations of the Episcopal Church in Isfahan (its suburb Julfa), Tehran & Shiraz. The cities where congregations have worshipped in past years – Kerman, Yazd, Ahwaz.

13th All involved in ministry among Iranians through media, literature, witness and leadership training.

14th The Diaspora of Iranian Christians scattered in many nations.

*Guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel
for the nations of the earth, that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward,
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love.*



Praying round the Provinces

**Blessed Lord, who faced the time of trial
have mercy on our failings and out of our weakness
bring your strength.**

● THE DIOCESE OF CYPRUS AND THE GULF

- 15th The new bishop, the Rt Rev Sean Semple, his wife Jenny and their family. The diocesan administrative staff.
- 16th The Dean of St Paul's Cathedral Nicosia, the Very Rev Jeremy Crocker and his wife Beth. The Dean of St, Christopher's Cathedral Bahrain.
- 17th The Archdeacon in the Gulf, the Ven Dr Michael Mbona and his wife Christine. The Archdeacon in Cyprus, the Ven Christopher Futchter and his wife Anne.
- 18th The clergy and people of Cyprus in Nicosia, Kyrenia, Larnaca, Limassol, Paphos and Ammochostos. The work of the Katafiyio room at the Angel Hills Hotel.
- 19th The clergy and people of the Gulf in Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Dubai, Sharjah and the Northern Emirates, Oman, Doha, Aden and the clinic at Ras Morbat, and the scattered congregations of the Arabian Peninsula who keep the faith privately.
- 20th The Church in Qatar and the Epiphany Centre, Dohar. The congregation of Baghdad led by Canon Faiz Jerjes. The people of Iraq, of all faiths, and all the Iraqi Christians who are sheltering in other lands.
- 21st The political leaders in Cyprus, Iraq and the Gulf States, that all may seek and create just and stable governments.
- 22nd The Friends of the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf.

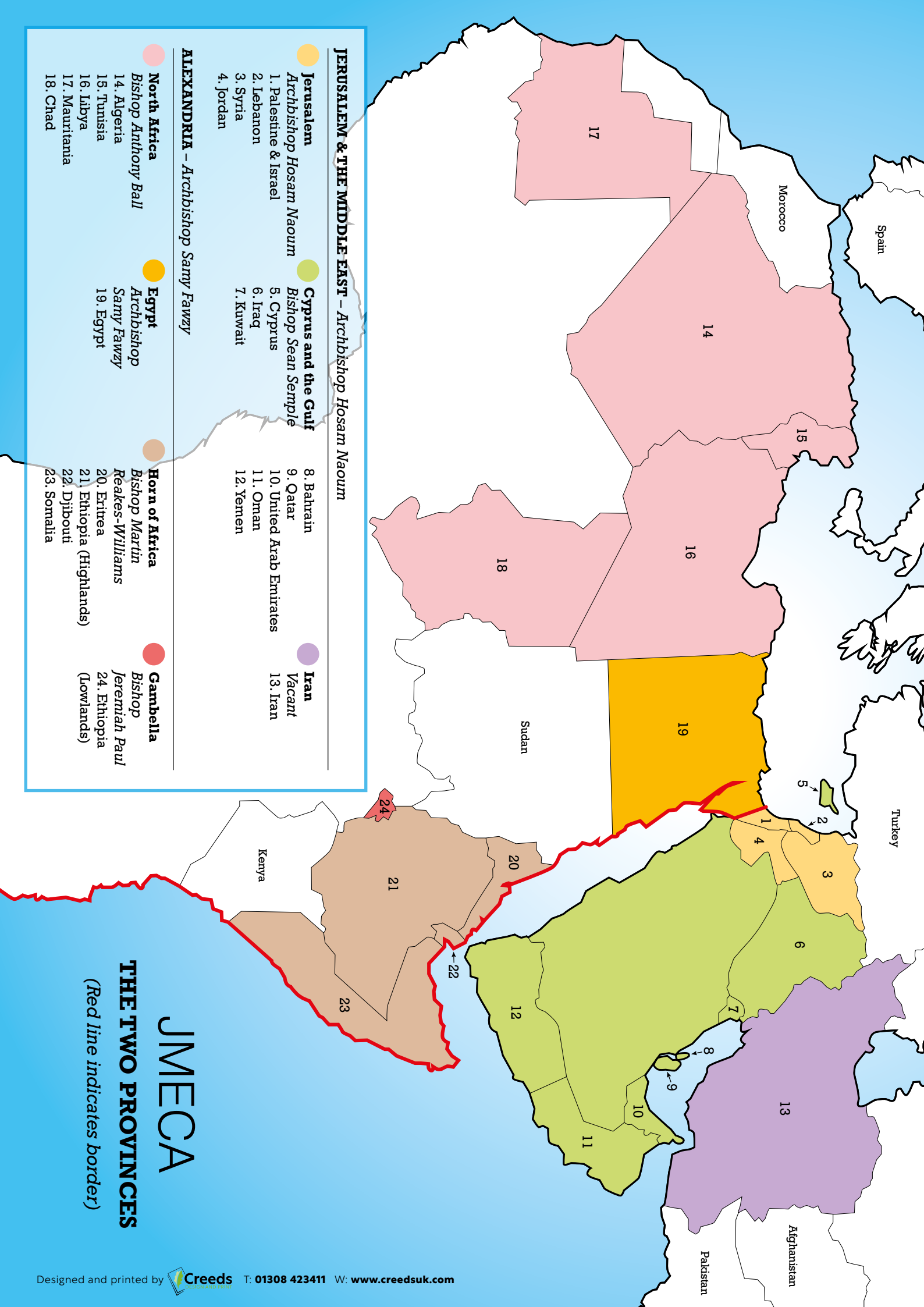
*Almighty and everlasting God, creator and giver of all good gifts, mercifully hear our prayers
and grant to this diocese all things needful for its welfare.*

● PROVINCE OF ALEXANDRIA

- 23rd The Province of Alexandria. The Archbishop of the Province, the Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy.
- 24th The diocese of Egypt. The bishop the Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy and his wife Madelaine and their family and all who work in and for the diocese.
- 25th The diocese of North Africa. The bishop the Rt Rev Anthony Ball, his family and all who work in and for the diocese.
- 26th The diocese of the Horn of Africa. The bishop the Rt Rev Martin Reakes-Williams and all who work in and for the diocese including Bishop Kuan Kim Seng.
- 27th The diocese of Gambella in Ethiopia. The bishop the Rt Rev Jeremiah Paul, his wife and family and all who work in and for the diocese including Bishop Kuan Kim Seng.
- 28th The Alexandria School of Theology Education System and its campuses throughout the Province. The Chair of the AST Board of Governors, the Rev Dr Ashley Null. All staff and students and their families.
- 29th The Friends of the Anglican Province of Alexandria, the Friends of the Anglican Church in Ethiopia and all friends of the dioceses.

*Strengthen the faithful, protect the children, comfort the sick, uplift the fallen
and bring us all to be of one heart and one mind within the fellowship of your holy church.*

- 30th The Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association. Its Chair, the Rt Rev Anthony Ball. The staff in the office in Farnham: Mrs Shirley Eason and Mrs Anne Crawshaw. All whose gifts, past and present, sustain it.



- JERUSALEM & THE MIDDLE EAST – Archbishop Hosam Naoum**
- Jerusalem**
Archbishop Hosam Naoum
 - Cyprus and the Gulf**
Bishop Sean Sempke
 - Iran**
Vacant
- ALEXANDRIA – Archbishop Sammy Fawzy**
- North Africa**
Bishop Anthony Ball
 - Egypt**
Archbishop Sammy Fawzy
 - Horn of Africa**
Bishop Martin Reakes-Williams
 - Gambella**
Bishop Jeremiah Paul

JMECA

THE TWO PROVINCES

(Red line indicates border)