

# Bible Lands

Summer 2023

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

[www.jmecca.org.uk](http://www.jmecca.org.uk)



Jerusalem



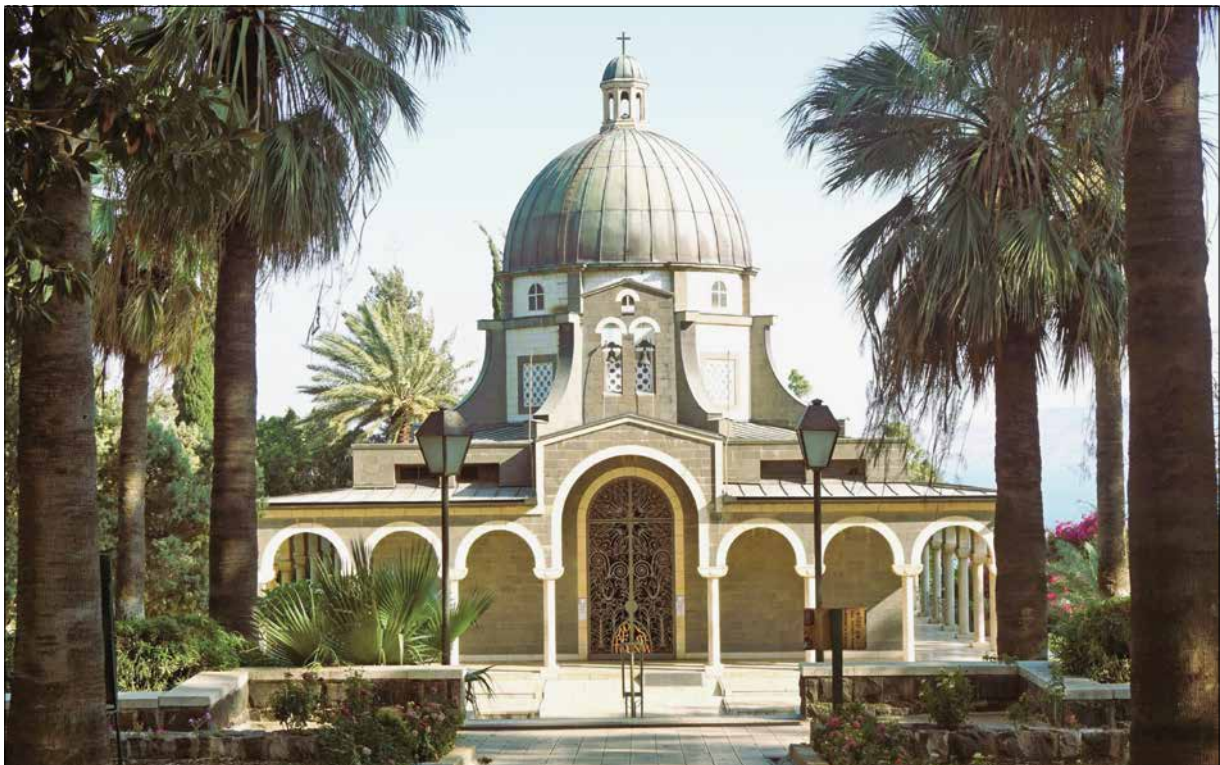
Cyprus & the Gulf



Iran



Alexandria



Syria earthquake.....	p.4
Coronation .....	p.6
Social concern in Cyprus and the Gulf.....	p.10
Archbishop Michael's retirement.....	p.12
News from Alexandria .....	p.19
Book review .....	p.21

# 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.'*

Reg. Charity no. 1158476

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## Patron

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable  
The Archbishop of Canterbury

## Chair

The Right Reverend Anthony Ball

## Administrator

Mrs Shirley Eason

Administrative Assistant: Mrs Anne Crawshaw

1 Hart House, The Hart

Farnham, Surrey GU9 7HJ.

[secretary@jmecca.org.uk](mailto:secretary@jmecca.org.uk)

Tel 01252 726994

## Trustees

The Right Reverend Anthony Ball (Chair)

Dr Clare Amos

Mr John Clark

The Reverend Catherine Dawkins

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The site has information for each of the dioceses with links to the websites and regular updates of Middle East news.

## Bible Lands Editor

Letters, articles, comments are welcomed by the Editor:

The Reverend Dr Stephen Need.

Email: [swneed@gmail.com](mailto:swneed@gmail.com)

The next issue will be published in November for Winter 2023.

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

Front cover photo: Church of the Beatitudes, Galilee.

## THE CENTRAL SYNODS OF THE TWO PROVINCES

### Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

**President Bishop:** The Most Rev Hosam Naoum  
Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem, PO Box 19122,  
65, Nablus Road, Jerusalem 91191  
Tel: +972 2 6272932 Website: [www.j-diocese.org](http://www.j-diocese.org)

**Secretary:** Rev Fuad Dagher  
Email: [stpaulch@hotmail.com](mailto:stpaulch@hotmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Archdeacon Christopher Fitcher  
Email: [archdeacon.christopher@cypgulf.org](mailto:archdeacon.christopher@cypgulf.org)

### Diocese of Jerusalem

The Most Rev Hosam Naoum  
(details as above)

### Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

Vacant

Diocesan Office, PO Box 22075, 1517 Nicosia  
Tel: +35722671220 Website: [www.cypgulf.org](http://www.cypgulf.org)

### Diocese of Iran

Vacant

### Province of Alexandria

**Archbishop:** The Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy  
All Saints' Cathedral, 5 Michel Lutfalla Street,  
Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +20 2 2738 0821

[info@dioceseofegypt.org](mailto:info@dioceseofegypt.org)

Website: [www.dioceseofegypt.org](http://www.dioceseofegypt.org)

### Assistant Bishop:

The Rt Rev Anthony Ball

[bishopanthonyball@gmail.com](mailto:bishopanthonyball@gmail.com)

**Secretary:** The Ven Dr Imad Basilius  
[imadbasilius@gmail.com](mailto:imadbasilius@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Dr Maged Botros

### Diocese of Egypt

The Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy

(details as above)

### Diocese of North Africa

Vacant

### Diocese of the Horn of Africa

The Rt Rev Kuan Kim Seng (Commissary)

### Diocese of Gambella

The Rt Rev Kuan Kim Seng (Commissary)



# Editorial

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

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retained a relevance today, partly because its underlying message is one of hope. And hope is one of the defining characteristics of the Christian faith. This edition of *Bible Lands* bears witness to both a period of significant change in the two provinces of the Anglican Communion which JMECA supports, and the tremendous sense of excitement and hope amidst a certain degree of sadness that these changes provoke.

The Coronation Service of King Charles III and Queen Camilla marks one such change which has had global resonance. There was a significant JMECA presence around the Coronation Chair in the sanctuary of Westminster Abbey. Archbishop Hosam carried in the Bible and presented the Holy Oil with which the King and Queen were anointed (see p.6). Bishop Guli carried in the chalice and gave communion to Their Majesties as part of the service. I was there too.

There has been a tradition that if one of the Chapter at Westminster Abbey is a bishop they have the responsibility of consecrating the Holy Oil for the anointing – the last time being in 1902 when Canon James Welldon, a former Bishop of Calcutta, had the privilege. This time it was a particular delight to feel that, as well as the personal significance for The King, our close relationships with the Orthodox Churches in the region as well as the link with St George's were expressed through the oil's consecration. The Archbishop of Canterbury said in a statement released at the time, it 'demonstrates the deep historic link between the Coronation, the Bible and the Holy Land. From ancient kings through to the present day, monarchs have been anointed with oil from this sacred place'.

Another significant change, also in May, was for the leadership of the Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East. It took place in the Cathedral Church of St George the Martyr, Jerusalem as Archbishop Michael passed the baton (or rather, primatial cross) to Archbishop Hosam as he became the President Bishop of the Province. On behalf of all in JMECA we assure him of our prayers and support as he exercises this ministry, alongside the other demanding roles he has within the diocese of Jerusalem and the Anglican Communion (including that of Vice-Chair of the Anglican Communion Standing Committee to which he was elected at the ACC meeting in February and for which we offer our congratulations).

I was sorry not to be in Jerusalem to witness the change-over, but was pleased to have been able to represent JMECA in Cyprus for Archbishop Michael's final diocesan synod. You can read his Synod Address on p.14. It seems like only yesterday that I accompanied Archbishop Rowan Williams to a school in Manchester with Bishop Michael, then Bishop of Middleton, oblivious to the fact that later that year (2007) he would be installed as Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf. Many *Bible Lands* readers will have cause to be grateful for Bishop Michael's dedication and service to the Church in the region, some glimpses of which are offered in Canon Bill Schwartz's reminiscences on pp.12-13. Our best wishes for Bishop Michael and Julia are recorded at the end of the article. 'Retirement' might not be the right word for someone who not only continues to serve as a member of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue but has also taken on the role of its Anglican Co-Chair. Congratulations!

In October, that Commission (of which Archbishop Hosam is also a member) will meet in Jerusalem and, shortly thereafter, the Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission will meet in Jordan, also in the diocese. Archbishop Samy is a member of that dialogue which, at the end of last year, published an Agreed Statement on 'The Inheritance of Ecumenical Councils in the Church'. This is a very positive and hopeful development (rather than 'change') in the ecumenical relationship with sister churches which the *Encyclopedia of Religion* records as the Christian tradition 'most important in terms of the number of faithful living in the Middle East'. As we pray for the life of our two provinces, let us keep those two Commission meetings, and that of IASCUFO (Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order) which Archbishop Samy, as a member, will be hosting in Cairo, in our prayers too. They take place amidst changing times for relationships within our Anglican Communion as well as those of the Communion with other churches; all part of the ways in which the richness of the life of the Body of Christ is lived out, with its joys, sorrows... and hopes!

Within JMECA too there are changes afoot – and not just the arrival of Anne Crawshaw in the JMECA office (see p.6). Those of you who are avid readers of p.2 will note a number of changes amongst the trustees and see from p.9 that we are reinforcing our comms capability. More about those changes in our next edition. But, for now, I trust you enjoy reading about the people, changes and hopes across the area that the charity supports. Have a wonderful summer!

+Anthony Ball

# 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.



## Earthquake in Syria...can YOU help?



A devastating earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter Scale struck the region of southern Turkey and northern Syria in the early hours of Monday 6th February and was followed by many, equally catastrophic aftershocks. The images of the destruction and news of the loss of life is horrific and our hearts, along with those in the diocese of Jerusalem, go out to all those who have been affected. We pray for them and all those involved in the rescue teams who are working day and night to search the rubble for victims.

In northern Syria, many of the victims are already refugees who have fled the ongoing civil war, making it difficult for government relief bodies to deliver aid to this area. On a practical level, the Jerusalem diocesan church network, in which Syria resides, has the ability to channel aid and relief to these victims who are now without shelter or food in the bitter winter weather. The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem has set up an appeal for contributions to enable the churches in the area to provide relief for those directly affected by the earthquake. The church agencies are responding by providing food items, medicines, winter kits with blankets and mattresses, and emergency support. Through your support they will know that people across the world stand alongside them through this tragedy. **THANK YOU!**

*For more on the appeal go to <https://www.jmecca.org.uk/node/615>*

*Photo: Shutterstock Photo ID2261328737 by Mohammad Bash*

Please GIVE what you can to enable the Anglican diocese to provide practical support to the victims in northern Syria.

### UK donations via JMECA:

**Online:** The simplest way to make a donations is online via the Earthquake appeal page on the JMECA CAF Donate page.



### Alternative donation methods:

**Paypal:** please specify in the comments that your donation is for the 'Syria Earthquake Appeal 2023' and whether you are eligible for Gift Aid.

**Bank transfer:** Direct to the JMECA account at Coutts bank, sort code 18-00-02, account number 03283534, please specify in the details that your donation is for the 'Syria Earthquake Appeal 2023' and let us know by email if you are eligible for Gift Aid.

**Cheque:** These should be made out to J.M.E.C.A. and sent to: The Secretary, JMECA, 1, Hart House, The Hart, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7HJ. Please enclose a covering letter and specify that your donation is for the 'Syria Earthquake Appeal 2023'. If you are not already registered for Gift Aid with us, please include a signed Gift Aid form available from the JMECA office.

## News from the diocese of Jerusalem...

### Protestant Cemetery in Jerusalem vandalised

The Protestant Cemetery in Jerusalem was vandalised over the New Year, causing damage to more than thirty gravestones.

The damage was discovered in the morning of January 3rd and the CCTV footage showed the crime was committed at 15.20 on January 1st. The security footage shows the



perpetrators as young men wearing kippahs and tallit katans. Many of the graves that were targeted were marked with stone crosses that were vandalised showing this criminal act was motivated by religious bigotry and hatred against Christians.

Many of the graves that suffered damage were also of historic significance, sadly including the obliteration of the bust of the Rt Rev Samuel Gobat, the second Protestant Bishop in Jerusalem and founder of the adjoining Jerusalem University College, formally known as the Bishop Gobat School. He also set up a fund, which is managed by JMECA, which to this day provides bursaries for students attending St George's School in Jerusalem. JMECA also currently holds a fund for the maintenance of the cemetery, but is insufficient to cover the cost of repair on this scale.

The diocese of Jerusalem has issued a statement condemning these wanton acts of desecration and calling for the fullest extent of the law to be brought against the perpetrators. The diocese said they welcome the supportive words expressed by President Herzog, Chief Rabbi Mirvis and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and called for religious leaders around the world to join in condemning such defilement of sacred sites thereby promoting mutual respect and religious tolerance in the Holy City.

The day after the discovery of the damage, Archbishop Hosam Naoum, visited the cemetery to review the extent of the damage and held a press conference among the debris of the broken tombstones.

### Happy Mother's Day in Birzeit



The ladies of St. Peter's in Birzeit and St. Andrew's in Ramallah hosted a celebration of women on Mothering Sunday this year. The Rev Fadi Diab and Mrs Ruba Diab invited Archbishop Naoum and his wife to participate in a special event at St. Peter's home next to the Church in Birzeit. The event was very well attended and guests included Mrs Diana Al Sayej, the Mayor of Birzeit, along with the ladies and vestry members of both parishes. The day included a wonderful breakfast along with hymn singing and biblical reflections. A splendid cake was made specially for the celebration.

Mrs Diab gave a welcoming speech and Mrs Naoum expressed her joy in participating in the events and wished joy and prosperity to all. Bishop Naoum praised such events, which 'empower women and strengthen their ministry in the church and the community'. He also thanked the ladies of St. Peter's Church for their hospitality and wished all a blessed Mothering Sunday. Following the speeches, Rev Fadi Diab and Mrs Lulu Aranki Nasser presented a gift to Bishop and Mrs Naoum to take back to Jerusalem on behalf of the congregation.



### Holy Week in Jerusalem begins in the Chapel of Abraham

On Monday morning, April 3rd, 2023, at the beginning of Holy Week, Archbishop Hosam Naoum, the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, presided over the eucharist at the Greek Orthodox Chapel of Abraham at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The service was attended by the clergy of St. George's Anglican Cathedral and members from the Arabic and English-speaking congregations. After the service, those present visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the empty tomb. There is an old tradition that the Anglican Church may use this chapel for worship, and despite ongoing renovation works in the church, the chapel was made available.



Photos: diocese of Jerusalem

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## Archbishop Hosam Naoum participates in King Charles III's Coronation at Westminster Abbey

Archbishop Hosam Naoum, the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, participated in HM King Charles III's Coronation at Westminster Abbey on 6th May. Archbishop Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, presided over the eucharist and the Coronation ceremony. The event was attended by senior bishops of the Anglican Church in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, members of the Royal Family, representatives of churches and other religions in England, and a multitude of heads of states and prominent figures.



Archbishop Naoum processed into the service carrying the Holy Bible and, before the Coronation, presented the Holy Oil to Archbishop Welby to anoint the king during the prayers of consecration and blessing. The anointing with the Holy Oil is the most sacred part of the Coronation ceremony.



The Oil was previously consecrated by Patriarch Theophilos III, the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Archbishop Hosam Naoum in the Holy

Sepulchre. It was prepared from olive oil from the fields of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, from the Monastery of the Ascension and the Monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, which has a special connection with the Royal Family, where King Charles III's paternal grandmother, Princess Alice of Greece, is buried. The oil was perfumed with rose, jasmine, cinnamon, sesame, orange blossom, cloves and amber. This recipe is based on the one used during the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, as well as Kings and Queens of Britain for hundreds of years.

The Coronation ceremony was marked by an ecumenical spirit. In addition to Anglican bishops, there were present Heads of Churches in the UK, the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church. All participated in the prayers and blessing of his Majesty. The music selection for the ceremony included classical, Anglican and Byzantine pieces. King Charles III is the fortieth monarch since 1066, is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England and holds the title 'Defender of the Faith'.

We pray for King Charles III and Queen Camilla, asking God to give them a long life, filled with dedicated service.

God save the King!

*Photos: diocese of Jerusalem*

## New staff member for the JMECA office



In September 2022, Mrs Anne Crawshaw took over the role of Administrative Assistant in the JMECA office in Farnham, alongside Shirley Eason. Anne's professional background is mainly in school offices where she went from Administrative Officer in the state sector to Bursar of an all-girls private school following studying for and achieving a Diploma in School Business Management.

Anne spent just over eight years working as a Bookkeeper in a Care Home, including the 'lockdown' years but found working three full days alongside having grandchildren two days a week pretty tiring. She decided to create a better life/work balance and looked around for a part-time job locally. She feels lucky to have found her role in the JMECA office.

Anne has a daughter living within walking distance of her home in Farnham and two grandchildren. She was a volunteer helper at a Messy Toddler group attached to a local church but now, as she has her little granddaughter all day on a Thursday is experiencing the other side and takes her regularly to have 'messy' fun!

Bible Lands welcomes Anne and wishes her all the best in her new role.

## 'Ladies Day' launches new energy for women's ministries at Jerusalem Diocese Majma

The annual gathering, Majma or synod of the diocese of Jerusalem, held in Amman, Jordan, April 24-27, devoted a major half-day session to a commendation of the ministries of women. Chaired by Rafa Naoum, the Archbishop's wife, the session heard enthusiastic calls from a variety of women, from clergy wives to school head teachers and politicians, to raise the profile of women in the Church. The theme of the gathering, from Ephesians 2, was 'Built Together', and in his concluding remarks to the discussions, Archbishop Hosam Naoum emphasized the role of women in building together. His own DMin thesis on the ministry of women in the diocese is currently being translated from English to Arabic, and he expects it to be widely available within a month.

Although the discussion stopped short of calling for women's ordination, there were several positive references to it, within a wider context of opportunities for service, in a way that left open possible future proposals. The Majma secretary, Rev Fadi Diab, said that it was better to arrive late to this subject than not at all, and drew attention to the international profile of Hanan Ashrawi, an Anglican from Birzeit. But most of the contributions came from women. Some made reference to Genesis 1:27 as describing a 'partnership in creation', while others spoke about the role of Mary in the gospels. More generally there was great support for inclusivity in all its forms and the Arab Episcopal School in Irbid was held up as an example, having won an award for its work with visually impaired children. Many examples of work being done by women in parishes, rendering real service to the community, were shared.



Nour Nassour, lay representative from Damascus, is a good example of how the themes of the Majma interconnect. A lawyer by profession, used to defending cases of homicide in Syria's courts, she and her husband, like many in Damascus, had to move because of the

fighting. Christians do not face religious persecution but inevitably they have been affected by the effects of the war. The Anglican Church of All Saints has become

a refuge for Christians from many backgrounds and parts of the city. What was once regarded as a church mostly used by Sudanese refugees has now become a local church in the true sense. It is shared with the Presbyterians and the congregations have rather outgrown the building. Archbishop Hosam is very aware of, and responsive to, the need to establish new ministries in Syria (and Lebanon) more generally, and Nour has seen the effects of new resources being provided for ministry in Damascus.

There are real similarities here with the church in Baghdad, another city whose normal lines have changed as a result of fighting, and whose congregation has changed as a result. In Baghdad the women have played a major part in developing ministries of food distribution and welfare. A group has started a cottage industry of making and embroidering clerical vestments for sale, and Nour sees the potential for something like that in Damascus, where there are lots of talented women eager to serve, and looking for the right opportunity. Nour herself offers advocacy help and legal advice on a voluntary basis. Life is not easy for anyone. Electricity, water and gas are subject to monthly rationing, and the Syrian lira has plummeted in relation to the American dollar, leading to rampant inflation. There is no resident priest at All Saints' at the moment. Archdeacon Imad, who lives in Lebanon, has responsibility for, as well as enormous sympathy with, the situation in Syria. He says, the church has provided for people who have nothing. He shares the archbishop's ambition for a development in ministry there, but in the meantime there is a need for theologically educated lay people, and Nour has seized that opportunity.

During the past few years she has worked towards a Certificate in Theology, using whatever channels were available, and her studies are ongoing. She told me that she loves the liturgy of the Anglican Church and is glad to be thoroughly involved in all it is doing in her community.

She is looking for ideas that will harness the abilities of the local women in particular, and contribute to the common good. She feels a call to ordination, and though realizing that that is not possible at the moment, welcomes any move that gives further opportunity for discernment. 'The Church is like my home', she says, 'it has opened a door to allow me to serve and to discover what God wants me to be'.



Photos: JMECA

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## A pilgrim ministry...



### Reflections from the Dean of St. George's College, Jerusalem

St George's College, Jerusalem is the Anglican Centre for Pilgrimage in the Holy Land. It was founded after the First World War with the hope of training Palestinian clergy for the Anglican diocese of Jerusalem. In the last thirty years we have become more of a pilgrimage centre where engagement with the Land, the history and the people are taken more seriously than in many pilgrimage organisations.

St George's College, Jerusalem runs pilgrimages for Anglicans and Christians of other denominations around the world. Our pilgrimages are predominantly religious in nature but we are committed to ensuring that people engage in the political realities of Israel and Palestine today. We highlight the injustices experienced by Palestinians as a day-by-day reality. We deal with modern history as well as ancient history. We make sure that our pilgrims engage with the Wall of Separation and understand the real impact of it on Palestinian lives. We also make sure that people hear and understand Jewish narratives in a positive light. However, we do not simply set up a cheap equivalence. We are clear that Israel's occupation of the West Bank brings injustice which, whilst it continues, is a barrier to constructive talks.

In the college, we enjoy good relations with a number of religious institutions around the city and with Jews and Muslims who together form the vast majority of the people of Jerusalem. Christians represent just two percent of the city's population. We regularly have Muslim and Jewish speakers addressing our pilgrims, so that St George's pilgrims get a broader view of the character of the city than many pilgrims do. We are not a peace and reconciliation organization but we are a pilgrimage centre which is committed to encouraging peaceful outcomes through striving for justice. Foremost for the college is ensuring that people return home much better informed and challenged to strive in their home country for a just outcome in Palestine and Israel.

Jerusalem is a fascinating city to live in. It is steeped in several millennia of history, much of which is still in view. The college is located a short distance from the Old City where most of the holy and historical sites are located, so these are very much part of our daily lived reality. Whilst it is wonderful to live in such a historical place imbued with profound religious significance

for Christians, Muslims and Jews, it is also one of the most contested places on earth. Conflict never seems to be too far from the surface and things can blow up here into clashes and violence at a moment's notice. That tension is an inevitable part of our context even as we go about shopping for daily necessities. Heavily armed Israeli soldiers are visible everywhere in and around the Old City. It is vital to remember that Jerusalem is a divided city even though there is no wall or border to mark the split. East Jerusalem has been occupied by Israel since 1967 and so Palestinians and many others understand and experience East Jerusalem (including the Old City) as being under military and civil occupation.



Having said this, many pilgrims and other visitors do not necessarily notice these harsh realities. Life continues on a day-to-day basis, with relative normality. Only those well acquainted with the city will necessarily be sensitive to the underlying tensions until something erupts, which it does quite regularly. Damascus Gate is the main thoroughfare for Jerusalem Palestinians and is the most common flashpoint as it is where young people congregate and socialize. The overbearing presence of Israeli soldiers is provocative and often leads to low level aggression and sometimes more.

By facing these realities, not protecting pilgrims from seeing them, we aim both to surprise them with the crushing reality, and encourage them to see that there is something they need to do about the situation by educating others in their home context. Many who come to St George's on pilgrimage share this hope for the people who live in the Holy Land and beyond. I hope that each and every one of them will seek to continue to be educated and strive for a better reality for the people who suffer in these lands.

Please pray for us that we can continue with our pilgrim ministry and that we receive the resources we need to continue in the present and into the future.

*Richard Sewell*  
Photos: St. George's College

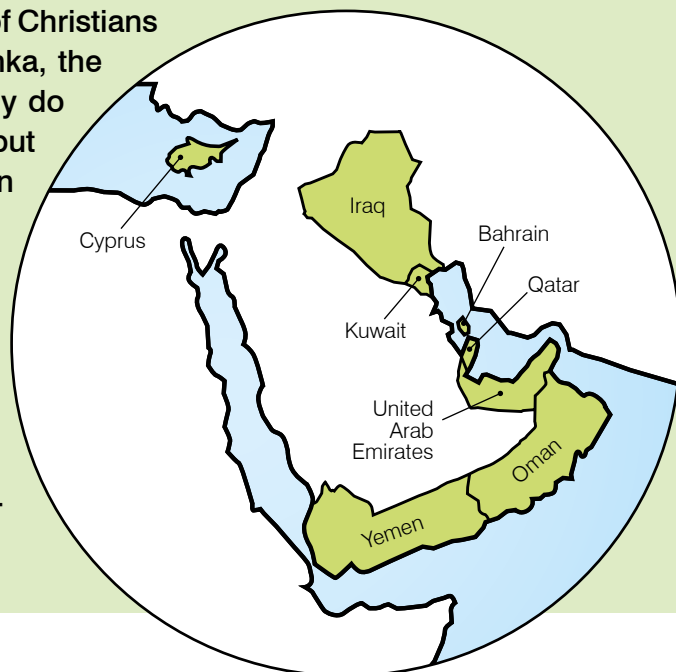






Bishop Michael Lewis explains that the diocese of Cyprus & the Gulf covers Oman, the Yemen, the seven United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and the whole of Cyprus. "In every part of the diocese, except in Cyprus and Iraq, the congregations are largely expatriate, made up of 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."



## Vacancy-in-See Committee update



The Committee has received the names of twenty potential candidates from around the world to be our next bishop. Each of these candidates is being contacted by the secretary to the Committee and a long-list is being drawn up.

Please continue to pray for Archbishop Michael and Julia, for the Committee as it engages with the task entrusted to it, and use personally and in church services the diocesan prayer for the appointment of a new bishop.

Heavenly Father,  
In your Son, Jesus Christ,  
the whole Body of the Church is joined together  
as one with Christ as the Head.  
Be present with us, by your Holy Spirit,  
as we pray for the appointment of a new bishop.  
Strengthen our communion and fellowship,  
and guide all involved in the appointment process,  
that with prayer and wisdom,  
they may discern your will.  
May your Kingdom come in this diocese,  
in this province, and throughout the world,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## JMECA appoints new 'story-teller'



The Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association (JMECA) has created a new communications post to spread the news from the two Anglican/Episcopal Provinces in the Middle East more widely.

The first post-holder to take on the challenge is Rev Dr John Holdsworth. John was formerly archdeacon in the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf where he moved from a varied ministry in Wales. That included substantial broadcasting experience as well as work with print-based church media. Reacting to the appointment, John said, 'This is a new and exciting challenge for me. I love telling stories and I know there are some incredible stories to tell'.

## In other news...

- Rev Alec Mitchell has been appointed House for Duty priest at St Andrew's, Kyrenia.
- Rev George Vidiakin, has been appointed Associate Priest at St Helena Larnaca, and Clive Lawford Reader at St John, Deryneia, (October).
- Rev Prem Mitra has been licensed as parish priest of Holy Trinity, Dubai.

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

- Rev Christine Trainor has been appointed new senior priest at St Andrew's, Abu Dhabi with St Thomas', Al 'Ain in the United Arab Emirates. (See article on page 16)
- Representatives of the Episcopal Church of the United States visited St George's, Baghdad at the end of April, celebrating Sunday service with the congregation led by the parish priest Rev Canon Faiz Jerjes.
- Two confirmation eucharists, one in English and one in Tamil, were celebrated by large congregations

on Friday 21 April in the church of the Epiphany, Doha, in Qatar.

- In separate Ascensiontide eucharists during May this year, Christine Mbona and Innocent Ekpeluchi were made deacons. The service for Christine at St. Paul's, Kuwait where she will serve, also included authorizing Lay Worship Leaders and welcoming a new member of the Mothers' Union. The service for Innocent at St. Martin's, Sharjah also included the confirmation of several candidates. Innocent will serve at Christ Church, Jebel Ali.

*Photo: diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*

## Social concern in the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf by Anne Fletcher

As I describe some of the people and situations with whom we work, I ask you to hold them and us in your thoughts and prayers.

Please pray with me for our work among the people of Yemen. It was a joy again to meet staff of the Ras Morbat Clinic, Aden during my short visit in February. The clinic, within the compound of Christ Church, serves local people in the name of the Anglican Church. Despite recent high levels of inflation, it continues to provide high quality eye-care at significantly reduced cost. Its patients also include many displaced people, particularly those from Rwanda and Somalia. In Nurse Rana's words, 'Our vision is this: this patient has no money, so we help. All people who work here have feeling. That is why we are like a family... this is good for all'.



I am exploring with the director of a Yemeni NGO and external funders, the feasibility of a programme based in All Saints' Anglican Church building, Salah el Din, which aims to offer women in this rural fishing community better life chances. Fieldwork has suggested this can be best achieved through classes in sewing and in literacy. The programme cannot begin until extensive repairs are made to the church roof. Donors are being sought locally. Please pray that funding can be found to enable such a community programme to enrich the lives of women there.

Please pray too for low-income migrants across the Gulf States, many of whom have poor living and

working conditions. Church communities are quietly doing what they can to help, always mindful that we too are guests and migrants. Work includes food ministries, thrift shops, prisoner support, and support for those struggling with drug/alcohol addiction. We also have a small-scale project whereby reusable feminine sanitary wear kits, sewn by a Cyprus parish, are distributed within UAE to migrant women in need, affording them greater dignity.

My work in Cyprus focuses largely on co-ordinating the diocesan response to growing numbers of asylum-seekers, who now comprise over four per cent of the population. Most are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Somalia, Sierra Leone, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Many asylum-seekers are young, single and vulnerable. Some, having escaped unimaginable horrors at home, are duped or abused by traffickers en route, and arrive traumatised. Unsurprisingly, asylum-services are very overstretched. By December 2022 there were almost 30,000 asylum applications unresolved. Determining a person's right to refugee status now averages five years.

Asylum-seekers find their way to our churches for spiritual, pastoral and practical support. Congregations become actively involved in hearing their stories and accompanying them through the asylum process. In this, they are supported by: the strengthening partnerships with a widening range of local non-profit organisations, forged through our social outreach forums and locality meetings; the amazing work of parish social concern co-ordinators; and information on our diocesan website, including a simple social concern directory.

Partnership working is key. In 2022, we were delighted to run two Covid-related programmes in Limassol funded by the Emergency Relief and Development Fund of the Episcopal Church in the United States.

In both, St. Barnabas partnered with a volunteer organisation, St. Catherine's 'Agapi' Limassol, Cyprus.

These programmes resulted firstly, in 190 households of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers receiving a pack of hygiene products and secondly, 173 households receiving a food voucher gift pack for Christmas/New Year. Most programme participants lived, at best, in overcrowded accommodation. Others sheltered in derelict/partially-constructed buildings, or on the street. 'John' lived with four other young men in an unfinished shell of a building, sleeping on the concrete floor. Having pooled resources to buy a gas bottle and cooker, they shared one blanket between them during December. It was, as Rev Ian Nicholson said, 'an answer to prayer' when he was unexpectedly contacted with an offer of blankets. John and his friends were so thankful.



Despite their hardships, the optimism and resilience of refugees and asylum-seekers, repeatedly shines through. One man supported by the Limassol programme is a single parent from Bangladesh. Able to work only part time, he lived through his wife's mental illness and subsequent departure from the family, to raise his two young children alone. They attend school and are thriving in the Cypriot community. His life isn't easy and he's so grateful for the help he receives.

*'Thank you for your words of encouragement...you put a smile on my face...you gave me hope and courage. These things I can never repay'.* So wrote Mark, an asylum-seeker who helped with the 2022 distribution of Christmas stockings filled with individualised gifts for each child at Kofinou Reception Centre – an initiative shared by five parishes.

It's a joy when asylum-seekers find their spiritual home among us. We are blessed by their faith and commitment. They often read the lessons, lead singing and act as sacristans or chalice-assistants. One sang a solo Christmas recital to a packed church for charity.



'Emma', awaiting a decision on her immigration status, is a valued member of her church community. Having learnt English since her arrival in 2019, she is now qualified to teach it as a foreign language. Emma volunteers to teach groups of

fellow asylum-seekers twice weekly at her church, as well as assisting at a local NGO. 'My faith has grown since being in Cyprus', she explained. 'I've seen the hand of God more and more in my life'.

Particularly worrying for the authorities is the increasing number of lone teenagers arriving in Cyprus seeking asylum. These 'unaccompanied minors' are mainly between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Many arrive deeply affected by past experiences. Most are now in dedicated government shelters, supervised by social welfare, with some involvement from UNHCR. It's been good to hear from several of the girls how safe they now feel.

A key part of work since May, 2022 in conjunction with the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, has been co-ordinating activities and facilitating access to local places of worship for unaccompanied minors in three of the shelters. Church volunteers, authorised by us and by UNHCR, are working in partnership with welfare teams, representatives from other denominations and faiths, and local NGOs. Some asylum-seekers are keen to contribute their skills. Volunteers have provided sessions in English, Maths, guitar, gospel singing, gardening, football and a range of artwork. This has included mosaic-making at the Learning Refuge, an Association of volunteers in Paphos.



Engagement from this wide volunteer-base has led to further benefits for the young people: donations of new, warm jackets and shoes, small-scale marketing of handicrafts, opportunities to apply for local hotel work, and to sing and play guitar during church worship.

Please pray for the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. Pray especially for migrant workers, asylum-seekers and refugees, and for those unaccompanied minors who are especially vulnerable. Pray for the people of Yemen. Pray for all who are blessed to minister in this diocese.

*Photos: diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*

*On Yemen please go to:*



# Archbishop Michael...Thank You and best wishes from us all!

Archbishop Michael Lewis has retired after sixteen years as Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf and four years as Primate of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. We look back on his enormous and significant contribution.

## Rev Canon Bill Schwartz writes...

Bishop Michael came to the diocese in the autumn of 2007 and became the longest-serving bishop in the history of Cyprus and the Gulf. In many ways his episcopacy shaped the diocese for the future, building on very important foundations of identity and structure that he inherited from his illustrious episcopal predecessors. The diocese has never been on a strong financial footing, and from the beginning Bishop Michael was faced with an urgent need to reorganise and restructure the way the diocese was administered. Covid presented serious financial challenges to the diocese, but there are structures and relationships in place now which will help the diocese recover over time.

From the beginning and throughout his episcopacy, Bishop Michael prioritised spending time in the different countries/parishes of the diocese; getting to know the clergy and people, the unique characteristics in each of the different parishes, and the political landscape in which the diocese lives and has its being. Over the years Michael and Julia travelled endlessly and tirelessly in a diocese of nine countries with even more political jurisdictions, covering more square kilometers than fourteen times the area of the UK. He quickly came to grips with the 'way things were' and then over the

years continually managed and guided the diocese through the ever-changing politics and economics of the region.

Of course, in many ways the person of the bishop personifies his diocese. One of Bishop Michael's most important accomplishments has been the incremental bonding among the parishes into a *diocese*. Building commonality and community among the incredibly diverse ethnicities, cultures and church traditions that make up the mostly isolated clergy and parishioners in the countries within Cyprus and the Gulf, he focused on the *mission of presence* and mutual support among the different parishes. Common worship, Common witness, Common mission became sequential themes among parishes. A commitment to financially support diocesan discernment for ministry training was one of the most definitive expressions, among others, of common budget vision that grew out of that greater awareness of diocese. This, in turn, formed an increasing number of clergy (both women and men) and laity to minister broadly in all the parishes.

This sense of a diocese prompted greater resource-sharing among the parishes. On top of increased budget shares contributing to the diocesan budget, much support for the special ministries in Iraq and Yemen from within the diocese was strengthened. Increasing legal and banking restrictions limiting the flow of funds in and out of (and particularly between) the countries which make up the diocese required more and more administrative expertise, and though the diocesan office staff remained the same in numbers the work increased incrementally. The Standing and Finance Committee of the synod increasingly supported the staff in



meeting those administrative needs.

During his episcopacy Bishop Michael built stronger relations with the worldwide Orthodox community of Churches, principally through his role as an Anglican participant in the Anglican-Orthodox dialogue. He worked very diligently to strengthen ties between the dioceses of the province, the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, and within the workings of the Anglican Consultative Council. He successfully promoted the presence of Christians and Churches *in the Gulf* in the workings of the Middle East Council of Churches, partly by his partnership in the founding of the Gulf Churches Fellowship, an annual ecumenical gathering of leaders of Churches operating within the GCC countries for mutual support and influence. During his term as primate of the province, Archbishop Michael worked very diligently to represent the whole province, as well as the special needs of Christians of all traditions in the Middle East.

Bishop Michael also took every opportunity he could to promote and participate in interfaith activities throughout his episcopacy. Notably, he served on the board of the Al Amana Center, an interfaith and ecumenical ministry in Oman. He brought academic scholarship and experience with the Orthodox Church tradition but he very quickly got up to speed on Islam and the various Islamic traditions in the countries of the province and diocese as well. He was able to develop strong relationships with officials in all the Gulf countries and thus raise the profile of the Christian communities, strengthening the role of the Church in the context of Islamic policies of tolerance for Christians living in their countries.

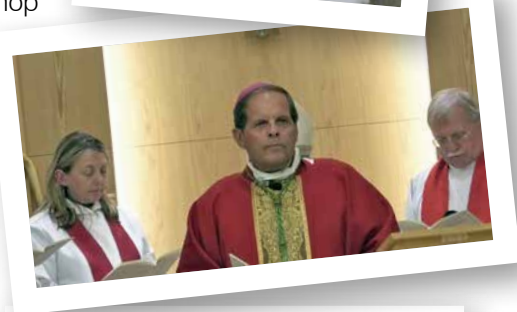
Bishop Michael's episcopacy has been a time of strengthening and diversifying instruments of administration and leadership in the diocese. We have seen much greater diversity in ethnic/national representation among the clergy and church council memberships, as well as a significant number of women in different clergy

positions throughout the diocese – no easy accomplishment within the constraints of considerable cultural conservatism. The diversity of the migrant/expat Christian population within our diocese has been embraced and celebrated. While the English language continues to characterise worship in the diocese, many congregations often encompass well over thirty nationalities in weekly worship. Anglican congregations and worship groups have been established in Mandarin, Tamil, Urdu, Malayalam, Igbo, Sinhala, Marathi, and Arabic as well. The parishes in the diocese continue to host a huge number of other kinds of congregations of multitude different worship forms, traditions and ethnicities in spaces provided by our parishes both in Cyprus and in the Gulf.

Under Bishop Michael's leadership the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf has developed identity, and a foundation which will ensure vision for ministry into the future. The historic financial difficulties which the diocese inherited from its conception are still a huge challenge, but the diocese is aware of its unique place in the Anglican Communion as a truly international and inclusive expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for all, embracing the true diversity of nationality, culture, churchmanship and language which reflects the world we are called to serve as the Body of Christ.

The people of Cyprus and the Gulf and of the entire province are thankful for Bishop Michael's leadership, foresight, wisdom, tolerance, good humour and love, and wish him and Julia well as they move into the next stage of their life together.

Bible Lands wishes Bishop Michael and Julia all the very best for a long and happy retirement.



Photos: diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## Presidential address at the diocesan synod, Larnaca, Cyprus: 6th February, 2023



*Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope unwaveringly, for the one who has promised is faithful, and let us consider how to prompt one another to love, and to good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as has become the habit of some, but encouraging one another. The one who has promised – God who has promised – is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23-25)*

This is the sixteenth synod of the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf during the time that Julia and I have been around—actually, there have been seventeen synods during our time. But the point is, this synod, with its unfolding, always varying but in some measure constant mix and pageant of characters and faces, has become as much a part of our lives as the parishes, projects, and above all the people of this unrepeatable and precious diocese. Thanks, from us, to you and your predecessors for all you have been and are.

And here we are again, this time at last in person once more. God, who has promised, is faithful. Christ has been faithful to his promise, delivered to Simon bar Jonah, St Peter the Apostle, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church: Matthew 16:18. The recent pandemic and the substantial financial as well as pastoral challenges it led to have been daunting, dismaying, sometimes frightening. I know how hard it has been for all our parishes, all our laity, all our clergy, all our councils.

But most have faced down the gates of hell. Most have recovered the confession of our hope that, as Christ promised, neither those gates nor all that is hellish can or will prevail against his Church, because it is his Church. It is his Church, not ours. Or, to put it another way, it is his Mystical Body: we are the Body of Christ; we are invited to sense, taste, know, and proclaim that in every eucharist. Or, to put it another way, it – she, if you like – the Church – is his new creation by water and the word; his bride, even. These are images, metaphors, but the more powerful for that, and true.

So what are we the Church for, if his? For praise, adoration, and worship of God the Holy Trinity first, and in the same breath, as an expression of that praise, for the world. For the world? Yes, because God as Father so loved it that he gave his only-begotten Son; and not to denounce or condemn it but for it to trust him and regain health and salvation; to flourish with abundant life, full life.

Whatever matters are debated this week and whatever decisions are made, it is as his Church thus described, understood, and lived out that we shall debate them and make them. We are corporate. We are an interconnected body; all bodies are. Without one another, or without due regard for one another, we are lesser, we are diminished, the body is impaired, we flourish less. Or, to celebrate that most noble of Jesus' I Am sayings, we are the branches of the vine that is Christ: cut off from him and from one another, or acting as if we are, we are so much less; abiding in him and intertwined, so much more. And, abiding in him and intertwined with one another here, in this diocese, it's even delightful.



There hasn't been a synod in which I haven't been enriched, moved, sustained and encouraged by you and your predecessors, both synodical members and synodical guests, stakeholders and observers, and I hope you have been or will be too. We have already introduced ourselves or been introduced. Let me again rejoice in particular and on our corporate behalf that Archbishop Hosam Naoum of Jerusalem, Robert, Bishop of Exeter, Julius, Bishop of Thika, and Bishop Anthony Ball, Assistant in the Province of Alexandria as well as Canon of Westminster and Chairman of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association, have travelled to be with us this year along with other real friends of this diocese: friends in the most inclusive sense of the word.

My dear clergy, dear parish representatives, dear guests, dear friends, and our dear and faithful staff without whom synod would be impoverished, welcome to synod 2023, in which we shall, I trust and believe, prompt one another to love, and to good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another. In the name of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the incarnation of the uncontainable one among us as one of us, the suffering servant now risen, ascended, and glorified, who is the Church's true Lord.

*The Most Reverend Michael Lewis  
Archbishop Primate of the Province of Jerusalem  
and the Middle East  
Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf  
Photos: diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf / Angela Murray*

## Canon Georgia: an ecumenical first



Mrs Georgia Katsantonis, Personal Assistant to successive Bishops of Cyprus and the Gulf for forty years, feels honoured but bemused to have been appointed an Ecumenical Lay Canon at St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia. Georgia, a lifelong and committed member of

the Orthodox Church, is having trouble explaining to her family just what this honour means. 'We don't have them in the Orthodox Church', she says. She is the first such appointment in the diocese. In his press release, Archbishop Michael Lewis points to her great dedication and her unrivalled knowledge of Anglicanism, but this is far from being a straightforward reward for long service. It is a very popular appointment for one of the most respected people in the province. On hearing the news, typical responses have noted her integrity, her caring character and her willingness to go the extra mile.

As well as being the PA to four of the five Bishops of Cyprus and the Gulf, for almost forty years, Georgia has also been the provincial secretary for Jerusalem and the Middle East, which until recently included the then diocese of Egypt, and she has been receiving congratulations from throughout the area. She has been a key liaison between the Anglican and the Orthodox Churches in Cyprus but has also played a key role in arranging the many international conferences which have met in Cyprus. This is a role which she has loved as it has given opportunity for her to showcase her beloved island.

Georgia was born in Cyprus, but her family emigrated to Zimbabwe when she was eight and she did not return for twenty years, taking up her role with the Anglican Church almost immediately thereafter. She

is a past President of the Zimbabwe Association of Cyprus. Despite her time in Africa, she remains a very proud Cypriot.

Georgia represented the province at the Provincial Secretaries conferences in Dublin and Hong Kong in recent years, which is remarkable for a non-Anglican, but she says, 'I feel as Anglican as the rest. I feel as if I belong'. She has had a unique role as an ambassador for each of her churches toward the other. There have been times when she has been saddened by the attitudes of some within Orthodoxy toward the Anglican Church, as for example when requests to hold Anglican worship in Orthodox buildings have



been turned down. But for those few occasions there have been many more positive experiences when it has been possible to build bridges and to help those of goodwill in each Church to recognise each other and work together.

She recalls the four bishops she has worked as PA for, with affection. 'They were all very different', she says, 'but they each brought their own gifts'. Georgia has exercised her role as PA in a way far beyond any job description. She sees it as partly a pastoral role, and each bishop has had reason to thank her for the care she has shown to them and their families. She has been the epitome of confidentiality. Sometimes that has been politically important. Bishop John Brown played a key role in achieving the release of Terry Waite (as outlined in his book *Mainly Uphill*) and Georgia was aware of what was going on at the time but was unable to say anything about it until relatively recently when it was in the public domain.

Now nearing retirement, Georgia hopes that this new appointment will give her the opportunity to be of service to the cathedral. Looking back, she says, 'I have spent over half my life in this job. I'm not sure how I can ever give it up. I've loved everything about it. It's not been a job; it's been a life'.

*Photos: diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*



## Provincial Synod 2023

The Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East held its annual meeting of synod in May this year, at the offices of the diocese of Jerusalem. Items for discussion included the Provincial Constitution, the Financial Report and the report of the Provincial Administrator. A closing eucharist at the Cathedral Church

of Saint George the Martyr marked the handing over of the role of Archbishop Primate of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East from Archbishop Michael Lewis to Archbishop Hosam Naoum.

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## Maggie Le-Roy retires from Katafiyio retreat ministry



Archbishop Michael Lewis is not the only diocesan figure who will be bidding a diocesan role farewell in the summer. Maggie Le-Roy, who over the years has brought so much to the diocese, is also going. Her association with the diocese stretches back to

the 1990s but she will be known to many more recently as diocesan Retreats Facilitator.

Her coming to the diocese was quite accidental, she admits, when I spoke to her in her office in Nicosia. She had been working with Youth for Christ in Lebanon and had called in on Cyprus on her way back to that country to resume her role. To her surprise she was detained at Beirut airport, declared an undesirable alien and deported. As Cyprus was where she had flown from, that is where she was sent, and she has been here more or less ever since. Her story is reminiscent of Jonah's, in that Cyprus was really the last place she wanted to be, regarding it as 'predictable, cosy and safe'. She preferred more adventurous placements as she saw them.

Born in Hertfordshire, UK within a Christian family, her dream in life was to be a police officer. She discerned no vocation for Christian service and for a while rejected the evangelical faith of her parents. 'I came to realise that it was their faith that I had assumed and I needed to forge a faith of my own, if faith was indeed going to play any part in my life'. That phase lasted just a short while, before she realised that she wanted to make a Christian commitment for herself, and at age twenty-one she was on her way to India, to take up an administrative job for a rural hospital. At that stage she had abandoned the police ambition. All she had wanted was to make enough money to buy her parents a house of their own so that they would not have to live in a council house all their lives. That was an ambition she was never to realise either.

When in India, she had come to see that God was leading her to a life of Christian service. She spent some time at the All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, studying mission and theology, before taking up an administrative job in the UAE which enabled her also to act as Chaplain's Assistant in Sharjah where she used her creative talents with young people. When her visa expired, she moved to Lebanon to work with Youth for Christ.

It was in Lebanon that she discovered retreats. She was invited to go on one which she did reluctantly thinking such things were 'introverted navel-gazing', but she was 'blown away' by the experience. The young people consequently became interested even though they thought it 'weird stuff'. She tentatively arranged a retreat for teenagers, thirty of whom wanted to take part, the whole experience persuading her that retreat work and spiritual direction was the way forward. She took a sabbatical to train in Ignatian Spirituality.

And so, in 2004 she was back in Cyprus, anything but an undesirable alien as far as the Anglican Church was concerned. Bishop Clive Handford and Dean Steve Collis had a vision for spirituality in the cathedral parish and in the diocese and saw Maggie as a key part of it. There must be people in Nicosia today who remember her successful youth group at the cathedral: CHILL. Later her role extended to the whole Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, allowing her to travel – something she loves.

As a result of a questionnaire consultation, it became obvious that there was a demand for some kind of retreat house. A Lay Reader at the cathedral knew of somewhere in her village, Kapedes, a house called Katafiyio, and that became a place of retreat, particularly retreats for individuals. Some of Maggie's best memories come from there. Particularly, she loved the individually-led retreats that 'sent people away happier'. Now that house has been relinquished and there is instead a 'Katafiyio room' at the nearby Angel Hills Hotel. 'It was sad to lose the old place',



she says, 'but I am excited about the new possibility, and think it could be a brilliant model for elsewhere'.

Sadly, she senses that there is less interest in her sphere of work than there has been. 'I would have liked to have stayed for another five years', she says, 'but I am leaving because interest has dwindled'. Her new post takes her back to the UK and to greater London where she will have a similar role in Southall and Hounslow, where a mission zone has been established and she will develop retreat and spiritual direction resources. She looks forward to that. How would she like to be remembered? 'It's not important that I'm remembered. It's important that the ministry continues'.

*Photos: diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*



## Mother Christine, new senior priest at Abu Dhabi, is taking to it like a camel to sand!



It's not often that the answer to a question about hobbies, in an interview with a priest, is 'Well I'm training to be a camel jockey and it's great fun', but speaking to Mother Christine Trainor, the parish priest at St Andrew's Abu Dhabi, you soon learn to take nothing for granted. Christine is the first female

senior priest in the Gulf region. She arrived during the covid restrictions but is now getting to know the diocese and its people, and is rapidly getting into her stride in the parish.

Mother Christine is a hugely experienced priest. When she was born in Charlottesville, Virginia female ordination was not yet a reality, but after women were ordained in the Episcopal Church it was certain outstanding role models that urged her toward her own ordination. She, in turn, wants to be a role model for others and not just for ordained ministry. She has an holistic view of ministry that sees the ministry of welcome and the ministry of stewardship, for example, as key ministries in a living church. Before ordination she had a role in the stewardship team at Christ Church, Greenwich, Connecticut and has a great respect and ambition for lay ministries in the church generally. Following ordination, she has worked in New York City, San Francisco and Santa Barbara, California, and St Paul's Cathedral in London in a varied ministry journey. This is her twelfth job.

Her work in midtown New York taught her especially the value of the ministry of welcome. The axiom on which that ministry was built there was, 'everyone who comes through the doors gives us a new encounter of the risen Christ' and that is an attitude which she has carried with her and which corresponds neatly with her very positive view of diversity. She has thoroughly enjoyed working in churches, such as in California, where, geographically, the church is situated on a fault line between rich and poor, for example, with a congregation that represents both communities. She says that the UAE is the most diverse place she has known and finds that exciting. She came to St Andrew's at a time she describes as 'transitional' and that too appealed to her. Having read the story of the

church to date as outlined by the people who wrote the job description, she said she, 'felt their prayer' and feels privileged now to be their priest. Encouraging a culture of vocation in the church, she has found a wealth of talent and possibility.

Christine admits that being called 'Mother' is a bit weird for some people. It's a form of address she uses in contexts where the majority of priests are called 'Father', as they are in the diocese, to express parity. But more than that, she believes that 'mothering', and the nurturing function that involves, is an important aspect of ministering in a church family. She has two children who have now reached what she calls the 'launching' stage, and she takes the idea of launching seriously as an aspect of ministering, helping people both to recognize their gifts, and to launch out in faith to employ them. So, it is making a statement but a statement that she feels is going with the tide in the region, where she sees the role of women changing at a pace. She says, 'it is great to be here at this time and to be part of it.'



Mother Christine has written or contributed to some thirteen books. Some have been in the Bible Challenge series and others have been related to the observation of, for example, Advent. The common theme in her work has been reflection, both on experience and on Bible text and Christian tradition. She has now turned her hand to writing fiction – with a completely fictional character who comes from the US to work in the UAE. She doesn't say whether this fictional character is learning to be a camel jockey but she herself is attending a school to learn to do just that. Her other passion is swimming in (warm) open water. She says, 'where else in the world could I do those things?'

Photos: Christine Trainor

# Diocese of Iran

## News from Iran

The four churches (in Tehran, Isfahan, Julfa [suburb of Isfahan] and Shiraz) closed in March, 2020 and have yet to be given permission to re-open. Only the Armenian and Assyrian communities are allowed to hold services in their ethnic languages. Farsi-speaking churches have not been permitted to open. This means that the small bands of members of the Anglican Churches are not able to gather for prayer, worship and mutual support.

The three deacons and administrator remain in post and there is regular contact with them from outside the country. Other staff are a watchman/cleaner in Tehran and gardener in Isfahan. As the years pass so upkeep of the church property becomes more demanding.

The diocese had fallen under the oversight of Archbishop Michael Lewis, Archbishop President of the Province of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, until the Provincial Synod of May 13, because there was no resident bishop in Iran. He had made strenuous efforts to obtain a visa to visit. This did not prove possible – being made more difficult by the demonstrations that had convulsed the country. So he invited members of the diocese to meet him and representatives of the province and diocese of Jerusalem in Cyprus – this is the report of the meeting.

## Report of meeting in Cyprus

*Five people, both clergy and lay, from Anglican churches in Iran have spent time in Cyprus in mid-April. Archbishop Michael had invited them to join him and others for two days so that the province could, in a setting of trust, express concern, care and encouragement for the remaining congregations of the diocese of Iran and be better informed about the realities of daily life.*

*Even after the pandemic all three churches – St Luke Isfahan, St Paul Tehran and St Simon the Zealot Shiraz – remain closed for formal worship, and ways forward with government authorities were discussed, as well as episcopal oversight of the diocese. The Iranians were keen that their life and its joys and sorrows should be more widely appreciated. The gathering was undergirded by prayer and the eucharist was celebrated on each full day.*

*Those who attended the conference from the province were Archbishop Michael, Canon Fuad Dagher (Provincial Secretary), Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani (Bishop of Chelmsford, daughter of a deeply respected former Bishop in Iran, and translator for this occasion*

*from and into Persian), Archdeacon Christopher Futcher (Provincial Treasurer), Mrs Georgia Katsantonis (Archbishop's PA), and Canon Don Binder (Chaplain to Archbishop Hosam Naoum of Jerusalem, who joined the meeting remotely by video link for one session).*

*Your prayers are asked by and for the people of Iran and especially for faithful Christians of its Anglican Diocese.*

Episcopal responsibility for the diocese of Iran now moves to the Most Revd Hosam Naoum, Archbishop in Jerusalem, until such time as it is possible for a bishop for Iran to be appointed and take up the role.

Do continue to hold the people of the diocese in your prayers and pray for God's future to unfold in his good time.

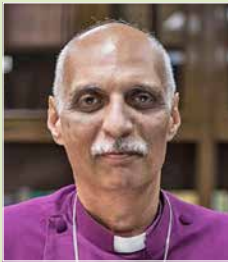
## A Prayer for Anglicans in Iran

Ever-living God,  
whose Church is strengthened by  
the blood of the martyrs,  
we thank you for the witness of the  
Anglican Church in Iran  
and pray for the faithful remnant who endure.  
In suffering, sustain them;  
in fragility, nurture them;  
in isolation, surround them with your love.  
May we see your presence in the  
small and vulnerable,  
for the bruised reed you do not break,  
nor the smouldering wick snuff out.  
Renew us, and the persecuted Church,  
in the message of hope  
shown in the death and resurrection of  
your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen



A cross of walnut wood from Iran

# Province of Alexandria

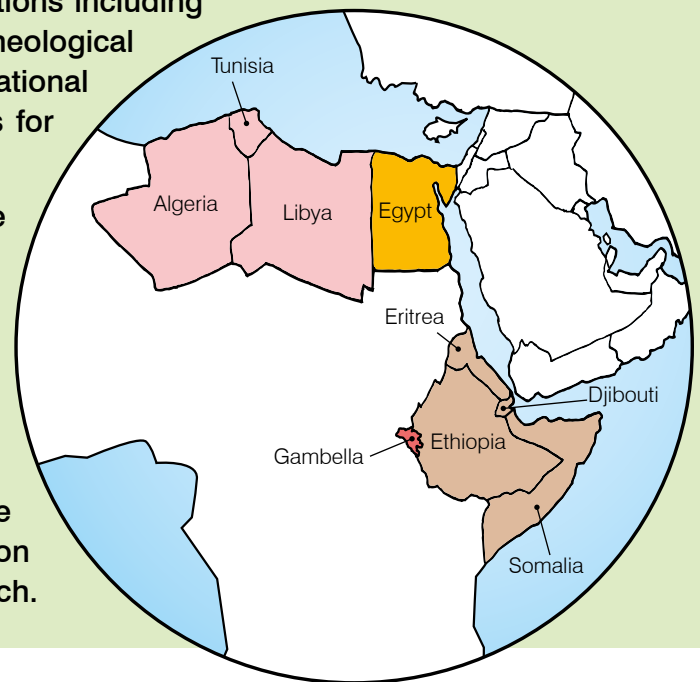


From its beginning in 1839, the diocese of Egypt was committed to serve others as Jesus did. The new Episcopal Anglican province of which the diocese of Egypt is now a part, continues this commitment to serving all people holistically regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically, we continue 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.



## Archbishop Samy writes...



The Province of Alexandria is a new province serving ten countries in very challenging circumstances in North Africa and the Horn of Africa. Our mission as a province is to serve God and our neighbours. There is a confusion in using the words 'mission' and 'evangelism', especially in our part of the world. Some evangelicals use 'evangelism' in relation to proclamation, dialogue, service and presence. How are we to refer to the activities of the churches in the Province of Alexandria today? Is it mission or evangelism?

The word evangelism is used more narrowly than mission. The traditional churches and the ecumenical protestants used the word 'mission' for ecclesial activities. Evangelicals avoided the word mission and used instead 'evangelism'. Some evangelicals claim that, historically, the mission of the church was evangelism. In ecumenical literature, mission, evangelism and witness are interchangeable concepts.

Theologians prefer the word 'witness' when they refer to the ministry of the church in an Islamic context.

Evangelism should be viewed as an essential element in the total activity of the church. It is witnessing to what God has done, is doing and will do. Evangelism aims at a response; conversion involves turning from a life of separation from God and turning to a new life of obedience to and fellowship with God.

As the Anglican/Episcopal province witnesses in North Africa and the Horn of Africa, evangelism remains essential and cannot be replaced. Mission is not merely evangelism but denotes all activities of love, service, preaching and healing. Evangelism and mission for the Anglican Province of Alexandria can be seen in the many ministries of worship, dialogue and service.

The Province of Alexandria inauguration was in June, 2020. The first primate of the province was Archbishop Mouneer, on 21st June, 2020. Praise God for the ministry and the leadership of Archbishop Mouneer and his vision, which resulted in the development and growth of the Anglican diocese of Egypt, North Africa and the Horn of Africa to become the Province of Alexandria. The province serves ten countries: Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Chad, Mauritania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia.

# Province of Alexandria

The province of Alexandria and the diocese of Egypt have a pivotal role in the establishment of the new dioceses. There is a five-year transitional period to establish the new dioceses of North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Gambella. There are many things to accomplish in establishing the new dioceses, including the election of new members of the new local synods, new diocesan executive boards, and the election of the new diocesan bishops at the end of the transitional period in 2025.

There is a great need of many hands to be working together to establish the new dioceses. Bishop Anthony was consecrated assistant bishop in the diocese of Egypt with focus on helping the establishment of the new dioceses, and to be ready for the election process in 2025.

## Gambella and the Horn of Africa synods

The first local synods in Gambella and the Horn of Africa were established in September, 2022. The two synods were led by Bishop Kuan Kim Seng and Bishop Anthony. The synods elected the members of the executive boards of the two dioceses and the members of the Anglican Church in Ethiopia (ACiE).



## North Africa synod

The synod of North Africa met in October 2022. It was a very fruitful event with the Arabic and English congregations, confirmation and licensing new lay ministers for St George's, Tunis and Christ the King, Libya. The synod elected members of the executive board and celebrated the graduation of seven St. Cyprian students from Tunisia and Algeria.



## Egypt local synod

The first local synod after the formation of the new province. The task of the synod was to develop the vision and the mission of the diocese of Egypt. The vision of the diocese is 'A Living Church for a Better

Society'. The synod decided to meet every year as the transformation of the diocese to a province will allow the local leaders to meet more frequently.



## Provincial synod, February 2023

The first provincial synod in Cairo. The members discussed the vision of the province and shared reports from the four dioceses. The discussions are summarized in the following statement: We strive to be a lighthouse standing firm on the scriptures, united in the Spirit, committed to mission, evangelism and discipleship to indigenous societies.

Rev. Yasir and deacon Felix from Chad presented the new mission to Chad and the opportunities to extend to new grounds in Chad. The synod concluded with the ordination of Deacon Crimson, the pastor of Christ the King, Libya to the priesthood.



## Alexandria School of Theology

Alexandria School of theology (AST) as a provincial institution plays a very important role in the ministry of the province in providing theological education in Cairo, Alexandria, Menya, Tunis and Gambella. AST trains and equips leaders for the Province of Alexandria. We partner with theological colleges in Sudan and South Sudan. Nuba Mountain Institute is serving Sudanese ordinands in our Church at St Michael and All Angels, Heliopolis.

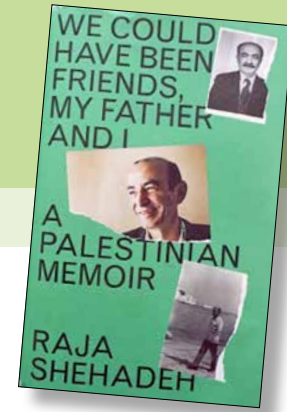


Archbishop Samy Shehata  
Photos: Province of Alexandria

# We Could Have Been Friends, My Father and I. A Palestinian Memoir

Raja Shehadeh

Profile Books, 2022



The author of this book is one of the best-known Palestinian writers today. Over the last four decades he has written several notable books all arising out of his experience as a Palestinian Christian living in the West Bank town of Ramallah. His publishing career began in 1982 with a book called *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank*. This recommended the way of perseverance over the ways of submission and hatred. It was followed by half a dozen other books including the popular *Palestinian Walks* (Profile Books, 2007) for which Shehadeh was awarded the Orwell Prize. His latest book will surely be of interest to anyone seeking a deeper appreciation of the conflict in Israel and Palestine. It is enhanced by 'period piece' black and white photographs.

Two important strands run throughout this memoir: one is a historical-political line, set during events in Israel-Palestine since 1948; the other an autobiographical line, focusing on Shehadeh's relationship with his father. The two lines are intertwined to provide the backbone of an engaging and moving account.

Readers already familiar with the broad outline of the recent history of the region will find the historical-political element quite illuminating. The book begins in 1984 when the Israel Defense Forces and the Civil Administration published the Regional Road Plan Number 50, revealing its plans for the West Bank after seventeen years of occupation. The map showed the network of roads the Israelis intended to construct. Cutting through Palestinian communities and cutting off major resources, the planned network criss-crossed the whole territory. Realising the implications of the map, Shehadeh determined to seek justice for the Palestinians against all odds.

But the author's father, Aziz Shehadeh, also a very well-known and highly respected Palestinian lawyer, was pursuing a different track of political concern from his son: the two-state solution, meaning the establishment of a state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel. The narrative then swings back to the events of 1948 which framed his father's experiences at the time of the recently established state of Israel. At that time, the Shehadeh family lost their home in Jaffa and ended up as refugees in Ramallah.

A good deal of the historical-political dimension of the book runs on Aziz Shehadeh's decades-long hope of returning to his home and land in Jaffa. Indeed, he spent much of his life working for the rights of Palestinian refugees. The book tells a story of total

loss, and of the gradual elimination of the hope of return, as the state of Israel strengthened its power through the occupation of the West Bank. Aziz Shehadeh was totally committed to Palestinian rights but he was marginalised, badly treated, imprisoned, exiled and finally murdered on 2nd December, 1985. No one was ever brought to justice.

From 1948 to 1967, the West Bank fell under Jordanian rule. The book reveals some interesting dimensions of the political landscape during that period: the Jordanians with their lack of real support for the West Bank and Jerusalem; the Israelis striving to assert the power of their new state; and the PLO, who sought a Palestinian state with no Israel. In the wider story, the British do not come over at all well.

The autobiographical line in the book is fascinating. Readers will meet members of the author's extended family, who had their own experiences and political views. It is at this level that Shehadeh's relationship with his father comes out. His father's loss and hardship following the 1948 war is paralleled with his own sense of injustice following the 1967 war. But whilst Aziz pursued the politics of the two-state solution, Raja sought civic justice on the ground

Somehow, the two men never really communicated well and the relationship stalled. Frequently throughout the book, the author relates how distant he had become from his father and how he was often even unaware of his father's views. It was only later after the murder that the author went through his father's papers (a process that gave rise to writing this book) and finally realised that opportunities had been lost. 'What I regret most of all', he says, 'is the fact that we could have been friends' (p.128).

This short, informative and sensitive memoir provides a series of sobering insights into life in Israel, Jordan and the West Bank between 1948 and the present day. Not an introduction to the Israel-Palestine conflict as such, it is more a case study, showing the devastating personal effects of political events on Raja Shehadeh and his family over time. Sadly, the author continues to face a gruelling challenge: after thirty-seven years (in 2022), he still awaits the result of the investigation into his father's murder. Whatever else, he gets full marks for perseverance.

Stephen Need

# 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 Alhi 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, the Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf Beirut, 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 All those involved in the search for a new bishop. 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 Fatcher 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, the Assistant Bishop the Rt Rev Anthony Ball.
- 24th The Diocese of Egypt. The bishop, the Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy and his wife Madelaine and their family. All who work in and for the Diocese of Egypt.
- 25th The Diocese of North Africa. The vacancy for the bishop and all who work in and for the Diocese of North Africa.
- 26th The Diocese of the Horn of Africa. The Commissary Bishop the Rt Rev Kuan Kim Seng and his wife and family and all who work in and for the Diocese of the Horn of Africa.
- 27th The Diocese of Gambella in Ethiopia. Archdeacon Jeremiah and his wife and family and the Commissary Bishop Rt Rev Kuan Kim Seng. All who work in and for the Diocese of Gambella.
- 28th The Alexandrian School of Theology 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.*

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- 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 Michael Lewis

**Jerusalem**  
 Archbishop Hosam Naoum

1. Palestine & Israel
2. Lebanon
3. Syria
4. Jordan

**Cyprus and the Gulf**  
 Archbishop Michael Lewis

5. Cyprus
6. Iraq
7. Kuwait
8. Bahrain
9. Qatar
10. United Arab Emirates
11. Oman
12. Yemen

**Iran**  
 Vacant  
 13. Iran

**ALEXANDRIA**  
 Archbishop Samy Fawzy

**North Africa**  
 Vacant

14. Algeria
  15. Tunisia
  16. Libya
- (also covering Mauritania and Chad)

**Egypt**  
 Archbishop Samy Fawzy

17. Egypt

**Horn of Africa**  
 Bishop Kwan Kim Seng

18. Eritrea
19. Ethiopia (Highlands)
20. Djibouti
21. Somalia

**Gambella**  
 Bishop Kwan Kim Seng  
 22. Ethiopia (Lowlands)

**JMECA**

**THE TWO PROVINCES**  
 (Red line indicates border)