

Bible Lands

Summer 2016

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

www.jmecca.org.uk



Jerusalem



Egypt & North Africa



Cyprus & the Gulf



Iran



THE EXODUS from Syria

THE REFUGEE CRISIS

- Archbishop Suheil from Jerusalemp8-9
- Revd David Roache from Lebanonp10
- Very Revd Peter Crooks from Yemenp12-13
- Revd Johann Vander Bijl from Horn of Africa ..p16-17

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'.

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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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Editorial

by the JEMT chairman, John Clark

A constant theme of our news media is the plight of refugees fleeing the catastrophe that is unfolding in Syria, the unsettled aftermath of the conflict in Iraq and the plight of many in Africa. This issue of *Bible Lands* has an emphasis on ministry among refugees. And these articles highlight the realities that our fellow Anglicans are facing in different parts of the Middle East

Archbishop Suheil of Jerusalem has written (pages 8-9) a significant article on the ways in which the Diocese of Jerusalem is providing help to some of the more than one million refugees in Jordan. They largely come from Syria, but also from Iraq.

Horn of Africa

There is a little known area of severe refugee need in the Horn of Africa, where those fleeing from the savage civil war in South Sudan have taken refuge in the Gambella Region. It is also an area of remarkable church growth where the Diocese of Egypt has recently established the St Frumentius Theological Centre under Bishop Grant Le Marquand (pages 16-17). At the end of April urgent prayer was requested because of an upsurge of fighting- and our article provides background to ministry in that area.

The Yemen

The terrible conflict in Yemen does not receive many column inches in the press because it is too dangerous for reporters to cover but the Clinic in Aden, (an outreach project of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf) where there has been much destruction, continues to offer limited medical care through its heroic staff. Peter Crooks, former Chaplain in Aden, maintains regular contact with local colleagues there and his article (pages 12-13) provides background and recent information on what is happening in the Yemen, where so many are displaced by the fighting.

Egypt

The Diocese of Egypt has also seen the passing of two great Christian leaders – Bishop Ghais Abdel Malek and Mr Abee Wakid – and we pay grateful tribute to their lives and their ministry (p.15 and p.18).

Iran

Change is coming in the Diocese of Iran with the resignation of Bishop Azad Marshall on his election as a Co-Adjutor Bishop in the Pakistan Diocese of Raiwind. Prayers are sought for the congregations and for Archbishop Mouneer, who as President-Bishop of the Province, takes the lead in determining how episcopal leadership should be provided for the four small, but faithful congregations in Iran (p.19).

Your donations

JMECA was formed over a century ago to support the Anglican/Episcopal Church in Jerusalem (which has since developed across the Middle East and North Africa) in prayer, information sharing and funds. We continue sharing news and information for prayer today through *Bible Lands*, through our website www.jmecca.org.uk (do check it out) and through social media.

Last year JMECA provided grants of more than £250,000 to support this region-wide Church's ministry and we hope to give more this year. As I write at the end of April gifts from the 2016 Good Friday/Easter Offering are well ahead of last years and we continue to receive donations. We are extremely grateful for all gifts, large or small, for the support and encouragement they provide to Christians of our Church in the Middle East, who beneath the headlines seek to live out the Christian faith in demanding and testing times.

John Clark

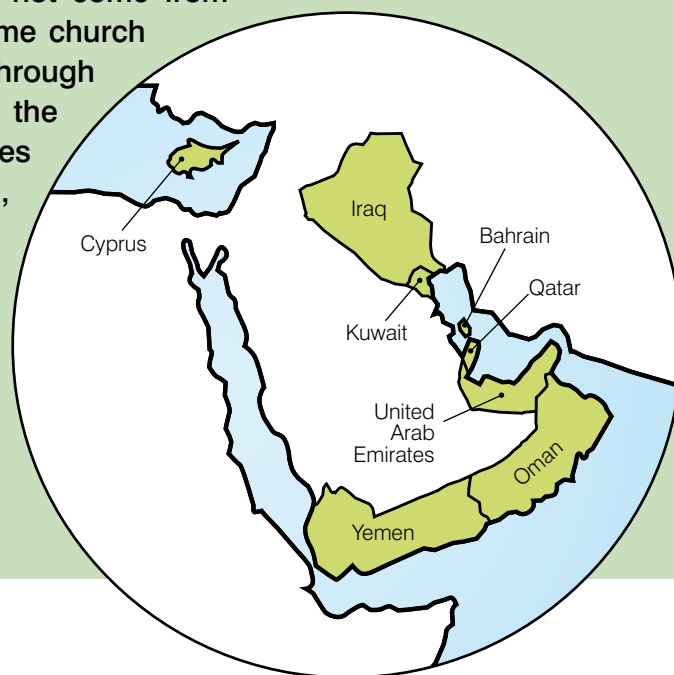
Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

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 Changes

The Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf, the Rt Revd Michael Lewis, has announced the following appointments:

The Revd Drew Schmotzer has been appointed to serve as priest and chaplain at St Martin Sharjah, and **the Revd Jon Lavelle** has been appointed to serve as priest and chaplain at St Luke Ras al Khaimah, also serving St Nicholas Fujairah. Both posts are within the Chaplaincy and Parish of Dubai with Sharjah and the Northern Emirates, in the United Arab Emirates.

Fr Drew Schmotzer has most recently served as priest and chaplain at Holy Trinity Algiers in the Diocese of Egypt. Fr Jon Lavelle is currently curate and assistant priest at St Christopher's Cathedral, Manama, Bahrain, in this diocese.

The Bishop is also pleased to announce two appointments to the parish / chaplaincy of Paphos.

The Revd Andrew Burt is to be senior priest and **the Revd Canon Anthony Stidolph** is to be house-for-duty associate priest.

Andrew Burt's ministry after ordination has included parish work in New Zealand, army chaplaincy, and school chaplaincy at Brighton College and currently at Portsmouth Grammar School. Anthony Stidolph,

a musician and organist, has ministered in parishes in Sussex, and also in school chaplaincy in England, Zimbabwe, and Wales.

**God of infinite compassion and gentleness,
you call us to be your people
in every place to which you lead us.
In this our earthly pilgrimage
walk alongside us as our guide,
sustain us by your Word and
holy sacraments,
and raise our eyes
to see your glory in all you have made
and to be your new creation,
through Jesus Christ our ascended Lord.
Amen.**

Attributed to Canon Paul Maybury

Bishop Michael Lewis' Presidential Address

Here we have chosen a few extracts directly concerned with the effect of Islamic State on those closest to the threat.

Islamic State

“In the year since this synod last met, the horrors have become evident of what calls itself the Islamic State and aspires to be the purest continuation of the seventh-century Muslim caliphate. Though its works of terror now affect other parts of the world its base is in the heart of our region. Of course, its leaders and followers are Muslims by self-description, just as Koran-burning extremist Baptists in Texas were Christians by self-description. But the non-negotiable Islam that IS proclaims and imposes is unrecognisable or at least abhorrent to all other Muslims except the one, currently very influential, stream of neo-conservative, hyper-puritanical, fascistic, literalist-fundamentalist bigots from which they draw their inspiration and, largely, their money. Their look and their direction is backwards: to an idealised Medina, established and defended by war, and – surely – to a God who is defined by their narrow limits, though they profess the exact opposite.”

In Iraq

“In Iraq, it hardly needs saying how tough life has been for Christians. Alongside other Iraqis they suffered in the aftermath of the ill-thought-through and unconscionable invasion by the Americans and the British in 2003. Now IS, Da'esh, has taken Mosul and the Christian heartlands of the biblical Plain of Nineveh and the Christians there have been torn from their roots and possessions in towns and villages that long predate Islam. Some who could have left the country for favoured and once not impossible places like Canada but rather for a miserable life in hard-pressed surrounding nations. Others are within official Iraqi borders in the Kurdish Autonomous Region, and others have come to Baghdad. These now constitute an acronym: they're IDPs, internally displaced persons. Yezidis have suffered, and indeed many Muslims too, not least Shi'a and non-compliant Sunni; but Christians most certainly have been and are persecuted by the vile phenomenon of IS. In Syria it's the same, and there the politics and the prospects are even more complicated and desperate than in Iraq.

In Baghdad St George's continues to be open to anyone who wants to enter and longs for what it offers: a holy place, worship, a welcome, food, assistance, the clinic, the school, dependable love. The congregation, partly stable, partly shifting and renewed, is the praying heart of the compound, but St George's serves all in their human needs, not least Muslims. Funds from the wider Christian world are channelled through our diocese and through Fr Faiz to help the relief efforts of the mainline Churches in the north as well as in local situations like an IDP camp in Baghdad in the grounds of the Assyrian Christian Zowa'a Party headquarters.”.

In Yemen

“In the Yemen, which is also in this diocese, Christians are lying low. Church buildings have been damaged and previously unapologetic public worship has had to go underground at least for a while. IS fighters are certainly present. So too are Saudi sympathisers, Al Qaeda factions, South Yemen secessionists, and Shi'a Houthi forces.

In Aden our priest and other Christians had to leave in the worst of the fighting and have necessarily not returned in the political chaos that has no end, but the church building and the words Christ Church on the compound gate still stand as a witness. The work of the clinic, our defining ministry of service there, was suspended for a while, but only as long as it had to be. In September it resumed. Our staff now carry on doing what they've always done, in the most difficult circumstances imaginable. They're all Muslims and almost all young women. They, and most especially the extraordinary man who is our general manager and administrator, a devout Muslim to whom Christ Church and the Ras Morbat clinic, and (I dare to say) the Christianity that is the *raison d'être* of our presence in Aden, are very dear, are committed to the ethos that Christ Church has always stood for: look around; look forward.”

Treasure in earthen vessels

“St Paul's heartfelt words in 2 Corinthians 4, written out of his own apostolic life, could have been penned with Baghdad and Aden in mind: *“We are pressed on every side yet not straitened, perplexed yet not unto despair, pursued yet not forsaken, smitten down yet not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.”*

+Michael Lewis, Diocesan Synod, 1 February 2016

We recommend the full text: www.cypgulf.org

The Bishop gives an overview of Christians in the Gulf

No Abiding City

There are two stories of Middle Eastern Christianity. One of them is barely known. While responsible voices warn that in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Palestine/Israel the faith risks becoming a rarity, a memory, or a theme-park tourist attraction, in the lands of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula the numbers of worshippers or would-be worshippers are astonishing. Every weekend the compound of Holy Trinity Anglican church in Dubai hosts about 25000 Christians in 125 denominations and fellowships.

Largest there is The King's Revival, a Pentecostal church of about 1400, mainly Indians and Africans. Two other Pentecostal groupings, Dubai City Church and The New Testament Church, which serves Keralan Christians, account for 500 each, as do the Malayalam-language and Tamil-language congregations of the Church of South India, with whom we are in full communion. At the other end of the scale are fervent gatherings of just 20 or 30. Anglican liturgies on Friday and Sunday attract a very cosmopolitan total of about 300. Figures approach those at St Andrew's in Abu Dhabi, The Epiphany in Doha, and elsewhere too. My colleagues the two Roman Catholic bishops of Arabia report priests exhausted by the flood of expectant believers that pours into every one of their churches each Friday. And they estimate that they have around a million co-religionists in Saudi Arabia alone, though only a tiny proportion there have any opportunity to gather.

Both stories are true. Of course "the Middle East" has as much and as little precision as "Europe". Even in my own diocese, when I visit the Yemen it can feel as distant from, say, the United Arab Emirates as Moldova does from France. Culture, economics, and politics vary greatly.

There is another factor that affects the Churches' presence and witness, in good times as well as bad. It has to do with remembering and forgetting. Not only did Christianity exist and flourish centuries before Muhammad and Islam in the Levant – Syria, the Lebanon, Palestine/Israel – and in Jordan and Iraq; it has continued and co-existed, despite hardships, to the present day. Iraqis remember very well that there are indigenous Christians. The indigenous Christians are, even now, proud Iraqis.

Yet in those first centuries Christians also lived and prospered in lands that today have completely forgotten that historical presence. The missionary Church of the East, working down the Gulf from Mesopotamia, established churches and monasteries on islands like Sir Bani Yas, now in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The region called Bet Qatraye encompassed not only present-day Qatar but also Bahrain and the nearby mainland. Its bishops attended synods and it sent forth saints and scholars like Isaac of Nineveh. In the south-west of Arabia, Najran was a well-known centre of Christianity. By the ninth century, though, it had faded throughout the peninsula and the chain of memory was lost.

The result is that there is almost no indigenous Christianity in these lands of broken memory, and Christians are very rarely allowed citizenship even if they have spent their whole lives in, say, Dubai or Oman. Yet we are millions. So who are we?

A sample survey a few years ago reckoned that over 80% of Gulf Christians are from elsewhere in Asia, the majority from five nations of the Indian subcontinent and a substantial figure from countries of South East Asia such as the Philippines and Indonesia. Korean and Chinese believers are growing in number. There are Arab Christians from elsewhere in the Middle East. Europeans, North Americans, and citizens of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa account together for only about 6 or 7%.

Since most countries give visas only for workers and their immediate dependants, with 65 or even 60 as the usual age limit, it is a rarity to see old people in church. Christians are present across the whole socio-economic spectrum, from oil company bosses to domestic servants and road-sweepers, and church on Friday or Sunday is about the only place where they can mix. Our Anglican presence, though modest, is unique in that in most



Ethiopian Orthodox 'guest' congregation

locations we build compounds and facilities big enough to host groups of non-Anglican believers who would otherwise have no access to a registered place of worship: hence the numbers cited above. This practical ecumenism is complemented by excellent relations among those heading the mainline historical Churches, and a Gulf Churches Fellowship for bishops, senior pastors, and other key leaders is now well established. Notable examples of Christian-Muslim encounter and dialogue exist, such as the Al Amana Centre in Muscat, under whose auspices Professor David Ford of Cambridge has been an eloquent exponent of Christian theology to a mixed Muslim-Christian audience in the Grand Mosque.

Yet this, the second story of Middle Eastern Christianity, is sometimes discounted both by the wider Christian world (if it notices it) and by the understandably proud indigenous Christians of the lands of unbroken memory and presence. I'm told that, since Gulf Christians are "migrants" or "expatriates", the impressive numbers are illusory.

The distinction between the terms, however, is invidious and false: every expatriate British executive is also a migrant and every Nepali construction worker or Eritrean maid is also an expatriate. More radically, the Christian story is rooted in migrancy and the leaving behind of native lands – what else did God call Abram to do? The Christian norm is movement, following the Son of Man, who, unlike foxes and birds, had nowhere to lay his head. Here indeed we have



St Christopher's Cathedral, Bahrain



no abiding city; we look for the city to come: Hebrews 13:14. Inhabitants of both Middle Eastern Christian stories, along with the rest of the Christian world, should rejoice that we're there, however we got there and wherever God is going to lead us.

The Rt Revd Michael Lewis is Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East.



Bishop in Baghdad

The Bishop, Rt. Revd. Michael Lewis, spent Holy Week in one of the world's most dangerous places, choosing to identify with Revd Faiz Jerjes the Iraqi priest and the people of St George's church, Baghdad.

At the Maundy Thursday liturgy he washed the feet of worshippers, during the Good Friday three hour liturgy a huge wooden cross was borne into the church. On Holy Saturday the flame was kindled (pictured) for the Easter Day celebrations. His presence at this holy but very sensitive time of year was greatly appreciated as is the continuing devotion and pastoral care of Father Faiz.

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.



The Archbishop in Jerusalem reflects on the situation for refugees in his Diocese

The Samaritan “*bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’*” (Luke 10:34-35)

The story of the Good Samaritan is one that is a guide to Christians across the globe as to how we can be neighbours for those who need us, whoever she or he may be; and it is relevant in our approach to how we as individuals and communities welcome and care for refugees. It is with this in mind that I write, aware of the extraordinary work that ordinary men and women in our diocese are doing in caring for refugees from Syria and Iraq. The refugee crisis is serious – very serious – and demands that we respond with compassion and care for people who have faced untold horrors, and who have had to leave their martyrs behind.

As refugees seek sanctuary, we as Christians are challenged to open our doors and share what we have with strangers. Archbishop Mouneer in his article *Our calling: Welcome refugees, support development, make peace*, cites Jesus’ commandment that we must share what we have. If we cannot for whatever reason share our house, then we must share our gifts

and our resources.

Hospitality is one of the hallmarks of this diocese: for centuries we have shown hospitality to pilgrims, to people who went on their way “sometimes not knowing whither they would come”, but seeking an expression of the Kingdom of God, as Abraham did. On other occasions and throughout history the churches of the region extended hospitality to the thousands of people forced to leave their homes for an unknown destination. During the past one hundred years there were Circassian refugees from Russia, Armenians from Turkey, Jews from Europe, refugees from Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, and many other places. Now our challenge is to show hospitality to yet another traveller, refugees and migrants from Syria.

At the moment Jordan welcomes some 1.25 million Syrians, 300,000 Iraqis, 400,000 Egyptians, 100,000 Libyans and 50,000 Yemenis. In Irbid (Northern Jordan) there are 250,000 refugees; and in the refugee camp of Zaatari’s on the Syrian border there are some 120,000 people who live in tents and caravans. Places that were once desert are now large towns, which require infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, electricity and water, shops and roads, and much more.

Diocese of Jerusalem

Brother Andrew in Salt, Jordan

One way the Church has managed to respond is through "The Network", which, under the supervision of the Revd Canon 'Brother Andrew' De Carpentier of the Anglican "Holy Land Institute for Deaf and Deaf-blind Children" in Salt, has brought together different local organizations providing essential medical and paramedical care to thousands of refugees with disabilities in need. The "Network" is a partnership between: The Dhia Society (a Jordanian charity for visually impaired children), The Raja society (a school for the education and training of those with cognitive issues), The Avicenna (Ibn Sina) society (a Jordanian organization for helping those with mobility issues); and the Palestine Hospital (A Church-affiliated specialist hospital for Trauma and Neurology).

Revd George Kopti in Amman

Another way the Church responded is through the work of St Paul's church in Ashrafiyeh - Amman. The Reverend George Kopti describes how refugees have become part of the church family, with activities provided for the children and for women, as well as a new mid-week Bible study for the Christians who have fled. During the winter the congregation gathered gas stoves distributed food coupons.

Canon Samir Esaid in Irbid

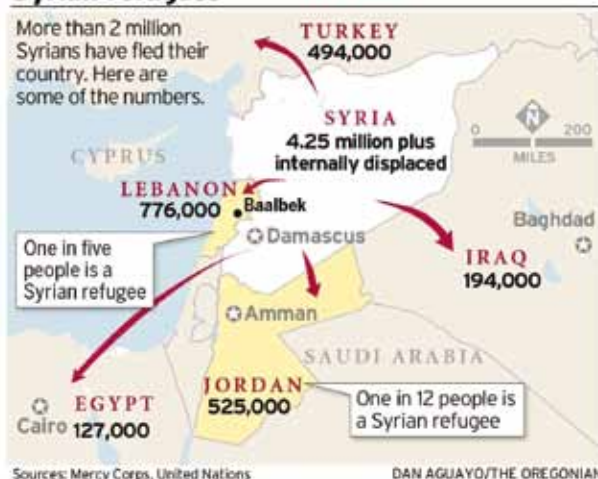
The Revd Canon Samir Esaid, vicar of the Virgin Mary Episcopal Church in Irbid, explained how his church is reaching out to refugees in the community with a special focus on providing education and support to parents of children who are blind or visually impaired. It helps parents cope with their children who attend the Arab Episcopal School for visually impaired and sighted children. Not only did they take in refugees as students, but in one instance also had a refugee working as a volunteer teacher in the school. He explained that for many the border between Syria and Jordan was quite arbitrary as related families were living on both sides, with many Jordanians now looking after their Syrian relatives.

It is hard for those who have not experienced the need to flee their homeland to envisage what life is like. Where is the next meal? Where will I sleep tonight? What about my children's education? What shall I do for my child who is ill? Where shall I go with my child who is blind or deaf, who is traumatized and disturbed? Who can help me with a child that has mobility problems, suffers epilepsy or cerebral palsy? These are real questions for real people looking for sanctuary, safety and friendship.

What is heartening is that these experiences give us all faith in humanity and encourage us to go the extra mile and help those in need as Christ asks us to. If all of us, whoever and wherever we are, can reach out to those who are suffering, whether they are strangers seeking sanctuary or are well known to us, I believe our lives will be transformed and become more like the person Christ calls us to be: Good Samaritans, brothers to all whom we encounter, sharing our gifts, and ultimately grafting our lives more into Jesus when his love, compassion and generosity work in and through us.

*Suheil Dawani,
Archbishop in Jerusalem, Episcopal Church*

Syrian refugees



Restoring the abandoned 1948 Churches



When the state of Israel was created three of the Diocesan Churches were abandoned and fell into a state of disrepair – St Paul's, Jerusalem; St Saviour's, Acco (in the North); and St Peter's, Jaffa (south of Tel Aviv).

In 2011 St Paul's was renovated and re-dedicated and now is home to a mid-week congregation.

Now the Diocese is working hard to re-establish the ministry and life of St Saviour's and St Peter's and it is hoped that in the next few years, these churches will be back on their feet once again serving their communities.

Revd. David Roache describes the situation in Lebanon and the work of All Saints' parish

The Lebanese Republic is renowned for its stunning snow-covered mountains and cedar forests. Lebanon's government is a parliamentary democracy with power distributed equally among its 18 recognized religious sects including Maronite Christians, Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Druze and Greek Orthodox.

Before Lebanon's civil war began in 1975, it boasted significant financial prosperity and was a popular tourist destination. Since the war recovery has been hampered by additional conflicts, including a recent influx of Syrian refugees. Tensions between the government and Hezbollah regularly lead to violence and legislative deadlock. We have been without a president since Michel Sulayman's term expired in 2014. Presidential duties are currently being carried out by acting President and Prime Minister Tammam Salam.

Refugees

1.2 million *registered* Syrians, fleeing the civil war, have crossed into Lebanon. In reality it is estimated there are 2 million here and over 50% are children. Lebanon has taken in a refugee population equaling nearly one-third of our resident population. This is a figure made all the more astonishing since the population of Lebanon is fewer than 6 million people. This is like the UK taking in 20 million people! They all need housing, schools, medical care and they use water and electricity...

The Lebanese government doesn't allow refugees to settle in large scale camps because of the delicate sectarian balance that would be overwhelmed by an influx of mostly Sunni civilians fleeing the war. The Palestinian refugee camps built in the 1940s and 1950s, after the establishment of the state of Israel, have become permanent settlements and still home to the more than 400,000 Palestinians, who played a key role in the country's 15-year civil war. For many Syrian refugees living in tents or shacks they would have been vulnerable to snow and freezing temperatures.

Child labour is a fact of life here. Thousands of Syrian children have become farm labourers in vegetable fields and warehouses. The destitution and misery of their displacement prompting them to enter a workforce where they are subject to abuse and exploitation. Many are exposed to pesticides, toxic chemicals, heavy loads and work exhausting hours. If there was no war, these children would be able to

receive a good standard of education. Now many are illiterate and unlikely to see the inside of a classroom again. A generation of children have lost fathers, family and home; have seen communities raised to the ground and are facing a bleak future.

Nearly half of Syrian refugee families rely partly or entirely on children's income. Many children are in poor health and suffer from psychological distress. Street children are a visible fixture in Beirut, hawking goods, begging, shining shoes and selling flowers at night to bar customers, risking the occasional beating and frequent verbal abuse. Most sleep rough and some turn to prostitution.

Trash Crisis

In July Lebanon's main landfill was closed. The landfill was opened in 1997 and was meant to receive only two million tons of rubbish for only a few years until a comprehensive solution was devised. It swelled into a trash mountain of over 15 million tons and local residents finally blocked the roads and refused to allow anymore rubbish to be dumped there. There was no forward planning as to where the next site would be!?

Since the end of the civil war in 1990 there has been little public investment. Aspects of the war economy have carried on, with profitable provision of waste removal through private firms rather than municipal councils and power through private generators, rather than a functioning national electricity grid.

In the eyes of the protesters, the mess is the result of corruption and incompetence at the heart of government, where lucrative contracts are routinely fought over by firms allied to politicians. Parliament, where MPs are seen more as entrepreneurs than legislators, has not passed a national budget since 2005. There is no such thing as recycling in Lebanon; the rubbish problem is a reflection of the political stalemate in the country.





The new Dean of the College, The Very Reverend Canon Gregory Jenks, outlines the distinctive character of a College course

Why choose a pilgrimage programme at St George's College?

St George's College Jerusalem has been offering pilgrims from around the world a unique experience of the biblical lands for more than 50 years, and its foundation dates back to 1920 when it was established as the Anglican theological college for Arab clergy in the Middle East.

These days there are many commercial companies offering pilgrimage services, as well as advocacy visits sponsored by activists from various political and religious perspectives.

We believe that St George's College Jerusalem offers a comprehensive pilgrimage experience that is second to none.

Our premium educational and pilgrimage programmes set us apart from commercial pilgrimage tour operators as well as the advocacy and solidarity visits offered by international NGOs.

Here are some of the key features of the pilgrimage programmes at St George's College:

- A long term relationship with the communities in the Holy Land
- The economic benefits of your programme flow to our dedicated local Palestinian staff
- A close relationship with the local Anglican Church
- A rich liturgical experience
- Dedicated facilities with high levels of comfort
- High levels of personal safety and group security
- In-house catering services
- Full board that covers all your meals
- Pastoral and spiritual support
- Input by world class scholars
- Selected local guides
- Privileged access to sites
- Engagement with local Jewish and Muslim communities

- A variety of programmes for different needs and schedules
- Scholarships and bursaries
- Academic credit and continuing education points

This list is not exhaustive but we hope you find it helpful as you consider your plans for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. A more detailed version of this list, with a paragraph about each item, is available on the College web site: www.saintgeorgescollegejerusalem.com

For further information about any of our programmes, please visit the College website or drop us an email.

I would love to hear from you, and I look forward to welcoming you into the life of our diverse College community some time soon.

2017 Programmes

Introduction to the Bible

February 6 – 13

May 1 – 8

June 19 – 26

November 23 – 30

Jordan Study Tour

January 24 – 28

May 9 – 13

July 10 – 14

September 19 – 23

Palestine of Jesus

February 28 – March 13 (Lent)

May 16 – 29 (Gospel of Matthew)

September 5 – 18 (Gospel of Mark)

November 7 – 20 (Gospel of Mark)

December 5 – 18 (Advent)

Ministry Formation Programme

January 10 – 23

July 18 – 31

Other Programmes

Abraham and his Children (April 19 – 28)

Bible and Archaeology (June 18 – July 7)

Easter Fire! (April 8 – 17)

Holy Land and the Arts (October 2 – 13)

OT Landscapes and Narratives (October 17 – 26)

Parables of Jesus (October 28 – November 4)

Sharing Perspectives: Jews and Christians

(February 3 – 12)

Sharing Perspectives: Muslims and Christians

(March 16 – 23)

St Paul and the Early Church (Turkey)

(September 13 – 26)

Ways in the Wilderness (October 2 – 13)

Women of the Bible (June 2 – 11)

In the Hand of God

Very Revd Peter J Crooks MBE

We were late. The little congregation were returning to their pews but our arrival had been noted. The three Sisters in their distinctive blue and white saris beamed at us and Fr Tom (Uzhunnalil) came to greet us, enquiring thoughtfully if we would like time to 'prepare ourselves' before he gave us communion too.

It is now nearly three weeks since he was kidnapped in Aden from a home run there by the Missionary Sisters of Charity for some 80 elderly and fragile men and women. I have often thought since of his words, 'time to prepare yourselves', and prayed that in his captivity he will have found strength and courage and the company of angels.

Fr Tom had moved to the home for his own safety after the Church of St Francis, beside which he lived, just a few minutes' walk from Christ Church, was vandalised and torched in September last year.



One of Aden's churches after torching

Those who took him, first locked him in his vestry and then found, bound and killed four of the five Sisters. The fifth, hid herself behind a door in a room to which the gunmen returned several times in search of her – incredibly, without finding her. The gunmen killed at least a dozen other people including Ethiopian and Yemeni nurses and carers, and most cruelly, a Yemeni lady doctor – a volunteer and a Muslim – mother of two young children who had asked that day if they might go to the home with her.

Yemen's media are not squeamish. Pictures of the slaughter quickly appeared, including one which showed two of the sisters lying face down on the ground, the ties of their aprons visible around their waists. One friend who saw the picture said, 'Could there be a nobler way to die than serving breakfast to God's most fragile and forgotten?'

Expressions of grief, anger and revulsion were widespread, not least from young men and women who had readily given their time to work after school or their own work, as volunteers alongside the Sisters. 'No one,' wrote one of them on Facebook, 'cared for our people like the Sisters.'

There were no public demonstrations against the killings as there have been in the past when foreign Christians working



Father Tom

in the country have been killed, but Yemen has seen a lot of death in this past year. Latest estimates put the number of dead at about 6,300, half of them civilians and of those it is reckoned that the vast majority died in their homes, in schools, in their streets and in their markets and even in hospitals, victims of airstrikes, ill-conceived and carelessly executed by warplanes of Saudi Arabia and its allies. An acquaintance who described himself as heartbroken at the deaths of the Sisters and their friends commented ruefully, 'What are they among so many?'

It also takes a very courageous person to stand up there and denounce those who in the name of Islam seek to cause mayhem and wherever they can sow destruction, division and death. But one good and brave cleric in Aden did so recently, denouncing both Al Qaeda and Daesh in his Friday sermon. Later in the day he was kidnapped and the next day his scarred body was found dumped in Aden's Sheikh Othman district.

All this seems desperately far removed from the heady optimism with which so many in Yemen greeted the Arab Spring in 2011. Yemen then had its 'Freedom Square' too, where for days huge numbers camped out. Even the National Dialogue which staggered on for months and concluded two years ago carried some seeds of hope but its resolutions and proposals for the future must lie now in tatters.

The war that has engulfed Yemen this past year and been largely ignored by those beyond its borders has brought untold misery and destruction. 'There is no single family,' writes journalist and friend, Nadia Al Sakkaf, 'that has not been affected . . . both horizontally through the civil war and vertically through the airstrikes and anti-aircraft units.'

Few accounts of that suffering have so moved me as that of an Argentinian doctor, one Mariella Carrara, who worked for some months with Médecins sans Frontières in Sa'ada, in the north of the country, a traditional stronghold of the Houthi, against whom along with the country's ex-president, Ali Abdullah Saleh and forces still loyal to him, Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners have been fighting.

One day a young husband and wife were brought in to the doctor. Their house had just been hit by an airstrike and all four of their children killed. The husband's injuries were slight but almost all the soft tissue of his wife's arms had been stripped away by the blast. The husband asked Dr Carrara to do all she could to save his wife's arms. She did and there followed long painful months of recovery. The woman made a deep impression on the doctor. 'She never complained. Her bravery. I couldn't understand it.' Just before Dr Carrara left Yemen, the woman came back to seek her out. 'It was difficult to talk, 'she recounts, 'I don't understand Arabic. The nurse translated for us. She had come to say thank you. It was nice. It was so nice.' (*Practising Medicine under Fire*, BBC World Service, 24.2.2016)

Yemen's current war is popularly portrayed as a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is that though Yemen observers far more knowledgeable than I suggest that the Iranian involvement is exaggerated and that much of the country's present misery may be traced back to the Machiavellian schemings of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is reported to be seeking refuge for himself and his family in the UAE. If he leaves, few will grieve his going and there are many who will wish that he had gone long ago. Talks aimed at ending the conflict have begun this week between the Houthi leadership and Saudi Arabia. The future of Yemen remains precarious and the plight of its people wretched. Famine stalks in many of its provinces.

That Christ Church, Aden should still be standing, admittedly with its lovely Yemeni windows blown out and roof well battle-scarred and the eye clinic beside it busy and functioning smoothly against this extraordinarily harsh and unpredictable backdrop is a miracle.

The Revd Velvet John, the last priest there, left with his wife a year ago. The congregation has been scattered. Only Rex, a delightful Filipino engineer remains and it is many months now since worship was offered in any of Aden's churches,

though I gather that small numbers of Yemeni Christians continue to meet cheerfully and faithfully in homes across the country to worship and to pray.

The fact that Christ Church remains largely unscathed and the eye clinic functioning (45 – 55 patients a day and 6 – 8 operations a week) owes much to the courage, faith, remarkable resourcefulness and love of Mansour Khan, its most conscientious administrator ; to the staff, and at Mansour's ready admission, the prayers of many friends. At a more than usually perilous moment in Aden, and particularly for the clinic and staff, members of St Laurence Church in Reading, where we worship, were encouraged by Christopher, the vicar, to write prayers for Mansour, the clinic and Yemen. 44 prayers were written. The next day we sent a few of them to Mansour. He replied simply, 'Thank you for the prayers. They make me feel I am in the hand of God.' Some days later he told us he had read the prayers to the staff, one of whom on hearing them apparently burst into tears exclaiming, 'They don't know us; they are not Muslim; and yet so much they care!'

Here are just two of the prayers:

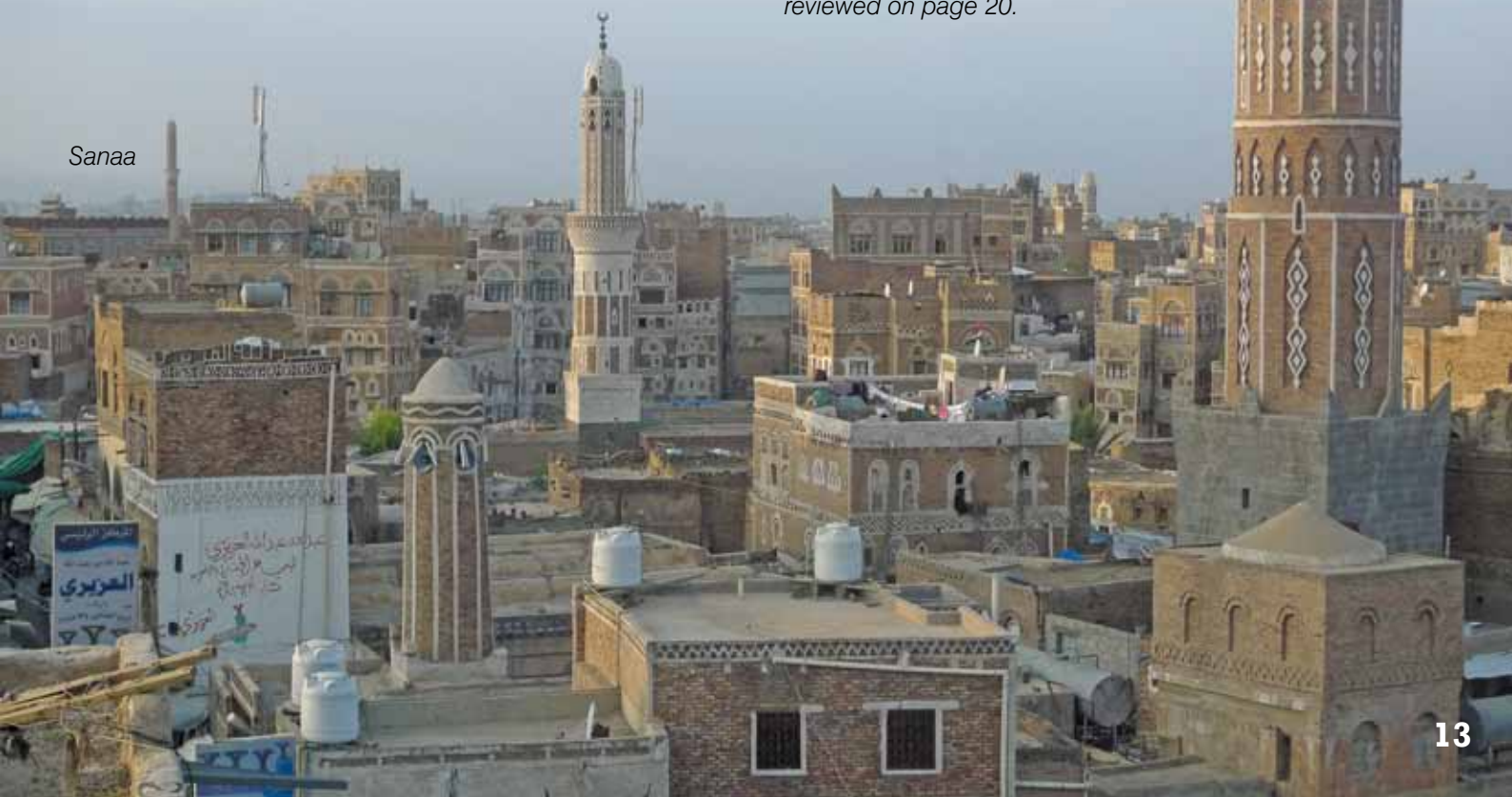
*Lord Jesus, we lift the situation in Yemen to you.
Give the leaders of the factions the wisdom they need
to seek peace...*

And another from a ten-year old, Hettie:

Dear God, please can you stop the awful things that are happening in Yemen and for the blockade to stop.
Lord Jesus, please help Mansour to survive
the awful killing – that would be absolutely AMAZING!
Do not be afraid Mansour, God is your shield. Amen.

Peter and Nancy Crooks lived and worked in Aden 2004-2008. Peter was the chaplain at Christ Church and director of the clinics. Peter's book, Yemen: Heartbreak and Hope is reviewed on page 20.

Sanaa



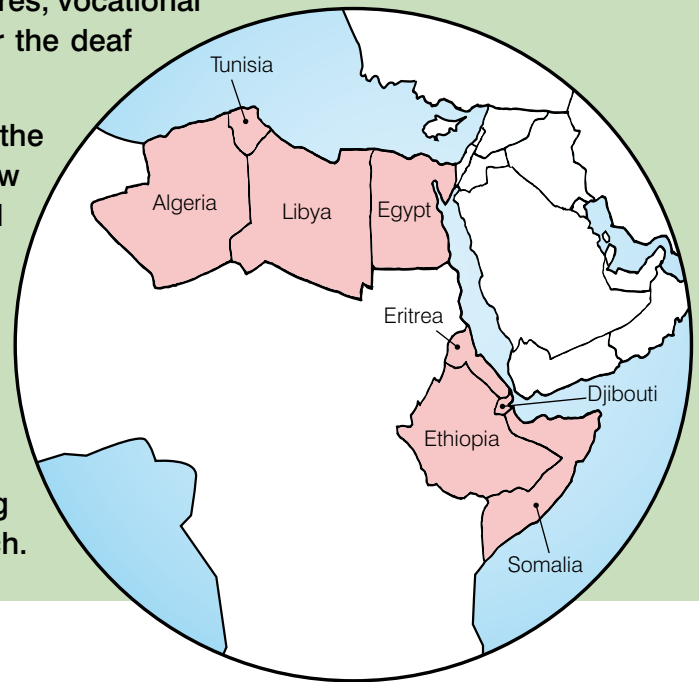
The Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa



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.



Together for Egypt

Over 200 imams and priests gathered at the conclusion of the three-year *Together for Egypt* programme to enjoy each other's company and receive certificates of completion.

Together for Egypt brought together priests and imams to work side by side in humanitarian and social work. The project demonstrated the capacity for leaders from very different religious backgrounds to work together for good, to make friendships with one another, and to create the foundations for future relations between the Christians and Muslims of Egypt. The goals of the project emphasised creating new stabilities in society as well as bringing about a brighter, more religiously tolerant future for Egypt.

The celebration featured speeches by a number of key figures of the *Together for Egypt* project including; Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis, Bishop Yohanna Kolta, Dr. Hamdy Zakzouk, Abdul Salem (representing Grand Imam Ahmed El-Tayyeb of Al-Azhar), and Anba Arrameya (representing Pope Tawadros II). Following these addresses, each imam or priest was called forward by name and presented a certificate of completion.

The celebration was the culmination of *Together for*

Egypt and the progress and success of the project was very clear. The priests and imams sat easily with each other, listening carefully to the speeches as one. At the conclusion the camaraderie and close friendships that had developed between the various religious leaders was apparent as they grouped around each other laughing, talking, telling stories, and taking photos.

The Garage Church

In 2008 the diocese bought a five story building in the slum area of Cairo known as Ezbet el Nakhel but could not afford to complete the work at the time. For some years a church in the ground floor garage was all they had to show for it. The building restoration is now complete and dedicated by Archbishop Mouneer, the church is now the church of St Paul and is in the midst of the 'squatter' district surrounded by half a million people. "We are not ashamed to start a church in a garage" says the archbishop "if Christ could be born in a stable, why can't his Body meet in a garage?" The building is now in use for multiple education and outreach purposes.

Obituary

Bishop Ghais Abdel Malik 1930-2016

Bishop Ghais Abdel Malik was born on May 21st, 1930 in Port Said, Egypt. His father died when he was only a little boy. He was the sixth born among nine siblings. His mother raised all the children in the Christian faith, which resulted in creating an entire family of God fearing children, many of whom grew up to become priests and elders of all different denominations.



After finishing his school education in Port Said, he continued his higher education in Cairo where he graduated with a degree in education. After graduating, he started a job as a lab technician at the Harpur Memorial Anglican Hospital in Old Cairo

where he met his future wife, Fawzia Mesak who was a nurse at the hospital. It was there that he received the Lord's calling for the ordained ministry. He enrolled in the Anglican seminary in Jerusalem in 1960 and returned to Egypt to be ordained deacon at Jesus the Light of the World Church in Old Cairo in 1961. The following year he was ordained priest and became an assistant to Archdeacon Adeeb Shamas in the same church. In 1965 he became the priest in charge of Jesus the Light of the World Church after the Archdeacon's retirement. Bishop Ghais married his beloved Fawzia, on July 23, 1956 and they had three children Clair, Awny and Hany.

Bishop Ghais was ordained Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa in 1984. He was the first Bishop in that diocese to be elected. He succeeded Bishop Ishaq Mossad who had been appointed. In 1996, Bishop Ghais was elected as Primate of the Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East and he held that position until he retired in 2000. On May 2nd 2001 Bishop Ghais, along with His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the Coptic Orthodox Pope, received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity degree from The Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Wisconsin, USA.

During his long and rich ministry, Bishop Ghais devoted special attention to the children and youth of the diocese. In addition to being the director of the Anglican schools, he started many youth and family ministries in the diocese. He also founded the Anglican hostel for Women College Students which provided much needed shelter and spiritual support for Christian students who came from different parts of Egypt to receive their college education in Cairo. In 1982, he founded the first Christian school for deaf students in Egypt. During his time of service, Bishop Ghais ordained more than 20 deacons and priests, many of whom are now important pillars of the diocese. Bishop Ghais also played a crucial role in establishing a productive dialogue with the leaders of other Christian denominations in Egypt with the goal of becoming one body of Christ. He established several community development centres for families, and nurseries which provided care for children in order to allow their mothers to continue in employment. In addition he established a new ministry for refugees and a new ministry for prisoners inside Egyptian jails.

Bishop Ghais died on Wednesday 2nd March. He had suffered a stroke and pneumonia had developed. He will always be remembered as a faithful man of God known for his loving and kind spirit.

"And when his time of service was completed, he went to his home."

Luke 1:23

*Edited from a tribute written by Bishop Ghais' successor,
The Most Reverend Archbishop Mouneer Anis.*

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

First Anglican Theological College in Ethiopia opens

High hopes

The first Anglican theological college in Ethiopia, named after Saint Frumentius, has been officially opened by the Archbishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East, Mouneer Anis. Ethiopia is part of Archbishop Mouneer's diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

For many years, St Matthew's Church in Addis Ababa was the only Anglican congregation in Ethiopia. But that changed in the mid 1970s with the large numbers of refugees who arrived in the country seeking sanctuary from the protracted civil war in Sudan.

Many of those refugees were Anglican and they began building churches in the refugee camps. Later, Anglican churches were established in the villages of the Gambella region, in the west of Ethiopia. There was a desperate need for clergy to serve the area but the priests ordained to fill the need were lacking in theological education, having been ordained in a war-time situation. Even now there is only one priest in Gambella who has attended theological college. They all have a great desire to be more fully trained.

St Frumentius' College, affiliated with the Alexandria School of Theology in Egypt, will welcome students of other denominations "as long as they respect and work within the Anglican ethos of the school."

The idea for the college came about in 2011 when Archbishop Mouneer visited Gambella and asked the clergy what they wanted from their new Area Bishop. The clergy asked for somebody who could teach theology and Bishop Grant LeMarquand, the former theological college professor and Academic Dean of Trinity School for Ministry in Pittsburgh, was appointed.

Bishop Grant is the chair of the college's board and will teach courses at the college. The Revd Dr Johann VanderBijl, an Anglican priest from the USA, will serve as Dean of St Frumentius.

Courses will be taught in English. Initially, these will be a two-year full-time programme leading to a Certificate in Theological Studies. Each year will have two semesters with five courses in each semester

If the Certificate programme is successful, the college will consider expanding the programme to three years for a Diploma and four years for a Bachelor's degree.

"The theological curriculum will be divided into four major areas: Bible, church history, systematic theology, and pastoral or practical theology," the



college said. "In each of these areas we will seek to make the programme relevant to Africa, and especially to the Gambella region of Ethiopia, rather than simply a copy of a western model of education.

"In addition to these four areas, students will also receive special instruction in English, in research techniques, and in comparative religion (especially concentrating on African Traditional Religion and Islam)."

The circular-shaped church is based on a traditional Ethiopian design. It has a stone and cement floor with local quartz rock. It has been designed with an arched wall surrounding the main worship area to allow air to flow in the church while protecting the congregation from the rain. A veranda will surround the arched walls providing circulation space and overflow seating. The baptistery will be outside the church in the style of ancient North African churches.



Saint Frumentius, born at Tyre in the early fourth century, was captured as a boy and, with his brother, became the King of Axum's slave. When he was freed he began to teach Christianity. He travelled to Alexandria to appeal for missionary priests to be sent to Axum (now a city in northern Ethiopia). He was appointed bishop and set about establishing the Church in Ethiopia, where he is credited with converting many people.

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

Harsh realities

Johann and Louise VanderBijl write of the realities following the opening of the College.

Life in Gambella is not simple.

We returned in January filled with new and exciting ideas about what we were going to do with our students only to have our very first week turned upside down by deadly ethnic clashes. Nothing has been the same ever since. We now teach two sets of classes in two different areas of Gambella, as neither ethnic group can meet with the other at present. Our Anglican brethren on both sides long for fellowship with each other and will often pray for each other, ask about each other, and send greetings to each other through us. They have responded negatively to other denominations in town that are calling for total segregation.

It is both painful and pleasing to see this...pleasing in that they have transcended traditional tribal barriers; painful in that they are being forced to stay apart because some on both sides do not share that unique oneness in Jesus. It is refreshing to see that our brethren here are not slow to see the spiritual forces of darkness behind the killing and the hatred. And so they turn as one united body together against a common spiritual enemy and fight their battles on their knees, fasting and praying for peace.

At the same time, city water has been very scarce and the power has been sporadic. Some of our brethren in outer lying areas do not have food as all the roads were closed during the unrest. And it is hot... very hot. Temperatures are now often between 45 and 55 degrees Celsius with an increasing humidity, even at night. Our students tell us they can't sleep...we know, because we can't either. When the power goes off and we don't have fans going, it feels like we are living in an oven. We are thinking about changing the dates of our current semesters so that the College will be functional only during the less extremely hot seasons...the rest of the time... well, we will have to figure that out as we go along. We remain committed to the Lord's work and the people here in Gambella... we just have to figure out creative ways to keep me healthy!

We have been moving at quite a pace with our dear students as we have had to cram our lessons into shorter hours because we are now dividing everything into two. They are all so very, very smart and we are very, very proud of each one. So many strikes against



them from the start and so many strikes against them as they simply try to live here, but they are troupers and keep on keeping on for Jesus' sake.

Since this was written, Johann has faced serious health problems and has been advised that he must return to South Africa for a heart ablation, a procedure in which the surgeon cauterizes the areas where the impulses enter the atrium and cause the heart to beat very fast and irregularly. They had hoped to delay this until July but repeated episodes means it can not be delayed.

"The long and the short of it all is that we are closing the College a week early to go to South Africa so that my ticker can get a service"

LATER NEWS

Bishop Mouneer wrote on April 18th

This morning I woke up to the news that over 160 people had been slaughtered in the area of Gambella, Ethiopia within our Diocese. Many children were abducted, and cattle and food stolen. This news came from Rev Dr Johann W H van der Bijl, Dean of our St Frumentius' Anglican Theological College, Gambella, The fear is that this conflict may escalate and spread.

Please pray for safety and wisdom for Bishop Grant and Rev Johann and all staff in the Anglican Centre and the churches of that area. Pray also for the people of this very inflamed region.

Bishop Mouneer

Obituary

ABEE WAKID 1926-2016

Diocesan Treasurer who managed the finances with unerring skill

The Venerable Howard Levett, Archdeacon emeritus of the Diocese of Egypt, remembers a friend who was an esteemed servant of the Lord and the Church:

I first met Abee in 1980 when he and I both served on the Nominations Committee for a new bishop of the then named 'Diocese of Egypt' following the retirement of Bishop Ishaq Musaad, the diocese's first Egyptian bishop.

Abee had long experience of the Diocese and of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East of which it was a constituent part, having been a Lay Reader at the Cathedral for very many years and a member of its congregation since his youth.



At the time of the episcopal transition, (which for the first time meant an elected bishop) he held forthright views about the direction in which the diocese ought to be going and favoured an emphasis on its ex-patriate nature and believed the 'management' of the diocese needed to reflect that. As long-time Treasurer of the diocese and as a member of the Provincial Synod and of its Standing committee (and thereby one of those who jokingly referred to themselves as, 'one sixteenth of an Archbishop') his was certainly a formidable voice.

He managed the finances of the diocese with unerring skill and it was largely thanks to this that the diocese found itself in a very healthy financial position. His grip on the 'purse-strings' was what one might expect from a hugely successful businessman, something not always understood by those who did not move in the business world.

Abee was also for a time a member of the Anglican Consultative Council and thereby came to a fuller appreciation of the broader and wider nature of Anglicanism. Abee's pilgrimage throughout his long life spanned a fascinating period of much change in the face of Anglicanism in the Middle East between the early 1950's when the Archbishop in Jerusalem was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and when the formidable Bishop Llewellyn Gwynne ruled the then Diocese of Egypt. That period was followed by the time of 'Sequestration' (1956 – 1962) and the eventual slow move towards the creation of the Province in 1976, with its democratic structures and the appointment of the first Egyptian bishop for the diocese of Egypt.

Following the election in 1984 of Bishop Ghais Abd-e-Malik, it was inevitable that Abee as Treasurer and I as the new Bishop's Archdeacon would have much to do with one another since a certain amount of 'brokering' between visions old and new was required. This exercise usually took place in Abee and first wife Toutti's home in Heliopolis over substantial and excellent dining! When, sadly, Toutti died and it was my privilege to deliver the homily at the funeral. Abee was greatly affected by his wife's death, they had been a devoted and perfectly matched couple. Their sons supported Abee in his grief but it was only when he later met and eventually married Alexandra that he returned to being the man he had been. Abee was to be truly blessed and happy in his second marriage.

Throughout the ups and downs of Abee's life his absolute faithfulness to the Lord and to the Church he loved was constant. All Saints cathedral Cairo remained Abee's spiritual home and he and Alexandra continued to be seriously committed to both worship and ministry there, as well as being extremely supportive of Egypt's current bishop and the diocese.

Abee certainly deserved the award from the Archbishop of Canterbury, presented to him in All Saints Cathedral last year. He had been so germane to the building of sound foundations both spiritual and practical, within the diocese of Egypt and he had been a powerful spokesman on behalf of the Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East in the wider Anglican and Christian worlds.

May he indeed rest in peace and rise in glory and may his legacy on earth continue to be built upon and his contribution remembered worthily.

April 2016

Bishop Azad Resignation

On January 7 **Bishop Azad Marshall** was elected **Co-Adjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Raiwind** in Pakistan. As Co-Adjutor Bishop he is the designated successor of the present diocesan bishop, the Rt. Revd. Samuel Azariah, who is due to retire in a year or so.

With his election he had to resign his present episcopal role as Bishop in Iran. Following discussions Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis, the President Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, appointed him Vicar-General of the Diocese of Iran for six months so that episcopal oversight can continue and steps can be set in train to discern a successor.

Archbishop Mouneer has expressed his appreciation for the faithful witness of the Christians in the diocese and his gratitude for the ministry of Bishop Azad during a testing period. Ideally the province would like to see a resident bishop if at all possible and that is something for which prayer is requested. Visas permitting, Archbishop Mouneer hopes to visit Iran to meet with members of the congregations and assess the situation himself in the course of the first half of 2016.

Do pray for God's guidance on those who carry the responsibility for discerning who should follow Bishop Azad.

Other Changes

There have been developments in the leadership of the congregations in Iran. The Revd Edgar Irfan from Pakistan, with his wife and two young children, has moved to Esfahan, after being granted a residence visa and work permit for a year. They are well settled. The Revd. Christopher Edgar has returned to Pakistan following many years of service in Tehran.

Friends of Diocese of Iran 2016 Residential Conference: 10-11 Sept, London School of Theology

The Iranian Church: Preparing for the Future

The Friends of the Diocese of Iran is holding its annual conference at the London School of Theology from 10-11 September 2016. The **Revd Dr Mehrdad Fatehi** is the main speaker bringing news of the Church in Iran

and about the development of the PARS Theological Centre, set up in 2001 so that emerging leaders of the churches in Iran (and outside) can receive the biblical and theological education that is so critical to the strengthening of the Church's foundations.

'By the Power of the Spirit: Stories of Iranian Christians' by Kenneth J Thomas. For review of this book and purchase details see pages 20-21

Obituary

Colin Williamson R.I.P.

John Clark writes:

Colin Williamson, who died on 7 January aged 93, became a member of the JMECA Council in 1976 and a Director in 1987, retiring in 1999. It was in Iran, to which he went in 1941 as a twenty year old chemist with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, that his interest in the Middle East developed. As the oil industry was of strategic national importance, his military training consisted in a short course in explosives, with the mandate to disable the refinery in the event of danger of hostile occupation. He never had to carry out that training which would have meant blowing up his own place of work. He learned fluent Farsi which he put to good use not only in refinery management positions but also in teaching Sunday school and holding services in Persian – and it was in Iran that he became an Anglican. He left Iran in 1953 at the time of Prime Minister Mossadegh's nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry.

He went on to head up BP's Computer Department, serve in Rochester Diocese as a Reader for more than fifty years, join the Board of Church Army and CMS General Council and Asia Committee. He maintained his connections with Iran and the wider Middle East. With those years of experience he was a fund of knowledge and wisdom for JMECA, and stepped in to edit *Bible Lands* with the secretary Vanessa Wells (including cutting and pasting articles ready for printing) in the 1990s when the editor's role fell vacant. Always ready with a story or a bon mot, he was a valued director and we give thanks for his life.

Yemen: Heartbreak and Hope

Peter Crooks

*Self-published and available for £8.75 (plus p&p) from Lulu.com
(Just type the title into the search box to find the book).*



Peter Crooks has served the church in the Middle East for much of the last four decades and this delightful, elegantly written book is an account of their experiences in Aden, Yemen, their latest post, which they describe as 'the happiest and most rewarding of their lives'. Peter met his wife Nancy in Aqaba, Jordan in 1973. After university and curacies in England they returned to the Middle East where he was successively Chaplain in Beirut, Damascus, Amman and Dean of St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem. Following a break in England they went to Aden in 2004, where they shared the responsibility of running two clinics and care of the small international congregation of Christ Church. Peter also served as Chaplain to seafarers.

By recounting some of their daily varied encounters Peter introduces us to some remarkable individuals from among the international, Yemeni and refugee community in Aden. And through their stories we are gently made aware of the complexities of life in the Middle East, the problems of daily life, the plight of refugees, and the resilience of the human spirit. Their meetings with Muslim friends take issue with the stereotypes of Muslims and Islam and affirm the value of practical Christian presence among them. There is much spiritual wisdom and insight shared through these stories.

Although set against the backdrop of Aden the

book includes four important

chapters on their time in Iran in 2002 introducing us to the isolated Iranian Episcopal Church and some remarkable Christians. Drawing from their experience in Jerusalem and the Levant Peter provides a reflection on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict challenging popular views of Palestinians and Israelis.

Their service was at times demanding and his accounts of being held up at gunpoint on the road to Sanaa, the threats against their lives that led to their rapid departure and the report of the life-threatening illness that struck him down on the remote island of Socotra are reminders of the challenges they faced.

This review is written after receiving their report of Easter 2013 in Aden and gives a flavour of what can be found in the book – 'Our dawn service was held by candlelight among an artificial 'garden' in the chancel. None of the traditional English Easter hymns were sung but each language group contributed and where possible we all joined in. Our joy could not have been matched in any more sophisticated service and it was difficult to bring it to an end. Eventually it was the children's eagerness for breakfast that brought us down to earth!'

John Clark

By the Power of the Spirit: Stories of Iranian Christians

Kenneth J Thomas

Published by the Association of Iranian Presbyterian Churches and Fellowships in North America; 2015 – and in the UK available from Elam Publications – PO Box 75, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 6YP – or email to publication@elam.com) £3.00 plus postage

Dr Kenneth Thomas, a Bible scholar, Presbyterian theological teacher in Iran for seventeen years and a translation consultant to the United Bible Societies, has produced this short (110 pages) and very readable account of twenty-seven figures he has selected from the history of Christian faith in Iran – a by-product of his recently published major study of Persian language Bible translation.

Starting with Tatian and concluding with Bishop Hassan Dehqani-Tafti he ranges through eight different eras of the last two thousand years of Iranian history to highlight significant figures 'whose birthplace was within the bounds of Persian domination at the time

they lived. They can be described as Armenians, Assyrians, Persians or Kurds.'

The book is divided into two sections - Christians in Apostolic Churches and Christians in Newer Churches. Then through the lives of people like Aphrahat, Mar Aba 1, Ivanis 'Izz al-Din, Yuhannan Gavilani, Jonathan Marzaki, Behravesht Pakizegi and Seth Yeghnazar we gain insights into Christian faith in Iran at different stages in its history.

And those connected with the Diocese of Iran are well represented – Carapet Yohannes, Benyamin Badal, Norollah Hakim (highlighting the Jewish tradition within the diocese) Jalil Qazzaq and Bishop Hassan

are all included.

Further value is added to the book by the brief Scene setting introductions to the history of Iran at the beginning of the eight eras that he has identified.

The Book of Hebrews speaks of the 'great cloud of witnesses' cheering us on as we follow Christ – and among them are these Christians of Iran. Iranian Christians of today and those who associate with them

are part of a great tradition of faith stretching back to the time of the Apostles and on into the future and this book sheds light on some who today may be lesser known figures of that chain of faith – and for bringing them back to our awareness we should be grateful to Kenneth Thomas.

At £3.00 a copy (plus postage) this is a bargain.

John Clark

The Chaldean Catholic Church

A study in modern history, ecclesiology and church-state relations (2003-2013)

The Trustees of Jerusalem and Middle East Church Assoc have received a grateful letter from Kristian Girling for a grant they awarded for his doctoral research into the Chaldean Catholic Church. His thesis is complete and we are pleased to publish an abstract. The full thesis is in the University of London library. If you wish to receive further information please contact Dr Girling on kristian.girling @ heythropcollege.ac.uk

This thesis provides a modern historical study of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq from 2003 to 2013 with analysis of the origins and ecclesiological development of the Chaldean community from the sixteenth century onwards.

I offer an insight into the formation of Chaldean ecclesiological identity and organisation in the context of the Chaldeans as a community originating from the ecclesial traditions of the Church of the East and as an eastern Catholic Church in union with the Holy See.

I argue for the gradual if consistent development of a Chaldean identity grounded and incarnated in the Mesopotamian-Iraqi environment yet open to engaging with cultures throughout the Middle East and West Asia and especially since 2003 to Europe, North America and Australasia. The thesis also provides an assessment of the contemporary status of the Chaldean dioceses of Iraq highlighting the size, influence and historical development of these

structures to October 2013.

I attempt to increase awareness of the Chaldeans as an essential part of Iraqi society and as to the crucial social “difference” which they established and maintained throughout their history. A “difference” which is only as a result of extreme persecution being removed from Iraq.

The thesis concludes by opening up examination for the potential for further ecclesiological developments which may occur in light of events since the 2003 Iraq War and the rise of Da'esh (IS) in 2014 and considerations of full ecclesial communion with the Chaldeans' sister community the Assyrian Church of the East.

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PhD Theology, 2015*



Statue of Our Lady outside the Dominican convent in Alqosh, northern Iraq – looking south to the Nineveh plain.



Tomb inscriptions in Syriac, in Rabban Hormizd Monastery, Alqosh, northern Iraq.

(Both photos by Kristian Girling.)

THE HOLY LAND ...from a first time visitor

Daniel Trott is an ordinand in the Church of England, due to be ordained deacon as we go to print. He received a grant from JEMT to enable him attend a four-week study programme at Tantur Ecumenical Institute in summer 2014. The programme comprised lectures, organized trips, and some free time for his own exploration. Tantur Ecumenical Institute is a 15-minute bus journey from the Old City of Jerusalem, and a five-minute walk from the Bethlehem checkpoint. A summary of his experience follows:

I went to the Holy Land with a very limited understanding of its history, its geography, and the variety of its religion. My understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was also quite superficial. The programme I attended, and the places I was able to visit in my free time, dramatically increased my knowledge of these areas, and has influenced my outlook in several ways.

First, my understanding of religion in general – and Christianity in particular – was broadened. In the streets of Jerusalem one encounters the call to prayer broadcast through speakers (sometimes interrupting the Stations of the Cross), bar mitzvah processions led by clarinet, and Greek, Armenian, Syrian, and Coptic priests dressed in their distinctive habits. During the month I attended one *Shabbat* service at a Reform synagogue and another led by a Reconstructionist rabbi at the First Station open-air mall, and experienced Greek Catholic (Melkite), Armenian Orthodox, and Syrian Orthodox worship.

Second, through visiting archaeological sites and traditional New Testament sites I was able to 'put flesh on the bones' of Scripture and Christian history. So many evocative place-names have now come to life: Bethlehem, Dan, Masada, Jericho, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, the Golan Heights, Mount Tabor, Capernaum, Emmaus – the list could go on. The numerous Byzantine and Crusader churches and the Ottoman city walls of Jerusalem connect the ancient past with more recent history.

Finally, I have come to better understand the Israel–Palestine conflict, though inevitably still from an outsider's perspective. I arrived in Israel on the day that the bodies of the kidnapped hitchhikers were found, and before long the Gaza conflict began, and I became accustomed to air raid sirens, exploding rockets, and riot police. The conflict made Palestinians and non-Jewish ('Arab') Israelis all the more eager to talk about their experiences of living (in the first case) under Israeli occupation and (in the second case) in a state that does not really want them. Complementing this, a visit to the Holocaust Museum helped me understand an important component of the Jewish Israeli psyche: abandoned by most of the world during the Second World



The Tantur Institute

War, they want a country where they can feel safe. I was left feeling angry at the injustices suffered by the Palestinians, and unsure that peace would ever be achieved.

There exists a glimmer of hope in the form of people who have made it their lives' work to break down the barriers separating Jews and non-Jews in the Holy Land. On one trip we met a rabbi who lives in Gush Etsyon, an (illegal) Israeli settlement in the West Bank, who has recently become aware of the plight of Palestinians and seeks to organize dialogue, so that Jews and non-Jews actually meet each other. On another occasion we met a woman who lives in an intentional Jewish-'Arab' community, where the children are taught both Arabic and Hebrew in school. It seems to me that this sort of work holds the key for a peaceful future for the region. Mono-racial states are not the answer. Jews and non-Jews need to learn to live together, but unfortunately many do not want to.

Through this programme I forged a link with the land that was a home to Jesus, and in particular places (the Sea of Galilee, the Temple Mount, the possible sites of Emmaus) the sense of connection was very strong. What has stayed with me most vividly, however, is my sadness that the Holy Land is still such a long way from peace and justice.

Daniel Trott



Course student by Lake Galilee

BISHOP AZAD ...faces the Jihadi threat

On 27 March 2016, 75 people were killed and over 340 injured in a suicide bombing that hit the main entrance of Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, one of the largest parks in Lahore, Pakistan. The attack targeted Christians who were celebrating Easter. Of the 75 dead, 14 were identified as Christians and the rest as Muslims. The majority of victims were women and children. Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a group affiliated with the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack. The attack led to worldwide condemnation and national mourning throughout Pakistan. Pakistan also launched a widespread counter-terrorism operation in South Punjab, arresting more than 200 people.

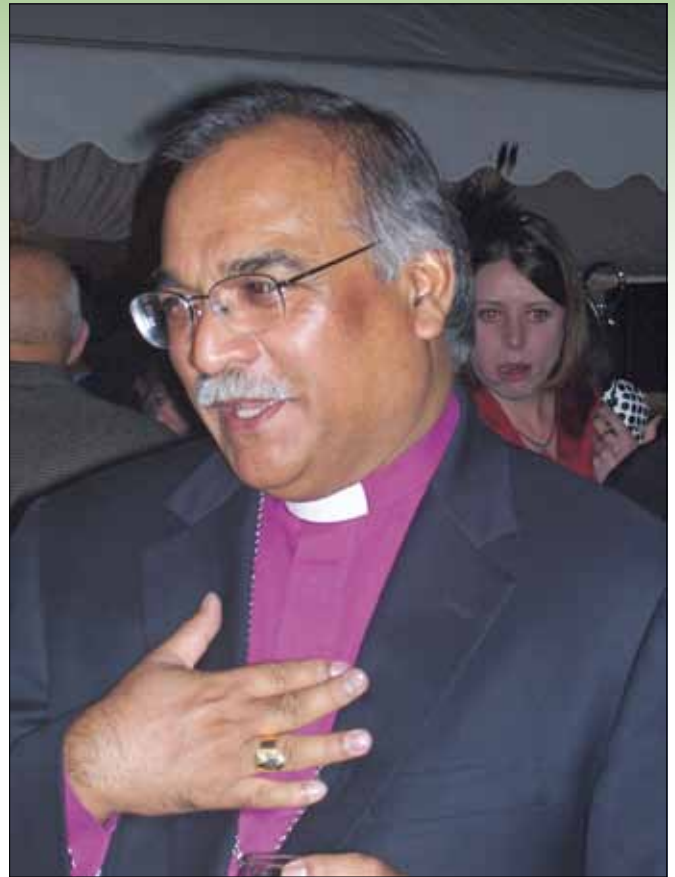
Editor

As announced on page 19 Bishop Azad Marshall has resigned as Bishop in Iran following his election as Co-Adjutor Bishop of Raiwind in Pakistan, a post he will take up shortly. The Christians of Pakistan constantly face threats from jihadi groups and Bishop Azad here writes of his experience this Easter:

The sun rose over us as more than 1200 Christians gathered together in Raiwind to give thanks and praise and celebrate the resurrected Christ Jesus and the victory of the cross and the empty tomb. God was there.

It continued to shine overhead as I drove across the city to St Andrew's Church where I was preaching again about the Resurrection of Christ, sharing about the fullness of power and grace to share the resurrection and its significance to the early Church. The Holy Spirit impressed upon me the need for Jesus to die to express complete love, complete justice and complete hope. God was there.

Later when a family lunch concluded and the sun began to set, I felt a little relief that the news had not alarmed us this Easter Day with the panicked voice of the newscaster screaming across the room to tell us an attack had happened. I said thank you to the Lord for keeping us safe. 'No attacks thank you Lord'. As the news of the attacks on Iqbal Park unfold, I am reminded my children went there when they were little. Shan, Lily, Michelle and Joshua, have fond memories of going there during Christmas and Easter holidays.

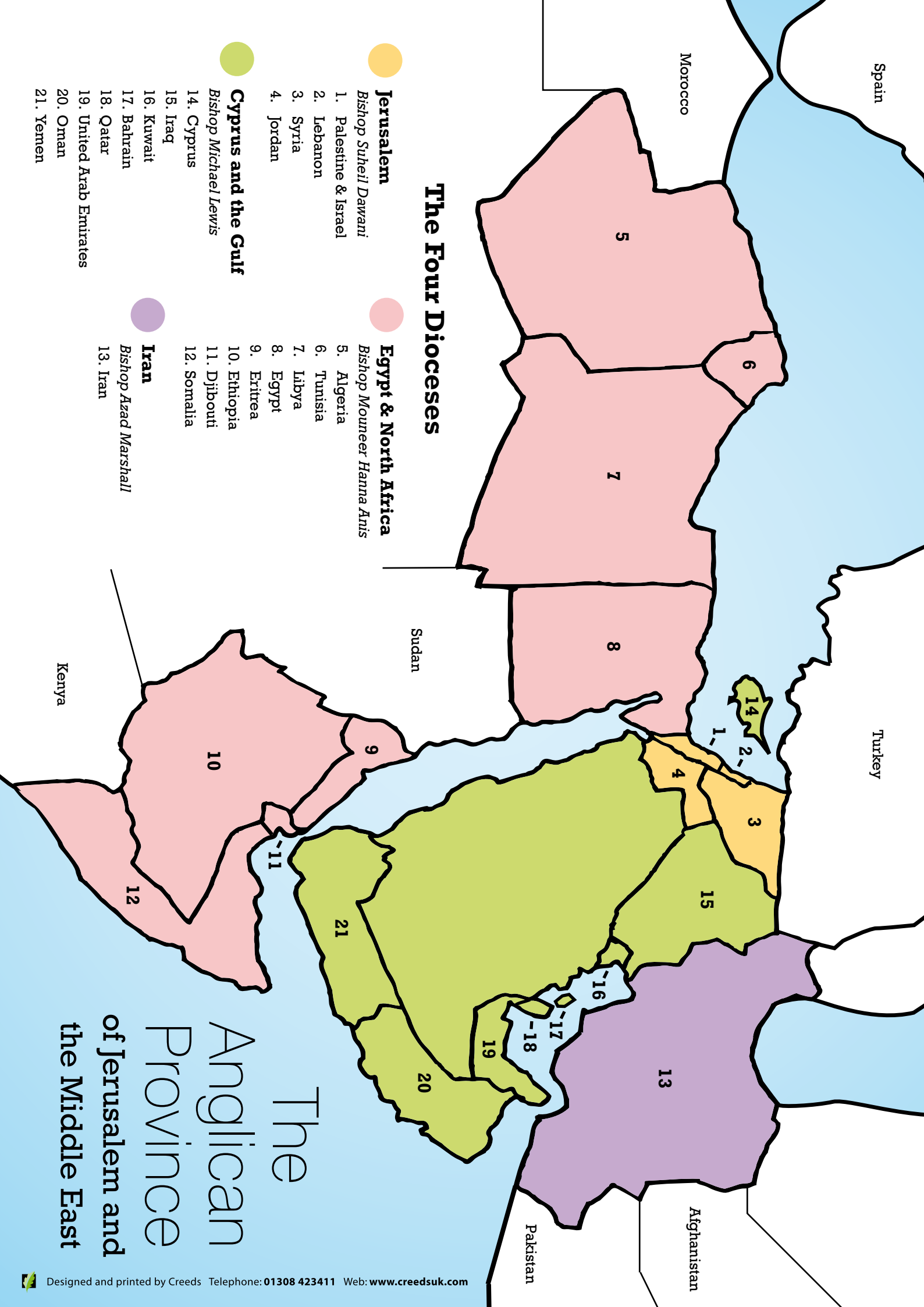


In that very park where my children have happy memories of swings and park rides, families have been fractured and traumatised by these gruesome attacks. Hundreds injured and many dead because angry lost souls in jackets take the law and life into their own hands. Shoes, crying, weeping mothers and children made it like a repeat of Peshawar [The suicide bomb attack on All Saints Church, Peshawar in September 2013]. And I am reminded of one woman in Peshawar who besides her pain and her loss in the tragedy of 2013 said 'God was there'.

Now Lord be with us as we seek to stand again, brush off the ashes, and allow Easter's resurrection power flow through us for the sake of God's Kingdom. Our work is not done. Let us weep together before our Lord for the loss of life and the disregard for human life. Then let us work together for the restoration of the hope of Christ.

Lesley and I want to say thank you to all who called us and prayed for us. Please continue to keep our nation and our people in your prayers. This is my hope and confidence: Emmanuel knows our pain. God is here.

We pray and grieve for these murders in Lahore and remember the Christians of Pakistan in their grief and we pray for bishop Azad and the new ministry to which he is called.



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

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