

# Bible Lands

Winter 2023

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

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



Jerusalem



Alexandria

Archbishops' Joint Appeal .....	p.4
Jerusalem Heads of Churches letter .....	p.5
Temple Gairdner centenary .....	p.12
Interfaith initiatives.....	p.18
Where Jesus grew up? .....	p.20

# THE JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST CHURCH ASSOCIATION

(JMECA)

Founded in 1887

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

Reg. Charity no. 1158476

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

## Patron

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable  
The Archbishop of Canterbury

## Chair

The Right Reverend Anthony Ball

## Administrator

Mrs Shirley Eason  
Administrative Assistant: Mrs Anne Crawshaw  
1 Hart House, The Hart  
Farnham, Surrey GU9 7HJ.  
[secretary@jmecca.org.uk](mailto:secretary@jmecca.org.uk)  
Tel 01252 726994

## Trustees

The Right Reverend Anthony Ball (Chair)  
Dr Clare Amos  
Mr John Clark  
The Reverend Catherine Dawkins (Hon Treasurer)  
Mrs Carol Hawkey  
Mr John Pringle  
The Reverend Canon Dr Matthew Rhodes  
The Reverend Dr Yazid Said  
The Reverend Dr William Taylor  
Mr David Wright OBE

## Consultants

The Venerable Dr John Holdsworth  
Mr Joel Kelling  
The Reverend Dr Stephen Need  
The Reverend Canon Hugh Wybrew

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

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

## Bible Lands Editor

Letters, articles, comments are welcomed by the Editor:  
The Reverend Dr Stephen Need.  
Email: [swneed@gmail.com](mailto:swneed@gmail.com)

The next issue will be published in June for  
Summer 2024.

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

*Front cover photo: The 'Door of Humility' at the Church of  
the Nativity, Bethlehem.*

## THE CENTRAL SYNODS OF THE TWO PROVINCES

### Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

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

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

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

#### Diocese of Jerusalem

The Most Rev Hosam Naoum  
(*details as above*)

#### Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

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

#### Diocese of Iran

Vacant

### Province of Alexandria

**Archbishop:** The Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy  
All Saints' Cathedral, 5 Michel Lutfalla Street,  
Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt  
Tel: +20 2 2738 0821  
[info@dioceseofegypt.org](mailto:info@dioceseofegypt.org)  
Website: [www.dioceseofegypt.org](http://www.dioceseofegypt.org)

#### Assistant Bishop:

The Rt Rev Anthony Ball  
[bishopanthonyball@gmail.com](mailto:bishopanthonyball@gmail.com)

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

**Treasurer:** Dr Maged Botros

#### Diocese of Egypt

The Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy  
(*details as above*)

#### Diocese of North Africa

Vacant

#### Diocese of the Horn of Africa

The Rt Rev Kuan Kim Seng (Commissary)

#### Diocese of Gambella

The Rt Rev Kuan Kim Seng (Commissary)



# Editorial

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

---

When Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated, I was a young diplomat sitting at an outdoor table in Jerusalem with some colleagues (the group with which I had been learning Arabic). It was 28 years ago on 4 November. I remember saying at the time, only half believing it and not really appreciating the significance, 'Well, there goes the chance for peace here during our careers'. The following year Benjamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister of Israel. In the years since, there have been times when peace seemed within grasp – but the prospect has always slipped away. The last remaining member of that cadre of Foreign Office Arabists left his post as an ambassador in the region this summer, retiring from the Diplomatic Service. With my unwitting prophecy fulfilled, is now the time?

Perhaps out of the horror of the current conflict might come a renewed impetus for the just peace that has proved so elusive. I doubt that the three current leaders will be in power at the end of the war and maybe some new faces (along with much more determined and consistent engagement from the international community) is what it will take to find a way through the impasse in which this generation of political leaders has been stuck. That may constitute 'the slender hope for peace' mentioned in Fr Nicholas Worsam's book review (p. 19). As Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College, says in his message (p. 6) 'the trouble has been brewing for years... Exactly what can be done to change this reality cannot be agreed upon yet but it is certain that change must come'.

The bombing of Al Ahli hospital and the Saint Porphyrius Church compound serve as reminders of our very real connections in the Body of Christ with the tragedy unfolding in Gaza. I am not an avid follower of social media, but the TV screen and my WhatsApp account are more than enough to create a sense of being overwhelmed by the enormity of this war (with people I know on both sides sharing news of friends and relatives) and a feeling of helplessness in offering any response. But we can each do something, however small it may seem. Reaching out to someone we know who is affected, a donation to an appeal, challenging narratives of hate or division when we encounter them, adding our voice to those seeking a just peace, praying for individuals and communities...all are acts of compassion and solidarity.

I had a particular opportunity to express solidarity when visiting Jordan at the end of October with the Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission. Alongside our ecumenical dialogue we meet with the leaders of all the Christian denominations in Amman to hear first-hand

how they and their communities are affected. A further reminder that these horrific events are made up of countless individual stories – people and lives forever changed.

The foregrounding of people and their stories is apparent in the pieces that the JMECA Communications Consultant, Archdeacon John Holdsworth (whose appointment was announced in the last edition), and others have contributed to this magazine. I do hope you enjoy reading about them and that the articles reinforce, or rekindle, a sense of your connection with the Anglican churches of the region. Archdeacon John has also worked hard with Shirley Eason, the JMECA Secretary, to ensure the website has kept up-to-date with developments within the diocese of Jerusalem as well as news of people and places across the provinces. If you have not visited the 'news & views' section recently (<https://www.jmecca.org.uk/latest/news-views>) I urge you to do so – there are some wonderful stories.

This is an unusual, and possibly unique, moment in the unfolding story of the two provinces with the Primate each being the only diocesan bishop in their Church and therefore, between them, acting in that role for all seven dioceses supported by JMECA. We are making the most of this to consult with them both on how they see the charity supporting the work of their provinces (along with JEMT, which holds the title to several church properties and manages a number of charities with similar objectives). A significant part of that support comes through the careful stewardship of historic resources and the disbursing of grants from them. As the profile (p. 11) of the outgoing Treasurer, John Pringle, highlights, it proved to be a lifeline during the COVID pandemic. John leaves the Board just after the last of the COVID grants has been sent to the dioceses – a fitting finale to his exemplary service. We are also hugely grateful for all that Canon Matthew Rhodes has given during his years as a director, and latterly as the Vice Chair, as he too stands down at the AGM in November. John and Matthew have set a high bar for those directors/trustees who have recently joined the Board! Alongside those thanks go hearty congratulations to Bishop Harry Moore (Cyprus & the Gulf 1983-86) as he celebrates his 100th birthday in November.

What Archdeacon Mones Farah says about the Holy Land (p.8) applies across both provinces: 'The Anglican church is active and led by hard working colleagues serving society as a whole through their focus on the calling of Jesus to his disciples and followers to be salt and light in their culture'. We are privileged to support that witness.

+Anthony Ball

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

Jerusalem Archbishop Hosam Naoum



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

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



## Joint Appeal for the diocese of Jerusalem



Archbishop Justin Welby has joined with Archbishop Hosam Naoum

to launch a Joint Appeal for Gaza, Palestine and Israel.

**In the joint letter Archbishop Hosam Naoum writes:**

'Just over two weeks ago, the world was horrified at the sudden eruption of war in the Holy Land resulting in hundreds of deaths, injuries, and displacements. Since that time, those numbers have multiplied into the thousands, as open hostilities have drastically escalated. Innocent civilians, especially women and children, have been caught in the deadly crossfire'.

Speaking of the missile strike on the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza, he adds, 'Although Ahli's buildings were heavily damaged, two nights later our devoted staff partially reopened the hospital. In doing this, they demonstrated the determination we have in the diocese of Jerusalem to persevere in our Christian mission to serve others as though we were serving Christ himself (Matthew 25:31-46)'.

**and Archbishop Justin Welby writes:**

'As war devastates the Holy Land, we ask where Christ is to be found amid the cries of his children. When the lives of the innocent are at risk, we strain our eyes for the light of the One who offers healing, peace and justice. In Gaza, the Al Ahli hospital, run by the diocese of Jerusalem, is that light'.

**If YOU can help in this desperate situation, go to <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/24666>**



***Thank you for all your prayers and support during this time of great calamity. Continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and for security for all who dwell in its lands.***

(The Rev Canon Don Binder – chaplain to the archbishop in Jerusalem)



## The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem unite in a call for peace and justice

The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, an ecumenical group of Christian leaders which includes the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Archbishop Hosam Naoum, have issued a statement calling for peace and justice amidst unfolding violence. Their statement in full is produced below.

*The Holy Land, a place sacred to countless millions around the world, is currently mired in violence and suffering due to the prolonged political conflict and the lamentable absence of justice and respect for human rights. We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, have time and again appealed for the importance of respecting the historic and legal Status Quo of the holy shrines. In these trying times, we come together to raise our voices in unity, echoing the divine message of peace and love for all humanity.*

*As custodians of the Christian faith, deeply rooted in the Holy Land, we stand in solidarity with the people of this region, who are enduring the devastating consequences of continued strife. Our faith, which is founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, compels us to advocate for the cessation of all violent and military activities that bring harm to both Palestinian and Israeli civilians.*

*We unequivocally condemn any acts that target*

*civilians, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or faith. Such actions go against the fundamental principles of humanity and the teachings of Christ, who implored us to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31).*

*It is our fervent hope and prayer that all parties involved will heed this call for an immediate cessation of violence. We implore political leaders and authorities to engage in sincere dialogue, seeking lasting solutions that promote justice, peace, and reconciliation for the people of this land, who have endured the burdens of conflict for far too long.*

*In our capacity as spiritual leaders, we extend our hands to all those who suffer, and we pray that the Almighty may grant comfort to the afflicted, strength to the weary, and wisdom to those in positions of authority. We call upon the international community to redouble its efforts to mediate a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land, based on equal rights for all and on international legitimacy.*

*Let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul: 'For God is not a God of disorder but of peace' (1 Corinthians 14:33). In the spirit of this divine message, we implore all to work tirelessly towards an end to violence and the establishment of a just and lasting peace that will allow the Holy Land to be a beacon of hope, faith, and love for all.*

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all during these challenging times.*

*The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches  
in Jerusalem*

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## A message from the Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem



St George's College has experienced numerous serious disruptions to its ministry over the past fifty years and there is an institutional memory of surviving these great challenges. We are in another of those moments of deep rupture. Once again, it isn't the result of the College's mismanagement or errors of judgement. This crisis is brought about by an explosion of violence between Israelis and Palestinians which has resulted in atrocities by both sides causing devastating numbers of deaths and casualties. The College staff along with people of all faiths and none, mourn these tragic events and the grief and deep trauma which result.

Pilgrims and tourists have fled in their droves. There has been a rush to the airport even as there have been wholesale cancellation of flights. We have a group of thirty-three pilgrims with us on a study-pilgrimage and it has been a profoundly challenging experience for them. Several decided to leave to return home. But thirty have remained, determined to do as much of their greatly anticipated experience that safety and sensible planning will allow. They feel confident in the college's planning and assessment of direct risks and so, barring one day when we simply sheltered in the college library, we have been able to offer an adapted schedule of visits to key holy sites in Jerusalem and Galilee. This has been based on a realistic assessment of risks and not a stubborn resistance to accept the facts on the ground.

Rev Rodney Aist, course director, Rev Andrew Mayes, chaplain and myself have been able to lead and guide the course with fortitude, in the best traditions of St George's College, determined not to be daunted by events. The Palestinian staff have faced very serious challenges to get to work owing to closed checkpoints for some and unsafe travel circumstances for others. But we have managed to offer a good experience for our pilgrims. These travellers from the US, Canada

and Australia have been extraordinarily determined, patient and flexible. We hope and pray that they will be able to return as planned in a few days' time, but they all know there is a risk that they will have to remain longer than planned. We have, however, had to cancel the pilgrimage which follows this one which is a blow to all. Will it be possible that this is the only cancelled course? We just do not know. We will communicate with those registered on upcoming courses as and when necessary.

Far more serious than that are the realities on the ground for Palestinians and Israelis especially for all those living in Gaza and those living in the environs outside the Strip. The implications for all the peoples of the Holy Land could not be more serious. Death, injury, grief, loss of homes and livelihoods is on a scale not seen in these lands since 1967.

Everyone is shocked by the extreme violence which has broken out and of course, all killings of innocents and targeting of children and women must be condemned, but the trouble has been brewing for years. A system which subjects two million West Bank Palestinians to military occupation and also incarcerates two million Gazans in an open prison is unsustainable and will inevitably lead to extreme violence. Exactly what can be done to change this reality cannot be agreed upon yet but it is certain that change must come. This change must give Palestinians a viable and acceptable way to live their lives in freedom. Equally, the Israelis have the right to defend their borders and live with security.

***May the God of all hope lead us out of darkness into God's kingdom of peace and justice.***

It feels a very long way off but we cling onto that hope and we must realise that small steps in the right direction give us momentum towards that distant target, which is our goal.

*Richard Sewell*



## Whom shall I send...me?



**As part of its summer programme, the diocese of Jerusalem hosted a vocational conference for young people. Rev George Vidiakin was part of the clergy team. He is in conversation here with John Holdsworth.**

The Provincial Leadership Programme titled 'Whom shall I send? – the call to serve in Jerusalem and the Middle East' was a workshop organized by the Anglican diocese of Jerusalem and funded by USPG. Its main purpose was to gather together young people from across the province and help them discern ways to serve God both as ordained or lay ministers. The programme was very rich and consisted of church services, talks on call, spiritual gifts and ministry, excursions to some of the key Christian sites of Jordan and other historic locations; and visits to educational institutions run by the diocese: the Theodore Schneller school in Amman, and the Arab Episcopal School in Irbid. The main thread of the event was personal stories of God's call.

### *JH: Who was there?*

**GV:** Young people from Nablus, Doha, Dubai, Sharjah, Manama participated in the workshop. The coordination team included Archdeacon of the Gulf, the Venerable Michael Mbona, clergy and lay members from the diocese of Jerusalem and the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, under the leadership of Joel Kelling, regional facilitator of the Anglican Alliance.

### *JH: What was the purpose of the event?*

**GV:** To help young participants discern if they have a taste for ministry by listening to different personal stories of God's call, by doing group discussions and exercises on discerning spiritual gifts, by reflecting on designated Bible stories of God's call such as Jesus and his disciples, John the Baptist, Mary, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Ruth. It included a visualisation exercise in the Ignatian style, by creating a 'spiritual coat of arms'. Apart from all this there was an intention to bring together Christians from all over the province.

### *JH: What was innovative about it?*

**GV:** The approach to the theme and the way to unfold it seemed quite innovative to me. It was very inventive to unite into one schedule, theological aspects of God's call and its social dimension through the examples of schools we visited. Both schools play a very important role in the local community. Theodore Schneller school with its vocational training helps its students get necessary skills for further professional development in different practical fields while the Arab Episcopal School serves blind and low-sighted students along with sighted and provides an inspiring example of inclusive education. Travel to different important Christian and historic sights helped very much in team building as well as widening participants' knowledge of the history of our faith in its cradle, the Middle East.

### *JH: What will you remember personally from the workshop?*

**GV:** On the very first day of the workshop Archbishop Hossam Naoum presided in the Holy Eucharist and gave a talk on his own story. He said that the heart of every ministry is the importance to serve people around us and to serve God.

I had the opportunity to tell the story of my own realisation of call, which is something perhaps we don't often do or reflect on, and it received useful feedback. I enjoyed preparing my Bible reflection and the service of compline which I presided (it was a real night prayer which started around 12:30 am)!

### *JH: What surprised you?*

**GV:** I was not very much familiar with the genre of personal stories about God's call. And I was surprised how diverse, dramatic, colourful, exciting and just interesting they can be.

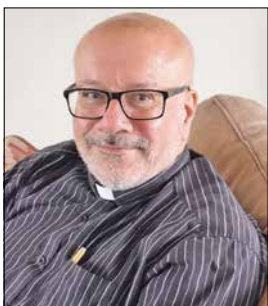
### *JH: What energised you?*

**GV:** Each personal story of God's call to ministry was truly remarkable. It was really stunning that people were talking about life-changing events and really hard times in their lives but all of them, it was obvious to anyone, were absolutely happy and didn't regret the choices they made in their journey of faith.



# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## A word from Wales



### **The Ven Mones Farah writes...**

On a recent trip to the Holy Land, I had the privilege of joining in with the Anglican Church celebration of Pentecost in St George Cathedral, Jerusalem. To be in Jerusalem on

Pentecost Sunday, the day that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early disciples gathered in the upper room, was a great privilege and a rich blessing.

Our small group from Wales, the archbishop, his wife, chaplain and I, at the invitation of the diocese of Jerusalem, spent ten days experiencing the riches of the Arabic church and meeting its leaders from the different expressions and denominations present in the land.

Our meetings began on the first morning with Archbishop Hosam Naoum, his chaplain and the Pastor of the Arabic-speaking congregation of the cathedral. It was at this time that we heard first the repeated concerns of every senior church leader that we met on our trip: increased struggle to slow and halt emigration of the young, connecting the young with the church, increasing confidence in the Christian identity of church members, and navigating increasing hostility towards the church, its members and institutions, from extremist elements of religious groups belonging to the Jewish faith in Jerusalem and the rest of the land.

I first came to Wales in 1983, where I experienced a renewal of faith and ended up being ordained in the diocese of St David's in which I am serving again, for the last forty years I have been visiting my hometown Nazareth as well as Jerusalem every year. During these visits I have always engaged with the local Churches, Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Melkite and the church of my childhood the Maronite Church, in the North of the Land.

Although numbers attending in some of these churches are low, this is by no means the picture in all of them. In fact, the Arabic church in its totality has learned to navigate a very difficult landscape and retains its passion and vigour, its depth of spirituality and historical connection with the land surviving, severe discrimination, persecution and enforced limitations on its expression of faith at various stages of its history.

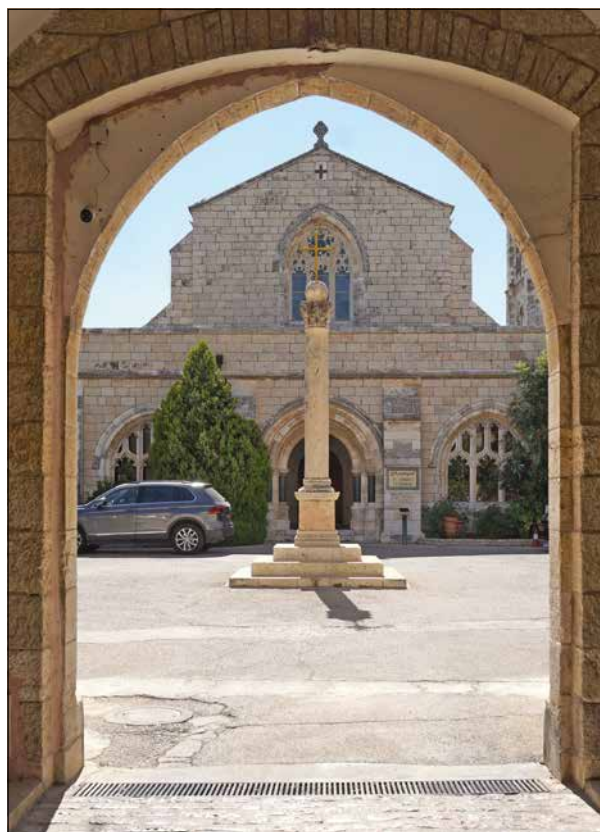
The Anglican church is active and led by hard working colleagues serving society as a whole through their focus on the calling of Jesus to his disciples and followers to be salt and light in their culture.

The aforementioned Pentecost gathering at St George Cathedral was a coming together of all the priests and congregations of the Anglican Church in Palestine and Israel. For those living in Palestine, a journey that should have taken under an hour took over two hours, navigating the check points and the roads that they are allowed to travel on. Our time together was filled with a sense of joy and celebration. It included a great word of exhortation by the archbishop. The service was followed by a joint lunch, worship and more singing led by a multi-generational band in the yard of the school opposite.

This is a church that is committed to her saviour, a church that is led by passionate, vibrant priests with many young leaders among them.

At the end of my visit, I was inspired and challenged by the churches and it is my strong conviction that the Church in the Holy Land can teach and equip us to deal with a changing faith landscape of post-Christendom here in the west.

**A Palestinian Christian, the Ven Mones Farah is Archdeacon for new Christian Communities & Evangelism in the diocese of St David's, Wales.**



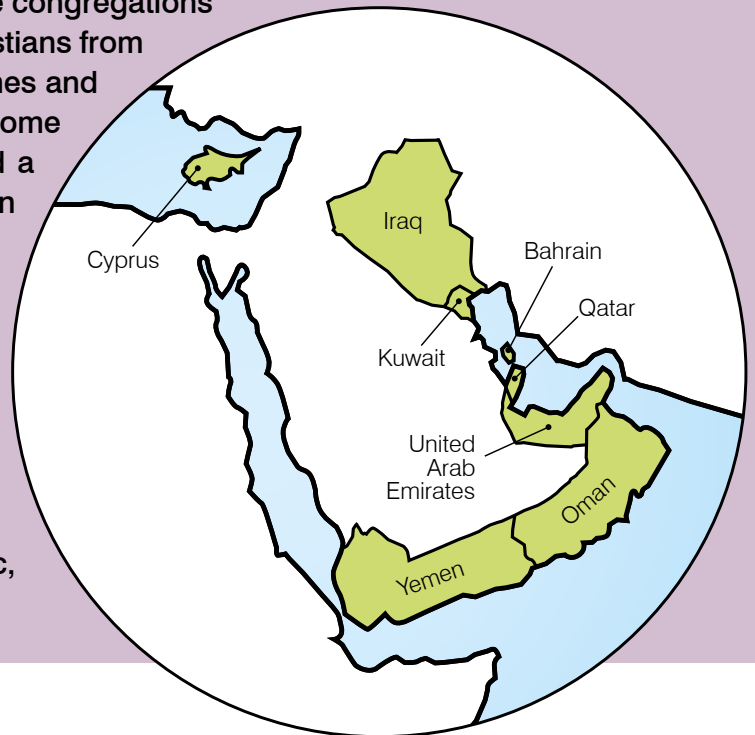


# Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

www.cypgulf.org

Cyprus and the Gulf Vacant

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.



## News from Cyprus

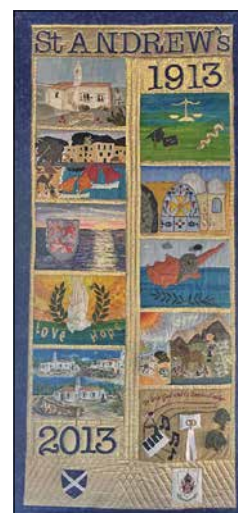
### From Caergybi to Kyrenia: Rev Alec Mitchell gives first impressions

About twelve months ago, sitting at home in Caergybi, Ynys Mon (or Holyhead on the Isle of Anglesey) and flicking through the back pages of the *Church Times*, a job advert caught my eye. It was for a so-called 'House for Duty' post at St Andrew's Anglican Church in Kyrenia, Cyprus (or Girne, in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus). These posts are familiar to clergy – especially retired clergy – offering, as they do, accommodation in return for work. In this case, part-time parochial ministry to the only Anglican – and ecumenical – congregation (and wider community) in a fascinating, yet challenging and ever-changing context. Paid employment for a 'papas' or Christian priest is not permitted here, nor proselytising (seeking converts). But I wasn't looking for an 'adventure' and besides, Linda and I had been happily retired for a while now, after forty years in Manchester, settled in our Georgian terraced home overlooking Britain's second busiest port...



Kyrenia/Girne before, as it happened. Only a week's holiday, but we had loved the place. The bishop was Michael Lewis who had been my area bishop in Manchester (so knew what we could offer); and – surely the clincher – I was almost desperate to live in a 'Hermitage' – given that my email address is 'fathermit...' ('fat-hermit' of course). Let me explain. The accommodation at St Andrew's is called 'The Hermitage', a beautiful single-storey traditional-style stone house in extensive grounds, which include mature trees, a well and an olive grove. There was only one snag: the house had been left empty for some time and had become uninhabitable. We would have to live elsewhere if we were to come.

But, but, but! The 'best-laid plans of (church) mice and men', and all that – and we had even been to



In due course, Linda and I visited Kyrenia again (last February), worshipping with the congregation at St Andrew's, meeting the church council and sharing our thoughts on ministry and mission. We wrote a 'paper' during our one week stay (!) suggesting that The Hermitage could be restored and repaired, becoming once again a focal point for fellowship, even a catalyst of renewal, for both church and

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

community, individuals and groups seeking healing, seeking peace and justice, seeking God. We are so grateful to those who not only read and accepted what we said but also then put ideas into action and arranged for the house to be renovated and decorated throughout. It is indeed beautiful and we continue to give thanks for the funding that was found to enable this work to be done; surely a 'raising to new life' and a sign of hope for the future.

So here we are! First impressions? It's been hot, the traffic is terrible and some of the driving is worse. There is something slightly 'surreal' (for me) about what for many others I'm sure is normal everyday life. This is undoubtedly all about geopolitics, history (empires), and cultural and religious diversity – all the ingredients that go to make up a unique and specific context that is fluid, evolving, complicated. As the saying goes, 'I'm still trying to get my head

round it'. But I have found the chapter on 'Turkey' (and indeed that on 'Greece') in Tim Marshall's *The Power of Geography* (Elliott & Thompson, 2021) to be immensely helpful. I recommend it, if you want to know more.

On the positive side: what a wonderful, welcoming congregation at St Andrew's! Ethnically rich (with folk from Africa, Asia and Europe), many visitors, many church traditions, two organists(!), and an open-hearted and, I sense open-minded, gathering of truly faithful followers of The Way. The people here have improved my preaching no end, and Linda and I are genuinely excited by the prospect of three years at what is arguably a critical contemporary crossroads for the historic Abrahamic faiths. I never thought this would happen in my 70th year: Thanks be to God!

*Alec Mitchell*

## Larnaca – A jail-break in the sun for Father Ken...

When Fr Ken Gabbadon, Anglican priest and Prison Chaplain in Yorkshire, UK was contemplating retirement from stipendiary work he decided to enlist the help of the Channel 4 TV programme, 'A Place in the Sun', to find a place to live. A single man, he had been a frequent visitor to Cyprus and had friends there, and so set the programme makers the challenge of finding him a home. One whole programme was dedicated to the search which resulted in his buying a property in Larnaca. A year on, the programme team have been back to see how he's getting on.



Fr Ken's parents were part of the Windrush generation and he himself was born in the Caribbean, coming to the UK as a small child. His family background had been in the Pentecostal tradition, and they reconnected with that Church in the UK. Ken was fully immersed in church life and became an Elim Pentecostal minister in due course. As time went on and as he had more ecumenical engagement through his prison work, he decided to test a vocation to the Anglican ministry. The resulting posts in the Manchester area brought him into contact with Bishop Michael Lewis, then Bishop of Middleton, part of Manchester Diocese. Neither man thought they would find themselves reunited in Cyprus!

Ken has always combined his work as an Anglican prison chaplain with parish appointments. He has been chaplain at some of the best-known prisons in England at, for example, Strangeways, Manchester and Armley, Leeds. Whilst chaplain at the latter he became priest in charge of a parish on the York side of the city and served there for thirteen years until 2023, in conjunction later with chaplaincies at smaller specialist prison units in the area.

He believes that the TV programme was attracted to him because he did not simply want to retire to sunbathe and drink Zivania but wanted to have an active retirement with a Permission to Officiate in the Church, which Bishop Michael had said he would provide subject to the necessary checks. Hence the new church was virtually as important as the new flat. The crew filmed at St Helena's Larnaca as a result and on this return visit did so again. Since his arrival earlier this year Fr Ken has not let the grass grow under his feet and has already been included on the archdeacon's rota, to minister in Famagusta, Deryneia, Nicosia and Limassol, as well as St Helena's.

Fr Ken admits that he misses parish life as well as prison life, and has a strong commitment to both. He says that prison chaplaincy breeds a sense of urgency in ministry. People you are dealing with today may be moved tomorrow. He has a strong sense of 'there but for the grace of God...' and saw his role as a prison chaplain in affirming that everyone is the recipient of God's love. He says 'I was in the business of heart transplants. As it says in Ezekiel chapter 11: "I will remove from them their heart of stone and give

them a heart of flesh that is soft and sensitive to the touch of God". And that has been his maxim in parish ministry also.

Fr Ken is an avid publisher. During COVID he began a weekly pew sheet with the weekly readings and reflections, and he continues to produce something similar every week, with an email list of around ninety people from all over the world. He also produces a monthly newsletter, similarly distributed, keeping

people up to date with his time and ministry in Cyprus.

Archdeacon Christopher Futchter whose duties include parish priest of Larnaca says that Fr Ken has been well received by the congregation there, who are charmed by his love of singing – particularly in the middle of sermons! 'He has a natural warmth and love of people', he says, 'and people recognize and respond to that wherever he goes'.

## Mountains climbed, unclimbed and yet to climb – Honorary Treasurer John Pringle retires

**When he thought about retirement, John Pringle's dream was to form a company with an Iranian friend that would organize walking tours in the Iranian mountains. Even now he gets misty eyed as he describes an area for which he clearly has great affection. He describes how he would have loved to introduce people to a landscape like the upper Alps with plunging valleys to little villages with hot springs and friendly people.**



Alas it was not to be, but his dream bears witness to a love affair with the Middle East that began with an appointment as General Manager of Lloyd's Bank in Dubai, with responsibility for all the Gulf countries; an appointment that lasted five years in the 1990s.

He attended Holy Trinity Church there when Dennis Gurney was Chaplain and soon found himself on the Church Council, of which he would later become Chair. At that time he saw himself as a reconciling influence on a Council that included members with very different cultural expectations.

On his return to the UK, Bishop Clive Handford 'got hold' (his words) of him to become a member of the JEMT (Jerusalem and East Mission Trust, a part of JMECA). He says he was greatly in awe of the group which included ambassadors and senior clerics, but he was content to offer his own expertise in financial management which led to his appointment as Honorary Treasurer, a post he has held for twenty years and from which he retires in November.

Modestly, he points to 'progress' made during that time which has seen the charity's assets treble in value and

enabled it to give meaningful support to the dioceses it serves. He believes the help given during the COVID crisis – some £300,000 in all, which enabled the Church to continue to function – has been the defining issue of his term. He was delighted that the finances allowed this, and says he has always wanted to be regarded as the man who says 'yes' to requests for help.

John believes it is 'high time' that he stands down now and sees the present time as one of transition for JMECA as it begins a new chapter with a new Chair, Bishop Anthony Ball. He is excited by the prospect and hopes to keep closely in touch with developments. His place as Treasurer will be taken by Catherine Dawkins

who has experience both in the Gulf and in the charity sector. John can see work to be done in the relationship with the Charity Commission and believes Catherine will be ideal for the job. Carol Hawkey is another recent addition to the Trustees.

In his 'retirement' John expects to be kept busy with his roles in connection with the Hospital of St. Cross Almshouse and the parish of St. Faith in Winchester.

How would he like to be remembered? In true Treasurer fashion as 'a steady hand'. He will certainly be remembered with affection and thanks by all who have worked with him, and they can be sure that he will continue to keep what he calls 'a watchful eye' on their work for the Anglican Church in his beloved Middle East.

***'Thank you', John, for 20 years  
of service to JMECA***

# Grace Cup, the calendar of 'remembrance' and Temple Gairdner

Among the most treasured possessions of my husband Alan and myself are copies of a series of small booklets entitled 'Grace Cup: A quarterly study paper' which were produced by Bishop Kenneth Cragg in the late 1970s and early 1980s on behalf of the 'Central Synod of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East'. Typed by Kenneth on his much-over-used manual typewriter, in the days before word-processors or even electric typewriters were common, the uneven quality of the print face does not disguise the love and dedication with which he undertook this task.

One of the issues of 'Grace Cup', No 10, published in Easter, 1981 had a particular function. Kenneth had been invited by the Central Synod, when it met in November 1980 in Cyprus, to draw up a 'Cycle of Remembrance' for the then very new province. And six months later this was what he produced as a draft. The idea had been to offer a list of names of those who had played a substantial role – either in ancient times or more recently – of figures who had played an important role in the development and building up of the Church in the Middle East. As well as the names, Kenneth wrote a couple of paragraphs about each of the individuals, and generally ended with a prayer that might be used on the day of commemoration. Kenneth offered twenty-one names: most from times well before there was any 'Anglican' presence in the Middle East. However, there were six dates, commemorating seven people, in which readers were invited to remember a more recent figure, who had had a role, either inspirational or practical, in building up the Church of which 'the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East' saw itself as the direct heir.



These dates and figures were:

- January 30 Samuel Gobat of Jerusalem
- May 6 Arastoo and Bahram of Isfahan
- May 22 Temple Gairdner of Cairo
- June 25 John Ethelstan Cheese, Lebanon and Somalia
- July 2 Constance Padwick of the Prayer Manuals
- October 16 Henry Martyn of Shiraz (who 'just' makes it into 'modern' times)

It is salutary to remember that Bahram had been murdered in Tehran less than a year before this issue of 'Grace Cup' appeared, and that Arastoo had been killed in Shiraz only a year before that.

In the middle of this list above is 'Temple Gairdner of Cairo', as he is generally known. His full name was William Henry Temple Gairdner. Aware that 2023 is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Temple Gairdner, I had been doing some exploration of his life. I have long found him fascinating



in terms of his commitment to and vision for the life of the Church in the Middle East, in his case specifically in Cairo. It led me to these 'Grace Cup' comments on him, which I include in full below (*I deliberately leave the capital letters as written by Kenneth Cragg*):

The son of an eminent Professor of Medicine at the University of Glasgow, Temple Gairdner was a joyous gift of Christ to his Church in Egypt. His skills in music, at languages, his lively mind and eager spirit – all recruited by the Holy Spirit into a warm, evangelical discipleship – were vigorously spent in the pastoral care of Old Cairo and in devoted scholarship in Islamics.

After Oxford and Ordination, with Douglas Thornton as his colleague, he made Cairo his home until his death, apart from a few short absences for study in the States, and to attend the famous Edinburgh

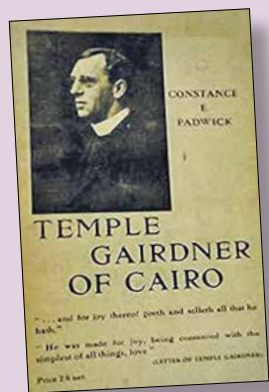
Conference of 1910, of which he wrote a Popular Report which bore much fruit. Thornton's early death was a heavy blow and Gairdner himself succumbed from overstrain and steady self-giving while still only in his mid-fifties. His passing in May, 1928, bereaved the Egyptian Church of a servant and lover of souls whose quality has few parallels.

Everything he did and wrote pre-supposed the Church, the people of God in Old Cairo and beyond. Persons, he knew, would be the ultimate witness to Islam. His Plays from Biblical Themes were meant to kindle the imagination and draw out discipleship. He had a special concern for the young and the intelligent and spent long hours, talking and writing Christ for their minds and hearts. 'Conversion' for him, had to be embodied in a society, Christ's Gospel alive in folk. In the magazine 'Orient and Occident' he inaugurated a literary witness which still endures.

Gairdner has had the fortune to be 'well remembered' in a number of ways. Locally, and shortly after he died, the church 'Jesus Light of the World' was built and dedicated to his memory in Old Cairo.



Within a year of his death, he was brought to the attention of the wider world through the publication of a biography of him, *Temple Gairdner of Cairo*, written by Constance Padwick, a colleague and close personal friend. Gairdner was deeply musical and a comment included in Padwick's biography draws on musical idiom to express the vision of his life-work, 'We need a song note in our message to the Muslims, not the dry cracked note of disputation, but the song-note of joyous witness, tender invitation'. Yusef Effendi Tadras, a local colleague of Gairdner's in Cairo echoes this 'note' that was sung by Gairdner as he remarks, 'Other teachers taught us how to refute Islam; he taught us how to love Muslims.'



As well as music, Gairdner's dramatic gifts were considerable. A series of biblical dramas that he wrote in the Arabic language and presented in the 1920s, has been described as the most 'original contribution' to his ministry. They made a considerable impact on those – from many parts of Cairo society – who witnessed them.

Sadly, due to negative pressure from influential disapproving conservative voices in the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Gairdner's supporting missionary agency, they suddenly ceased in the mid-1920s.

Later influential CMS leaders such as Max Warren and John Taylor were to acknowledge their personal debt to Gairdner and his creative missionary thinking.

For a more recent generation such as my own, Gairdner's vision has been mediated by the influence it had on Kenneth Cragg himself, a friend to a number of us. Though Cragg never met Gairdner in person, as an undergraduate he read Padwick's biography of him, which he described as giving 'emotional fire' to his spiritual life, and both Gairdner and Padwick deeply influenced Cragg's own later journey, with its own contrapuntal vision which included both evangelistic mission and dialogue, as well as a deep commitment to the Church in Egypt. I suspect however that dialogue became the ultimate sounding bass of Cragg's own vision – while for Gairdner evangelism remained the *sostenuto*.

However, by the time Cragg was actively working in Egypt and the wider Middle East the question which had been very much a 'live issue' during most of Temple Gairdner's ministry had largely been resolved. Namely what was the role and goal of Anglican work in the Middle East? There were indeed the twin and sometimes competing threads of chaplaincy to expatriates and mission to Muslims (and in Jerusalem and Palestine, Jewish people). But there was a long-standing ambiguity as to whether it was better to seek to support and build up the 'ancient' churches of the Middle East region, in the case of Egypt primarily the Coptic Orthodox Church, or whether to establish a local indigenous Anglican Church.

Eventually, in 1923, a statement was issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury which was actually drafted by Gairdner and which, in a qualified way, accepted adherents from the Coptic or Evangelical Churches who saw in the Anglican Church 'their spiritual home' at the same time as 'extend[ing] the right hand of fellowship to the Coptic Church ... [and striving] for closer co-operation and greater unity between all the churches in Egypt.' The ordination of the first Egyptian to become an Anglican priest took place the following year. The present-day work of JMECA stands in these footprints initially carved out by Temple Gairdner.

**O Lord Christ,**

**Whose kingdom is like to treasure hid in a field  
Which a man for joy thereof might go to purchase  
by selling all that was his:**

**We give thanks for thy servant, Temple Gairdner,  
Who for joy of thy truth and grace**

**Gave all that he had for the field he made his own.**

**He found the treasure of his joy in the love of Egypt,**

**In the wealth of Arabic, in the Church of Cairo.**

**Ever give us this joy. Amen.**

*(Prayer for Temple Gairdner in the  
'Cycle of Remembrance').*

*Canon Dr Clare Amos*

# Diocese of Iran

Apart from a funeral in Isfahan no church services have been held in the four churches of the diocese of Iran for almost four years. The Covid pandemic caused worship in churches to be halted in the spring of 2020. Since then, only those churches which hold services in Armenian or Assyrian, the languages of the two recognised Christian ethnic minorities, have been allowed to reopen. All churches which have worshipped in the national language of Persian (Farsi) have not been allowed to reopen. Anglican churches worshipped in Persian.

The three deacons in Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz remain in post – two are well passed the age of retirement. The diocesan administrator continues to handle issues to do with finance, maintenance of church premises and relations with government authorities in Isfahan, which the government recognises as the centre of the Anglican diocese.

The Anglican church is not involved with the house church movement which has dramatically spread across the country – Iranians who find faith in Christ but who meet privately in small groups of less than ten in homes.

Many of those who came to faith in the diocese have left the country. A number exercise significant ministry. Dr Sara Afshari, for example, now on the staff of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, found faith in Christ in the church in Kerman (that church building has been destroyed). She came to England to study English and Theology and went on to found SAT-7 PARS the Persian language channel of SAT-7 International.

SAT-7 consists of Christians from the Middle East broadcasting by satellite to Christians and the wider community of the Middle East and North Africa, sharing the Christian faith and relating it to life in society. The programmes in Persian, made and fronted by Iranian Christians, produce a significant response. Dr Afshari examined the role of media in the communication of the Christian faith in Persian for her Edinburgh University doctorate recently published by Routledge as *Religion, Media and Conversion in Iran. Mediated Christianity in an Islamic Context*.

Another young woman from the Church in Shiraz is exercising an extensive ministry with Iranian women who have become Christians and are living in the UK, Europe and Turkey. And, of course, the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Revd Guli Francis-Dehqani is of Irano-British heritage, which she publicly acknowledges.

The last Iranian Bishop of the diocese, Bishop Iraj Mottahedeh, was obliged to retire to England and in retirement exercised a sensitive and deeply spiritual

ministry in Birmingham and Lichfield dioceses.

The Anglican tradition of the Christian faith was taken to Iran among the Jewish and Muslim communities by missionaries from Britain. Today many Iranians who have come to faith in the house church movement have sought (and been granted) asylum in Britain, are finding homes in Church of England parishes to which they bring a new vibrancy and challenge.

The numbers are such that both the dioceses of London and Southwark have made funding available for full time teams to assist the growing number of parishes which have Iranians in their congregations. In London it is led by an Iranian priest and in Southwark a curate at Christ Church, Gipsy Hill (where about sixty Iranians form part of the congregation) has been set aside full time as a resource person for Persian ministry.

*A Farsi Communion Liturgy* is one of the only two officially authorised Church of England Communion liturgies (the other is French) and is available in a small booklet from [farsifellowship@yahoo.com](mailto:farsifellowship@yahoo.com)

As was said at a recent meeting: if a hundred years ago members of the Church of England went as Christians to Iran, now the role is reversed – Iranians are coming to England both bringing the Christian faith and seeking it in Anglican congregations.

John Clark

## Two prayers from and about Iran

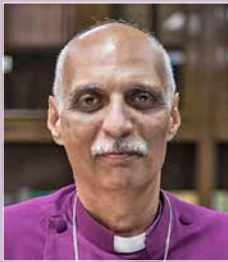
Lord Jesus, we thank you for all those who uphold the faith in Iran.

We pray that you will give them courage, enrich them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and strengthen their sense of belonging to the Universal Church so that their sense of isolation may be relieved. Amen.

We thank you for our fellowship with Christians in and from Iran and pray that together we may live our lives with integrity, courage and hope so that your love may be evident in our communities and we may be known as people of the resurrection. Amen.



# Province of Alexandria

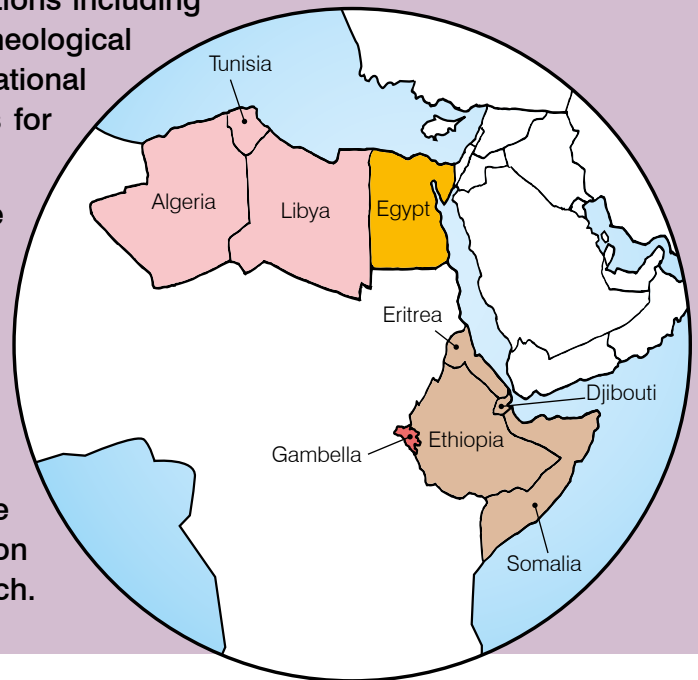


From its beginning in 1839, the diocese of Egypt was committed to serve others as Jesus did. The new Episcopal Anglican province of which the diocese of Egypt is now a part, continues this commitment to serving all people holistically regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically, we continue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

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

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

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



## St Raphael's, Cairo – a school for healing

The start of a new school year is an exciting time for any child but for the pupils at St Raphael's School it has extra significance. St Raphael's is a school for Sudanese refugee children, run by the diocese of Egypt and situated in one of the most run-down areas of Cairo. It began at the outset of the various crises that have beset Sudan, in 2015, with just three classes and now it has twelve, catering for around two hundred and sixty children aged four to eighteen. For those who attend, this is their first opportunity to gain a foothold in their new society, with the possibility of a full education. The school offers exams according to the Sudanese curriculum, supervised by the Sudanese Embassy in Cairo, which can give access to university. For others it will provide access to employment and some vestige of settlement. But in the meantime, things are far from easy.



I am visiting the school with a small party of people from the United States who have come on a familiarisation tour organized by Kristin Jacobs, head of the Diocesan Partnership Office. All the school staff are Sudanese, and the school population includes both Christians and Muslims. The headmaster, Mr Helmi, tells us that simply keeping the children from the streets is performing a great service for them. They face many dangers he says. There are dangers from neglect since parents will spend long hours out of their homes looking for work or working long hours. There are the dangers of exploitation and abuse which are common threats to children in poor neighbourhoods throughout the world. And there are specific threats to their safety from the inter-tribal violence which is endemic.



He tells us wryly that there are said to be ninety-nine tribes in Sudan. One of the things that makes him proud about the school is the influence it has been for reconciliation and mutual understanding. 'Here', he says, 'we have no tribes. We are all Sudanese'.

# Province of Alexandria

The school has contracted with an NGO to provide extra help in teaching children about containing and finding alternatives to violence as well as providing sex education. Welfare needs are catered for. All pupils are provided with lunch and, in some instances, breakfast.

The school is partly self-funding and each child has to pay around fifty euros a year for their place. In order to make sure that no-one is excluded on financial grounds, the local churches have been providing fifty-euro 'scholarships' but of course there is always a demand for more. Within the year the headmaster hopes to move to new larger and more suitable premises. The Church has acquired suitable accommodation but is presently in further negotiations, dealing with local residents who are wary about having

such a school on their doorstep. The new building will also act as a community centre for Sudanese refugees and be a place of worship, complementing the several other Sudanese congregations in the city.

The pupils themselves are bright-eyed, enthusiastic and delighted to be able to practice their English. As we enter each room the teacher says 'Hello, how are you?' and in unison and very deliberately receives the response, 'I am just fine, thank you'. May it be so.



## Pioneer ministry takes root in Hurghada

On All Saints' Day, November 1st, in All Saints' Cathedral in Cairo, Ibram Nady will be made deacon. He will be ordained to serve as Pioneer Minister in the Red Sea resort of Hurghada. Ibram is an engineer by training but a missionary at heart. Together with his wife Francine they have already had mission experience in places as far apart as Iraq, the United States and Finland. Now they have found a home both within the Anglican Church (which was not their birth church) and in Hurghada, a popular destination for holidaymakers from across Europe, and beyond. Ibram and Francine have been living in Hurghada for the last two and a half years during which time they continued secular employment, but their home there has been a gathering place for Christians keen to engage in Bible study and prayer together. It is that initial seed which they will now be nurturing.

I joined them for their weekly Saturday evening meeting. Numbers vary between a dozen and twenty adults and up to ten children. Francine runs a Sunday School for the children while the adults engage in prayer and discussion. The topic for this week was due to be the Eucharist. Ibram believes that the Eucharist should be at the heart of worship, and he is keen to establish it, but recognizes that with people attending from many traditions, there needs to be careful preparation. In the event, the theme of the evening was the worsening situation in Gaza and Israel. Ibram introduced the discussion that led to extended prayer. The key theological, as opposed to political question for him was: is the current state of Israel coterminous with the biblical people of Israel? And his introduction prompted a full discussion.

Ibram and Francine have both concluded theological training through the Alexandria School of Theology, and that showed in his responses to points made. Every session is carefully prepared and meticulously researched.



The meeting began with worship that consisted of songs and prayers led by Bruna, a Brazilian missionary working with YWAM (Youth with a Mission). She has previously worked in Canada and South Africa and felt a special calling to Egypt. She values the weekly meetings and the congregation that has gathered and developed. She thinks of it (as do its members) as family rather than anything more formal. She says that as a group they are generous and open to what God is doing. They show pastoral concern: 'if you have a problem, they are worried about you.' She loves preparing the current worship, but is open to a development with Eucharist. She worshipped in a Roman Catholic Mass in South Africa. She says that the important thing about worship, whatever its form, is that it is Christ-centered.

The 'family' is diverse. Margaret came to the area as a resort rep in 2007 and has been here ever since, developing a career as a diving instructor. She grew up as an English Anglican and welcomes a place to come to feed the spiritual side of her life. Tanya speaks of a welcoming atmosphere. 'Here people listen,' she



# Province of Alexandria

says, 'they have an open ear.' Dr Shawky Mohareb attends whenever he visits his daughter who lives in the town. Back in 1985 he founded a charity based on the words of Jesus in John 10:10 (I came that they might have life and have it in abundance) called Better Life and dedicated to the rehabilitation of street children in Cairo. Like so many projects it suffered from the COVID experience and an organization that once catered for a hundred children now has contact with only twenty-five because funds have dwindled. Nevertheless, his dream is to build a children's village and he has already purchased the land.

Tito is also based mostly in Cairo but is one of the group's most faithful members. A refugee from Darfur he was attracted to Christianity by the care and love he was shown by Christians on his arrival. He now has a small business and uses that as a basis for informal evangelism. For Ibram this is not just a group but a church, and indeed it is advertised as an International Church under the auspices of the Episcopal Anglican Church in Egypt. It has now reached the stage where

it could expand to have a separate building of its own. A building has been identified, and the present owner, a Christian, is keen for them to buy it. But despite the favourable terms being offered, the price is still too high for current diocesan or local funds. They continue to pray that a miracle may happen and a benefactor be found.

Ibram has dreams for the future. He believes that a designated church building with a weekly Sunday Eucharist, in English, would be attractive to the many tourists who flock to the area. He can see a holistic ministry developing, in which Francine will also be a key player. He tells me that this is the only Anglican church on the Red Sea coast, and he believes that from this base in Hurghada other worship centres could be developed further south to form a Red Sea Ministry Area.

The meeting concludes with prayers in several languages. The Rev Ibram will, it seems, be planting seeds in fertile ground.

## Taste and see: experience a hidden 'Holy Land'

Outside the Anglican cathedral in Cairo there is a stone on which is engraved words from Matthew's gospel 'Out of Egypt have I called my Son.'



It serves to remind the many who pass by, that Egypt has its own 'Holy Land' stories, often overlooked or ignored by Western pilgrims and Christians. The Old Testament describes how the concept of a state of Israel as a people in Covenant with God took shape at Mount Sinai.

But Egypt's part in the Christian story has much more to say than that. The papyrus on which the oldest versions of the New Testament were written was made from plants grown in the Nile Delta. That is one of the reasons why a great library and centre of Christian learning, supporting figures of the early church such as Origen, was founded at Alexandria. The ascetic tradition of Christians living as hermits and monks was developed in Egypt. And, of course, in the New Testament we learn that Jesus spent (perhaps a considerable time of) his early life as a refugee in Egypt, which is where the text on the stone has its context.



The modern Anglican Church in Egypt is a vibrant successor in this tradition, and its recently appointed head of the Partnership Office,

Kristin Jacobs, is keen that this hidden 'Holy Land' becomes better known in the West. To this end she is organising a series of familiarisation trips for Western Christians, starting this autumn. Participants will have plenty to see. This is not a Church which is agonising over questions of gender and sexuality. Rather there is lots of evidence that its focus is on healing the sick, raising up the poor, welcoming the stranger and doing what it can to achieve reconciliation.

Participants will be able to see for themselves what the Church is doing through its hospitals and schools, its work with refugees and its community projects in some of the poorest areas, as well as visiting other sites of historical religious interest. There will also be time to visit the iconic pyramids and to soak up the atmosphere of this unique land.

Kristin came to Egypt with her husband Jeff who is priest for the English congregation at Cairo Anglican cathedral. She has been blown away by Egypt and wants to convey her enthusiasm to others. For her 'partnership' means what it says. 'This is not like visitors coming to a zoo, just to watch from a distance',

# Province of Alexandria

she says. 'This is a chance to see how the strengths of the Western Church and the strengths of the Egyptian Church can be mutually beneficial and really enable growth. Brothers and sisters are visiting their wider family'. She thinks that people will be surprised and perhaps even transformed by what they see. As an American she says that this intensity and variety of church ministries was an eye-opener to her.

She hopes that by providing an exciting programme of visits to places that might have been thought difficult to access otherwise, this land's Christian heritage and its contemporary Christian life might become

better known. As her job title suggests, she is in the business of finding partners. These could be prayer partners, parishes seeking twinning arrangements or sponsors for particular projects. The very reasonable cost will include all accommodation and internal flights and transport.



Further details are available at [partnershipoffice.egyptdiocese@gmail.com](mailto:partnershipoffice.egyptdiocese@gmail.com)

## A journey of love: interfaith initiatives in Egypt

Bishop Mouneer, formerly provincial archbishop, is justly proud of his achievements and the achievements of the diocese of Egypt in the field of inter-faith relationships. Speaking to a group of American visitors recently, he spoke with passion of his dream of a more complete understanding between Christians and Muslims leading to a more cohesive community and generally enhancing life in society. He said that he favoured the term 'engagement' rather than 'dialogue.' 'Dialogue conjures up a picture of two people facing each other across a table; engagement suggests people doing things together'.

He outlined to his guests the recent history of Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt, making the case that this was an auspicious time to be concentrating on this area of religious life. A notable stage in the realization of his dream was the formation of Gusour (an Arabic word translating 'bridges'), an Arts based organization that brings together young people with a common interest regardless of their religious background. It is now more than ten years old and includes an orchestra, classes and workshops, a film club and drama group. Ironically, he says, it is the Muslim young people more than the Christians who have entered into the spirit of Gusour.

One milestone has been the establishment of the Granita coffee shop/restaurant within the cathedral precincts in Cairo. From humble beginnings this has now become the place to go in the Zamalek district of the city (which plays host to embassies and corporate organisations),



with delicious food and a great reputation.

The dream has now taken a further momentous step forward since the establishment of the Centre for Christian Muslim Understanding and Engagement in 2022. Its first director was specially head hunted by Bishop Mouneer who has known Kareem Gerges from meeting him as a young boy in Port Said church and has followed his subsequent career. Kareem has impressive credentials. Following graduation from the American University in Beirut and gaining a Masters degree in Geneva in political science, he worked for various NGOs including Oxfam before arriving at the Centre. He is inspired by the vision of a more peaceful society.



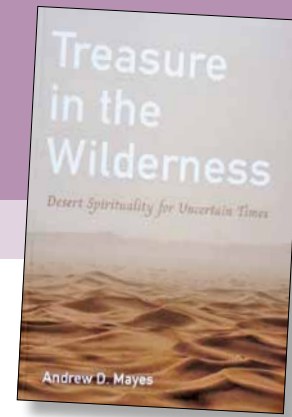
During the summer, the Centre hosted an event called 'Journey of Learning'. For four days it brought together students of theology from the Muslim Al Azhar School of Theology and Christian students of theology from several different denominations. The aim was not to convert but to talk about religion in a way that encouraged listening and understanding. The group of thirty people was intentionally diverse, including gender as well as faith balance, representing Egyptian society as a whole. It is planned to hold three more such events in 2024.

The Centre would love to arrange visits for visitors from the UK and Ireland. Participation for ordinands or other students of theology at the 'Journey of Learning' sessions is also possible through simultaneous translation and there is the possibility of an English language event. One of the American visitors asked Bishop Mouneer in the Q and A session at the end of his presentation, why? why should we be involved in this? His answer: because Jesus would have been involved in it. It is an expression of the love of God.

# Treasure in the Wilderness – Desert Spirituality for Uncertain Times

Andrew D. Mayes

*Wipf and Stock: Resource Publications, 2023*



Deserts are unforgiving places: the extremes of heat and cold, drought and flood, silence and storm, make these environments suitable only for the most intrepid of travellers, and for the most well-adapted and hardiest of plants and living creatures. Most people enter them with a view to passing through as quickly and as profitably as possible. Others enter these liminal places to experience life on the edge of human endurance.

Here in this meditation on the spirituality of the wilderness, Andrew Mayes invites the reader to explore with him the deserts of the world, with a view to discovering a deeper connection with the God who is both at the edge of civilization, and at the centre of all things. The symbolism of the desert has so rooted itself in the consciousness of Christianity that when the faith spread to the forests of Northern Europe and the oceans bordered by the far Celtic west, it was as if these green and blue wildernesses were the new deserts to be explored, in fear and trust, searching for the God who makes a home in the seemingly uninhabitable waste lands of the world.

The deserts Mayes describes he has visited himself, some many times, like the Judean desert, but here he begins each chapter in the company of some brave explorer of a previous age, to act as his guide along the way. These range from fourth century pilgrims keen to savour the varieties of ecclesiastical liturgy, to Victorian scholars searching for long-lost manuscripts hidden in the dusty vaults of sand-blown monastic settlements.

Refreshingly, the author begins with the deserts of Australia, and the aboriginal wisdom of that continent's earliest occupants. He invites the reader to explore the sacred, symbolic universe in which the interconnectedness of the earth with its people speaks of a primordial unity, a family of one blood and bone. Here all is sacrament, a sacred reminder of creation, to be discovered 'on walkabout', the pilgrimage that emerges each day rather than being planned and provisioned far ahead.

We then return to more familiar ground for those grounded in the covenants of the Middle East – the desert of Sinai and the mountain where Moses saw the burning bush, and received the tablets of stone with the words of God inscribed. Watchfulness is the key discipline here, especially as taught by the abbots of St Catherine's, Sinai, including John of the Ladder and Hesychios the Priest, ever alert to the thoughts

that crowd out the silence and are stilled by the breath and the word.

Then on to the deserts of Judea and Galilee, from which John the Baptist emerges, and to which Jesus and his disciples periodically return. This is the place of temptation and of restoration, struggle and renewed resolve, where the demons gather and the angels minister to those in need. Then to the Egyptian deserts and the wit and wisdom of the desert fathers and mothers. Here the true self is discovered in humility, solitude and silence; where the cell teaches you all things, and the elders share their wisdom with a well-chosen word.

Next up is Gaza, in the company of the sixth century hermits Barsanuphius and John, and their disciple Dorotheus, speaking of the gift of tears and the cleansing power of godly sorrow. Such tears could well be shed at the tragic situation of Gaza in our own day, while retaining the slender hope for peace. This is followed by reflections on the Syrian tradition, and some of the extraordinary spiritual practices once found there, from those living in trees or atop stone columns, roofed by the sky, to those forgoing sleep, food or human society, and somehow emerging sanely wise.

The stories and sayings of those who figuratively accompany us on our desert journeys include not just figures from the distant past. Some of the modern guides include the Athonites Silouan and Sophrony, the French hermit Charles de Foucauld and his Italian disciple Carlo Carretto, and the scientist and Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

And so the journey continues through Mount Athos and the Sahara, China and New Mexico, each place being an invitation to discover not just the oasis at the centre of each desert, but the life-giving spring that wells up within every person who ventures out into the seemingly dry places of the world. Mayes invites the reader to join in this journey, from which no-one returns unchanged.

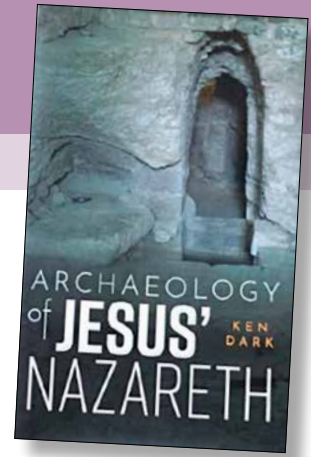
Each chapter ends with half a dozen questions for reflection, and the book could easily be used for group discussion over the period of Lent, the archetypal season for engaging with the Holy Spirit who leads or drives us into the wilderness.

*Nicholas Alan Worssam SSF*

# Archaeology of Jesus' Nazareth

Ken Dark

Oxford: OUP, 2023



## Where Jesus grew up? – a review article

At Christmastime our minds turn naturally to thinking about the birth of Jesus. But what about his childhood, boyhood and young adulthood? In the New Testament he is born in Bethlehem and grows up in Nazareth. But the gospels of Matthew and Luke are the only ones to mention the places (Matt 2:1 and 23; Lk 2:4) and apart from one incident when he was twelve (Luke 2:42) there's nothing about his life before the age of thirty when his public ministry begins (Lk 3:23). For this reason, these years have often been called the 'hidden' or 'silent' years. There are some second-century and later apocryphal gospels which tell stories of Jesus performing miracles as a child but they are not usually thought by scholars to be historically reliable. So can archaeology in Nazareth fill out the picture in any way?

Professor Ken Dark of King's College, London thinks so and presents his reasons in this fascinating new book. In the last twenty years or so, Dark has been excavating what could possibly be the house in Nazareth where Jesus grew up. In fact, underneath the cloisters of the convent of the Sisters of Nazareth, across the road from the huge well-known Basilica of the Annunciation, archaeological excavations of various sorts have been going on for nearly a century and a half. Numerous layers have been uncovered, including multiple caves or rooms, a spectacular 'Rolling Stone' tomb (possibly the best in the Holy Land) and evidence of a huge Byzantine church. Although Dark is cautious, he maintains that it is possible that the house of Mary and Joseph – and therefore the place where Jesus grew up – has been found.



The story of the excavations at the site begins on Christmas Eve, 1881, when the nuns move into a

property in central Nazareth. A cistern needs repairing and in attending to this the workmen find a column. The mother superior at the time, Mère Marie Giraud, thinks that the discovery might indicate a Byzantine or Crusader church. The following year, further excavations uncover more material. Word on the street in Nazareth is that in times past there was a large church on this site and the tomb of 'a just man'.



Ken Dark's book paints a wonderful picture of the Nazareth nuns in their habits, digging with pickaxes by candle light! They encounter layer upon layer of soil and ash and the challenge of collapsing ceilings and mounting debris. In their persistence, however, much is revealed: they find pottery, lamps, coins and heaps of mosaic glass pieces. Cisterns and graves are uncovered including one with a skeleton wearing a ring: could this be a bishop? From one cave, the smell of incense arises. A chapel is found with what looks like an altar. Crusader spurs are found hanging on a wall. Gradually it starts to look like the remains of a large church have been discovered, probably destroyed by fire when the Crusader kingdom was defeated by Saladin in 1187. In the seventh century a writer called Arculf mentioned two large churches in Nazareth: the Church of the Annunciation (on the site of the present-day Basilica of the Annunciation) and the 'Church of the Nutrition' or childhood of Jesus. The nuns are convinced that they have found the latter – and hence the house where Jesus grew up. Mère Giraud records everything diligently – and turns out to be a pioneer archaeologist and one of the first female directors of a dig.

The next wave of excavation at the convent starts in the mid-1930s under Henri Senès, a French Jesuit priest who was involved with the Pontifical Biblical

Institute in Jerusalem and then with the Nazareth site. Trained as a draughtsman, surveyor and linguist, Senès is convinced that the sisters' interpretation of the site is correct: they have found the house of the Holy Family along with the tomb of Joseph. This time a



Jesuit priest digging through soil and ash by candle light produces much-improved plans. However, Senès' imagination runs away with him and his archaeology is influenced by his religious beliefs. His work is never published. To add to the confusion, during two World Wars, items from the dig are taken, sold or stolen. And objects from other sites find their way into the nuns' museum so that records become confused.

Beginning in the same period, the Italian archaeologist Bellarmino Bagatti becomes involved but is more than sceptical. One of the foremost archaeologists in the Holy Land in later years, he draws up a plan of the sisters' site concluding that the remains are Crusader and have nothing to do with religion! His dismissal of the nuns' interpretation of the site leads to the excavation being ignored by professional archaeologists.

In 2006, a third wave of excavation begins under Ken Dark. His work brings records into line with modern archaeological methods. Using the well-known nearby 'Nazareth Village' (a reconstruction of



what Nazareth might have been like in the first century) to help him, Dark suggests that cisterns and caves on a hillside led to one cave being extended and turned into a cave-church. A tomb was later cut into the rock after people had ceased to live in the area. In the fifth century, a church was built marking the site.

The most recent excavations at the site have shown that the Byzantine church was large and decorated with columns and mosaics and is very probably the 'Church of the Nutrition' which contained a tomb. Connecting the archaeological work with relevant historical texts, Dark shows how the cave-church seen by Egeria in the fourth century fits into his archaeological reading of this site. The testimonies of later pilgrims such as the Abbot Daniel and Saewulf also fit into the wider picture. The significance of the tomb is less clear. But Dark's work has certainly

overturned Bagatti's interpretation and brought in a new era in the understanding of the site.

As this book unfolds, the central tantalising question sharpens: could this really be the place where Jesus grew up? Following the reconstruction of Nazareth as it probably was in Jesus' day and showing how the various layers evolved, Dark hits the inevitable question that comes up in all the Christian holy places in the Holy Land: how do we get back behind the traditions of the fourth century?



In answer to this, the author focuses on history and memory, claiming that memories and stories can be preserved in local communities for centuries and archaeological ruins can support these. Could it be that from the lifetime of Jesus the residents of this town remembered where he had lived and that by the time Egeria saw a cave associated with the Holy Family, the memory had been successfully and reliably preserved?

Perhaps. Even with the best contemporary archaeological methods and the critical study of relevant texts, the jury is still out on the answer. Dark concludes: 'This identification can be neither proved nor refuted. As such, it remains possible' (p.157). As in all archaeology, it is a matter of weighing probability and honing interpretation at every stage. In the meantime, a great deal has been learnt about the historical context of Jesus 'hidden years' as well as the later years when Nazareth became a centre of pilgrimage. Exciting and informative, this book is illustrated by photos and plans and opens up a hornets' nest of stimulating and challenging questions.

*Stephen Need*

### Ken Dark...

is a Visiting Professor at King's College, London and has taught archaeology in the Universities of Oxford and Reading. His broad interests include the Roman period and the archaeology of early Christianity. He has also written on Constantinople. More detail on the material covered in the book reviewed here can be found in his two previous works:

*The Sisters of Nazareth Convent. A Roman-period, Byzantine, and Crusader site in central Nazareth* (London: Routledge, 2020)

and

*Roman-period and Byzantine Nazareth and its Hinterland* (London: Routledge, 2020).

# Praying round the Provinces



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

## ● PROVINCE OF JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

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

## ● THE DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM

- 2nd The Archbishop and Dean of St George's Cathedral, the Most Rev Dr Hosam Naoum and his wife Raffa and family. For wisdom as he leads the church in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The administrative staff.
- 3rd The clergy serving the parishes and institutions in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and the congregations who keep the faith and sustain the churches in troubled times.
- 4th The hospitals and centres that tend the sick: the Diabetic Clinic Ramallah, St Luke's Hospital Nablus, the Ahli Arab hospital Gaza, and the Penman Clinic, Zebabdeh.
- 5th The schools that prepare the next generation: St George's Jerusalem, the International School Jerusalem, the Arab Episcopal School Ramallah, the Vocational Training Centre Ramallah, Christ's School Nazareth, St John's School Haifa, the Ahliyyah School for Girls, the Bishop's Kindergarten and the Bishop's School for Boys Amman, the Schneller Vocational Training Institute Amman, St Saviour's School Zerqa, St John Baptist School for Integration of the Blind Irbid, and St George's School Lod.
- 6th The centres of healing: the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf Salt, the Jofeh Community Rehabilitation Centre Jordan Valley, the Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf Beirut, St Luke's Centre for the Mentally Disabled Beirut, the Home for the Elderly Amman, the Episcopal Home for Children Ramallah.
- 7th The guest houses that provide hospitality and refreshment for pilgrims and all visitors: St George's Jerusalem, St Margaret's Nazareth, St Andrew's Ramallah, the Schneller Institute Amman and Christ Church Jerusalem.
- 8th Those who work for peace: the Peace and Reconciliation Movement, Kids4Peace, Sabeel and people from all sides who seek peace and pursue it.
- 9th St George's College Jerusalem and its courses: the dean, the Very Rev Richard Sewell and his wife Julieann, the Course Director, the Rev Dr Rodney Aist, the chaplain, and their families.

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

## ● THE DIOCESE OF IRAN

- 10th All in leadership roles in the Church in Iran.
- 11th The political leadership of the nation. The wellbeing of all people in Iran.
- 12th The congregations of the Episcopal Church in Isfahan (its suburb Julfa), Tehran & Shiraz. The cities where congregations have worshipped in past years – Kerman, Yazd, Ahwaz.
- 13th All involved in ministry among Iranians through media, literature, witness and leadership training.
- 14th The Diaspora of Iranian Christians scattered in many nations.

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



# Praying round the Provinces

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

## ● THE DIOCESE OF CYPRUS AND THE GULF

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

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

## ● PROVINCE OF ALEXANDRIA

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

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

\*\*\*

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



**JERUSALEM & THE MIDDLE EAST**  
Archbishop Hosam Naoum

**Jerusalem**  
Archbishop Hosam Naoum

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

**Cyprus and the Gulf**  
Vacant

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

**Iran**  
Vacant

13. Iran

**ALEXANDRIA**  
Archbishop Samy Fawzy

**North Africa**  
Vacant

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

**Egypt**  
Archbishop Samy Fawzy

17. Egypt

**Horn of Africa**  
Bishop Kuan Kim Seng

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

**Gambella**  
Bishop Kuan Kim Seng

22. Ethiopia (Lowlands)

**JMECA**

**THE TWO PROVINCES**

(Red line indicates border)