

# Bible Lands

Summer 2025

**Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association**

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



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# THE JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST CHURCH ASSOCIATION

(JMECA)

**Founded in 1887**

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

Reg. Charity no. 1158476

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

*Front cover photo: Canon William Gulliford presiding at an Anglican Eucharist at the church of Ayia Kyriaki, Paphos, used for Anglican worship by permission of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Paphos.*

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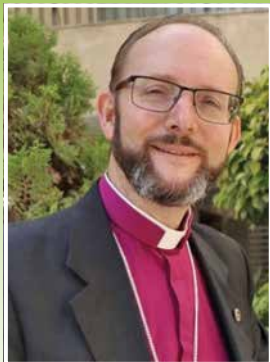
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# Editorial

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

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‘Bring new hope to those in power who are weary of conflict but despair of resolution’ was amongst the intercessions I offered at the Sung Eucharist in Westminster Abbey yesterday. My first editorial for *Bible Lands* began: ‘As I write, news of the first hints of a cease-fire in the conflict between Israel and Gaza are filtering through. We were signatories of an ecumenical letter sent to all members of the UN Security Council calling for such a cease-fire ...’. That was back in 2021. This, my final editorial, is written at a time when the ceasefire from a far more convulsive conflict in that territory has broken down in the midst of a world-order that has lost many of its anchor points. It is sometimes a struggle to transmit, or even hold on to, hope in such an uncertain context.

Uncertainty might well shift towards bewilderment as we look across the countries covered by the seven dioceses within two provinces that JMECA supports, a bewilderment that intensifies if we look across those countries’ borders. This series of conflicts and simmering hostilities – in Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Libya as well as the Israeli-Palestinian one and the knock-on effect of the battles in Sudan and South Sudan – all have an impact on our churches. This is all part of what Pope Francis has called a ‘third World War’ that is being fought piecemeal.

As I have noted before, against the enormity of the challenge we can easily feel paralysed. Faced with the complexity of the competing narratives in conflict situations we can easily feel silenced. But rather than an ostrich-like reaction of burying our heads in the sand, we are called to do something – however small or ineffective it might seem to us at the time. Like an incredulous Abraham being invited to contemplate the stars of heaven and believe the Lord’s promise to multiply his offspring, each little contribution (of prayer, protest, money, contact, kindness – whatever it is) makes a difference in the present and helps shape the future for which we hope.

There are many whose love for, and commitment to, the Christian communities of the Middle East and North Africa has been expressed through their support for JMECA, which sustains our present and shapes our future as a charity. Many of their stories have been told, and tribute paid to them, in successive editions of *Bible Lands*. Here I express our collective gratitude to Canon Huw Wybrev who has served on the Board for thirty-five years, to Canon

Dr Yazid Said who also served as a Trustee and to Mrs Anne Crawshaw who, for nearly 3 years, has worked in our Farnham office as the Administrative Assistant. All have left or are shortly to step down from their JMECA roles (keeping an active connection with the charity!) and we wish each of them every blessing as they continue to contribute in different ways.

As we move through the bitter-sweet experience of Holy Week into the season of Easter and its themes of renewal, alongside those departures it is wonderful to welcome Canon David Longe as a Trustee. He may well be known to you from his previous role as Chaplain to the previous Archbishop in Jerusalem or his involvement with other Middle-East related charities. We are also fortunate that ‘JMECA can report that it has landed a premier league standard appointment for its new Operations Manager post’. You can read more on Gabrielle Higgins’ appointment from the interview on our website from which the quote comes. There are also some fantastic candidates to be trustees who are likely to have joined the Board by the time the next edition of this magazine comes out. Their names will be for my successor as Chair to announce. As you will read on the JMECA webpage, I shall shortly be moving to live in Rome where I will be Director of the Anglican Centre (in Rome) and Archbishop of Canterbury’s Representative to the Holy See. Having been appointed as Chair of JMECA in 2018 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, I will be resigning the role this summer. I do so full of excitement – and hope – for the continued flourishing of the charity.

Indeed, as Tom Wright titled one of his books, we can often be ‘surprised by hope’. The day that I was offering the prayer with which I began this piece I was in a meeting where I learned that there are more than twenty Iran-born/Persian-speaking priests serving in the Church of England (not counting the Bishop of Chelmsford). Diverse sources recount the explosion of Iranians drawn to Jesus. Although there are no Anglican priests serving in the diocese of Iran, it is so encouraging to see the commitment to resourcing the diaspora and nurturing an Iranian expression of Anglicanism. It seems right to end with that sign of hope for the smallest (in number) and most vulnerable of the dioceses supported by JMECA. You will learn more about them all in the pages that follow.

Happy Easter!

+Anthony Ball

Very best wishes for the future to Bishop Anthony from JMECA and *Bible Lands*.

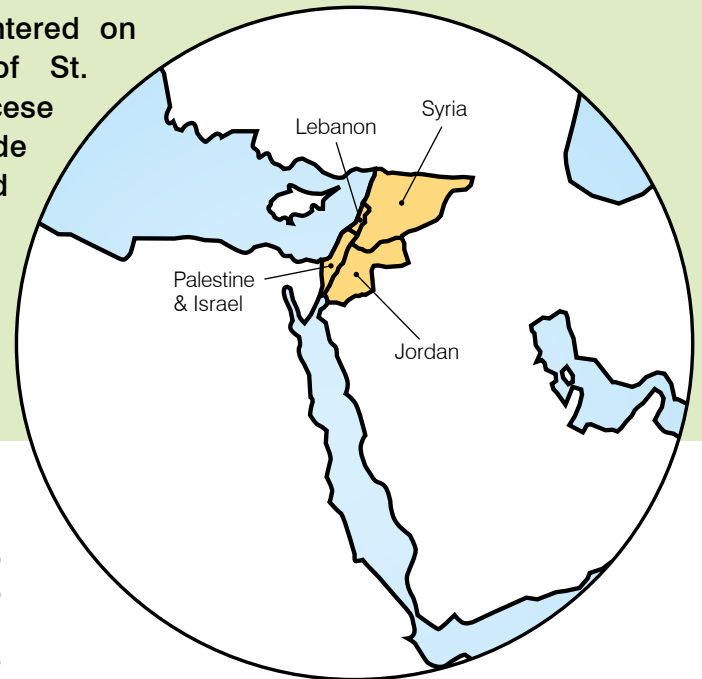


# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East



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

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



## New deacon in Jerusalem



The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Archbishop Hossam Naoum, presided over the festive service of Holy Communion that included the ordination of Mr. Salim Ghassan Kasabreh as a deacon in the Church of God, on the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, Sunday 29th September,

2024 at St. George the Martyr's Cathedral, Jerusalem.

A group of priests and laity of the parishes of the diocese in Palestine and the Galilee, the Lutheran Bishop Sunny Barhoum Azar, pastors of the Lutheran Church, monks and nuns, in addition to the deacon's family, friends and parish of Jerusalem attended and participated in the service. Pastor Fouad Dagher introduced Salim to be made a deacon.

In his spiritual homily, Archbishop Naoum gave the new deacon some advice and guidance, explaining the role and function of a deacon in the church. He said: 'The servant heart is essential to the identity of



the church, and the deacon represents an icon, or the image of Christ the servant, to remind the church of this.'

'Selim, today you are entrusted with leading the Lord's people in the spirit of the holy angels who serve, guard, and assist, and you must maintain this faithfulness with dedication and sincerity, as today's feast reminds us that the primary task – commissioned by God to St. Michael – is to fight evil in the world.'

Bishop Naoum presented two gifts to the new deacon, a Bible and four stoles in the liturgical colours.

Born and raised in Jerusalem, Deacon Salim attended Frere High School, Birzeit University and Virginia Theological Seminary.

We congratulate Deacon Selim, his family and the diocese of Jerusalem as we pray for God's blessing on his ministry.

*Photos: diocese of Jerusalem*



## **Undersecretary to the Council of the Patriarchs and the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, the Rev Canon Dr Don Binder, urges EU diplomats in Israel to support Churches\***



The challenges I shall describe have been made all the more urgent over the course of the past fifteen months during a devastating war. And although we are presently in the first week of a ceasefire,

that ceasefire remains fragile. Moreover, it is limited only to the Gaza Strip and not to other areas, in the West Bank, where conflict continues unabated. And so, we remain here very much on edge.

Yet while the Gaza War has brought many of the region's religious tensions to a boil, these have been heating up now for over the past decade. This development has been in concert with the recent rise of a religious extremism fuelled by an ideology of Jewish Supremacism. Once considered a fringe element of Israeli society, this ideology has become more prominent in recent years within the governing coalition. Its unfortunate rise has given sanction and political cover for extremist groups to enact their vision of cleansing the land of religions other than their own.

As an example of this, let me begin with an incident that personally affected our Anglican and Lutheran communities here in Jerusalem. It took place in our joint cemetery on Mt. Zion on New Year's Day, 2023 less than a week after the current governing coalition came to power. Security camera footage from that afternoon revealed two young men wearing kippahs, maliciously smashing to pieces a stone carving of the second Protestant Bishop in Jerusalem. It went on to show them doing the same to numerous stone crosses, as well as to the tombstones of Christian police officers. As our Council subsequently wrote: 'The choice of these specific targets signals to us that the perpetrators of these criminal deeds were clearly motivated by religious bigotry and hatred of Christians'.

In the aftermath of that incident, our diocese was grateful to receive many expressions of outrage from the local Jewish community at what had been done to our cemetery. Moreover, from video evidence, the police were able to locate and arrest the two alleged perpetrators. Nevertheless, after two years now, there has been no significant movement in the prosecution

of the case, and the two charged with the attack remain free on bail. As the Council's Statement noted, this attack was not an isolated incident.

Other times there are attempts to burn down a church, as happened with the Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane in December of 2020 when a man doused its pews with flammable liquid and set it on fire. Frequently, it includes Christians being spat at as they walk through the Old City.

Yet as serious as these incidents are, they are in some ways the least of our problems. That's because we are beginning to face even greater challenges from the governing authorities themselves. Some of the most serious of these involve restrictions on Christian worship, taxation of our properties, and even control over our church ministries.

In the first of these categories, I can give you a very recent example. Each year, the Orthodox Christians of the surrounding region celebrate Christmas at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on the evening of January 6th. This has been going on for centuries and is well-known to the local authorities. This year, His Beatitude Theophilos III kindly invited a group of ten American bishops to accompany our own Archbishop Hosam in attending that service. Yet when we arrived at the checkpoint into Bethlehem that evening, we found it inexplicably closed to all vehicles. We had to spend another forty-five minutes driving through an alternative route into the West Bank in order to arrive at the church. As you might imagine, the ten visiting bishops were dumbfounded that the government would close the very gates of Bethlehem on Christmas Eve itself. Yet, as we told them, the same thing has happened in the past on our own western Christmas as well.

These are not isolated incidents. Over the past three years, Jerusalem's Old City has been placed on near total lockdown on the day of the Holy Fire service at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Easter Eve. As I have personally documented in videos and livestreams over the past few years, only a small fraction of the indigenous Christian community is allowed into the city, much less the church itself. Those who try are often beaten and berated by police – even if they are from among the clergy themselves. In recent years, similar restrictions have been put in place for local participation in the annual Palm Sunday service in Jerusalem, and at the Orthodox celebration of the Feast of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor in Galilee.

Moving on to the matter of taxation: The municipal tax or Arnona also continues to be a concern for the churches. In this, municipalities have for the past

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Jerusalem Archbishop Hosam Naoum

several years threatened fines and the collection of unfair taxes on the churches, all flying in the face of the religious Status Quo. Last June, church leaders went so far as to raise this issue with Prime Minister Netanyahu himself in written correspondence. To date, no response from his office has been received. A month later, we held a meeting with the Mayor of Jerusalem that also did not resolve the issue. It remains tied up in legal proceedings that continue to be a significant financial drain upon the churches.

Lastly, there is the recent plan to incorporate church properties into the existing Jerusalem Walls National Park. That measure is up for consideration later this year in June. It threatens to restrict access and control over our church properties on the Mount of Olives, including the Garden of Gethsemane. We remain apprehensive that this measure will advance despite our objections, further limiting the free exercise of religion in our churches.

Earlier, I mentioned how the Gaza War has negatively impacted the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Nowhere has this been seen more than in Gaza itself. Only twelve hundred Christians were living in Gaza at the start of the war, mostly divided between the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities. Today, less than seven hundred remain. Most of those no longer there fled, as they were able, through the Rafah border crossing while it was still open. But, as you might remember, eighteen of them were killed during the second week of the war when an IDF airstrike collapsed the parish hall of St. Porphyrios' Orthodox Church while members and other refugees were sleeping inside.



Two months later, in December of 2023, IDF snipers shot and killed two women at Holy Family Catholic Church as they came out of worship services. Seven others were shot and wounded as they tried

to protect others inside the church compound. This all followed earlier rocket fire by an IDF tank at the adjacent Sister's Convent, a home to over fifty-four disabled persons. The resulting damage made the home uninhabitable.

While our Anglican diocese has no congregation in Gaza, we do have the ministry of our Ahli Arab Hospital in that same part of Gaza City. It too was bombed during the second week of the Gaza War, with the most recent forensic evidence suggesting

that the exploding missile was a fragmentation bomb. Hundreds were killed or wounded that night from the razor-edged shrapnel that flew from its warhead when it detonated on impact near the centre of the hospital's courtyard.

Despite this horrific loss of life, the staff and volunteers of our hospital persevered in their healing ministry, often short on food, fuel, and medical supplies. During the week before Christmas of that same year – 2023 – the IDF arrested many of them without charge. They were taken into custody and held for between three and six weeks before finally being released. And then, their release was not back to the hospital, but to Rafah at the southern border with Egypt. Yet even there our staff persevered, opening a free clinic for the hundreds of thousands of displaced families taking refuge in the area. Then, a few months later when they were driven from Rafah, they opened a similar clinic in Khan Younis! Such is their fortitude and commitment to serving the poor and downtrodden in need of medical attention. Today, Ahli is the only hospital still open in the north. It remains a beacon of hope in the midst of a sea of death, destruction, and despair.

Let me now conclude my remarks by saying that I wish I didn't have to issue you this report in its present form. When I first came to Jerusalem more than six years ago as a Christian missionary, I arrived with a heart filled with hope that we of all religious faiths could work together constructively to solve the many problems. While I wasn't totally naïve about the many challenges here, over time I came to understand that they are far wider and deeper than I had ever imagined.

Even now, as a person of faith, I do not believe that these challenges are insurmountable. I believe that there are enough people of goodwill both here and around the world who can join together to change the course of the present trajectory and make it bend more towards the direction of justice and peace. As part of the European Union diplomatic corps, you are key members of the team that can help bring about positive change both here in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. And so, on behalf of our council, I ask for your support in working with us and with the leaders of the other Abrahamic Faiths in helping to promote an environment of safety, mutual respect, and religious tolerance here in this Holy City that is held in reverence throughout the world.

*Rev Canon Don Binder  
Photos: Jerusalem*

*\*Edited due to space.*



# Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

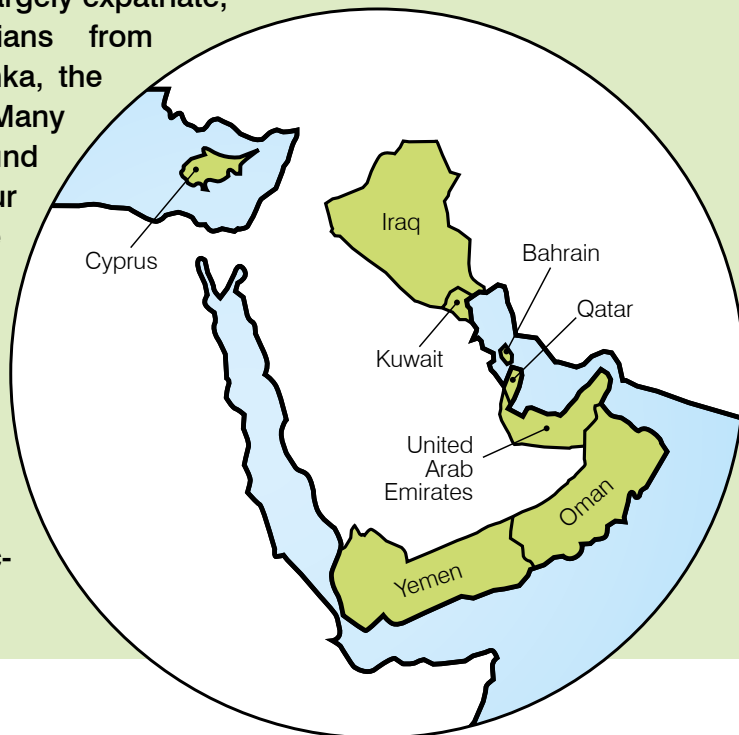
[www.cypgulf.org](http://www.cypgulf.org)

Cyprus and the Gulf Bishop Sean Semple



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.



## Barriers and Bridges: A pilgrimage journey to Cyprus

One of the 'good news stories' of the Church of England during the last ten years has been the development of the 'Ministry Experience Scheme' (MES). This offers young people up to the age of about thirty who are exploring a possible vocation to full time church ministry, either lay or ordained, the opportunity to spend up to a year as an 'intern'. Alongside their practical experience they are offered an educational programme and a mentor to help them explore personal development issues.



It is my pleasure to direct, on an honorary basis, the MES of the diocese in Europe – a Church of England diocese – with chaplaincies (or parishes) in most countries of continental Europe, as well as in Morocco and Turkey. In our case we locate each of our interns in one of the chaplaincies so they are quite widely spread apart. This year the interns are based in Geneva, Vienna, Brussels, Groningen and Gibraltar. We have various ways in which we seek to foster a sense of 'group identity'. We have regular gatherings by Zoom

on line, and we also aim to bring the group together physically, at the beginning of the academic year, and at a couple of points in the middle. A special highlight of the MES experience in our diocese has been the week's pilgrimage that we have organised to the Holy Land. But for the last two years it has not realistically been possible to take such a group to Jerusalem for a week. So where could we go?

Cyprus was the answer! Acts 13 tells of the visit of Paul and Barnabas to the island, and it is clear from other parts of the Book of Acts that people from the Jewish community in Cyprus (probably primarily Salamis) became influential in the development of the early Christian community, first in Jerusalem and later in Antioch. Cyprus also offered us other learning possibilities. It is a good location for exposure to aspects of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and the divided island raises questions both about religion and politics and about the varied relationships between Christianity and Islam. The stunning physical remains at Salamis and Kourion, and mosaics at Kourion and Paphos, are a visual reminder of the glories and power of Rome and the Graeco-Roman world into which the apostles found themselves taking and translating the story and Jesus and the message of 'The Way' (Acts 9.2). On our pilgrimage visits we normally choose a book of the Bible to focus on. I asked the group which

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one they would like for this occasion, and unanimously Acts was chosen.



Given the fact that the group was primarily composed of young Anglicans they were very interested to learn about the Anglican presence on the

island, and the wider work and witness of the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. Bishop Sean of Cyprus kindly led us in Morning Prayer at St Paul's Cathedral in Nicosia and then generously spent an hour with us, sharing his vision and fielding questions. He spoke about the vocation of the Anglican Church in contexts – both in the Gulf and in Cyprus – where it is effectively a 'guest' (whether in a majority Christian Orthodox country or in a Muslim state). His remark that one of the important roles that the Anglican church had in such contexts was to model integrity and good governance in church life made a clear impression on our group.

Why 'Barriers and Bridges'? That title was chosen because, in my view, Cyprus is a key 'bridging place' in the story of the spread of the early Church from Jerusalem, eventually by the end of Acts, to reach Rome. I am fascinated by the fact that in Act 13.2 we hear about 'Barnabas and Saul' setting off for Cyprus, but by the time they have journeyed from Salamis on its eastern coast to Paphos in the west, Saul has changed his name to 'Paul', and the order of the pair is normally given as 'Paul and Barnabas'. The journey made in Acts is however not simply a geographical one: it is a journey in which a small community that had begun as a sect within Judaism, now begins to see its vocation as engaging not simply with Jews, but with the Gentile world, indeed even with the representatives of the imperial power of Rome. So although the two apostles begin their visit to Cyprus by 'speaking in the synagogues of the Jews' by the time they reach Paphos they are being welcomed to speak to the Gentile Roman governor, Sergius Paulus.

Some of the barriers that we encountered on the trip were very physical: crossing from the Republic of Cyprus to the northern Turkish-controlled part of the island made a clear impression upon people. As well as visiting Salamis, Famagusta and the tomb of St Barnabas on our first day, the next day the group appreciated our visit to the 'House of Cooperation' on the Green Line in Nicosia, and hearing from Ms Salpy Eskidjian about the work of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, with its vision of building

bridges rather than barriers between the Christian and the Muslim communities on the island.

The list of the places that we visited together was impressive and includes Salamis; St Barnabas Church/Museum; Famagusta; the Orthodox Museum at Paralimni (our visit there was facilitated by Revd George Vidiakin, Anglican priest at Ayia Napa); Nicosia; Hala Sultan Tekke; the Church of St Lazarus in Larnaca; the 'painted church at Arakas/Lagoudera; the Tomb of the Kings; the



Birthplace and Baths of Aphrodite (which prompted a reflection on 'Love' in Christianity!); Kouklia (Ancient Paphos); the Tomb of the Kings; the Paphos Mosaics; St Paul's pillar; St Neophytos Monastery; John Corbidge's paintings in a chapel at Pissouri; ancient Kourion; and Kolossi.

And one other. Personally, I am passionate about the biblical story and theme of 'transfiguration'. And I was hoping that we would be able to go up the Troodos mountains and celebrate a Eucharist marking this biblical event at that unique 'mountain' Anglican Church of St George in the Forest. Thanks to the efforts



of John Holdsworth we managed it. John presided and I preached. In my address I quoted some words of Michael Ramsey, not directly on the transfiguration, but deeply relevant both to the young people in our group and to these present days and times: 'To be a theologian is to

be exposed to the vision of heaven and the tragedies of mankind.' (*Michael Ramsey*) I pray and trust that our pilgrimage journey to Cyprus will have opened eyes a little wider both to the heavenly vision, and to the often painful experiences of many throughout the centuries who have lived at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

(If anyone would like a digital copy of the study booklet *Barriers and Bridges: A Pilgrimage Journey to Cyprus*, please contact me by email at [clare.amos@europe.anglican.org](mailto:clare.amos@europe.anglican.org) and I will send a copy)

Clare Amos



## A hope and a future... Cyprus and the Gulf Synod 2025

The annual in-person meeting of diocesan synod was held at the Lordos Hotel in Larnaca on 3-6 February, bringing together almost a hundred participants – synod members from across the diocese and guests from around the world – to join in worship, reflection and discussion. The synod opened with a chrism Eucharist led by Bishop Sean. During the service, which included a clergy Renewal of Vows, the Rev Dr David Jarratt was licensed as priest for the parish of Abu Dhabi.

The Synod theme was 'A hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11) – 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future'. 'We begin this synod trusting in God's good plans for our diocese,' said Bishop Sean – 'our parishes and our very lives.'

Delivering his Presidential Address, Bishop Sean referred to synod as 'an important instrument of our unity,' expressing his hope that it would be 'a celebration of our common calling and friendship in Christ at this crossroads of the world.' 'Together as laity and clergy,' he said, 'we must do the challenging but necessary work of discerning God's vision together, and then, by God's grace, aligning ourselves with this vision.' He continued,

In the longer term, my hopes are that Cyprus and the Gulf will be able to celebrate its unique identity within the Anglican Communion as a Middle Eastern and international diocese, and will come to be seen as a resource to the wider Church in interfaith, ecumenical, multiracial and multicultural practice and witness.

As well as morning services, synod participants shared in the joy of worship each evening with prayer before dinner, followed by Compline. The first synod session opened with greetings from Archbishop Hosam Naoum, Primate of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Synod also heard from the Venerable Paul Feheley, Middle East Partnership Officer of The Episcopal Church (TEC) of the USA, who brought greetings from The Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop the Most Rev Sean Rowe. And he



shared news of the Good Friday Offering, through which TEC offers generous support to the diocese and wider province.

In the evening, hotel management gathered to celebrate with synod participants the fortieth anniversary of Diocesan Synods held at the Lordos Hotel in Larnaca. As Canon Georgia Katsantonis reminded the audience in her look back over the years, the diocese itself celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2026. And though she refused to name names, she suggested the occasion might once again be the scene for a bishop to dance on a table...

Day two of synod began with a service of Eucharist led by the Very Rev Richard Fermer, Dean of St Christopher's

Cathedral in Bahrain, with Bishop of Thika the Rt Rev Julius Wanyoike preaching. Synod business opened with talks on two themes:

'Communion' and 'Province and Diocese' by Canon John Holdsworth, and 'Discerning God's Call' by Bishop Sean. These were followed by a workshop on mission in the diocese, drawing on Matthew 28:19-20 and led by the Rev MD Johnson, the Rev George Vidiakin and the Rev Jim Young.

The day included the first of a series of workshops on Gulf-enhanced episcopal leadership, which opened with a presentation by the Rev Dr John Aitchison – and on the ongoing Constitutional review process. There was also discussion of diocesan finances, and meetings of the Houses of Clergy and Laity. Bishop Sean provided an update on the Ras Morbat Clinic in Aden sent by clinic director Mansoor Yousuf, including a video of the interior of Christ Church.

The bishop also updated synod on the diocesan Mothers Union of which he is patron, proudly sporting an MU cap. The Rev John Attenborough reported on Mission to Seafarers operations in the diocese and



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beyond, with the Rev Franklin Isaac sharing news of its work in Bahrain. The Rev Canon Faiz Jerjes provided insight into life at St. George's, Baghdad—ably translated by Sinan Kakarash. The Rev Ken Gabbadon delivered a report by Lynette Oruc on the St Mark, Famagusta Student Chaplaincy, while Manisha Cornelius addressed synod on behalf of the Contingency Fund sub-committee.

On day three – the final day of synod business – morning Eucharist was led by the Rev Prem Mitra, parish priest at Holy Trinity Dubai, with Bishop James

Magness preaching. Bishop James is chair of the recently established American Friends of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, which works to support the presence and ministry of Anglican congregations in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, and to raise awareness in the US about the importance of that presence and ministry (<https://www.afdc.org>).

Later in the day, synod heard from the primate of the province, the Most Rev Hosam Naoum, who shared something of the experience of life in a time of war in his diocese of Jerusalem – which, he said, would not have survived the past two years without the support of its friends around the world. Archbishop Hosam paid tribute to the work of the people of his diocese, including the staff of Al Ahli hospital – frequently the only hospital serving northern Gaza. He asked that synod pray for the clergy of his diocese—for their continued resilience and steadfastness. And he said, 'Please do hold me, my wife, Rafa, and our family in your prayers'.

The Rt Rev Julius Wanyoike, Bishop of Thika, presented news from the Cyprus and the Gulf companion diocese in Kenya, with Bishop Sean outlining plans for a revitalised three-way link – Bishop Mike of the diocese of Exeter completing the trio via a video greeting. Synod participants also heard from UK Friends of the diocese chair the Rev Chris Butt, Foundation chair Michael Cole, and JMECA – the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association, represented by Canon Dr John Holdsworth, who shared a message from JMECA Trustee Canon Dr Clare Amos.

Two workshop sessions – on Gulf-enhanced episcopal leadership and on the Constitutional review process – ended with a plenary session to share highlights of group discussions, joined via Zoom from Canada by Constitutional Review Committee adviser on canon law, Dr Harry Huskins. The results of House elections were also shared.

After Morning Prayer on the final day of synod, participants made their way to Nicosia for a closing Eucharist at St Paul's Cathedral led by Bishop Sean, with the Venerable Paul Feheley of

TEC preaching. The retiring collection was for St Mark Famagusta. Following a sandwich lunch in the cathedral grounds, participants travelled around the Venetian walls of the Old City to the Orthodox Archbishopric and the Cathedral of St John.

The group then gathered at the Home for Cooperation in the buffer zone of the divided city. Here, participants learned something of the bitter history of the island—and of the space offered for the different communities of Cyprus to come together in conversation and friendship.

The experience provided an opportunity to reflect further on Archdeacon Paul's sermon that morning, in which he referred to the synod theme – *A hope and a future*. 'Those two words – hope and future – are indelibly written in my heart and soul and mind,' he said. 'May they be central to your way of thinking, to your prayer life, and to our understanding of what God has called us to do and to be. Amen.'



Photos: Cyprus and the Gulf

## Cyprus and the Gulf Synod 2025 – Presidential Address



Around two thousand years ago, a disagreement about circumcision caused 'sharp dispute and debate'<sup>(i)</sup> in the Christian community of Antioch, threatening to divide and destroy it. This unpleasant incident is recorded in Acts 15; but as the New Testament reveals,

conflict has been a feature of Christ's Church since its inception. It is no wonder that Nigerian theologian Gabriel Olutolai describes conflict as 'the hallmark of the church and its birthmark'.<sup>(ii)</sup>

The Church in Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas and some other believers to seek the guidance of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. During what become known as the Council of Jerusalem – the first ever Christian synod – there was much discussion but eventually consensus was reached and a letter was sent to the Church in Antioch with the council's verdict on circumcision.<sup>(iii)</sup> The letter contains the phrase 'For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...' <sup>(iv)</sup> which has become a golden principle for all subsequent conciliar decision-making in the Church.

The recent episcopal interregnum in Cyprus and the Gulf was arguably one of the most difficult and painful times in the forty-nine-year history of this diocese. It brought frustrations to the surface and sharp conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ. Exactly a year ago at synod it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to you that I should be elected as your bishop, and for the last eight months it has been my great privilege and responsibility to serve this diocese as its shepherd.

We are now together for the first time at an in-person synod. In such a dispersed diocese, this synod is an important instrument of our unity, but it is costly in time, money and effort. I would like to thank all who have made personal sacrifices to be here, and to all who have worked so hard to arrange our gathering. In Scripture, sacrifice always precedes celebration, and my hope is that our synod would be a celebration of our common calling and friendship in Christ at this crossroads of the world.

In the days ahead, I pray that despite the issues we are passionate about, we might be **most** attuned to what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to all of us, so that at the end of synod we may have a clear sense that we have made decisions in line with God's will rather than our own wills and for the benefit of all,

not just for the few. The theme for this synod comes from a well-known passage in Jeremiah: "'For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord'.<sup>(v)</sup> We begin this synod trusting in God's good plans for our diocese, our parishes and our very lives.

In our own planning, we have made this synod shorter than usual to allow those who have Friday services to return home. But more time in our agenda has been given to discussing challenging issues, and efforts have been made to present them in different ways. These changes reflect the requests of clergy and laity I have listened to during my travels around the diocese.

In our attempts to do things differently, it is inevitable that we will have made mistakes, and for these we ask for your understanding and grace. The term 'flying bishop' might have been coined especially for the Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf! In my eight months in office, six have been spent travelling. I have visited all the parishes and countries in the diocese except for the Canterbury Group and Yemen, both of which I will visit later this year. I have had the pleasure of visiting some parishes in the Gulf several times, and I hope to visit the parishes in Cyprus a bit more in the year ahead. I have quickly learned that we are a diocese that is unknown and invisible to much of the Anglican world, and yet when people hear our story, they are fascinated and encouraged to know of our presence and ministry.

In the last few months, it has been a great privilege to represent the diocese internationally in our link diocese of Exeter; and in New York while attending the launch of the US Friends of the Diocese; and even in Sydney while on holiday there. It has been a busy time since my consecration in Bahrain in May 2024, but by God's grace I am finding feet, or perhaps 'growing into my hat' as one cheeky priest from the Gulf described it! One of the questions I am frequently asked is, 'What is your vision for the diocese?' Clearly, the vision and direction of a diocese should not be set by one person or even a handful of people. Together as laity and clergy, we must do the challenging but necessary work of discerning God's vision together, and then by God's grace, aligning ourselves with this vision.

Through our synodical processes I trust that we will do exactly this – and our gospel reading today reminds us not be sidetracked from what God wants to reveal to us by personal posturing or irrelevance. In the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well<sup>(vi)</sup> there is a fascinating interplay between revelation and obfuscation. In this interfaith and culturally provocative encounter,

*(Continued on p.14)*



# JMECA – The JMECA family g



**On Wednesday 27th November, 2024 Westminster Abbey was the venue for a unique meeting between the six serving bishops from the JMECA constituency and the Trustees and Directors of the organization. An afternoon session with invited guests gave an opportunity for the bishops to speak about their dioceses, and for a lively discussion about the issues that will both inform JMECA's role in the near future, and which surely inspired all those present.**

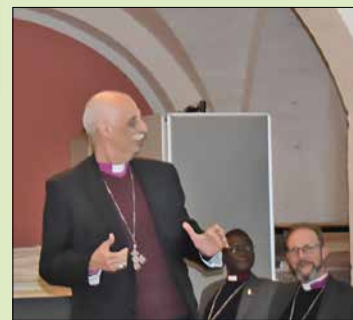
Archbishop Hosam Naoum described a church that aspired to be 'more than victorious' – the theme of the diocese of Jerusalem's annual Majma (synod). He spoke proudly of the heroic work of Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza which had continued to work among the injured and sick for all but five days throughout the conflict to date. JMECA is the body through which UK donations are channelled. He painted a picture of a diocese continuing to work in adverse circumstances. His personal diary had seen him promoting youth ministry, developing

ecumenical relationships, supporting those graduating from church schools and encouraging vocations. There are three ordinands in training at present. The issue of violence and crime was one current priority. Raising funds to support clergy pensions was another.

Bishop Sean Semple of Cyprus and the Gulf described his diocese as one that had a great gift to offer the communion in terms of all



the ways it could be said to be at a crossroads. As a relatively new bishop he had spent time listening and building relationships. There was a financial crisis in the diocese that had necessitated a loan from the Diocesan Foundation, but he felt that the problems that had led to the crisis were 'starting to steady.' Work was being done on constitutional reform, and there was discussion within the diocese about a possible redrawing of its boundaries. His vision for the future was of a post-colonial diocese with a distinct middle eastern identity.



Archbishop Samy Fawzy spoke both of the province and of his own diocese of Egypt. The former would be holding episcopal elections in the three new dioceses in January. He paid tribute to

Bishop Anthony Ball for the work he had done in establishing structures for the new dioceses and wished him well for his new role as Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome. The diocese of Egypt continues with the working out of its diocesan theme of 'a living Church for a better society.' He gave many examples of the work of the various sectors, including the two hospitals and the various schools – with special reference to those that dealt with deaf or blind children or those who had special needs. The media sector was continuing its groundbreaking work translating the New Testament into Arabic sign language, which he hoped would be complete within four years. Work was continuing with Sudanese refugees, and three new congregations had been formed. The Interfaith department, established by Bishop Mouneer continued to do innovative work.

# gathers at Westminster Abbey

Bishop Jeremiah was able to report that inter-tribal strife had given way to peace, and that the two main tribal communities had come together. The Church had played a role in that. At synod 'all the tribes came together and celebrated peace and love'. He described a growing church. There were seventy-five churches with regular congregations of over a hundred adults, in addition to other smaller 'mission stations' and church plants. In this situation there was a great need for teachers who were informed disciples.



Bishop Martin of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa described a diocese that had twelve churches with nine languages. They had five Sudanese priests working with the large refugee population. His priority was 'to get the Gospel out' and 'to discover the God-givens', that is to work with what the context provided. In this case that meant taking to heart what the New Testament had to say about aliens and strangers. Although all the work is currently located within Ethiopia, he was able to give an update on possibilities in some neighbouring countries.

Bishop Anthony described a similar situation in Chad which was the area of the diocese of North Africa where the churches were largely comprised of the indigenous population. He said that Anglicanism had many elements which appealed: people wanted to know more about it and churches were being planted at a rate despite there only being one church building that the diocese

owned. He highlighted the attractiveness of Anglican liturgy and prayer which he said, 'really speaks into that context'. The bishop's account was of growth in every direction as he outlined a mission strategy with a strong social conscience, directed to suburban areas without churches at present. Elsewhere, a first female lay minister had been licensed in Tunis, and prayers were asked for a former church secretary in prison in Libya, accused of infringement of local religious laws.



Archbishop Samy said that Anglicans have something in their DNA that enables them to relate with other historic Churches, and Archbishop Hosam described the Church as the trusted glue that held the community of faith together. Bishop Sean noted that Anglicans currently held the Chair of the Gulf Council of Churches.

Bishop Jo Bailey Wells, Deputy Secretary General at the Anglican Communion Office, chaired a lively discussion that began to identify common expectations, before Evensong in the Abbey itself – a service the Chadians would have appreciated.

*Photos: JMECA*



# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

(Continued from p. 11)

Jesus is determined to reveal who he is, while the Samaritan woman seems equally determined to obscure who she is behind personal posturing and religious debate. This strikes me as a fitting metaphor for how the Church may sometimes miss what God is saying to us, in the clamour of personal agendas and overheated debates.

The encounter at Jacob's Well furthermore pierces social norms to reveal the broken humanity that exists behind personal, cultural and religious defences. In the Samaritan woman's backstory, we realise that however we may present ourselves to one another, we are fallen, imperfect people who are nonetheless known, loved and saved by Christ. St John links the life-sustaining water of Jacob's Well with the living water of Christ,<sup>(vii)</sup> and this imagery strongly suggests to me the ministry of our churches in the Gulf and Cyprus. Our churches are spiritual oases whose springs are the living water of Christ, welling up to eternal life.

So, God's vision rather than my vision, but let me conclude by sharing what will be my priorities in the year ahead, over and above existing pastoral and synodical work:

- Our 'fearfully and wonderfully made'<sup>(viii)</sup> diocese will celebrate its Golden Anniversary in 2026. Over time all things change and it is abundantly clear that the Gulf Archdeaconry is, for want of a better term, 'the senior partner' in our diocese. We therefore need to reflect the Gulf's status and importance in our constitution, structures, and planning.
- I will continue to build relationships with the clergy and laity of this diocese, and with interfaith, ecumenical, diplomatic and supportive partners.
- A senior diocesan leadership team must be appointed.
- Our tripartite link with the dioceses of Exeter and Thika requires renewal and development.
- I need to create a healthy balance between travel, marriage, and home life.
- And I would like to challenge our clergy, in this year that we celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, to take a break from the lectionary for a few weeks and to teach through the Nicene Creed. Challenge accepted? The Creed is the defining and foundation statement of our Christian faith, and although it is embedded in traditional Anglican liturgies, I know it is most often said without thought, and sometimes even without

belief. In the longer term, my hopes are that Cyprus and the Gulf will be able to celebrate its unique identity within the Anglican Communion as a Middle Eastern and international diocese, and will come to be seen as a resource to the wider Church in interfaith, ecumenical, multiracial and multicultural practice and witness.

But what I long for most deeply, perhaps most naively, is for a diocese where conflicts would be infrequent and not intractable; where the word 'diocese' could be said without contempt; and where the institution of the Church would enable clergy and laity to grow and flourish in their God-given vocations, rather than cause disillusionment or crush the spirit.

This is just one synod – there will be others – and so we do not need to accomplish every aspiration in these three days, although we know how much God can accomplish in just three days! We simply need to take the next steps, guided by that sovereign, unpredictable wind<sup>(ix)</sup> of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Venerable Bede, 'Unfurl the sails, and let God steer us where he will!'.<sup>(x)</sup>

Welcome to Synod 2025!

<sup>(i)</sup> Acts 15.2

<sup>(ii)</sup> International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE) Volume 9, Issue 4, April 2022, pp 138-149

<sup>(iii)</sup> Acts 15.23

<sup>(iv)</sup> Acts 15.28

<sup>(v)</sup> Jeremiah 29.11

<sup>(vi)</sup> John 4.1-26

<sup>(vii)</sup> John 4.10

<sup>(viii)</sup> Psalm 139.14

<sup>(ix)</sup> John 3.8

<sup>(x)</sup> <https://quotefancy.com/quote/1087705/Venerable-Bede-Unfurl-the-sails-and-let-God-steer-us-where-He-will>

*Photo: Cyprus and the Gulf*





## Reflections on my visit to Iraq – March 2024

by Rev Calum Burke

In March 2024, I made my fourth visit to Iraq, a country I have been travelling to since my days as an ordinand. From my very first visit, Iraq – its people and culture – captivated me. Some friends, including Iraqis, have even described my deep interest as bordering on obsession!

Iraq, like much of the Middle East, is a nation where circumstances can change dramatically. This was my first visit since the events of October 7th and the ensuing conflict in Gaza. It was also my first time back since the 2023 Iraqi elections—the first local elections in a decade. Votes were cast across fifteen provinces. Under the electoral framework established by the Western Coalition, local governors wield significant administrative and financial powers. This election was highly significant, exposing the deep political fault lines in Iraq. The influential Shia cleric and politician Muqtada al-Sadr, leader of the Sadrist Movement, boycotted the elections, leading to significant gains for his opponents and Iran-aligned parties.



Upon arriving in Baghdad, I was struck by an unusual sense of calm. Driving out of the airport, I passed the memorial to Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani, who was killed by an American drone strike in 2020, but beyond this, there were few visible signs of unrest. There were noticeably fewer guns on the streets, and the camps of young men who had previously protested outside the Green Zone were gone. Roads once blocked by riot police were now open. Even those most wary of the current political make-up acknowledged that, while it may not bring peace of mind, it was at least delivering security.

One of the most inspiring aspects of my visit was witnessing the faith and resilience of the Christian community in Iraq, particularly those who worship at St. George's in Baghdad. Despite the immense challenges they face, they embody faith and joy. They always tell me, 'Please do not forget us'. My response is always the same: How could I? When I return home to my own parish, I continue my so-called obsession by sharing the stories of Iraq's Christian community with anyone who will listen. Too often, I am met with surprise – even ignorance – about the very existence of Christians in Iraq. After all, it is easy to forget something you never knew. So I continue to pray for Christians in Iraq and the church under threat of extinction. I also want to continue to raise the awareness of anyone who will listen, and perhaps even those who will not!

*Rev Calum Burke is Interim Priest-in-Charge of the Benefice of Thornbury, Woodhall and Waterloo in the diocese of Leeds.*

## New Diocesan Director of Ministry

Bishop Sean is pleased to announce the appointment of the Rev Kent Middleton as Diocesan Director of Ministry (DDM), following the retirement of Archdeacon Christopher Futch.



Fr Kent, who has served as parish priest of St Luke Ras Al Khaimah with St Nicholas Fujairah since 2018, was for several years Warden of Readers – a position he retains – and a member of the Standing and Finance Committee.

Announcing Fr Kent's appointment, Bishop Sean welcomed the opportunity to 'reimagine ministry in

our diocese, to ensure we meet the vocational training and CMD needs of our people and context'.

Fr Kent brings to the role of DDM deep knowledge of the diocese – both the Gulf and Cyprus. Previously assistant priest at St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia Kent was a teacher in the United Arab Emirates and a worshipper at Christ Church Jebel Ali before the discernment process that led to his training and formation for ordained ministry.

After studying at theological college in Cardiff, Kent was made deacon by the Archbishop of Wales to serve for a year at Christ Church, Roath Park in the diocese of Llandaff.

Welcoming Fr Kent to his new position, Bishop Sean thanked Christopher Futch for his valuable contribution as DDM in Cyprus and the Gulf.

*Photo: Cyprus and the Gulf*

# Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

## Critical Carer becomes Community Co-ordinator



The new Community Outreach Coordinator for Cyprus appointed by Bishop Sean is Maria (soon to be Rev Maria) Evangelou, one of the most senior nurses on the Island. The post was first created, as a separate post, for Rev Anne Fletcher, and on her departure last

year Stella Lail Perrin, from the Charity All4Aid, based in Larnaca, was appointed. Unfortunately, her 'day job' changed and she was recalled to the US and so the post has been vacant for a few months.

There is little doubt that there is a job to do on the Island, acting as a bridge between parishes who want to be involved in projects of social responsibility; charities and groups that cater for specific areas of need, and disadvantaged individuals. The job description identifies the main priorities as displaced people (that is refugees, asylum seekers and migrants); and victims of human trafficking, poverty and dementia. Concern for the environment completes the list. Maria says, 'this is a challenge I am eager to take on both to help the diocese and to help more people in need'.

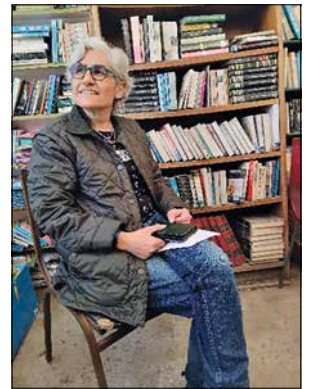
Maria was born in Birmingham, UK with an English mother and Cypriot father. She was baptised in the Orthodox Church but attended an Anglican Sunday School. As her family relocated to Cyprus around the troubled times of the mid-seventies, she embarked on her career of nursing, training in Nicosia. She specialized in critical/intensive care and gained a degree in nursing and a postgraduate degree in her specialisation, following which she taught in the Nursing School for five years. She is anxious to point out that that did not mean being exiled from practical critical care, since teaching in this context is largely practical. Her next move was to the Ministry of Health, where she is now effectively the Deputy Head of Nursing for Cyprus.

Her journey towards discovering a further vocation to Christian ministry she describes as, 'a journey from grief to wholeness' – grief at the death of her mother and wholeness with a growing involvement in the life and worship of St Paul's Cathedral in Nicosia, which began with her Confirmation in 2016. She says decisively that the Anglican Church represents her expression of religion.



She has had an increasing number of responsibilities at St Paul's. She is responsible for the website, she is Dean's Warden, a worship leader, crucifer and server; and during her period of training, an increasingly effective and popular preacher. She also runs the busy Cathedral Bookshop. She was accepted for training for ordination in 2021 and has been following the diocesan training pathway, where she has exercised what she has realised is a love and curiosity for theology. Her vocation was first spotted by Dean Jeremy Crocker. He is disappointed not to be able to be present for the service at which she will be made a deacon on May 24<sup>th</sup> but hopes to be present for her ordination as a priest at a date in the future.

Maria believes that her experience in nursing and in HR will be helpful in her new role. Through her professional work she has come into contact with trafficked women and visited 'safe' houses. She looks forward to that priority in particular. She feels that her ability to speak Greek, and through that, her acquaintance with Cypriot current affairs, will also stand her in good stead. As she looks forward to the challenges of ordination and the new role she says, 'I feel a deep satisfaction that the years of training are now moving towards a ministry through which I can serve God and the Church'.



*Photos: JMECA and diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*



## Henry Martyn and Iran – The Bible and Engagement with Islam

In the last issue of *Bible Lands*, John Holdsworth outlined the life and influence of the young missionary and translator Henry Martyn. The present article focuses specifically on his eleven months in Iran from June 1811 to May 1812. There are two areas of focus: the New Testament and his engagement with Islam.

Martyn's time in Iran has been described as 'one of the most remarkable cultural encounters between Iranians and Europeans. During his short stay in Iran Martyn became something of a celebrity and a formidable theological challenge to the Shi'i ulema, and in turn, to the Qajar state.'

**Translation of the New Testament:** Martyn made a Persian translation of the New Testament a priority because Persian was the lingua franca from North India to Damascus. When he tested the translation he had made in India it was a disappointment to discover that his Arabic speaking informant had used so many Arabic words that he needed to travel to Persia to revise the translation.

Martyn relied heavily on assistants who made full first drafts using other languages which he then checked against the original Greek. His system was that his assistants translated from the bible in other languages and he compared their translation with the Greek. In Persia his assistant was Seyyed Mirza Ali-Khan, with whom he also held long theological discussions.

The appearance of the Persian translation was so significant in the Persian religious and literary scene because it made available for the first time an alternative scripture to the Qur'an. It became widely accessible and easily comprehensible in the Persian of the period at a time when the Arabic Qur'an was largely outside the reach of average Persians and even rarely studied by the ulema in their teaching.

It was the basis for future versions of the New Testament until the 1970s. It broke the pattern of word for word translation and overuse of Arabic and emphasised the need for simple and direct language. It provided the core of the next translation by the first CMS missionary to Iran, Dr Robert Bruce, who also translated the Old Testament. It is estimated that in the hundred years preceding 1904, 64,000 copies of the New Testament (quite apart from individual gospels and Bible tracts) were distributed at a time when the reading population of Iran was around 100,000. Today the Scriptures continue to hold a key place in the

spread of Christianity in Iran and the Iranian diaspora.

**Engagement with Islam:** Martyn was the first English priest ever to live in a Persian city and he was an object of great interest. His Iranian Journals say little about the work of translation. They are, however, full of his private and public encounters with the religious leadership of Shiraz and the lengthy discussions he held with ulema in the city. He was received with curiosity and interest for his charm, his knowledge of Persian and the fact that he was not a soldier, trader or diplomat but a man of God 'mard-e-khoda' because of his evident religious devotion and his willingness to engage in theological discussion and debate.

It was through his assistant that very early in his stay in Shiraz Martyn met some students of Mirza Ibrahim Fasa'i, the chief mujtahid of Shiraz and as a result of religious conversations with them about Islam and Bible prophecies about Muhammad he met with the Mujtahid. The meeting led to an exchange of pamphlets – the first written by Fasa'i himself in response to points made by Martyn in the meeting. Martyn responded with three pamphlets in Persian. The first two contained his refutation of Islam and the Qur'an. The arguments were largely drawn from medieval Christian and Muslim polemic. The third focused on the points of convergence and divergence between Christianity and Sufism. It was the fruit of long hours of debate with a number of Sufis and philosophers in Shiraz.

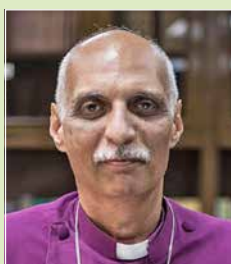
What made the debate and the tracts so significant was not so much the content but the context – for this was the first time that the ulema had engaged with a theologically educated European clergyman, representative of one of the major international industrialising powers of the time.

Learning of the tracts the Shah ordered a response. By 1817 there had been seven major rejoinders and by 1834 (Fath Ali Shah's death) at least twenty-eight refutations of the 'padre' by Shi'i ulema, philosophers and Sufis. Three new developments in Muslim polemic have been identified. First, a use of scriptural argumentation to question the prophethood of Jesus; second, a sense of evolutionary development in the nature of prophethood to support the truths of Islam, and third a close examination of the Bible for evidence of prophecies about Muhammad and contradictions and corruptions in the Bible itself. In other words, they contributed to a revival of Shi'ite theology and a renewed importance of Shi'ite ulema in Iranian society culminating sixteen decades later in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

John Clark



# Province of Alexandria

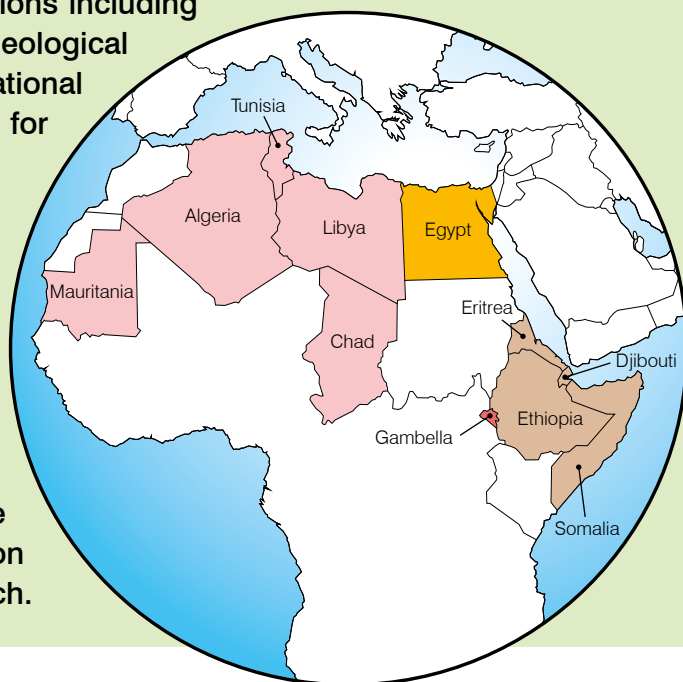


From its beginning in 1839, the diocese of Egypt was committed to serve others as Jesus did. The new Episcopal Anglican province of which the diocese of Egypt is now a part, continues this commitment to serving all people holistically regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically, we continue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



## Teaching and learning in Cairo and Tunis

by Bishop Bill Musk

Hilary and I enjoyed a ten-day visit to Egypt in mid-October, 2024. The main brief was for me to deliver fourteen lectures on the Book of Jeremiah to the third- and fourth-year Bachelor of Theology students at the Alexandria School of Theology. The teaching was physically done in a special 'media' room on the cathedral/diocesan site in Zamalek, Cairo.

About twenty or so students were physically present in that room. Students living in Alexandria joined the lectures by magic (electronic means)! It was a very intensive course, being delivered over three days. I am grateful to Fadi who did a great job of interpreting for me. Outside of meeting some lovely, spiritually-hungry youngish people, what I found really encouraging was



the excited buzz that happened at break times! The place was congested with many different

classes being taught to different year students in various rooms on the site. Shady and Rev Mark are delivering a wonderful educational experience to many within and beyond the Anglican/Episcopal Church in Egypt.

While I was enjoying the buzz of teaching/learning in the rooms above the diocesan offices, Hilary spent two longish sessions with hundreds of Sudanese refugees in another large room; listening to their stories and sharing with them. They were focusing on



some of the aspects of trauma and how that might be faced and how the Lord might be found to be present with them. She and I also popped into the packed cathedral at the weekend Sudanese service – of course the worship was so moving – literally as well as emotionally and spiritually!

It was great to meet many of the current clergy serving in Egypt in their chapter meeting, whilst Hilary spent time separately with clergy wives. I am grateful to Archbishop Samy for inviting me to join the chapter

# Province of Alexandria

and lead a discussion. We looked at the subject of 'living faithfully as a Christian leader in an Islamic context'. Some of the Egyptian ministers I knew from when we lived in Cairo in the 1980s, some through more recent visits for synods etc from our years in Tunis. It was encouraging to meet some new(ish) clergy finding their place as some of the old(er) clergy look forward to retirement.

We enjoyed a visit with Archbishop Emeritus Mouneer and his colleagues at the Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership. They are busy with many creative projects and with ideas for many more. It was a privilege to attend and preach at All Saints' Heliopolis, plus spend some time with Archdeacon Emad and his wife Hana'. Bishop Mouneer and Nancy graciously welcomed us into their new home, not far from the church.



We worshipped at All Saint's Zamalek with the Arabic-speaking and English-speaking congregations. The current minister of the latter invited us to pop into their flat in Michel Lutfallah Street – where we used to live, and where he and his wife and son now reside. It has changed a bit!

The cathedral/diocesan site is constantly busy, but retains a lovely atmosphere. A very popular restaurant (the *Granita*) draws many, many visitors to the compound. The Wady shop benefits greatly from this, being situated just along from the restaurant. We also got to see the work of Tukul, which is seeking to help refugees help themselves with the production and sale of art and crafts.



We enjoyed staying at the Garden Hotel (fourth floor) where the staff are lovely. We are thankful to Cairo friends of old for their kind hospitality; and are very happy that we could get to Alexandria briefly to visit Dean David and Basma at All Saints' Stanley. They also took us to St Mark's in

Manshieh to greet David's dear mother, and to see the pro-Cathedral and meet those based there and serving in the Alexandria School of Theology (great library!), guest house and other ministries.

It was a pretty full-on ten days and we saw only a

little of what the diocese is achieving and praying to achieve under the leadership of Archbishop Samy. We both came away humbled and inspired, full of gratitude to the Lord.

Within three months we found ourselves in **Tunisia**, thanking God with the residents there for the copious rain that promised some renewal of water reserves in the country, even if it seemed to us like a continuation of typical UK weather!

During a week in January, students from Tunisia and Algeria gathered in the St Cyprian Diocesan Theological College at St George's Tunis. My brief was to guide them in some studies: the Book of Jeremiah at Diploma level and the Gospel of Mark at Bachelor level. It was good to see many students whom I had taught a few years ago continuing with their studies. The days were again very intensive, but it was so encouraging to see how Canon Herb Hand and Mrs Sawsen organised and directed the study days, with emphasis on worship and prayer punctuating each batch of studies; plus time for personal interviews/counselling of each student.

Father Frank Bernardi (current Rector of St George's Tunis and Area Dean for North Africa) kindly invited me to preach at the Arabic and English medium services on the Saturday and Sunday. Again, it was thrilling to see the growth in maturity and involvement of congregants from our days in Tunis – some of whom have been licensed as lay workers by Bishop Anthony Ball.



Every evening was taken up with visits to personal friends of Hilary and myself, helping us to get some renewed perspective on economic, political, social, religious developments in the country. Ministries among people in dire need (prisoners, immigrants seeking hopeful futures, the trafficked, the sick) are strongly supported through St George's congregations. There was also a lot of prayer for the (then) upcoming electoral synod (for a new diocesan bishop) about to take place in Chad. The welcome and warmth and spiritual fervour certainly balanced out the pretty miserable weather outside! We returned home exhausted, but with full hearts.

+Bill Musk

Photos: Hilary Musk  
and diocese of Egypt



## New bishop for North Africa

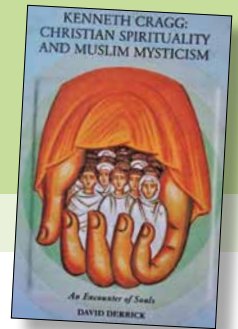
The Episcopal/Anglican diocese of North Africa is delighted to announce that The Rev Canon Dr Ashley Null has been elected as the next bishop of North Africa. The Electoral Synod met on 4 February in N'Djamena, Chad, in the context of a Diocesan Synod.

Photo: JMECA

## Kenneth Cragg. Christian Spirituality and Muslim Mysticism. An Encounter of Souls.

David Derrick

*Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust, 2024*



Bishop Kenneth Cragg had the soul of a poet and the mind of an etymologist. His many books on Christianity and Islam repay careful reading but this reading cannot be hurried as he almost invented his own form of English which often feels located midway between poetry and prose. It is as if words were icons for Kenneth, to be wondered at and thereby given their power to stretch us beyond our normal patterns of thought.

For this reason it is good that David Derrick has written this extraordinary book which draws attention to openings toward mysticism in Kenneth's writings. Derrick, who trained as a worker priest for the Church of England and has exercised his ministry in London's inner boroughs for almost fifty years, has found in completing this work a fulfilment of his long-term concern for the engagement of Christians with other religious traditions.

Derrick's interest in Kenneth Cragg's more mystical leanings has come as rather a surprise to me, for as Derrick himself remarks, Kenneth would not have welcomed any categorisation of his writings as mystical. That would not have fitted with his self-designation as an evangelical within the Church of England, called to pursue a mission to Islam based on dialogue and understanding, and notably the use of reason.

But to turn to an example of Kenneth capturing an audience with his exploration of a word, I will remember a time when he broke off from the theme of a lecture to talk about the importance of "consideration", pointing out that the word's origin can be traced to mariners who consult the stars in order to define their course.

Kenneth was always opening windows to the beyond, in his writing, his thinking and his praying.

It is particularly welcome that Derrick makes the link between personal life, "biography" and faith. Like those who formed his faith in early years, Kenneth never lost sight of the fundamental call to "walk with God" and this enabled him to enter into a deep sense of communion with others who sought that intimacy with the divine, which I believe accounts for his sympathy towards the Sufi mystics of Islam.

Derrick's book is not an introduction to Kenneth Cragg. It is more a treasury or a mine, a resource to be turned to for a deeper understanding of this remarkable scholar and exponent of mission. It will be invaluable to those conducting their own research into Cragg's life and work. In particular, I was grateful to be reminded of Kenneth's friendship with Charles Malik, Lebanese Orthodox philosopher who as President of the UN General Assembly played a vital role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A further interest that Derrick brings into focus is Kenneth's admiration for Dag Hammarskjöld. I had not been aware of the extent of the influence of these two international figures on the development of Kenneth's own thinking.

There is a wonderful quotation provided by Derrick from a sermon preached by Kenneth in All Saints' Anglican Cathedral in 1977. This seems to me to exemplify his remarkable gifts as a preacher and teacher:

'Christian faith is fact, but not bare fact, it is poetry, but not imagination ... "What is music?" asked Walt Whitman, "but what awakes within you when you listen to the instrument". And Jesus is the music of the reality of God, and faith is what wakens when we hearken' (p.12).

Alan Amos



# Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Conflict over Israel and Palestine

Colin Chapman

SPCK, 2024



Hamas' horrific assault on October 7th, 2023 on Israel and Israel's devastating response halted the process of 'normalisation' between some Arab Gulf States and Israel and brought the issue of the Palestinians and their claims to a state of their own in historic Palestine to centre stage.

So it is timely that SPCK, taking over from Lion Publishing, has published the fifth edition of this invaluable book by Canon Colin Chapman, an Arabist and former missionary with CMS, widely travelled in the Middle East. It was first published in 1983 following Israel's invasion of Lebanon and siege of Beirut, where he and his family had lived. That invasion led him to write about the history of Palestinian and Israeli claims to the same plot of land, which three religions call 'holy'. He combined that history and its politics with an exploration of the competing biblical, theological and religious traditions that underpin the conflict over this territory and make it so much more complex. It is this mix of history and theology that makes it such a unique book that in more than forty years it has never been out of print and in successive editions has expanded as new stages of the conflict have taken place and his own reading, study and reflection have developed.

The book is simply and helpfully structured in three main sections with clearly marked sub-divisions (75 in all!) so that it can both be read straight through or dipped into for specific topics.

Part One **Understanding the History** explains in three chapters the historical claims both of Jews and Arabs based on previous occupation of the land with an overview from the time of Abraham (in rapid summary); the events leading up to the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel; and the most significant developments since, updated to take account of the war of 2023. There follows one of the distinctive features of the book – a chapter of quotations from a wide range of sources allowing people who have been involved in the conflict or have written about it to comment in their own words. This use of quotations runs through the whole work. It is evidence of wide reading and research and of a determination to allow different views to be expressed. The final section tackles a range of questions such as 'Zionism and Zionisms?'; 'Can Israel be both Jewish and democratic?'; and 'Why do Christians have such different responses to Zionism and Israel?'.

Part Two **Interpreting the Bible** is another three chapters looking at what the Bible says about the

land *before* Christ; the land *after* Christ and thirdly other biblical themes that relate to an understanding of the conflict such as 'the prophetic concern for justice'; 'the passion for truth'; 'Jew and Gentile in the Old Testament and after the time of Christ'. A major feature of this section is the careful exposition of the most significant passages in Old and New Testaments that speak of the land and the promises of Jewish restoration – again drawing on a range of commentators.

Part Three **Finding Ways Forward** builds on the previous two sections and has been updated to provide background to Hamas' barbaric attack on Israel, Israel's response and international re-action. These are preceded by extensive consideration of Zionism, Christian Zionism, Zionism and Islam and a section tackling the question of the future for Hamas and Israel. It also looks at issues that have come into the foreground following October 7 - the role of international law as applied to such issues as occupation of land seized in war, refugee rights of return, rights of self-defence, the role of the USA, of Iran and its proxies. It concludes by looking at two options for the two peoples that occupy the land – two states side by side, or one state containing both peoples.

I conclude with one particular theme. In interpreting Old Testament promises about the land and the return of the Jews in the New Testament he argues that for Christians they focus on their fulfilment in Jesus and the kingdom of God, that the New Testament writers show no interest in a literal interpretation, so that 'it is not appropriate for Christians to interpret the recent history of Israel/Palestine in terms of the fulfilment of the promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants and the prophecies of a return of Jewish exiles to the land' (p. 283). Just as the disciples 'understanding of the nation expanded to include people of all nations and all races, so their understanding of the land expanded to include all lands.' (p 400). This is just one of the many challenges he puts to the theology of Christian Zionism as leading to a one-sided political stance with little concern for questions of justice.

He ends with a hope, a prayer and a vision that the land may be liberated from injustice and war and become a land of reconciliation, peace and love.

John Clark

# 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

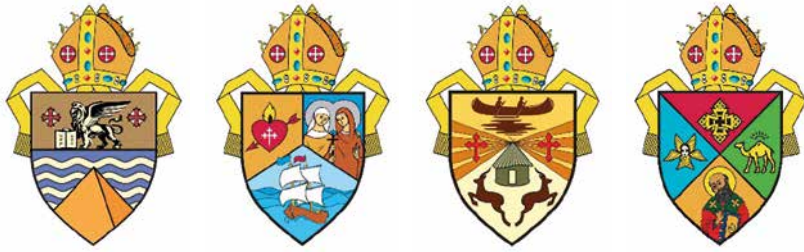
- 2nd The Archbishop and Dean of St George's Cathedral, the Most Rev Dr Hosam Naoum and his wife Raffa and family. For wisdom as he leads the church in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The administrative staff.
- 3rd The clergy serving the parishes and institutions in Israel, Palestine, 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, 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 The bishop, the Rt Rev Sean Semple, his wife Jenny and their family. The diocesan administrative staff.
- 16th The Dean of St Paul's Cathedral Nicosia. The Dean of St, Christopher's Cathedral Bahrain the Very Rev Dr Richard Fermer and his wife.
- 17th The Archdeacon in the Gulf, the Ven Dr Michael Mbona and his wife Christine. The Archdeacon in Cyprus, the Ven Paul Carr and his wife Paula.
- 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, Doha. 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

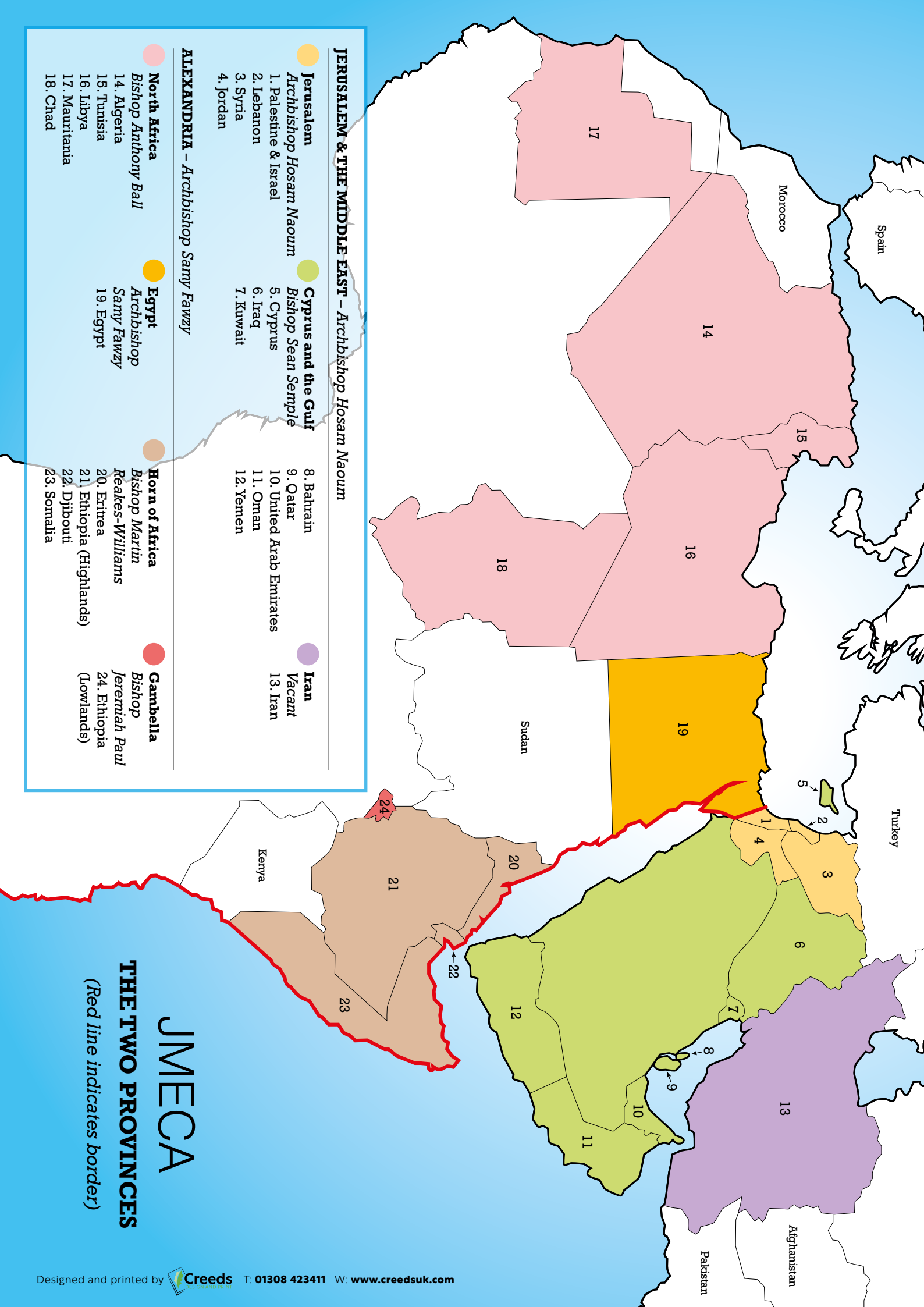
- 23rd The Province of Alexandria. The Archbishop of the Province, the Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy.
- 24th The diocese of Egypt. The bishop the Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy and his wife Madelaine and their family and all who work in and for the diocese.
- 25th The diocese of North Africa. The bishop the Rt Rev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

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

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





## JERUSALEM & THE MIDDLE EAST – Archbishop Hosam Naoum

### Jerusalem

Archbishop Hosam Naoum

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

### Cyprus and the Gulf

Bishop Sean Sempile

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

### Iran

Vacant

13. Iran

## ALEXANDRIA – Archbishop Sammy Fawzy

### North Africa

Bishop Anthony Ball

14. Algeria
15. Tunisia
16. Libya
17. Mauritania
18. Chad

### Egypt

Archbishop Sammy Fawzy

19. Egypt

### Horn of Africa

Bishop Martin Reakes-Williams

20. Eritrea
21. Ethiopia (Highlands)
22. Djibouti
23. Somalia

### Gambella

Bishop Jeremiah Paul

24. Ethiopia (Lowlands)

# JMECA

## THE TWO PROVINCES

(Red line indicates border)