

Bible Lands

Pentecost 2009

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association



Jerusalem



Egypt & North Africa



Iran



Cyprus & the Gulf

THE JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST CHURCH ASSOCIATION

(JMECA)

Founded in 1887

'To encourage support in prayer, money and personal service for the religious and other charitable work of the Episcopal church in Jerusalem and the Middle East'.

Reg. Charity no. 248799

Patron

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable
The Archbishop of Canterbury

Chairman

Mr. Richard Owens OBE

Secretary

Mrs. Mary Knight
1 Hart House The Hart
Farnham GU9 7HJ, Surrey.
secretary@jmecca.eclipse.co.uk

Normal office hours: Mon to Thurs 08.30 to 12.30
Tel/Fax 01252 726994

The Council of JMECA delegates the administration of its assets to a Standing Committee which is

THE JERUSALEM AND THE EAST MISSION TRUST LIMITED (JEMT)

Secretary as above

Directors

Mr. John Clark (Chairman)
The Venerable Howard Levett
Mr. Richard Owens OBE
Mr. John G Pringle (Hon Treasurer)
The Reverend William Taylor
Sir Harold Walker KCMG
Mr. Roger (Bob) Wilcox
Mr. David Wright OBE
The Reverend Canon Hugh Wybrew

Consultants

The Reverend Canon Anthony Ball
The Reverend Canon Timothy Biles

THE CENTRAL SYNOD OF THE PROVINCE

President

The Most Revd Dr Mouneer Anis

Secretary

The Reverend Hanna Mansour

Treasurer

The Reverend Canon William Schwartz.

Jerusalem

The Rt Revd Suheil Dawani
St George's Cathedral Close, PO Box 1248,
Jerusalem
Tel: +972 2 6272932
bishop@j-diocese.org
website: www.j-diocese.org

Iran

The Rt Revd Azad Marshall
455B Canal View Housing, Multan Road, Lahore 53700
Pakistan
Tel: +92 42 5420286
bishop@saintthomascenter.org

Egypt

The Most Revd Dr Mouneer Anis
All Saints Cathedral, PO Box 87, Distribution Zamalek,
Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +202 7380829
bishopmouneer@link.net
website: www.dioceseofegypt.net

Cyprus and the Gulf

The Rt. Rev. Michael Lewis
Diocesan Office, PO Box 22075, 1517 Nicosia
Cyprus
Tel: +357 22671220
georgia@spidemet.com.cy
website: www.cypgulf.org

Bible Lands Editor

Letters, articles, comments are welcomed by the Editor:

Canon Timothy Biles, 36 Hound Street,
Sherborne DT9 3AA Tel: 01935 816247
Email: tim@tjbiles.freeseve.co.uk

The next issue will be published in Advent 2009.

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Association; therefore only signed articles will be published.

JMECA Website

The site has an information page for each of the four Dioceses with links to the websites of each one.

www.jmecca.org.uk



Chairman's comment...

Mr. John Clark, Chairman of the Trust, has been looking through the Association's archives, housed at St. Antony's College Oxford....

"The Mission was established by Bishop Blyth in 1887 the first Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem to develop the work of the Diocese of Jerusalem which covered the whole Middle East. From his diocese the four dioceses of today's Province and the Province of the Sudan have emerged. Just looking at the subjects of the 127 boxes of files was to be movingly reminded of the changing role of the Mission over the decades with its many connections to the churches, schools, hospitals and other forms of Christian presence and witness established by the Anglican Churches throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Today JMECA continues that work of support for the Province and its four dioceses. We are no longer involved in the recruitment and sending of people, or the running of Institutions. That has rightly been taken on by the local church in each place – but we continue to provide substantial financial support through a number of trust funds for specific purposes and through general donations from you, the supporters. The treasurer's note, which follows, explains how the funds are distributed.

The Association's Committee, drawn from people with experience of the church, business and diplomatic world of the Middle East, meets four times a year to attend to the Association's affairs and once a year the full meeting of representatives of the Association. Mary Knight, the hard-working Secretary of JMECA, maintains regular email contact with the diocesan offices of the Province and keeps a precise record of the use of the Association's finances. Through *Bible Lands* our Honorary Editor Canon Tim Biles, shares information, news and issues as widely as possible.

In this way the work of the Association to support the Anglican Church in the Middle East is taken forward today. And at this season of Pentecost we pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to inspire and lead the Church and this Association in their ministries and witness.

Treasurer's notes...

Mr. John Pringle, the Hon Treasurer adds:

In September last year I wrote of turbulent times in world markets. Little did I know what was still to come! However we remain optimistic that in 2009 we will continue to support the four Dioceses at very nearly the same level as last year.

Some of the Funds which constitute JMECA's portfolio have a long history. The earliest Fund was established in 1841 to support the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem. By Trust Deed the King of Prussia and an Appeal Fund sponsored by the Crown of England each committed £600 per annum, to be paid to Trustees for distribution to Jerusalem. This arrangement continued until 1882 when the King of Prussia withdrew and church bodies in the UK took over the commitment. With minor variations this important contribution continues today.

Over the years other Funds have been established thanks to generous legacies, often from people who spent long working lives in Middle Eastern countries. The use of these funds is sometimes restricted by geographical area or by purpose. For example one helps the training of ordinands, another provides bursaries at schools in Jerusalem. Where no specific purpose is stipulated the income is distributed equally to the four Dioceses to be used at the discretion of the Bishops of the Province.

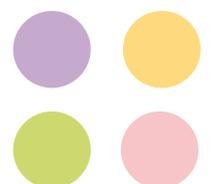
We continue to benefit from legacies from the estates of people who care for the Christian people who live and work in our Province. These legacies, together with your regular donations, are the life-blood of our organisation.

Special thanks...

The Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza was featured in the last edition of *Bible Lands*. Already struggling under the burden of the Israeli blockade, during the recent hostilities it became a key centre for emergency medical care and Christian provision for both residents and refugees, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background or political affiliation. This was despite suffering damage to its buildings and facilities from Israeli bombing. See the Bishop in Jerusalem's letter of gratitude for your response to our appeal on page 4.



Editorial



On Tuesday, March 10, Bishop Suheil Dawani was at last granted permission to go into Gaza to make a pastoral visit to the diocesan Al Ahli Arab Hospital. He had previously been turned away at the border. Bishop Suheil was accompanied by Greek Catholic Archbishop Elias Chacour and Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan.

The three Church leaders made their way through the badly damaged area of northern Gaza to the hospital, which has served over 400 casualties during the recent crisis. During their time at the hospital, Bishop Dawani, Bishop Younan, and Archbishop Chacour were updated by Al Ahli's devoted director, Suhaila Tarazi and dedicated medical director, Dr. Maher Ayad. As the wounded continue to heal, many are in need of ongoing care, rehabilitation, and social services which continue to stretch the capability of the hospital beyond its normal capacity. Nevertheless, the entire hospital staff continues to provide exemplary care for all in need, regardless of faith or ability to pay, in keeping with the highest standard of medical ethics. The Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem receives donations from across the Anglican community. They are vital to continuing the care and support for the innocent civilians in Gaza.

The three bishops visited staff and patients in the hospital, reassuring all of their concern and support.

Taking time to pray in the hospital church for the dead and wounded in the January conflict, as well as for peace in the region, Bishops Dawani and Younan, and Archbishop Chacour toured the hospital grounds, with gratitude for the minimal structural damage despite the windows which blew out.

The remaining part of the visit included a meeting with Constantine Dabbagh, director of the Near East Council of Churches Refugee Works, and a call at the their clinic to hear reports of their work, including the damage suffered by their building. Like the staff at the diocesan Al Ahli Arab Hospital, the clinic staff find themselves confronted with extraordinary need and limited resources and housing.

The visiting bishops spoke with the media about their visit, explaining that they came to show their support and thank the medical staff, and to pray for peace in the region and reconciliation between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

There are approximately 3,500 Christians in a population of one and a half million living in Gaza. During his visit, the Bishop said "the Christian presence must be empowered and must remain in the Holy Land." He encouraged Gazan Christians to "look forward and build up what has been destroyed, to keep faith and hope in the future, and carry on living in hope of a more normal situation despite all the hardships". And the Bishop assured the people of the support of the diocese as they attempt to do this.

From Bishop Suheil

I wish to express my appreciation for the efforts of the Jerusalem & East Mission Trust on behalf of our medical mission and Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, particularly in managing and sending the recent donation of £2,771. It is important that we, the Diocese of Jerusalem, have partners such as yourselves to assist us with the vital ministries we have in this region.

As patients in Gaza are beginning to recover physically and move toward rehabilitation, there is an ongoing need for medical care and social service assistance during the relative calm of this Cease Fire. Such contributions will assist us in this ministry.

In this time of anxiety and turmoil, the institutions of this Diocese provide steady examples of mutual respect and cooperation, humanitarian care and dependable hospitality. We appreciate your partnership as we all represent the One Body, working together in peace and reconciliation to alleviate the suffering of people in need.

With best wishes,

The Rt. Rev'd. Suheil Dawani.

Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem

Editor's note: Since receiving the Bishop's letter of gratitude further cheques in excess of £1000 have been received from readers and the Trust has been able to add £2000 from an Emergency fund. If readers wish to contribute, their cheque should be sent to the Farnham Office (address p.2) made payable to Jerusalem and East Mission Trust and clearly marked on the covering correspondence for the Gaza medical Appeal. All gifts will be acknowledged and forwarded to the Diocese of Jerusalem.

Medical Care In West Bank and Gaza

The Diocese of Jerusalem has long been involved in medical ministry and is actively working to enhance its comprehensive network of health care, family support and critical medical services for people in need, particularly in the challenging regions in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. With four major medical facilities in operation, the diocese is dedicated to expanding its much needed services, and creating medical and health care jobs for Palestinian Christians.

In the past year, the medical work has been taken to a new level by Dr. Hisham Nassar, a local surgeon who is the Bishop's Consultant for Healthcare, and by Dr. Harry Gunkel, a volunteer from the Episcopal Church USA, who has lent his expertise to the diocese for nearly a year and half. Dr. Gunkel has now returned to his home in the States, where he assists Dr. Nassar in follow up conversations with American healthcare institutions. His leadership, advice and experience have played an integral role in updating and improving the diocese's medical clinics and hospitals.

The four medical centres are:

Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza. See opposite page.

Princess Basma Centre for Disabled Children

The centre serves disabled children in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Located in East Jerusalem, Princess Basma Centre offers ambulatory care and temporary live-in facilities where mothers of disabled children can learn about proper caring techniques. The Centre is working with Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian institutions to better coordinate cerebral palsy research, and is leading the effort to improve the diagnosis of autism cases in the West Bank and Gaza. Most recently, the Centre is providing artificial limbs and physical therapy services for children permanently maimed or wounded during the recent crisis in Gaza.

St. Luke's Hospital

St. Luke's hospital is the essential symbol of Christian presence in the region of Nablus, serving more than 4,000 patients a year. Nablus is one of the most isolated cities in the West Bank, in a region of high anxiety and unemployment. St. Luke's is preparing to provide the only advanced neurosurgery facility in the West Bank/Gaza region, and its maternity ward is considered the very best in the northern region. St. Luke's serves as one of the largest – if not the largest – employer of Christians in Nablus, and many Christians depend on St. Luke's to earn their living and support their extended families.



Zababdeh Penman Clinic

Zababdeh is a small Christian village located near Jenin in the West Bank. Behind the diocese's St. Matthew's church is a clinic with a family doctor, a nurse, a small lab, dental services, and a pharmacy. Most of the villages in the area around Zababdeh do not have adequate social services, so the Penman Clinic is an important and active symbol of the ministry of Christ. *New priest, see page 11.*

HEALTH CARE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Partnership with Israeli hospitals.

At the present time, very few residency training programmes exist for physicians working in the West Bank and Gaza, and very little specialty training is offered. Programmes to introduce new medical equipment, treatments and procedures are very much needed. Israeli hospitals are geographically close and their healthcare facilities and are well known for their high quality. These hospitals have previously been inaccessible to residents of the West Bank and Gaza seeking medical training. However, the Diocese of Jerusalem has developed a cooperative programme which will enable Palestinian medical personnel to receive training in Israeli hospitals. The length of training may range from a few months for an intensive care unit nurse to up to five years for a residency for a specialized physician. The cost of the actual class room and clinical experience is being covered by the participating hospitals. Living expenses and educational materials are a charge on the diocese.

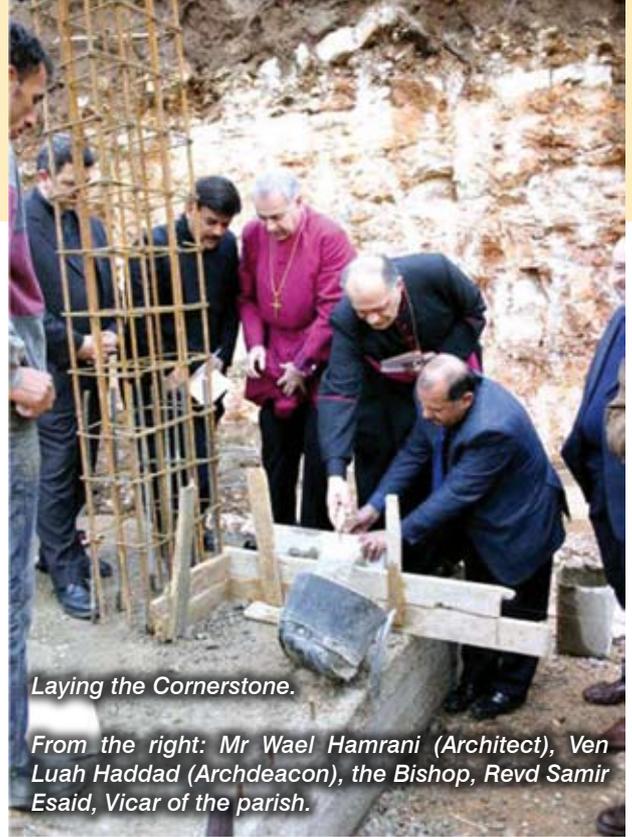
More information about this may be found on the Diocesan website under "Ministries" at www.j-diocese.org

NEW CHURCH FOR IRBID

In a joyous and festive afternoon in February, in the heart of Jordan's third largest city Bishop Suheil Dawani laid the cornerstone for the new Church of St. Mary the Virgin. In an interview the bishop was asked "Why now and why Irbid?" He replied:

"We have an expanding and well respected 'Special Needs' school serving the community and a growing congregation that needs more space for education and worship, as well as for community social services. Irbid is now a large metropolitan city with two major centres for higher education that enhance the community's cultural pursuits. With the growth of our school in serving special needs children through the fifth Grade, and with the congregation overflowing the Chapel the need for a Church to replace the smaller school Chapel became a high priority for the Diocese. The new Church facilities will enable the school to use the vacated space as well as the new facility to add classrooms for another 250 students and from the inquiries and waiting list, that number will quickly be reached". In naming the new Church St. Mary the Virgin, the Bishop explained, "You should know that we have not had a Church named for the Holy Mother of our Lord in the Diocese. With the school being a family oriented educational ministry serving children whose sight is impaired it was appropriate to name its church 'St. Mary', honoring the caring love of the Mother of our Lord in the Holy Family. Perhaps equally important is that Irbid is a predominantly Muslim City. The Blessed Virgin Mary has a special place in Islam. The Blessed Mother as the Koran states *grows under direct divine protection and is nourished daily by angels and has visions of God every day*".

The Bishop went on to thank King Abdullah II of Jordan for his support. "He supports the Christian community's concern for those needing special help such as this school provides. As with his father the late King Hussein, His Majesty always gives his blessing to such worthy communal educational



Laying the Cornerstone.

From the right: Mr Wael Hamrani (Architect), Ven Luah Haddad (Archdeacon), the Bishop, Revd Samir Esaid, Vicar of the parish.

and social services endeavors". Expressing his great admiration for the King, Bishop Suheil said that "as a Diocese, and along with the entire Christian community in Jordan, we are most grateful for the warm support and collegiality in purpose that our Institutions receive from the Government in the fields of education, healthcare and social services". The bishop ended the interview on a positive note that underlines his vision of partnership which the diocese enjoys ecumenically as well as in interfaith and governmental collegiality by saying: "The school has grown with 150 children now enrolled through the Fifth Grade, of whom 32 are sight-impaired or blind. They are served by highly dedicated and specialized teachers from interfaith traditions, some of whom are vision-impaired themselves. Each year volunteers, from Germany and the United States, enhance the school's teaching and social services staff. As the school grows, vital employment opportunities are created for young professionals and the local economy is strengthened through the education of special needs children." The bishop paid tribute to Revd. Samir Esaid the parish priest and to his wife Sabah the head teacher whose determination had brought the vision to reality. "In this diocese we have six Institutions which help people with special needs to become active and self-sustaining members of the community. In this, in Irbid, St Mary's church and school will surely play a pivotal part in civil society." he said.

The new Church will seat 200 parishioners comfortably providing the space needed for congregational and school growth. The multi service Parish Hall on the lower ground floor of the Church will accommodate 250 persons seated for dinner and can also be utilized for meetings by community groups related to the school.

BISHOP ANNOUNCES NEW APPOINTMENTS



The Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf is pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Canon Bill Schwartz OBE to be Archdeacon in the Gulf, to be held in conjunction with his present appointment as Chaplain in Qatar. It will take effect immediately upon the retirement of the present Archdeacon, the Very Reverend Alan Hayday.

The Bishop is also pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Christopher Butt, Team Rector of South Gillingham in the Diocese of Rochester, England, to be Dean of St Christopher's Cathedral, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain.

He will be installed in Bahrain in October on a date to be confirmed. Pray for him and for his wife Tricia as they prepare for life in the Gulf and in the diocese.

The Bishop is also pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Andrew Notere, priest of the Diocese of Willochra in the Province of South Australia, to be Chaplain in Paphos. He expects to license him to the post in early Autumn 2009.

Bishop Michael also notes the announcement by the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral Nicosia and Archdeacon in Cyprus, the Very Reverend Stephen Collis, of his forthcoming retirement, due to take effect in August, 2009.

Bishop Michael Lewis

CANON BILL SCHWARTZ

Canon Bill, who is to be the new Archdeacon of the Gulf, has served the diocese in so many lay and clerical roles that he brings an unrivalled knowledge of the area to the appointment. Bill was born in Omaha USA in 1952 but has been in the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf from the age of 25.

He first worked as a layman there for four years as Administrator of the Institute of Middle East Studies also working with Brother Andrew on the 'Open Doors' project. He became chairman of the diocesan House of Laity and Assistant treasurer of the diocese. In the early 1990s his vocation to the priesthood was confirmed and in 1993 he was ordained deacon in Cyprus and priest at All Hallows by the Tower in London.

Since then he has served as a 'supply priest' in many parishes in the diocese and then for several years as Rector of the Canterbury Group in Saudi Arabia. In 2006 he was made a Canon of Bahrain Cathedral and then chaplain to the congregations in Qatar. There he is the 'front man' in trying to raise £5million for the building of an Ecumenical church on land given by the Emir.

Bill is married to Edith and they have two daughters and two sons.

NEWS FROM THE GULF

We are grateful to Dennis Gurney, formerly an Archdeacon in the Gulf, for these news flashes:

THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY, QATAR.

Canon Bill Schwartz advises the construction is pressing ahead, with building now above ground. Funds are in hand to complete columns, beams and shell.

A temporary facility has been completed to allow congregations of one or two hundred to meet. Phase one of the major building is expected to be complete by February next year and that will give a total of eight worship spaces and five Sunday School rooms.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Some four hundred different congregations meet regularly for worship throughout the UAE. About two million people live in Labour Camps and are not able to get to established centres for regular worship.

JEBEL ALI CAMP

About 125 people meet every week in the desert. The darkness is only broken by two rechargeable lights and joyful hearts touched by God's love.

AL QUOZ CAMP, DUBAI.

At Christmas 5,000 people gathered. The Bible Society in the Gulf made 15,000 books and 12,000 CDs available to the churches for those who managed to get to services.

A SAFE HOME IN DUBAI;

Every year over a thousand housemaids go through this 'Safe Home.'

The Bible Society recently provided 150 DVDs of Gods' Story and 200 Tagalog Bibles. A dramatised version of the New Testament (MP3) produced by 'Faith Comes by Hearing' is being used to reach as many people as possible with the Good News of the Gospel.

RETREATS

Time to rest and listen

The Retreat House in Cyprus offers great opportunities to individuals or groups

The Katafiyio Retreat House

- for those who wish to rest and listen to God

Individually Guided Retreats:

- Residential at Katafiyio
- week of guided prayer in everyday life
- discernment regarding life choices

Group Quiet Days

- for special interest groups, leaders, churches: venue/content by arrangement
- 3rd Tuesday of month at Katafiyio, 10-3.30 pm. open to all, no booking necessary
- Space For God days - 3-4 times per year. Various locations, booking necessary

Quiet Services

- 3rd Monday of month, 8 pm at St Paul's Cathedral. Nicosia, open to all

Leading

- seminars on different approaches to prayer
- creative prayer sessions at small group events

Spiritual Accompaniment

- for those wanting a guide to help them listen to God on a regular basis

For more information contact Maggie or Judy at the:

RETREATS OFFICE

Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, PO Box 22075, 1517 Nicosia, Cyprus
www.cypgulf.org
and click on Retreat House

Email: retreats@spidemet.com.cy

Tel: 22-671220 Mobile: 99-155092

RETREATS is a self-funding office. A guide for donations will be suggested.

The Venerable Ralph Lindley CBE

Ralph Lindley was successively Archdeacon in the Gulf and General Secretary of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association.

Born in 1920, Ralph Adrian Lindley served during World War Two in the Royal Air Force. After the War, he went up to St John's Durham where, having taken his degree, he trained for ordination. Ordained in 1953, he served his curacy in Burnley. Then followed fifteen years as a Royal Air Force chaplain.

While in Bahrain, Ralph met George Appleton, recently appointed Archbishop in Jerusalem, who invited him to become Archdeacon in the Gulf and Chaplain in Abu Dhabi and Qatar. Based in Abu Dhabi, Ralph continued the monthly pattern of visits to Qatar and Das Island. This was a significant period in the development of Abu Dhabi, with rapid expansion and a growing expatriate population. Ralph was very much involved, especially, though by no means exclusively, with the British Community. He and his wife Margot, herself active in Church and Community, worked very much as a partnership. One of their projects, taken up by other Churches in the Gulf, was the establishment of the Thrift Centre. Ralph was at heart a pastor and many valued his care and counselling skills. The award in 1975 of a CBE was a great joy to his many friends.

The present Province and the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf were inaugurated in January 1976. Ralph was present at the ceremonies in Jerusalem and at the new Central Synod which met immediately afterwards in Amman. Leaving the Gulf, but not the Middle East Church, in 1978, he became General Secretary of JMECA, establishing an office in the Gatehouse of Farnham Castle. Retiring to St Briavels in 1986, Ralph nursed Margot through increasing ill health. He maintained his interest in the Middle East and helped in the local Church.

Ralph Lindley was a 'people person', a great conversationalist, always with a pastor's concern. Almost to the end, he was active with the Samaritans. He was a true servant of God for whose ministry and friendship many will be grateful.

Clive Handford

Bishop Clive Handford was Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf 1996-2007 and Presiding Bishop of the Province 2002-2007.

The Revd Barry Simmons was a colleague of Archdeacon Lindley in Gulf days and spoke at the funeral in St. Briavels. We add a part of his tribute:

"Ralph was an absolute bundle of joyful energy with many a story to tell. He was a great conversationalist but he liked people, gave the impression he liked you and would listen to you. He didn't just talk, he listened. Ralph was a gem, there are not many like him. I joined him in the Gulf after 13 years as a priest having served in UK, Jamaica and Hong Kong but I have always realised and been deeply aware that my time in the Arabian Gulf with Ralph Lindley immensely developed and significantly influenced my priesthood, for the good."

Several people have remembered the Archdeacon with affection. Mrs Mary Greville, a former secretary of this Association, recalls:

"In his RAF days Ralph was training in Canada to be a pilot when he and another chap dived into a swimming pool, the other person's fingers went into his right eye and he was blinded in that eye and had to leave the RAF which was a sad blow..."

All correspondents comment on his great enjoyment of people and events:

"He was like an eager little boy full of fun, and he never lost it"

Empowerment of Women....



Last Year...

Last year, the Diocese of Tokyo invited twenty five women from Jerusalem Diocese to participate in a joint conference under the title "Together We Can Make the Difference". This Conference was held at the Theodore Schneller School Guest House, one of the diocesan institutions in Jordan.

The participants enjoyed worshipping together in each other's languages, in prayer, song and bible studies, and sharing stories reflecting both cultures. The common issues and the differences were shared. The

Japanese guests saw some of the struggles of the region by visiting a refugee camp and they were introduced to the diocesan Faith in Action work through some of the institutions and congregations. One of the high points of the Conference for the delegates was a visit to Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal who remains very supportive of all the work.

March '09

Diocesan Women Meet in Jericho

A group of 150 women – and their clergy -- from Palestinian and Israeli parishes met in Jericho to prepare for empowerment workshops and the Second Anglican Women's Conference in October. Mrs. Suheil Dawani, wife of the bishop, spoke of the importance of strengthening the relationship between women in the diocese and the central committee. "As we get ready for the Second Anglican Women's conference in October, we need to think about ways to activate and empower the role of women in our church and in civil society," she said. "We need to strengthen our ties and relationships, because we can accomplish so much more with one, united voice."



L to r: Faten Saadeh, Rodaina Dagher, Revd Ibrahim Nairoz. Front: Wedad Sudah, Shafeeqa Dawani.

The programme started at 10 a.m. with Morning Prayer prepared by the women and a short meditation presented by Rev. Ibrahim Nairouz, the women's consultant for the diocese. Rev. Fuad Dagher and Rev. Hosam Naoum led the women and clergy in musical making. Bishop Suheil, on his way back from Jordan, visited the gathering and emphasized his support for the important work of the women's group.

"The work you are doing is of vital important to our diocese," said the Bishop. "We need your talents, your commitment, your voice and your dedication to help us continue the strong presence of our church and face the tremendous challenges in this region."

April '09

First Ecumenical Women's Meeting

The Diocese of Jerusalem held its first Ecumenical Women's Meeting at St. George's Cathedral, hosting 40 women from different churches committed to enhancing the ministry of the diocese. Mrs. Shafeeqa Dawani, had encouraged numerous women's regional gatherings focusing on the empowerment of women. She believes that the personal enrichment, friendships, and spiritual growth that result from these meetings are important to maintaining a vital, lively and active diocese.



Mrs Dawani, Centre.

"We have so many talented women in our region," said Mrs. Dawani. "Together and individually, we have many gifts to share. Working as a team, we can make great strides in improving family life and civil society." Mrs. Dawani also has included women members of the diocese's English-speaking congregation in her outreach efforts. "As women, working together, we are strengthened for our mutual benefit." she said.

Plans are well underway for the second bi-annual Conference focused on empowering the women of the Diocese to be held in Amman in October 2009.

A Family Returns....

Father George Kirreh



Bishop Suheil, left, with the Archbishop of Adelaide and the Kirreh family at the Ordination.

We have asked Father George Kirreh to tell us his story because it is so encouraging to hear of a Christian family returning to serve their people when so many are leaving.

“I was born in Jerusalem, my background is Palestinian. I grew up in a Christian Anglican family; I used to go to St George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem. I am the youngest of five brothers who are married and have children, all my family live in Jerusalem. I graduated from St George’s Anglican School.

While I was in my high school the calling to become a minister in the diocese of Jerusalem was planted in my heart, but I was not yet ready to answer God’s call. I was given a scholarship to go to Greece to study dentistry; I went and after I finished studying I stayed in Greece. During this time I met my wife Faten, who also has a Palestinian background, but was born in Jordan. Faten had lived in Australia most of her life. We were married in Jerusalem in St. George Cathedral and then moved back to Greece for three years. We had our first daughter, Joanna, in 1992. One and a half years after Joanna’s birth, Faten moved to Australia while 7 months pregnant with our second daughter Julia. I followed later and was able to meet for the first time my six months old daughter, Julia. In 1995 our third child, Farid, was born.

While I was in Australia God’s call came again to be a priest and serve in my beloved Church and among my family in the Holy Land, and He opened the way for me to study. I received a BA degree in Ministry and was able to finish a Masters of Theological Studies a year ago. My call to serve in the Holy Land and within the beloved Church in which I grew up became stronger. I was ordained Deacon within the diocese of Adelaide by the Archbishop Jeffrey, but this year, on February 8th I was ordained into the priesthood by our Bishop Suheil Dawani and the Archbishop Jeffery Driver in St George’s Cathedral, Jerusalem. Now I am serving at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, Zababdeh.”

Father George goes on to say his wife is now an Enrolled Nurse and his three children, aged 16, 14 and 13 are being home-schooled at present.

“With the help and grace of God, my hope is to make God’s love grow in the community and to make the Church an instrument led by God’s power to be a light within Zababdeh and work to bring comfort and peace in the region. I also hope that the Penman Clinic here will grow in helping the people by providing the necessary medical attention that they need. That will come by the help of God and your support which will help us make God’s love known to the people and the community.”

Menhouf Harpur Hospital

Alexandria School of Theology

Tensions between Christians and Muslims in Egypt often make headlines, but the work of a group of Christian doctors paints a more upbeat picture of religious coexistence. The doctors run a hospital for mostly Muslim patients in Egypt's heartland - the Egyptian Delta town of Menhouf.

The afternoon call to prayer sounds as doctors examine patients at the hospital run by the diocese. Unlike most hospitals in Egypt, Harpur receives no money from the government and its doctors donate their time to care for the hospital's primarily Muslim clientele.

"It is a labour of love", says Dr. Samir Bakheet, a 62-year old gynecologist from Cairo, who runs the hospital: He says most of his doctors are Christian, and that patients from across the region come because they trust the doctors and respect them. "Our doctors have a strong faith and strong sense of purpose, which is to serve the sick. We are not here to make a profit", he insists. Dr. Bakheet says 50,000 patients are treated at the hospital every year and a quarter of a million go through the doors, if their families are included. He says 90 to 95 percent of the patients are Muslim.

Dr. Michel Awad, who gave up a lucrative job in Cairo to come to Menhouf, says the work is rewarding. He says the hospital's founder, Doctor Frank Harpur, was so successful that he is still remembered for eradicating a parasite which was plaguing the countryside: "At the beginning, there were many farmers who suffered from parasites, notably one parasite called enclostoma, feeding on the blood of the farmers, so they were getting weak and unable to do much work," he said. "Dr. Harpur and his team brought the treatment for this parasite and they treated many patients, so by and by word spread in the country and the government adopted the same treatment." Anglican Bishop Mouneer Anis, who oversees Harpur Hospital, says its work is especially meaningful to him "The medical program is very near to my heart, because I myself am a medical doctor. I graduated in Cairo University medical school in 1974 and I worked in a hospital for 21 years before I became a bishop," he said. He says the medical program is a way for him and other doctors to apply the Christian teaching of compassion for others: "Jesus, when he came to our earth went around doing good for all people, regardless of their religion, their gender, their economic status, and sometimes the church itself cannot do this," he said.

The Bishop compares his team's medical work to that of a Good Samaritan, who goes where organizations like churches cannot go.

The Most Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and most of the Primates of the Anglican Communion, visited Alexandria Campus during the Primates' Conference.

Rev. Emad A. Mikhail, the Principal, gave a short presentation in St. Mark's Church, Alexandria about the founding of AST and its goals. Faculty staff, students and other guests attended. Archbishop Rowan spoke of their rich historical heritage. He reminded them that they stand in the tradition of St. Mark who evangelised Egypt in the first century and was martyred in Alexandria.

Following the visit, Archbishop Rowan participated in a service led by Presiding Bishop Mouneer Anis in which St. Mark's was dedicated as a Pro Cathedral.

For more information: www.ast-eg.org/news

The Alexandria School has had several notable lecturers. Dr. Chris Taylor, an expert in Islamic Studies, gave a broad introduction to Islamic history and thought to fourth year students. He is from Madison, New Jersey where he is professor and chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Drew University. He has lived in Egypt a great deal since 1980, and his wife Magda is Egyptian. His students considered the nature of God as described in the Qur'an, compared and contrasted with the God of the Bible. They also surveyed the Qur'anic text to grasp the nature of the relationship between God and creation as described in Islam, with particular attention to the role of humanity. Throughout the course there were extended discussions of both similarities and contrasts between Islam and Christianity.

Bishop Maurice Sinclair together with Dr. Mary Massoud delivered a course that traced the way human wisdom has evolved down the ages and in different regions of the world. The context of this developing and changing wisdom of man is God's wise plan in creation and redemption. Rather than teaching human philosophy and ethics separately from what is revealed in Scripture about the wisdom of God, the aim was to hold the two together. As part of one assignment students gave a presentation on aspects of current thinking in the Arab World and how Christians may engage more effectively at the grassroots and in intellectual debate. Topics chosen included the 'Influence of Pharaonic Egypt on present life', 'Optimism and Pessimism' – good and bad omens, 'Comparing the Islamic and Secular trends' and the 'Effect of Globalisation on Egypt'.

The Moore Theological College of Sydney Australia will come to Egypt two or three times a year to present courses in intensive modular form.

Episcopal Area: NORTH AFRICA

Bishop Bill and Hilary Musk are settling into their Tunis home and appreciate the 'vital' church life they have inherited. They hadn't been there long when the Archbishop of Canterbury arrived on route to the Primates' Meeting in Alexandria. Bishop Bill recalls part of the visit:

"The two and a half days of the Archbishop's visit were closely packed. We were all kindly hosted by the British ambassador and his wife at their residence (so funny seeing English three-pin sockets!). There were receptions, meetings, services, quick visits to a Roman archaeological site and to the British School in Tripoli, much whizzing about in "protocol" cars, the exchanging of business cards (except I don't have one!) and much more. It was wonderful meeting in some depth the local Roman Catholic clergy in Libya and Franciscan brothers of gentle, patient faith and long-term commitment to the country. Many religious orders, mostly of nuns, offer different kinds of service throughout the country quietly witnessing to a life of Christian faith in service. : Archbishop Rowan delivered a paper on the Christian understanding of revelation to a crowded auditorium in the training college of the World Islamic Call Society. This was amazing! The room was filled with lecturers and students from all over the Islamic world. As he finished his lecture, there was a flurry of activity behind the Archbishop and it was suddenly announced that the Archbishop and his party had to go

on to another engagement and that Dr Bill Musk would answer all the questions everyone had for the Archbishop! What had happened was that a hoped-for audience with Colonel Qaddafi had suddenly materialised and the Archbishop, with Bishop Mouneer, the British Ambassador and the Archbishop's Secretary for International and Inter-Religious Relations were advised that they had to be whisked to the Leader's "meeting tent" now! For an hour after they left (because we were waiting for them to return for the banquet after the lecture) I found myself in the hot seat! With friends from Christ the King church praying for me, I got the chance to speak to all these people committed to *dawah*, or Islamic mission, about a Christian understanding of revelation and faith, about the meaning of the cross, about who is the Holy Spirit and so on. There were also uncomfortable questions/statements about Western, political collusion with the State of Israel especially over what is called in these parts the "war on Gaza", and questions about the Archbishop's personal views on things– the last of which I thought it wise not to answer!"

THE BISHOP SAYS...

Priorities in My Ministry

Following the Primates Meeting in Alexandria the bishop, Most Reverend Dr. Mouneer Anis, has done some soul-searching about his future priorities. These are his conclusions:

Developing Leadership (50%)

"I will dedicate 50% of my time to this critical priority, as it is the future of the church in Egypt. We have held several Clergy Chapter meetings and I have encouraged each pastor and each church to develop their own "Strategic Plan" for the next year and the next five years. Additionally, I have restructured my office hours according to my priorities. This includes regular visits with the clergy and the churches, and we are in the process of designing a leadership training programme throughout the Diocese. Jesus gave us a great example as He, very early in His ministry, called disciples and spent all His time on earth training them.

Focus on Youth & Children and our Institutions (30%)

I want to resume my monthly dinners with the Youth and work on a 5 year plan with our Diocesan Youth Worker, Mark Takki. I will also make a pilgrimage trip with the youth. I would also like to reinstate the children's programmes and magazine. I have recently visited several institutions

and ministries. I look forward to visiting them more often to encourage them. However, it is I who walk away most encouraged. My hope is to see our institutions communicating God's love to our people, in words and deeds.

Our Province and the Anglican Communion (20%)

My third priority has in the past, been a major focus of my time. For this, I apologize to my diocese, as my attention has often been focused on Communion matters. Whilst the needs of the Communion are not decreasing, and my work as a Primate is increasing, I need to take care of the sheep entrusted to me. I am responsible to my diocese, and that is going to be my priority (80% of the total priority).

I would also like to build up the two Episcopal areas: The Horn of Africa under Bishop Andrew Proud (and Janice), and North Africa under Bishop Bill Musk (and Hilary) also, I must relate to my brother bishops of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Our Diocesan Synod will be in June, prior to the first graduation of students of Alexandria School of Theology and our Provincial Clergy Conference will be in October. These will be wonderful times of fellowship and forward planning."

REVD. MICHAEL STARR

Michael Starr, priest in charge of Christ the King church Tripoli, died suddenly after saying the morning office on Tuesday 4th November 2008. Michael and Margaret had recently been asked by Bishop Mouneer, to move from St Matthews Addis Ababa, to head the pastoral team in the growing Libyan church. Michael was trained as a Civil Engineer but he and Margaret had always wanted to serve God overseas. They did this in many places, but only exclusively within the church after Michael's retirement aged 60. Their travels took them to Pakistan, then Hong Kong, where Michael was a lay reader and Sunday School Superintendent at St Andrews Kowloon. In 1975 they moved to Iran where Michael and Margaret served at St Paul's Tehran with a microcosm of the world's population. It was back in UK in the parish of All Saints Farringdon that Michael felt called to be ordained. He was always a missionary at heart with a great desire for people to experience joy at the heart of their relationship with God. With all their UK responsibilities covered, including Margaret's teaching commitment, they headed back to the warmth and vitality of the multi-cultural Anglican Diaspora found all over the world. Ethiopia was hosting many asylum-seeking Sudanese Christians and while they were based at St Matthews Addis others were able to support new churches being set up in the west of the country. Then came the call to Libya from Bishop Mouneer, to respond to the needs of a growing expatriate community in Tripoli. Michael started doing this, happy to work with another very diverse gathering, when the final call came.

Edited by Tim Biles from a memoir written by Michael's son, Andrew Starr.

Friends of the Diocese of Iran

Registered Charity No. 257483

The main focus of the FDI is on the work and ministry of the members of the Episcopal congregations in Iran. It is for them we pray and offer such support as we can for the work of the diocese. They need our prayers and concern amidst the pressures of daily life and the isolation of being a small and scattered fellowship. We are also able to engage with the wider ministries that have developed among members of the diocese scattered in different parts of the world and the gifts they have been able to bring to the communities in which they have settled. May we all be found faithful in our support and prayer.

John Clark, Chair of FDI.

CONFERENCE AUGUST 28-30

The London School of Theology, Northwood Middlesex will host this year's Conference. "The Church in Iran, Yesterday, Today and..." There will be several participants of great experience including The Bishop in Iran, Rt. Revd. Azad Marshall, Bishop Kenneth Cragg and Canon Guy Wilkinson. Enquiries for fuller details and application form from Mrs. Christine Goldsmid at 1 Berkeley Court Gordon Rd. Ealing W5 2AE Tel. 020 8998 4748.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

If you would like to support the small Anglican Church in Iran, join the Friends of the Diocese. The Annual subscription is £5 or £10. Please contact the Subscription and Gift Aid secretary Mrs. Jessie Axtell 15 Berwick Avenue Heaton Mersey Stockport SK4 3AA. Any other information or correspondence should be sent to Mrs. B Shaw 128 Perth Rd. Ilford. Essex IG2 AS6

A prayer for Iran

O Lord God, Heavenly Father,
 you brought the Persian magi to honour our Lord Jesus Christ at his birth,
 after they had waited hundreds of years for a Saviour.
 We now pray for your people in Iran,
 both those who already know you and those who are still waiting.
 Pour down you Holy Spirit among them:
 redeem them, heal them, build them up,
 guide them into all truth, and protect them
 in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Iran Bishop Azad Marshall



On A Caravan: East and West Journeying Together through the Arts

Exhibition at St John's Church, Maadi.

St. John's Church was turned into an art gallery for a week to house a major interfaith art exhibition. Twenty renowned Egyptian and Western artists, sponsored by the church, gathered to use art as a bridge for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. It was all part of the effort to build bridges of understanding and respect between East and West and between Moslems and Christians. Participants ranged from Egypt's internationally respected leading contemporary artist, Mohamed Abla, to more local artists. Each artist produced two pieces of work on ideas that reflect the collective theme: East and West Journeying Together. The Rector, Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler, and his team of helpers were greatly encouraged by more than 1300 visitors during the week and by wide publicity in the international media. All the paintings can be seen and purchased on the website, which is: www.oncaravan.org

PRIESTS HONOURED

Two members of the Jerusalem clergy were recently honoured for their service.

Rev'd Canon Dr. William Broughton was awarded the Cross of St. Augustine. He received the Cross from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, in a ceremony at the Chapel at Lambeth Palace. The Cross of St. Augustine has historically been awarded to clergy and lay people of foreign churches who have contributed conspicuously to advancing friendly relations with the churches of the Anglican Communion. More recently it has also been given, to those who have helped advance relations between the various Christian communions and churches. Father Bill was recognized for being "a massive source of knowledge and advice for pilgrims to Jerusalem and is equally respected by the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. Father Bill is a former American Naval Chaplain who is also an archeologist assisting on the Ashkelon dig. Last year he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of the Holy Land where he also teaches.

Rev'd Canon Robert Edmunds has been inducted into The Most Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem in the National Cathedral in Washington. D.C. Father Bob is serving on mission from the US Episcopal Church as the Bishop's Chaplain and Pastor to the English-speaking congregation at St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. He was nominated for this honour because of his work in supporting the work of the Order of St. John which is an international charity providing first aid care and support services in 42 countries around the world. Its work in Palestine is conducted through two foundations, one of which is the St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. The Eye Hospital has satellite links throughout the West Bank and Gaza to support its work in delivering medical care, mobile outreach, training, teaching, and research.

HORN OF AFRICA... Gambella and the Somali Pirates

Bishop Andrew Proud's ambition is to establish a Community Centre at Gambella in the South West of Ethiopia. It is a remote and undeveloped district where Sudanese refugees are among those who seek to make a living. A distraction has arisen in the form of the Somali pirates. He says 'piracy is almost an industry' and that it is 'extremely depressing'. As there is no Christian church in Somalia he has been unable to make a visit. 'It is a lawless region, the people are desperate to settle down and achieve some stability, but I do not see it happening'. Bishop Andrew has visited the autonomous region of Somaliland and he has hopes that the church in the capital, Hargeisa, will be rebuilt. On his last visit he baptised five Christians 'we met in the dark and prayed and sang in a whisper.'

The Episcopal area of the Horn is a part of the Diocese of Egypt and has about 6000 Anglicans in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti as well as Somaliland and Somalia. Bishop Andrew's ambition remains to create in the neglected Gambella region a centre for employment and training but the great needs, dangers, insecurities and impoverishment throughout the region, also make heavy demands.



CHRISTIAN AID IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Tabitha Ross is Communications Officer for the Middle East at Christian Aid. She writes about their work in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories over the years and today.

Over 50 years in the Middle East

Christian Aid was established in the aftermath of the Second World War to help European refugees who had lost everything during the conflict. Since that time, we have consistently worked to alleviate suffering for the most vulnerable people, no matter what their faith.

In the 1940s and early 50s, this approach meant providing food, shelter and general support to European refugees, including Jewish refugees.

In the 1950s, as our work expanded all over the world, this meant providing aid to Palestinians who were displaced in the war following the creation of Israel in 1948.

Our then-director Janet Lacey visited the region in 1954, and saw the work we were supporting in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza through Middle Eastern church organisations.

She noted that our local partners 'regularly distribute food and clothing, mostly from America, and also provide supplementary education, medical care and housing, self-help programmes and vocational training'.

Combating poverty

Poverty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) has increased more than threefold since the Oslo peace process began in 1993, while violence on both sides has escalated.

At the same time, the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza makes it impossible for Palestinians to lead normal lives – to access sufficient education, healthcare, employment, even sufficient food and water.

87% of the population in Gaza live below the poverty line, a result of years of restrictions as well as the Israeli blockade, which severely limits supplies such as food, medicines and spare parts for industry and agriculture.

Christian Aid and partners are working to combat these problems both at the local and national levels.

At the local level, several of our partner organisations support individuals and communities to make a living despite the difficult conditions they face. Mu'in Al Atrich, 24, from Bethlehem is one of those individuals, he was shot by an Israeli soldier while on a demonstration, leaving him in a wheelchair.

Our partner the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) gave Mu'in counselling, vocational training, and a business loan and he now runs his own business, carving souvenirs for tourists. Mu'in says: "All this – the workshop, all I have achieved, I have to thank Christian Aid and the YMCA for". (*picture opposite*)

Christian Aid and partners also work at the national level in Israel and the OPT to challenge the structures that keep people poor. Partner organisations such as Israeli human rights group B'Tselem lobby the Israeli government to protect Palestinian rights, including the lifting of the blockade of Gaza, promoting freedom of movement and access to employment and markets. Christian Aid itself has called upon the British government to use its influence at the international level for the same ends.

Building the foundations of peace

Christian Aid also supports partners doing critical awareness raising and peace campaign work. One such is the Parents' Circle Families Forum, a group of Israelis and Palestinians who have all lost loved ones in the conflict, and yet come together to campaign for peace. They go into Israeli and Palestinian schools, giving an alternative message of hope and tolerance to children who may never have heard 'the other side' of the story before. As Rami Elhanan, (*pic, top left*) a Parents' Circle member who lost his daughter in a suicide bombing in 1994, says: 'Our blood is the same colour and our pain is the same pain. If we who have paid the highest price possible can still talk to one another, then anyone can'.

Another partner organisation doing critical work in breaking down barriers between Israelis and Palestinians is Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHR). Through PHR, Israeli doctors and nurses volunteer in the West Bank, treating Palestinians with reduced access to healthcare. PHR doctor Naomi Stockwell says that the medical benefit isn't the only value of this work: 'I want to show Palestinians that not all Israelis are like the ones they meet every day on the checkpoints. For me, the most terrifying thing is that children on both sides will grow up with hatred bred out of ignorance'.

Responding to emergencies: GAZA

All eyes were on Gaza at the beginning of this year, as the ongoing conflict erupted into violence on a huge scale.

The UN estimates that the latest Israeli attacks destroyed 14,000 homes, 219 factories and 240 schools, and killed over 1400 Palestinians, 288 of them children (*pic, opposite left*). 9 Israeli civilians and four soldiers lost their lives.

Christian Aid partners were there in the midst of the crisis, running ambulances and emergency clinics. As soon as a ceasefire ensured safe access, we stepped up the response, providing emergency aid, trauma counselling for children and getting those who had previously been inaccessible to medical care.

Christian Aid and partners will be there over the months ahead, helping Gazans to rebuild their shattered lives. But the crisis isn't over. The blockade means that not enough humanitarian aid can get in, and essential items continue to be restricted from entering, such as cement for reconstruction, and spare parts for repairs to sewage, water and electricity networks.

Without immediate and unfettered humanitarian access, thousands of displaced Palestinians, many of whom are already refugees forced to flee their homes in 1948 and 1967, will continue to go cold and hungry, simply existing, rather than living their lives in dignity and with hope.

Moreover, the continuing rocket attacks on Israel show us that the Israeli attacks as well as the blockade are counter-productive to the stated aim of putting an end to the rockets in order to protect the security of Israeli civilians. Israel has the right to defend itself, but it must do so within the law. This illegal policy of collective punishment is only serving to deepen despair and frustration in Gaza and therefore does not provide the security Israeli civilians long for.

Christian Aid's mandate from our sponsoring churches is to strengthen the poor, firm in the belief that all people are made in the image of God and therefore of equal worth. This belief still informs all of our work around the world, including, of course, in the land of Jesus' birth.

This is why Christian Aid is still working with partner organisations in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories – because everyone has the right to live in dignity and peace without fear.

We believe the way forward requires a long-term, just and peaceful solution that brings an end to occupation and guarantees security and viability for both Palestinians and Israelis.

It is as urgent today for Israelis to live without fear of attack, and for Palestinians to rise out of poverty and despair, as it was in 1959 when our former director Janet Lacey wrote only a political settlement can bring freedom to Palestinian refugees waiting for peace'.

'You can find out more about CA's work on the Gaza crisis at www.christianaid.org.uk/gaza or about our work across the Holy Land by following the 'online pilgrimage' www.christianaid.org.uk/pilgrimage

Christian Aid has now been working in the Middle East for over 50 years. We have built strong relationships with more than 25 local Israeli and Palestinian partner organisations, and work with them to respond to emergencies, for sustainable development, rights and justice for all, and to build the foundations of a just peace that provides security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

THE VICAR OF BAGHDAD

Canon Andrew White

Monarch Books £8.99. 190 pages ISBN 978 1 85424 876 3

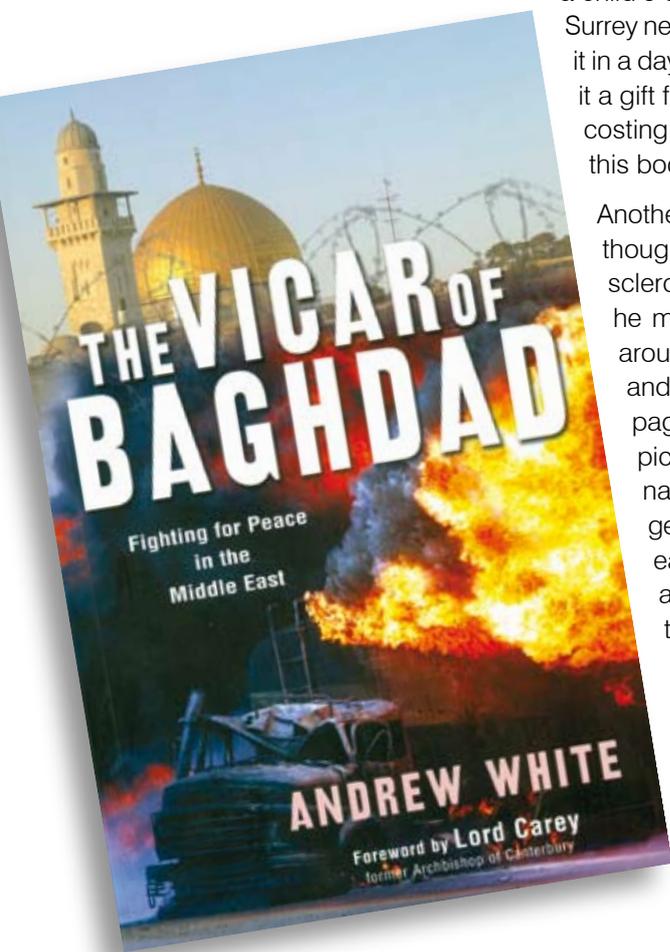
If you have an interest in the Middle East, an anxiety about the Iraq War or a concern about Christian/Moslem relations you will find plenty to feed your mind in this book. Andrew White is well placed, inside Baghdad, to write about all three issues and his frequent meetings with the principal players in religion and politics gives the reader unique insights.

The book is worth buying for the Siege of the Church of the Nativity chapter alone. He was present, trying to assist negotiations and his first-hand account is compelling reading, though harrowing. Another chapter tells of the problems of getting the heads of the three great Abrahamic religions to confer together and draw up the Alexandria Declaration which was a significant achievement at the time. Later chapters describe the congregation and life at St George's Church in Baghdad and should make any parish priest in UK think ten times before ever grumbling again as White needs a security convoy to get him to the church and body armour to protect him while he is there. One of his candid admissions is that the congregation, which had hardly any Anglicans, was gathered from the various Orthodox and Catholic traditions whose clergy were not too pleased with him, especially as he gave the congregation cash one week and food the next week. The numbers grew by a hundred a month and reached nearly two thousand! Parish priests at home, who spend endless time and effort as money raisers will be amazed by the ease with which he finds vast sums. When £30k was needed for a child's operation, it was there within the week. When an interfaith conference in Surrey needed £1million for the policing and he had a week to raise it, he produced it in a day. When a church leader was abducted a \$40k ransom was found, half of it a gift from GodTV. At the same time his personal security arrangements were costing £750 a day. Where all the money came from is only one of the questions this book poses, and does not answer.

Another thing which will astonish readers is the author's obvious energy, even though he makes it clear he is suffering the progressive illness of multiple sclerosis. Then there is more astonishment at the apparent ease with which he moves unharmed between warring factions at a time when bombs are around every corner. No one could undertake this work without a big ego and some readers will find the use of the first person singular, ten times a page on average, a bit hard to bear. This trait is underlined by the twenty four pictures, almost all of the author winning an Award or alongside a famous name: the Pope, ayatollahs and sheiks galore, Prime Ministers and many generals, usually inside the Pentagon. It is the Pentagon connection and the easy relations with the US military that will worry some readers. He is clear about his support for the invasion of Iraq, he is clear in his conviction that there were WMD, he is clear about his support for McCain over Obama for the US Presidency. This identification of the Christian church with the US military must raise the spectre of 'Crusade' among Moslems and yet when 89 members of his Christian congregation are abducted in five months and eleven of his staff disappear or are killed, he doesn't seem to see a connection. Many readers will be disturbed by this.

This book doesn't answer many questions but it is an inside story told with passion that needs to be read with cautious concern.

Timothy Biles



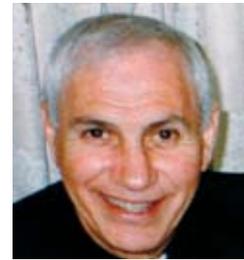
A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN CRY FOR RECONCILIATION

Canon Naim Ateek

Orbis Books. 224 pages.

“Twenty years in the writing, Canon Naim Ateek’s long awaited sequel to Justice only Justice, may prove to be the most important work ever written by a Palestinian theologian.” Says our reviewer, Revd. Dr. Stephen Sizer who is Vicar of Virginia Water in Guildford Diocese.

For those who know and respect Canon Ateek and the reconciliation work of the Sabeel Liberation Theology Centre in Jerusalem, the title says it all: A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation. He is unwavering in his conviction that “Our God-given mandate is to see that an enduring peace is achieved in the Middle East” The book explains the reasons for the struggle for justice; the tortuously slow progress made in the last twenty years; why successive peace agreements have failed; and why reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis is as elusive today as it was in 1948 or 1967. While brutally realistic, it is nevertheless a hopeful book, calling for justice for Palestinians, peace for Israelis and reconciliation for both.



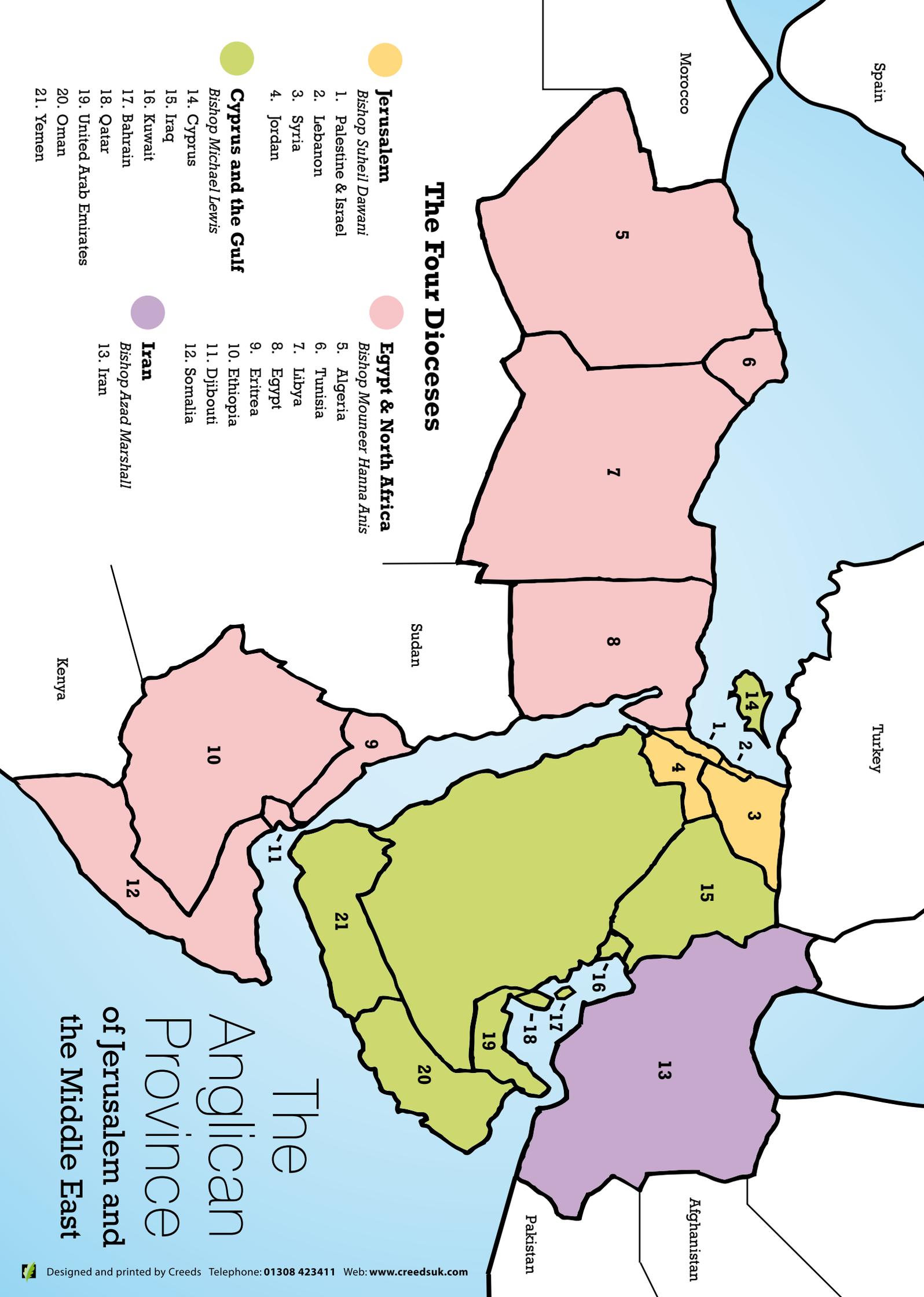
The book has three parts. The first part is entitled, “Recapping History” and traces the birth of Sabeel, Canon Ateek’s own personal story, the generous offer of the Palestinians to share the land in a “two state solution” and the consistent refusal of Israel to abide by international law which has led to both political extremism and the breeding of violence.

With great care, Canon Ateek explains why successive peace negotiations failed because they did not address the root cause of the conflict - Israel’s illegal occupation, annexation and colonisation of the West Bank. One of the most helpful sections refutes Zionist propoganda about the “generous offer” and shows how Palestinians have consistently been willing to compromise land for peace but to no avail.

The second part addresses Palestinian Liberation Theology in the service of nonviolence and peace. Here Canon Ateek examines the place of “Land” in Scripture and the centrality of the biblical demand for justice. He exposes the deficiencies and inherent racism of Zionist theology.. In successive chapters, Canon Ateek compares the strategies and paradigms of contemporary, historical and biblical figures such as Saddam Hussein, Jonah, Samson, Daniel and Judah Maccabeus.

The third and final part is appropriately entitled “The Peace we Dream of”. With sensitivity and compassion, Canon Ateek states Israel’s predicament - how to remain a Jewish State committed to ethnic nationalism without being compared to apartheid South Africa. He identifies the deficiencies of the “Two State Solution” and the need for Israelis and Palestinians to move from justice to forgiveness and reconciliation. Consistently throughout the book, Canon Ateek, seeks faith-based solutions from biblical models and scriptural injunctions “to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God”. Canon Ateek shows compellingly that one cannot divorce religion from politics. He insists both are deeply intertwined. “Religion can be a source of tremendous spiritual strength, but when misused and translated into action by people of power, can also become a deadly weapon.” In this vitally important book, Canon Ateek identifies the major principles or building blocks upon which a just and lasting peace can and must be built. He goes to the heart of the conflict and addresses the major obstacles to peace, not least the unconditional support successive US administrations have given Israel. He warns prophetically, “Only when justice is done and Palestinians can celebrate their own independence will a comprehensive peace be felt throughout the land. As long as one side celebrates while the other mourns, no authentic celebration or peace is possible.” As Jesus says, “Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.”

Stephen Sizer



The Four Dioceses

Jerusalem

Bishop Suheil Dawani

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

Egypt & North Africa

Bishop Mouneer Hanna Anis

5. Algeria
6. Tunisia
7. Libya
8. Egypt
9. Eritrea
10. Ethiopia
11. Djibouti
12. Somalia

Cyprus and the Gulf

Bishop Michael Lewis

14. Cyprus
15. Iraq
16. Kuwait
17. Bahrain
18. Qatar
19. United Arab Emirates
20. Oman
21. Yemen

Iran

Bishop Azad Marshall

13. Iran

The
Anglican
Province
of Jerusalem and
the Middle East