

Bible Lands

Summer 2015

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

www.jmecca.org.uk



Jerusalem



Egypt & North Africa



Cyprus & the Gulf



Iran



**The Princess Basma Centre for Disabled Children
celebrates 50th Anniversary – see pages 8-9**

Rise of Islamic State – see pages 3, 10-11, 12, 14

THE JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST CHURCH ASSOCIATION

(JMECA)

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'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'.

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JMECA Website www.jmecca.org.uk

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

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Views on the 'Islamic State' (IS)

King Abdullah II of Jordan

King Abdullah II of Jordan spoke to members of the European parliament in Strasbourg in March about the rise and the threat of the so-called Islamic State (IS).

He described IS as “an offence against humanity as well as Islam” He said they were terrorists with ruthless ambition “who were motivated by power rather than faith.” He affirmed the Christian presence and said “Arab Christians are an integral part of our region’s past, present and future.” He said: “All my life, every day, I have heard and used the greeting *as-salamu alaykum* – a wish for the other to be blessed with peace. This is what it means to be a Muslim.”

The King declared the problem was principally a problem within Islam “We, and other Arab and Muslim states, defend not only our people but our faith,” he said. “This is a fight that has to be carried out by Muslim nations first and foremost. This is a fight within Islam”.

In a powerful and moving expression of his Moslem faith he told the Assembly that “More than a thousand years ago, before the Geneva Conventions, Muslim soldiers were ordered not to kill a child, a woman, or an old person; not to destroy a tree; not to harm a priest; not to destroy a church. These were the same values of Islam we were taught in school as children: not to destroy or desecrate a place where God is worshipped; not a mosque, not a church, not a synagogue. This is what it means to be a Muslim. These are the values I teach my children. And they will hand it on to theirs.”

He warned that failure to achieve a final and comprehensive settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis was being used as a powerful rallying cry to recruit fighters and to breed hate, violence, and terror across the world. He called on countries to unite and provide the momentum and chart the way forward. Speaking to Europeans, he said we would not find better partners and neighbours than each other. “Our history and our geography bind us. Let no one separate us, because together we can create pillars of mutual respect that will support the common good for generations to come.”

Bishop Mouneer of Egypt

Following the murder of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya, Bishop Mouneer wrote on 16th February:

“It is with great sadness I write you about the heinous murder of 21 Egyptian Christians at the hand of the so-

called Islamic State branch in Libya. These men from the Upper Egyptian city of Samalout are no different from thousands of other Muslim and Christian Egyptians in Libya, seeking employment to support their families back home. Except that these 21 were specifically chosen for their Christian faith. The video of their beheading expressed the Islamic State’s intention to increasingly target the Copts of Egypt.” Bishop Mouneer went on to express heartfelt sorrow “The Anglican Church in Egypt and the world expresses its deep condolences to the families of these men, and also to his Holiness Pope Tawadros II, patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church.”

Please join me in praying for peace in Libya, Egypt, and the entire Middle East. Please pray the international community will act in wisdom, correctly and efficiently, and support Egypt in its war on terror. Please pray the churches of Egypt will comfort their sons and daughters, encouraging them to resist fear and hatred. And please pray for the perpetrators of this terrible crime, that God would be merciful to them and change their hearts. Jesus tells us in John 16:33, “In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Such cheer may seem impossible, but it is God’s promise. Please pray for us, that we may live lives worthy of his name, and hold to the testimony exhibited by the brave Egyptians in Libya.



His Beatitude Louis Sako

His Beatitude Louis Sako, Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, following a meeting with Pope Francis and ten heads of Middle East churches said:

“The entire international community should insist that Christians remain in the Middle East, not simply as minorities but as citizens enjoying full equality under the law and therefore in a position to continue to contribute to peace, justice and stability.”

For further comment see centre pages by Revd William Taylor.

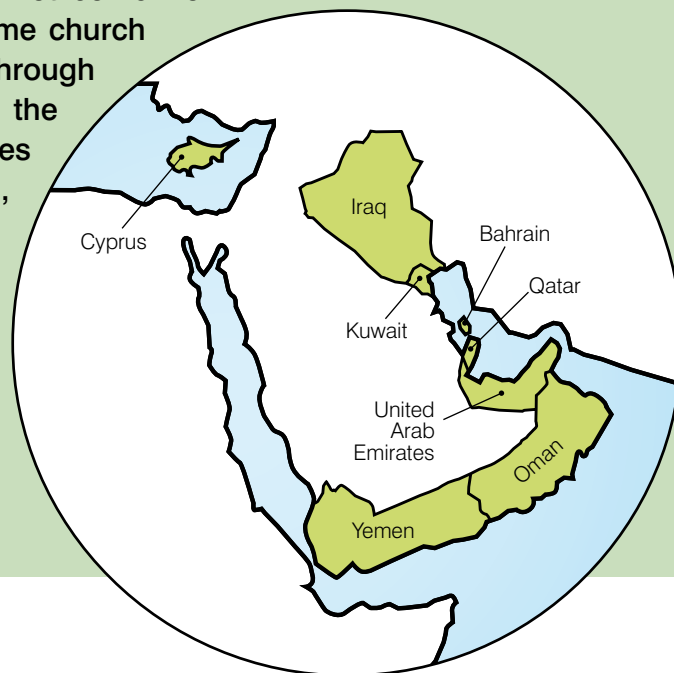
Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

www.cypgulf.org



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. Bishop Azad Marshall of Iran has a particular ministry to the Urdu-speaking congregations within our diocese."



Staff Appointments

The Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, Rt Revd Michael Lewis, has announced the following staff changes:

The Reverend Jeremy Crocker

is to be the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia. He will be installed in Nicosia on Sunday, 24th May, 2015. He has served in the Diocese of St Albans since his ordination, at Stevenage and Hatfield and as Team Rector of Elstow, Bedfordshire. Pray for Fr Jeremy, Beth, and their children as they prepare to move to Cyprus, and for the people of Nicosia.

The Reverend Timothy Heaney

is to be the parish priest of Christ Church Jebel Ali within the chaplaincy of Dubai with Sharjah and the Northern Emirates. Fr Tim moves to Christ Church from Holy Trinity Dubai. Please pray for Tim, Diane, their family, and the people of the whole chaplaincy at this time of transition.

Father Faiz Jerjes of Baghdad Licensed

Early in January Bishop Michael licensed Father Faiz Jerjes as parish priest of St George, Baghdad. In his

sermon, Bishop Michael gave thanks for the work of the Reverend Canon Andrew White and went on to talk about witnessing through bad times and good times. Mr Dawlat Abouna translated.

The church was full of people who came to witness the historic occasion including Fr Faiz's mother Evelyn. (Picture opposite.)

The Reverend Paul Scott Davies

Previously vicar of St Mary, Sunbury on Thames, in the Diocese of London is to be senior priest of the Church of the Epiphany, Qatar. He has served in the dioceses of Southwark and Lichfield. (See page 6.)

The Reverend Nelson Fernandez

The Bishop records that from 1 September 2014 Fr Nelson Fernandez has been serving as a full-time chaplain of the Mission to Seafarers in the United Arab Emirates. Until then he served as priest at St Luke, Ras al Khaimah. Pray for him and Sadha and all seafarers and shipping and port workers in the Gulf.

Departures

Reverend Canon Steve Wright

From 2003 until the end of 2014 Steve Wright has served a substantial incumbency at Christ Church Jebel Ali within the Chaplaincy of Dubai with Sharjah and the Northern Emirates. Previously he was chaplain of St Paul Ahmadi, Kuwait. Before arriving in Cyprus and the Gulf he ministered first in the Diocese of Sheffield and then in the Church of Nigeria, where he is an honorary canon of Asaba.

Reverend Andrew Tucker

For the last year and more Andrew Tucker has served at St Nicholas Fujairah in the same larger chaplaincy. He ministered in the Dioceses of Chester and Chichester before coming to Cyprus and the Gulf.

The Bishop says: *"The diocese has been the richer for knowing them, and their gentle and thoughtful service has touched the lives of many."*

The Reverend Nic Denny-Dimitriou

has been appointed parish priest of Coromandel Valley in the Diocese of Adelaide, South Australia. He expects to leave Cyprus towards the end of the first half of 2015. Pray for Nic, his wife the Revd Julia Denny-Dimitriou, and their children as they embark on the next stage of their life.

The Reverend Dr. Ruwan Palapathwala

ceased to hold the bishop's licence as senior chaplain in the chaplaincy of Dubai with Sharjah and the Northern Emirates, and as a priest in the diocese, from Monday 26 January 2015.

The Revd Canon Michael Jones RIP

The Bishop writes:

We record with sadness that the Revd Canon Michael Jones died after a long illness on 9 December 2014. He served twice in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf: as chaplain at St Paul Ahmadi, Kuwait, from 1983 to 1991 and then, after an incumbency in the Diocese of Norwich, as chaplain of St Barnabas Limassol and Mission to Seafarers port chaplain from 1996 to 2003. Latterly he was a Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia.

After education and formation at Lampeter and Durham he ministered in the Diocese of Durham and then for a period in Australia, returning in due course to the Dioceses of Carlisle and Blackburn. His funeral took place in Kenilworth parish church and we pray for Jean and their daughters as we thank God for his life and service.

St George's Baghdad

Response to Islamic State (IS)

Father Faiz Jerjes, the new priest in charge of Iraq's oppressed Christian community, made his first address to the annual Synod and was warmly received. He paid tribute to the faith of his troubled flock. "We are providing regular food rations for 250 families displaced by the Islamic State insurgency," he reported.

He told the Synod that IS offered the Christians three options: to convert to Islam, to pay onerous taxes or leave with nothing but the clothes they are wearing.

"We thank God that no-one has accepted to convert to Islam," he said.

"650,000 people prefer to be refugees and live in miserable conditions than to leave their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Meanwhile, the kindergarten set up in 2011 is now regarded as the best in all Iraq.

The clinic is providing free examinations and treatment for up to 90 families a day, including medical, dental, pharmacy and stem cell technology.

"The situation in Baghdad is getting better with the new government," he told Synod, "and we hope that the refugees from Erbil and in Baghdad will soon be able to return home."



Fr Faiz swearing the oath of canonical obedience

CHRIST CHURCH ADEN and THE EYE CLINIC

Turn to page 14 to read of the crisis and civil war in Yemen and the affect on the people of Aden. ▶

Epiphany Qatar – moving from strength to strength

Margaret Douglass, People's Warden Church of the Epiphany, writes of a time of change

The Anglican Centre in Doha, Qatar, has been acclaimed as a model for the churches of the Gulf, and rightly so. Hosting over 14,000 Christians each week, the Centre provides a church home for many faithful in Qatar. How did we get here? And where is the "anchor church", Church of the Epiphany, going?

In 2007, The Venerable William Schwartz came to Qatar as Chaplain to oversee this monumental project. Through Father Bill's careful ministrations, the building project took shape, changed with the needs of the rapidly expanding expatriate community in Qatar, and came to fruition in 2013. The Church of Epiphany was, at the time, a relatively small but growing congregation, anxious to help in the construction of a permanent church home. But it was not to be a home for just them; it became apparent quickly that the many and varied congregations from Protestant and Reformed traditions needed a place to worship, and the Qatari government looked to the Anglican Church to fulfill this need.

And fulfill it we did! Now hosting over 60 congregations, the Centre is a vibrant place of worship dedicated to providing safe space for Christians in Doha. Epiphany parish moved from their borrowed space in the Doha English Speaking School in July 2013, and the Centre was consecrated on 29 September, 2013 by Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, the Rt. Revd. Michael Lewis.

Father Bill is to be credited with the great success of moving the plans for the church from the drawing board to reality, and moving the parish from temporary space into our church home. We are grateful for his ministry among us. In January of this year, Father Bill moved on to take the role of Archdeacon in the Gulf full time, as the growing, constantly changing Gulf requires this now.



So where does Epiphany go from here? God willing, from strength to strength! The parish, like the Gulf, has grown tremendously over the last several years. We currently hold six weekly services – four in the Centre,



one in Al Khor, and one in Dukhan – in 3 languages (English, Tamil, and Igbo) and have over 400 regular worshippers. Now we wrestle, not with building a church in Qatar, but with what it truly means to BE the Church in Qatar. How do we serve the pastoral needs of so many people from so many places in this richly diverse congregation?

We have been blessed tremendously by our Assistant Chaplain, Fr. Jebaraj Devasagayam, who has stalwartly pastored the parish through this time of transition. We



Fr. Jerarash Devasagayam

were further blessed by the coming of Canon Ian Calder of Gloucester, who served brilliantly as locum for us at Bishop Michael's request, and also Fr. Ian Nicholson of New Zealand, who came to Qatar in the autumn and has been licensed by the Bishop to serve.

In May, we will install our new senior Chaplain, Fr. Paul Davies. Currently of Sunbury, UK, Father Paul comes to us ready to use his talents in community development and spiritual development to build up the



Fr. Paul Davies

congregations in this place. The church in Qatar requires vitality and creativity in order to serve all its members well, and Father Paul brings such attributes in spades. We are pleased that he and his lovely wife Sally have agreed to come to us, and look forward to his working with Father Jebaraj to continue to build and strengthen the Anglican Church and the community of the faithful in this place.

Margaret Douglass, People's Warden

Diocese of Jerusalem



The Episcopal 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.



Jerusalem Diocese Archbishopric restored

The Diocese of Jerusalem has been restored to the Archiepiscopal status it held before the Anglican presence in the Middle East was re-structured in 1976.

Bishop Suheil is now honoured as Archbishop and the raised status has been widely welcomed. The change emphasises three things of value to the local community and the wider church: it recognises the centrality of Jerusalem to the whole Christian story, that Jerusalem holds the foundation stones of our faith; it encourages the local indigenous community of Christians, who face many hardships, to realise that their significance in history and in the present moment is recognised; it strengthens the bonds with the historic sister churches of the Eastern and the Catholic traditions which have their Patriarchs in Jerusalem.



Staff Changes

The Diocesan Office in Jerusalem recently welcomed two new staff members:

Ghassan Isaac, CPA, General Accountant/Finance Director: Among other responsibilities, Ghassan will follow up on long term financial planning, budgeting and reporting, and will give financial advice and direction to Diocesan institutions. Ghassan has experience in formulating overall financial strategies for complex multi-branch organizations. In addition, he is knowledgeable in developing and managing operational and capital budgets, as well as cash flow projections.

Sami Khouri, Programmes Director: Among other responsibilities, Sami will follow up on planning, reporting, fundraising, visibility and compliance with donors. Sami comes with a background in programmatic quality assurance. The focus of his previous work experience has been primarily in planning, designing, monitoring and evaluation of development and relief projects and programmes, organizational strategic planning, and fundraising. He holds a Master's degree in International Cooperation and Development and a Bachelor's degree in Biology.

Princess Basma Centre for Children with Disabilities celebrates 50 years

For fifty years the Princess Basma Centre on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives has been providing a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for children with disabilities. They come from Jerusalem but also from all over the West Bank and Gaza. The aim is to fully integrate the children into their families and community.

The age of children admitted is from birth to fifteen years and the focus is on children with polio, cerebral palsy and suffering the traumas of war and bereavement.

The Centre, which has a wide reputation for excellence, was led by Mrs Betty Majaj until her recent retirement when the leadership passed to Mr. Ibrahim Faltas.

Nisreen Minarios, the Princess Basma Centre Communications officer, writes of the work still growing after 50 years of service.

On a journey of recovery and hope

When Adam was two months old his mother noticed something unusual; Adam was not disturbed by the loud music and noise around him at a relative's wedding in Ramallah. The next day she took him to a local pediatrician hoping her son was simply quiet but after several tests, Adam was diagnosed with the neurodevelopment disorder, Microcephaly.

"When I walked out of the pediatrician's room, I thought I was going to collapse! I was devastated and confused and could not grasp all that I had heard. I was depressed and could not go to work for two consecutive weeks. I was deeply concerned about Adam and what his life was going to look like with such disability" said Lina, Adam's mother. "I immediately started looking for ways to try to help Adam in any way I could. That was when I first heard about Princess Basma Centre".

When Adam was first admitted

to Princess Basma Centre in 2012, he was seven months old. His initial checking was conducted by Dr. Waddah, the medical director at PBC. "When I checked Adam he was unable to roll over or sit. He had no trunk control, unable to respond to any auditory command. He was unable to bear weight by his arms and showed facial muscles weakness. With poor concentration and poor vocal play, he was not even able to recognize his mother or any other family member".

Immediately after his assessment, a comprehensive rehabilitation program was designed at the centre and customized specifically for Adam's case. It included multiple therapy streams to include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, recreational therapy and hydrotherapy.

During each visit, Adam was treated daily for three consecutive weeks with his mother by his side, closely observing and learning from therapists. After the second visit, Adam started showing improvement. But after the fourth visit, Lina felt more confident about helping Adam at home with what she had observed but this time among family members.

"He gradually started to sit alone, crawl, stand and walk without any help" Lina added. "With rail support he could go up and down the stairs. He started using both hands to play and hold objects. He even wanted to eat without help using a spoon. His eye-hand coordination and concentration improved, even if slowly. He was able to match and distinguish between objects and recognizing family members. I knew things were getting better when he started responding and started using words and phrases to express his needs. Adam has gone through an impressive journey of improvement, thanks to the support of Princess Basma staff".



Refurbishing the Child Rehabilitation Department 2014

Rehabilitating the Child Rehabilitation Department

Princess Basma Centre continues to find ways to ensure that children from East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza, such as Adam, and their mothers have quality and comprehensive rehabilitation services. In 2014, the center embarked on a journey of refurbishing its “Child Rehabilitation Department” in Jerusalem. This department being in the heart of the mission and services of the center had become old, dilapidated and unsafe for working with children.



Through the generous support from the Islamic Development Bank, and United Thanks Offering and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, the renovation works are almost complete and the new department is ready for opening in May 2015.

The 1000 square meters space (almost 11,000 sq feet) department will be a safer, child-friendly environment and where comprehensive rehabilitation services are provided to children with disabilities. There will be physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and recreational therapy. It will allow for new services such as music therapy. Children referred are diagnosed with a large range of disabilities including neuromuscular diseases, congenital malformations, post musculoskeletal traumas, and communicative disorders.

“We feel blessed and encouraged by the support of our friends and donors during the upgrading of the Child Rehabilitation centre at PBC” said the Most Rev Suhail Dawani, Archbishop in Jerusalem. “We urge our friends around the world to continue to pray for this important ministry especially for children with disabilities in the Palestinian Territories. Today, and after 50 years of great work at the centre, we hope to continue expanding the scope of our work by providing the best quality rehabilitation and health care services to all children with disabilities in Palestine and improving the center’s infrastructure.

[For more information on how you can get involved in the ministry of Princess Basma Centre, please contact info@basma-centre.org or visit our website www.basma-centre.org or to learn how you can support the Hydrotherapy Pool Renovation project]

Established in 1965, Princess Basma Centre

works with children with disabilities from all over the Palestinian Territories reaching more than 1000 children with disabilities from East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza and around 1000 adults from Jerusalem and the West Bank. Despite all the challenges and hindrances within the current political, social and economic context in Palestine, Princess Basma Centre continues to ensure that all children have quality health care, rehabilitation services and inclusive education to empower them, and to ensure their maximum level of independency and full integration and participation in their communities. The Centre’s services include physical rehabilitation, inclusive education, the development and dissemination of best practices, and influencing policies and legislation.



SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHRISTIANS OF IRAQ IN THE FACE OF ISIS

Revd William Taylor, a Director of JMECA, writes of his visit to Iraq. His full report is available on www.jmece.org.uk – an edited version follows:

At the request of Archbishop Justin of Canterbury, Bishop Geoffrey Rowell and I went to Iraq in a gesture of solidarity at Christmas time. The visit arose out of the day the Archbishop hosted at Lambeth Palace for representatives of Christian communities from the Middle East, especially those from Iraq and Syria facing a critical situation. Our visit had three objectives:

- To show the solidarity of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England for suffering Christians and other minorities, especially those who have been forced to flee the occupation of their homes and lands by the (self-declared) IS militants.
- To assess the humanitarian needs of the local Churches, and to make appropriate recommendations for practical help.
- To listen to the communities and their leaders in their hopes and aspirations for the future.

The visit was hosted by Archbishop Bashar Warda of the Chaldean Catholic Church, who is working in Erbil, (Iraqi Kurdistan) with an ecumenical team from the Assyrian (Church of East), Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, and Protestant Churches. The work of the church leadership and hundreds of volunteers is inspirational, as they care for approximately 120,000 internally displaced people (IDP). The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) estimates that the Kurdistan region is currently providing shelter and refuge for 1.2million IDPs.

Care on the frontline: solidarity

Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan is not far from the area occupied by IS. It has a frontline and slightly surreal quality. The knowledge that brutalities are being committed ten

kilometres down the road, together with the damaged infrastructure of the place, set side-by-side with five star hotels with Bentleys, Range Rovers and Jaguars parked outside them, gives a very real sense that war has always been good for business for some. In the midst of this strange mix, the churches of the region are doing deeply impressive work caring for IDPs, with their many immediate needs. The most immediate need is housing,

shelter and food. When the people of Mosul and the surrounding villages fled the IS takeover in August of last year, they had no option but to live under trees and in any shelter they could find from the 40 degree heat. The next stage was to set up tent centres for those who were living on streets and in the open. This happened quickly, thanks to the leadership of the local churches and NGOs, supported by the major international charities – UNHCR, Save the Children, Oxfam, Kirche In Not and others. In winter these tents were no longer appropriate, and were largely replaced by portacabins. We saw the work of housing, feeding and providing education for children as we visited many centres for IDPs in and around Erbil and Dohuk – the terms ‘camps’ and ‘refugees’ are rejected by local people.

We heard heart-rending stories from individuals and families as they told us what had happened to them. We heard from children who had lost their parents, and we heard from parents who had lost their children. We heard from victims of brutality, women and men, young and old, some of whom told us of rape. Telling their stories to people who will listen is part of the necessary process of healing for victims of trauma. As Fr Douglas Bazi, who runs the Mar Elia Centre in Erbil said, “We don’t want internally displaced people to be internally damaged”. He is also in charge of a team of trauma counsellors. Hearing and inwardly digesting these important stories is what we understood by solidarity, and was mutually strengthening, even though many of the experiences recounted are draining to hear.

Working together: humanitarian needs

We talked to a group of 27 Dominican nuns, who were forced to flee Mosul with just a few hours’ notice, abandoning their



Daily life in Mar Elia Centre



Mar Elia Centre in Erbil, with Fr Douglas and Fr Daniel



Some of the team, themselves displaced, caring for internally displaced people

convents and churches, and arriving in Erbil with only the clothes they stood in. They now live in portacabins in that city, and are part of the major relief operation which is being carried out by NGOs and churches. This work is deeply impressive – of the four bishops who lead it, three are internally displaced people themselves, as they had been working in Mosul. The quality and dedication of the clergy and religious we met was inspirational, as was the commitment and care of the hundreds of volunteers who are working with them. We met no one who regarded the work as somebody else's problem, which is of course a message for churches worldwide. The immediate humanitarian needs for people who have lost everything are obvious, and were generally articulated to us as including:

- Food; shelter and housing; medication for the sick; education for children
- Meaningful employment for those of working age; Care for the elderly

The ecumenical work of the churches is amongst the most impressive I have seen anywhere in the world, and this inspired and energised me. The churches work hand-in-hand with NGOs and other charities, are highly efficient and organised, and know exactly what is happening on the ground in the different centres, and what the needs and issues are. The IDPs themselves who live in the centres are also not passive victims, and have developed structures for good order and governance for the centres, working as part of the relief effort generally. In this sense they are empowered people, and do not see themselves as victims in their present circumstances.

Justice and education: aspirations for the future

The displaced people we met, and their leadership, are very clear about what they want:

- The right to return to their historic homelands, supported by the legal means to regain their homes, churches and land
- The protection of a United Nations peacekeeping force, supported by the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga
- The bringing to justice of those who have committed crimes against humanity
- The setting up of a "truth and reconciliation commission" along the lines of the South African model, to heal communities which have been fractured by mistrust and violence.

If Christians and other minorities are to stay in the region, they must be able to participate fully in the life of society – economically, politically, and in every other sense. The leadership of the Chaldean Catholic Church has energetic and visionary plans to open an English-language university in Erbil, and have set themselves the incredibly ambitious target of opening in September 2015. Employment generation schemes are being put into place by

the churches, NGOs and the KRG, some of which are already beginning to happen. Extra places in the school and education system are being provided so that IDPs are brought into the educational mainstream immediately.

“We are down to earth, come and dance with us”



This is what one of the children, in a tent prepared for Christmas, called out to the Assyrian priest Fr Daniel and me as we watched their preparations for a Christmas talent show, which included a dance routine to Jingle Bells. So we danced with them and, in my case, not very well. This for me summarised the visit. There are people who have gone through an experience of violent trauma, have lost everything materially, but are spiritually and existentially vibrant. Again and again we heard that it was people's faith which sustained them, and gives them hope for the future. They are optimistic that what they hope for can be achieved but it will not happen without the informed prayer and action from people around the world, especially in the churches. As the Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, His Beatitude Louis Sako, has written, "What these peaceful Christians and loyal citizens experienced is a real genocide... and a shameful stain in history. Everybody should know that this is a threat for all!" Patriarch Sako met with Pope Francis and ten heads of Middle Eastern churches. After that meeting he wrote, "the entire international community should insist that Christians remain in the Middle East, not simply as minorities, but as citizens enjoying full equality under the law, and therefore in a position to continue to contribute to peace, justice and stability."

For my own part, I remain committed to keeping the needs of these displaced and traumatised people before the eyes of a wider community, and I am grateful for this opportunity to share some of their hopes with colleagues in the Diocese.

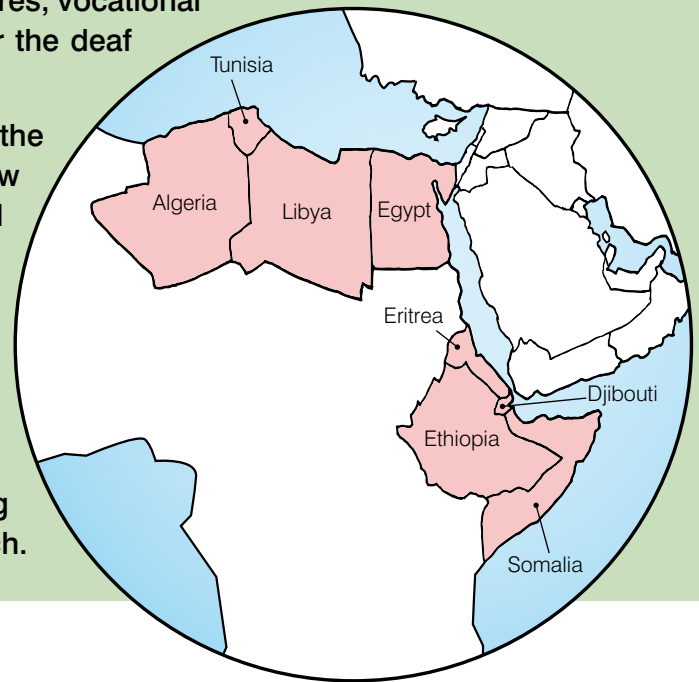
The Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa



Since its beginning in 1839, the Diocese has been committed to serve others as Jesus did. We are committed to serving all people holistically, regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically we are small, but 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 Diocese supports over 30 institutions which include hospitals, clinics, nurseries, schools, a theological seminary, micro-enterprise ventures, vocational training programs, as well as institutions for the deaf and the disabled.

The five goals of the Diocese 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; to dialogue with other faith communities.

Support from The Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association (JMECA) to the Diocese in recent years has been directed to helping with mission work, ordination training for Egyptian candidates and medical outreach.



Archbishop of Canterbury visits Egypt

After the beheading of 21 Christians in Libya, Archbishop Justin Welby contacted me and expressed his desire to come and give condolences to Pope Tawadros II and the Christian community in Egypt. This incident shook the conscience of the whole world, awakening the church worldwide to the fact that Coptic Christians are ready to die for the sake of their faith in Christ.

Archbishop Welby arrived in the early hours of April 19 and left at the early hours of the next day. In addition to the condolence visit to the Pope, meetings were organized between the Archbishop and President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, as well as with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayyib.

At the meeting with the President, Archbishop Welby offered his condolences for the victims of terrorist attacks in Egypt, especially those by ISIS in Libya against Coptic Christians. He thanked the President for his care and support for the Christian minority. At this point, the President emphasized that Egyptian Christians are not a minority but members of one Egyptian family. "They have full rights as Egyptian citizens," the President said.

President Sisi said that terrorism and extremism are the products of ignorance, poverty, and isolation from the modern world, in addition to a poor religious rhetoric. He shared his hopes that Western universities would offer scholarships to Egyptian students, which would not only advance their technical skills and knowledge, but also expose these students to different cultures, opening new generations to the diversity of the world.

During this meeting, the President agreed to allow us to use a quote from his Christmas visit to the Coptic Cathedral: "the solution to our problems is to seriously love one another." The meeting lasted for 70 minutes and was very warm and encouraging.

At the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Archbishop Welby handed Pope Tawadros II twenty-one letters of condolence written by members of the Church of England. The Pope shared about the strong faith exhibited by parents of the martyrs in Libya, who are proud of their sons for not denying Christ, welcoming instead their death for his sake.

+Mouneer April 23rd 2015

Loving our Syrian neighbour

Background to the Situation

In 2013, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) saw a dramatic rise in the number of Syrians taking refuge in Egypt. In response, it set up an operation dedicated for registering Syrian refugees in the building next to All Saints' Cathedral, the Mother Church of the Diocese of Egypt. Today, there are nearly 140 000 UNHCR registered Syrian refugees living in Egypt (over 50 000 households).



Would you like a drink?

One Sunday, Manal was helping and said, "This day I will never forget. From the time, I entered the place where the Syrians wait; I felt a mixture of joy and peace. I expected only to serve them some tea and milk. I asked a young lady in a wheelchair if she would like a drink. She asked me, "Are you from the UN? Can you help facilitate this paperwork for us?" I explained we are not employed by the UN; we are Christians from the church coming to express our love for you. Her mother said, "My daughter was normal, but when she heard the noise of the shooting and bombs in Syria her nervous system became damaged and she is now unable to walk." I told her that the church prays for peace in Syria. She said, "We also love Christians. The drink of juice then became a sign of our love for her, not just a drink.

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
Heb. 13:2

In November, we began on Sundays serving refreshments and distributing pictures for children to colour while the Syrian families wait to be called for registration.

Last Christmas and New Year, we launched an appeal to help us sustain and expand this ministry.

You very generously gave GBP 10357 and we also received local donations of LE 5793, totalling GBP 10850, approx. LE 124284

So far, we have spent LE 9640 (approx. GBP 800) on our ministry of hospitality.

In addition to this, we recognised that the mothers were keen for their children to drink milk, so we have given sixteen bags of powdered milk costing LE 1503 (approx. GBP 125).

We have also financially assisted 22 families who are living in the very poor suburbs of Cairo with medical, food, housing, costing LE 5825 (approx. GBP 485).

We also held a Mothers' Day event for over 150 mothers and their 250 plus children costing LE 12236 (approx. GBP 1020).

We also met as a team at a retreat centre to plan and pray about the future of this ministry costing LE 770 (approx. GBP 65).

Our total expenses so far are LE 29974 (approx. GBP 2500).

Our Mothers' Day

The 6th of October City, an outlying district of Cairo, the Diocese of Egypt held a Mothers' Day at the Diocesan Vocational Training Centre. This was attended by over 150 Syrian mothers and their 250 children. The recently appointed director of this centre lived in Syria for ten years and is married to a Syrian and has three children. The centre also houses a Refugee Clinic for pre and post natal care, currently serving 250 cases a week.

The goal of the day was threefold:

- 1) Provide a safe place for the Syrian mothers in the local community to come and have a 'day out' and meet other Mums and know that their children are having fun!
- 2) Speak about the problems being faced in Egypt and how to adjust to this different culture.
- 3) Open channels of communication for us to be able to provide psychological, moral and social help while they are in Egypt.

Loving our Iraqi neighbour

Egypt & North Africa Bishop Mouneer Hanna Anis

Bishop Mouneer Encourages Support

In July 2014 Bishop Mouneer issued a statement of support for the people of Iraq in the face of the growing threat from the self-named Islamic State. He stated “the suffering, persecution and displacement of Iraqi Christians, especially in the Mosul area, is a disgrace to the international community which is not doing enough to rescue the people of Iraq from the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS”. He also expressed his deep sadness for burning and looting of churches in Iraq, noting that the Chaldean Church in Iraq goes back to the first century. He added that emptying Iraq of Christians is a great loss to the people of Iraq. He called upon the Iraqi government and the international community to make every effort to stop these terrorist crimes against Christians and called upon Al Azhar Al Sherif and Muslim scholars in the Middle East to stand against the terrorist ideologies of these terrorists who have also killed innocent Muslims.

In January 2015, funds were sent by the Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa, the

Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, and their partners. As soon as they were made available in Iraq, they were channelled through Patriarch Louis-Raphael I Sako of the Chaldean Catholic Church, the historic church of Iraq. Approximately 15,000 internally displaced Christians from the Plain of Nineveh and the city of Mosul now live in compounds around Erbil, 650 people to a compound. The Rev. Faiz Jerjes, Anglican priest in Baghdad, visited the internally displaced Christians in the North of Iraq. His exploratory mission concentrated on the Erbil complex, to which relief funds were sent. During his time in Erbil, he visited one of the compounds and spoke with the Chaldean Catholic priest serving there under the Patriarch. They discussed how the \$186,500 disbursed through the Dioceses of Egypt and Cyprus and the Gulf had been used.

The funds have been gratefully received and have supported the purchase of caravans, of housing units, water tanks, and blankets for the compound.

Christ Church Aden and the Eye Clinic

Cyprus and the Gulf Bishop Michael Lewis

STOP PRESS

In March there were strikes and demonstrations in Aden and aerial bombardment of the residence where President Hadi was staying. There was armed conflict between government forces and the Houthi movement but the Eye Clinic remained open and continued to operate as normal seeing between 40 and 50 patients each day.

In April we held our breath in a still unfolding national crisis affecting the whole of the Yemen. The former, deposed president, Al Abdullah Saleh, is deeply implicated in the Houthi rebel advance and plainly wishes to regain power by any means. A little while ago it was necessary for the Revd Velvet John and his wife the Revd Vijaya John to return to India when things became too dangerous for foreigners. Our Roman Catholic neighbour, the priest at St Francis, has had to do the same in consultation with his bishop. Our Pakistani family at Christ Church also left, at the last possible moment, for Pakistan via Djibouti. Our clinic has, at the time of writing and again at the last possible moment, suspended its work, mainly because medical staff are unable to travel to Ras Morbat each day. The redoubtable and outstanding Mansour Khan, general administrator and, as it were, father to Ras Morbat and its community, is watching ceaselessly as the crisis develops. Pray for him, for Vijaya and Velvet, for the people of the beleaguered city, and for order and justice to come to the Yemen at last.

... for latest news update see www.cypgulf.org/

Loving our Sudanese neighbour

Area Bishop Horn of Africa:
Rt. Revd. Dr. Grant Le Marquand

bishopgrant777@gmail.com

Egypt & North Africa
Bishop Mounner Hanna Anis

Gambella

Gambella is located in the west of Ethiopia, and borders with South Sudan. It is home to a mix of ethnic groups including Anuak, Dinka, Nuer, Mabaan, Jum-Jum and Opo.

The Gambella Region is one of the poorest regions in Ethiopia and suffers from extreme poverty: at least 44% of the population live under the poverty line, child mortality is a third higher than the national average, and no more than 10% of women are literate. These problems are further compounded by marginalization, socio-political instability, eco-fragility (with drought and flooding), ethnic tensions, loss of land and displacement.

Ethiopia has a population of 95 million, and prior to December 2013, the population of Gambella was estimated to be 385,000. However, since the conflict started in South Sudan, an additional 150,000 refugees have sought refuge in Gambella. It is estimated that this number will double by the end of 2014, stretching the already scarce resources.

The Anglican Church in Ethiopia

Until recent years, there was only one Anglican congregation in Ethiopia, St Matthew's in Addis Ababa. However, during the protracted civil war in Sudan (from the mid-1970s until the early part of the new millennium), large numbers of refugees sought shelter in Ethiopia. Many of these new refugees were Anglican and they began churches in the refugee camps.

Later, Anglican churches were established in the villages of the Gambella region, in the west of Ethiopia. The priests who were ordained at that time had no opportunity to receive theological education, as they were ordained in a war-time situation.

Now there are 80 Anglican Churches in Gambella worshipping in a variety of languages. Some churches are in refugee camps, some are in villages. Some have a simple church building to worship in, while others meet under the shade of a tree.

The Anglican Church in Ethiopia is part of the Episcopal Area of the Horn of Africa, which is part of the Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa. Led by the Area Bishop for the Horn of Africa, The Right Rev. Dr. Grant Le-Marquand, this area includes Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia.



Plans for Theological Centre of St. Frumentius



Rev. Johann Vanderbijl sends joyful news, coming just after the Area Assembly where Gambella clergy gathered to pray and cast vision together.

"We have the government's blessing to start St Frumentius' Anglican College in late August 2015. This means we can forge on ahead with plans other than building and fund raising. Last week, we visited several seminaries, colleges, and Bible Schools in Addis to learn more about how things are done around here. I am thrilled to report that everyone we spoke to was more than helpful and genuinely happy to have a Theological College open in Gambella since the closest Bible School is a day's drive to the West.

I am also chuffed to say that our College will be open to all denominations and, thanks to an agreement between respective Primates, to students from across the border. This camaraderie restores one's hope that the High Priestly prayer of Jesus might not be a pipe dream after all...perhaps we can all be one even as He and the Father are one."

Bishop Grant

Islam: A Religion, A Culture, A Society

Bill Schwartz

Christians Aware 2014

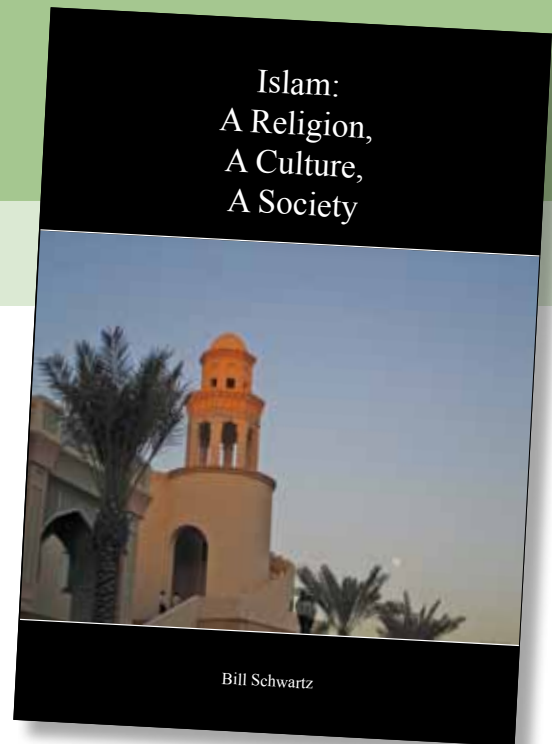
ISBN 978 1 973372 51 7 130pp £8.00

Islam is under scrutiny as never before. Misinformation, over-simplification and deliberate lies fill the space where answers should be found. Questions from the Charlie Hebdo killings concerning freedom to insult are answered by secularists with no understanding of Islam, or by Muslims with no comprehension of how to reply within the post-modern world, and those who say that ISIS doesn't represent Islam hide behind clichés.

Bill Schwartz' short book is, therefore, well timed, and both perplexing and significant. Its basic tenet is that Islam is not like Christianity and that Christians seriously misunderstand Islam if they try, for example, to suggest that Muhammad is parallel to Jesus and the Bible to the Qur'an. Those who emphasise commonalities in Muslim-Christian dialogue are taught the error of their ways. He explains how different the essence of Islam is, that there is no way to have a personal relationship with God in it, that the Community of the Faithful, the 'Ummah', takes precedent over private respects, and that Americans have real problems because the two systems, of rational enlightenment democracy and Islam are totally different. It is really helpful for him to make the case so strongly and clearly.

Written from an Evangelical and American perspective, *Islam: A Religion, A Culture, A Society* deals with one tradition within Islam, and its main weakness is that just as it ignores any other form of Christianity, it assumes that Islam is a monolithic cohesive structure. The Islam it describes is that known to Schwartz from the many years of ministry in the Arabian Peninsula. This is important today because what he writes about is the Wahhabi revivalist primitivist tradition a relatively modern ideology springing from what is now Saudi Arabia. This Wahhabism is the source of much of the violence which inspires al Qa'ida and ISIS. Schwartz quotes, for example, as a significant Muslim authority Sayyid Qutb who was significant in the beginnings of the Muslim Brotherhood but whose position is clearly not that of the Brotherhood in contemporary Syria.

I found the book helpful because this is not the Islam which I met when living and working in Syria, Jordan and Turkey, but is of a type which Muslims in those countries have generally rejected. The primitivist tradition lacks the cultural depth and artistic beauty of more mainstream Islam, and this explains why there



is no reference to the glories of Maghrebi, Syrian and Ottoman Islamic art, music and culture, let alone that of Shi'a Islam; nor is there a hint of Sufi mysticism, despised by the Wahhabis, nor of the breadth of expression within Islam, nor the brilliance of Muslim scholarship throughout the ages. There is little sense that there is an Islam outside of the Arab world.

Schwartz's experience of Islam is one which follows the Hanbali school of law, the most rigorous of the 4 schools of Islamic jurisprudence. His work is important in exposing the extreme version of Islam which has been funded in the Arabian Peninsula and whose missionary activities has led to the murder of many mainstream Muslim scholars, as well as thousands of other mainstream Muslims.

But there needs to be a health warning. The book assumes an American readership, and the Islam portrayed may be wealthy and virulent but it is not the cultured, subtle, thoughtful Islam which has flourished from Indonesia to Morocco. The Muslim in the mall in Austin or the baseball game in Denver probably does not come from the hard and destructive Wahhabi puritanism described by Schwartz, but far more likely from a Sufi or Shi'a sect as horrified by ISIS as the average American.

Stephen Griffith

*The Revd Stephen Griffith MBE
is a parish priest in Southwark diocese
and formerly worked in Jordan, Lebanon,
Syria, Turkey and the Caucasus*

A second review of this very important book was received from the publishers, Christians Aware

When the thoughts of many are drawn almost daily by the news to the Middle East, the arrival of this book is very timely. Written with Westerners and Christians particularly in mind, especially Americans, it opens a window into the fundamental convictions of Muslims, not least in the Arab World. Its author has lived and worked in countries which are the heartlands of Islam. He has been involved with Muslims in a variety of ways through most of his working life and has come to understand at some depth their instincts and the way they approach life. Currently he is the Anglican (Episcopal) Archdeacon in the Gulf. He knows whereof he speaks.

In recent days, we have seen the growth of an increasingly obvious sense of Islamic identity. Too often, the response to this in the West has been negative, fuelled by scare-mongering in the press and expediency on the part of politicians. Opinions are all too quickly formed without any serious attempt at understanding. Caricatures and stereotypes abound. This book can go a long way to correct that. It sets out to be "an attempt to help Christians understand Islam and Arab Islamic cultural values from an Islamic point of view on a level that is accessible to 'average' church-going people."

Bill Schwartz rightly warns against the simplistic comparisons between Christianity and Islam that one often encounters, such as equating the roles of Jesus and Muhammad. Recognising the different concepts of revelation is fundamental to a true understanding of how the two faiths differ from one another. Christians believe that in Jesus Christ the nature of God is revealed, the way to a deeper relationship with God is opened up and salvation is possible. This is unthinkable for a Muslim for whom God is totally transcendent, wholly other. Through the Qur'an, principally, God has revealed the right way to live in society. People are not reconciled to God but guided in right social relationships. "The Muslim sees only the need of a guide, not a saviour".

For the Muslim, Islam governs the whole of life. There can be no division between public and private. As the title of this book makes clear, Islam is "A Religion, A Culture and A Society". The western secular idea of the separation of religion from politics, the privatisation of faith, is quite foreign to the Arab Muslim, as to most Arab Christians.

Following from these fundamental principles, the author considers a number of ways in which Muslims respond to the demands of living, sometimes contrasting Muslim and Christian responses. Where western Christians hold that the decision to follow Christ is an individual matter, albeit not without communal implications, in Islam individual thinking is not valued and, indeed, often instinctively repudiated. Community pressure is exerted against those who contemplate something other than Islam. Chapters follow on "Unclean and Clean" and "Religion and Society". While noting that the impact of foreign cultures and sciences sometimes led to a distinction between religion and culture in medieval and modern Islam, the author points out that there is no indication of such a distinction in the Qur'an. A chapter on Christian-Muslim Dialogue has useful practical advice and some timely warnings.

At the end of the book there are several appendices. Among them are two bibliographies. The first divides books (and one or two videos) into categories of "Non-Helpful" and "Helpful". Would that more authors might do this! There is set out the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, dating from September 1981. It can usefully be read in conjunction with Chapter 9 on "Human Rights and Religious Freedom". This is a book about Islam with a difference, reflective as well as descriptive. I commend it warmly and hope that it will be widely read. If you wish to know what makes Muslims tick, buy this book!

+Clive Handford

The reviewer was bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf 1996-2007 and Presiding Bishop of the Province of the Middle East from 2002 until his retirement in 2007

FRIENDS OF DIOCESE OF IRAN

**24 Hour Residential Conference: September 12th, 12.30 to 2.00pm, Sunday 13th
London School of Theology, Northwood Middlesex**

The Revd. Mansour Borji, Academic Dean of PARS Theological Centre will be the keynote speaker. Mansour holds a BA in Theology and Bible and an M.Phil in Islamic Studies. He is the founder of 'The Iranian Centre for Christian Culture and Thought'.

Others will also speak and lead discussions on the theme of –

Iran today – where is God leading...?

All booking enquiries to Mrs Christine Goldsmid, 1 Berkeley Court, Gordon Rd., Ealing W5 2AE
Tel: 0208 998 4748 or email: chrsgoldsmid@hotmail.co.uk

From the Rt Revd. Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston and Chair of the British Regional Committee of St George's College, Jerusalem



This is an extremely challenging time for Christians in the Middle East. We are all very aware of the enormous challenges which face our complex, plural and inter-connected world, and also the particular issues facing both the local church and the people in Israel/Palestine. St George's College Jerusalem has a unique ministry within this much broader context, and I am delighted to be able to tell you that the Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, has graciously agreed to be its Patron.

The College's role is summed up in its Mission Statement:

"St George's College, Jerusalem is an Anglican community of education, hospitality, pilgrimage and reconciliation. Through study, site visits, engaging with the local Christian community, prayer and reflection, lives are transformed and faith renewed."

In response to this, it is trying to encourage wider participation on its excellent courses from across the Anglican Communion and beyond, focusing particularly on people training for ordination or are near the beginning of their ministry. It is also developing opportunities for interfaith dialogue, particularly between members of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths, and actively supporting the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Anglican Church in the Middle East.



Feedback from recent course participants has been very positive. One who attended last summer's course for ordinands described it as "a life-changing experience" on which "the quality of teaching and the overall experience surpassed all expectation." On return from the "Beyond the Edge" course, another wrote, "I have a new richness to inform my prayers, preaching, teaching and retreat leading. Our hearts are better informed and so are our prayers." The "Children of Israel" course gave one member "a better knowledge of the inter-religious context in Jerusalem and Israel, deepened Christian spirituality through encountering people of the Jewish and Islamic faiths, and a greater fluency with the spirituality and foundations of Judaism and Islam".

St George's College clearly has a great deal to offer and I hope that you will play your part in making its excellent work more widely known. The full programme of courses for 2015 and 2016 is at <http://sgcjerusalem.org>

You may also want to consider making a donation to our Bursary Fund: applicants for bursaries would not be able to attend the courses without financial support, and your generosity in contributing to the Fund would be greatly appreciated. Cheques can be sent to the Revd John Angle, Bethany, 14 Farthing Combe, Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2DR.

*The Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham
and Bishop of Kingston*

THE LAST WORDS

From Shirley Eason, the Administrator:

Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza Appeal 2014

Many thanks from Debbie and I in the JMECA Office to everyone who supported last year's appeal for Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza, which surpassed our most bullish estimates due to the support of various churches, groups and individuals.

Since the appeal's launch in July 2014 we have received over 670 donations from across the UK and Ireland and a few from further afield, totalling £95,251, and we were able to claim a further £6.9k in Gift Aid.

In particular I must mention three bishops who encouraged parishes to support the appeal. The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of West Yorkshire & the Dales and the Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry whose dioceses each donated over £14,000, and the former Bishop of Oxford the Rt Revd John Pritchard who wrote in support of the appeal in the Church Times. In addition, we thank Lightline Pilgrimages Ltd who took out an advert in the Church Times in support of Al-Ahli Hospital appeal helping to extend the reach of the appeal beyond current JMECA supporters.

Update from JMECA HQ

About this time last year we announced in Bible Lands the expansion of our administrative team with the appointment of Debbie Taylor as my administrative assistant. We are pleased to announce that there has been further expansion during the year as Debbie gave birth in April to a baby daughter (keeping up with the Windsors!). I'm sure you will join me in sending her heartfelt congratulations and praying for her and her family at this joyful time.

She is now on maternity leave but we hope she will be back with us by this time next year. In the meantime her role is filled by Ginny Heffernan who, I am sure, will be a great asset to JMECA over the coming year.

Mrs. Shirley Eason

1 Hart House, The Hart,
Farnham GU9 7HJ, Surrey.

secretary@jmecca.eclipse.co.uk

JMECA Website www.jmecca.org.uk

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

From John Clark, Chairman JEMT:

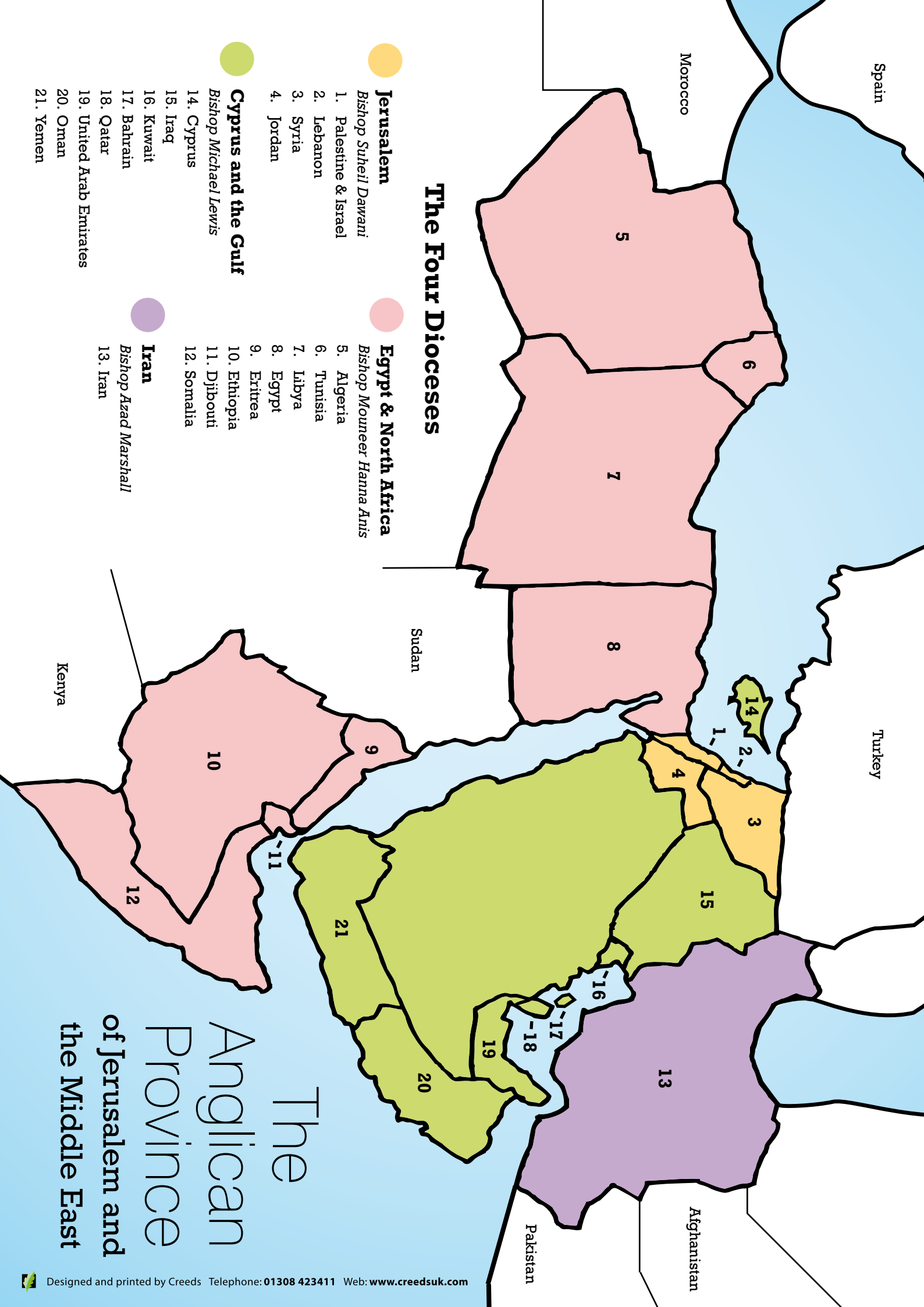


Since our winter issue conflicts in the Middle East seem to have grown worse. There is talk of an arc of crisis from Libya though Sudan to Somalia, north to Yemen and on to Iraq and Syria. And caught within that arc are Christians of different traditions and backgrounds. Amidst them the small Anglican/Episcopal Church seeks to maintain its presence and its engagement with the majority communities – often in very difficult circumstances. In Aden, for example, during the recent fighting the Church and Clinic had to close while Archdeacon Bill Schwartz (whose new book on Christian Muslim relations is reviewed in this issue, pages 16-17) maintained daily phone contact with the staff who remained.

But the development of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) is sending shock waves through the region. Historic Christian communities and other minorities in Northern Iraq have been forced to flee from their homes and take refuge in Kurdistan, while their churches and monasteries have been despoiled. William Taylor's report (pages 10-11) on his visit with Bishop Geoffrey Rowell on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury provides a graphic account of the situation of these Assyrian Christians. Many are fleeing from Syria and Iraq and in Egypt the diocese under Archbishop Mouneer is providing refuge for them (pages 13-15) – but the displacement of so many is a growing and sadly a long-term tragedy.

Alongside this emergency ministry the regular work of the institutions through which dioceses engage with the wider community continues – and we particularly feature the golden jubilee of the Princess Basma Centre on the Mount of Olives for children with special needs (pages 8-9) – just one of the thirty-three institutions in the Diocese of Jerusalem.

JMECA was established to support the Episcopal Church in the Middle East while aware of the wider Christian and regional contexts, through sharing information, prayer and financial gifts. Information and news for prayer is provided through Bible Lands supplemented by our website www.jmecca.org.uk. Financial support is through our annual grants to the institutions and the four dioceses which this year have been substantially increased by the far greater than anticipated response of more than £100,000 to the appeal for Gaza's Al-Ahli Hospital. It proved timely that Shirley had a part-time assistant to help handle the donations. As Shirley writes (above) we and the hospital are immensely grateful to all who gave so generously.



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