

Bible Lands

Winter 2024

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

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

www.jmecca.org.uk

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Our website has information about the Church and its work in each of the dioceses with regular updates of news and stories from the region.

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

Front cover photo: Candles in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.

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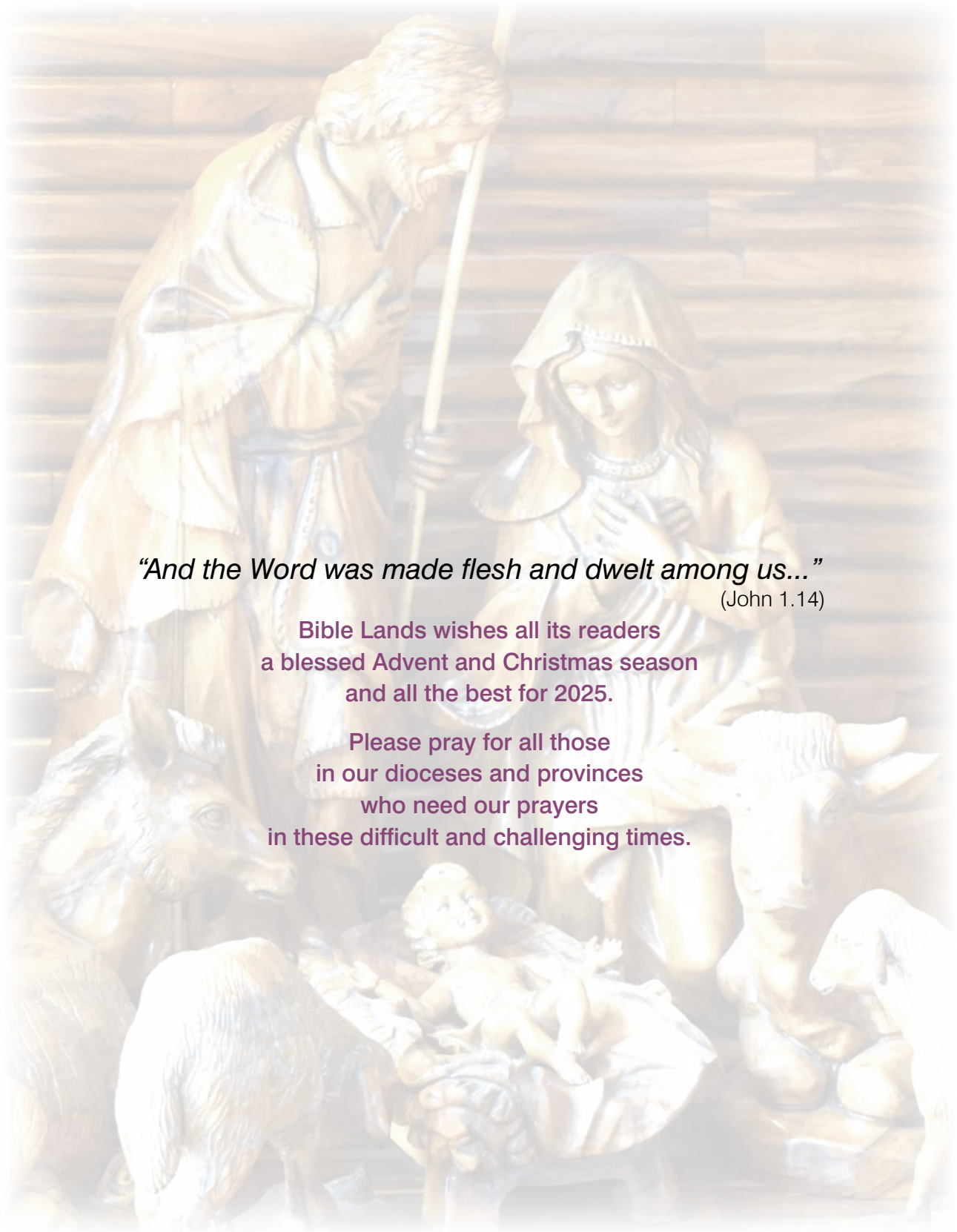
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“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...”

(John 1.14)

Bible Lands wishes all its readers
a blessed Advent and Christmas season
and all the best for 2025.

Please pray for all those
in our dioceses and provinces
who need our prayers
in these difficult and challenging times.

JMECA Secretary retires

We will be writing in more detail in our next issue, but readers of Bible Lands will want to know that Shirley Eason, our JMECA Secretary and Administrator, has recently given notice that after fifteen years with the charity she will be stepping down from her role at Christmas. Shirley has made a huge contribution to JMECA and to the Episcopal Church in the Middle East. She has developed so many things since her appointment in 2010, maintaining records, corresponding with church leaders in the region, minuting meetings, responding to enquiries, organising transfer of grants, initiating and maintaining the website and so much more. She has been a pleasure to work with – always friendly, informed, organised and often going beyond the call of duty. She will be much missed. Thank you, Shirley!

Anthony Ball (Chair); John Clark (previous Chair)

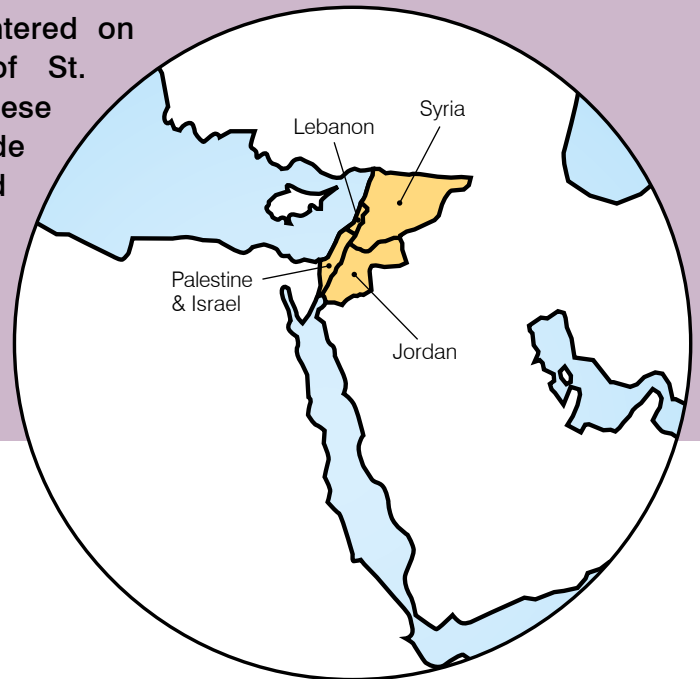
Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

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.



Archbishop Hosam: 'We're bleeding...'

Clergy from the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf gathered recently for a Zoom meeting organised by Bishop Sean to hear Archbishop Hosam's reflections on how we might think theologically about ongoing conflict in the region; how we might pray and how we might offer practical support to those in need.

In the meeting, Archbishop Hosam described his diocese as "bleeding". Nowhere is safe; its people are exhausted. Tens of thousands of businesses have closed; tourists and pilgrims come no more. In Gaza, where so many have been killed, the destruction of infrastructure and economic life is total, and there is no escape from the violence.

"In Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and the West Bank, things are very difficult, too," he said. "In Nablus, Jericho, Bethlehem – all are surrounded by checkpoints." As also now in Lebanon, there is nowhere to go. Visiting his home parish of St Paul Shefa-Amr with Fr Fuad to celebrate Harvest Sunday, the Archbishop held a Zoom meeting with friends in the US that was twice interrupted when he had to flee to seek shelter. "That is the kind of life we are living now."

Very small amounts of aid trickle through, including for Al Ahli Hospital, which is run by the diocese of Jerusalem and is receiving barely any supplies or fuel. Yet, barring a few days, the hospital has managed to function throughout.

"It is important to know that our congregations, our institutions and the people, at large and beyond the diocese, are facing a lot of difficulties and a lot of challenges. Some of it is financial, but also psychological. There is a lot of anxiety. Gazans cannot leave because there are now basically no exits. But in the West Bank, even in Israel, we are seeing a lot of people leaving their country – not only Jews, but those Christians and Muslims, too, who have an Israeli ID. Over one million out of nine million Israelis have left the country."

The situation is similar in Lebanon, "where the whole South is being evacuated, including our own families, Christian families in places like Al Masha, where Archdeacon Imad comes from, the whole village has been evacuated, and now, not even a stone is left upon another", he said.

Archbishop Hosam paid tribute to the resilience of a people who have lived through many wars, although this, he said, was unlike anything seen since the First World War – itself a time of great suffering in the region.

"There is great need on many levels – psychological support, pastoral care. As a diocese, we carry on with ministry despite everything we see and the pressure is on each and everyone's shoulders, in terms of institutions, in terms of the clergy."

At the same time, fundraising remains central to

the work of the diocese of Jerusalem, providing for struggling institutions, helping families in need, paying scholarships for young people, all of which requires a huge amount of resources. And while there was always more to do, Archbishop Hosam took heart: "I think we are doing well. Not enough, but well, given the capacity we have as a diocese: we have been able to provide for all of these institutions over the past year, and we are really happy that we have not had to let go even one of our employees on furlough or on leave. Including at our hospital in Gaza, we are paying the salaries despite the fact that most of the staff are not at the hospital because they have been deported to the south. We are determined to continue to do what we can in terms of providing for the families of the more than 2,000 employees of our institutions."

There are also huge challenges, especially in the north of Israel, where most of the diocese of Jerusalem's schools are not functioning normally, able only to offer online learning – and families have been unable to pay tuition fees.

"The whole system is collapsing," said Archbishop Hosam. "But as Christians, we continue to have hope, and we are called to be resilient. We are called to be God's presence in the world. And this is exactly what we are doing right now. Despite everything, people are determined to continue with their ministry. And I have to say that it has proven our people are really tenacious. They are strong, hoping despite everything. This is really a gift that God gives to us: knowing that if we are really challenged, if we are in distress or in trouble, as Paul says in Romans, this produces patience, it produces perseverance and therefore resilience."

Recalling the Majma (Synod) of the diocese of Jerusalem held in Jordan in May, Archbishop Hosam reflected on its theme, *More than victorious* from Romans 8:37. "It was about overcoming," he said; amidst distress, "it was about presence and resilience".

"Despite everything, there have been some wonderful highlights over the past year. We had the ordination of Deacon Saleem Kasabreh, celebrated at the Cathedral; graduations and confirmations of young people. So even while it is really tough in and around us, we are determined to carry on: determined to do what we are able for our people, for our churches, for

our institutions, to continue with this important work."

And he thanked Bishop Sean and the clergy and people of the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. "Bishop Sean periodically checks in, and we keep in touch to just support each other as bishops," said Archbishop Hosam. "And I'm grateful to each and every one of you, wherever you are, in the Gulf or in Cyprus or elsewhere. Thank you for your prayers, for your support, and for being companions and sojourners on this path of pilgrimage within the province."

Taking questions, the Very Reverend Richard Fermer, Dean of St Christopher's Cathedral in Bahrain, asked Archbishop Hosam how he spoke "words of truth and peace at a time of heightened tension, when emotions ran high and words were twisted".

"We need to be looking to the day after the war," said Archbishop Hosam. "We need to continue to work together as Israelis and Palestinians to find the way to a peaceful solution to this crisis we are living in. Even though people criticise the church or whoever speaks that language, we will not stop doing this: this is something we will not be shy to talk about."

"Peacebuilding is something on which heads of churches have some liberty to speak a bit more strongly than others, because we are in a position of leadership," he said. "But it is important to keep a balance – not only because we want to be diplomatic, but because we want to continue to find ways in which to not cut all connection with different parties in the conflict."

The Venerable Michael Mbona, Archdeacon in the Gulf, asked whether Archbishop Hosam found the collaboration between Christian churches in their ministry and mission to be stronger or weaker in these difficult times.

"It is both stronger and weaker," said Archbishop Hosam. "On one level, there is a lot of collaboration between the churches, which is really good. We have had quite a few meetings and issued a number of statements as heads of churches in Jerusalem. But at the same time, each church has its own challenges, and each is busy just trying to survive in the midst of this turmoil. There is a lot of pressure on each and every community in the region here, but certainly, speaking for myself, I don't feel alone – I don't feel that I have been deserted, whether internally or beyond the



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diocese. There is a lot of support from the communion and from our partners in mission around the globe, who continue to hold the Holy Land in their prayers and the ministry here is on their heart. But we feel that we are still connected with the local churches, we are connected with the local communities for the most part and we are still connected with our partners around the world, who provide a lot of support and, if not physical presence, certainly a spiritual presence within the diocese.”

The Reverend MD Johnson, Associate Priest at Church of the Epiphany in Doha, asked Archbishop Hosam about the congregations of the diocese of Jerusalem, whether they were able to come together in worship, and what practical help those of the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf might be able to offer.

“Most of the churches gather in person; but sometimes only the priest and the few who live around the church are able to come; sometimes the whole service is cancelled if things are really tense – as happened on the northern border of Israel when the congregation of Christ the King in Tarshiha could not meet,” said Archbishop Hosam. The same had been the case at the church in Acre (Akko/Akka), but a bomb shelter had now been built there and services resumed.

Regarding practical help, Archbishop Hosam was delighted to share news of an Advent appeal to be launched by Bishop Sean in the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf.

“A prayer would be the most precious thing,” said Archbishop Hosam. “And when we say ‘prayer’ we mean it in a holistic way, not only saying the words but also acting on our prayer, doing something that would really help achieve the ‘Amen’ that we express in our hearts.”

As a final question, Bishop Sean asked Archbishop Hosam for his reflections on how there might, one day, come to be forgiveness and reconciliation after such violence in the region.

“Clinging to the mission of the church and speaking about ourselves and what we do – looking at the

hospital in Gaza, for example, and the fact that it’s still open, is a miracle. This is not the strength of human beings or our own resilience or our own wisdom – although I’m not saying that is not important. But I think the fact that it’s still standing, as we speak, is really God’s confidence: meaning, we have a mission, and the hospital is still standing because it is seen as a place of hope, without being affiliated with any faction. Its sole ministry is to provide healing and healthcare.

“As long as there are people who are committed to peace and reconciliation, there is always hope. It might take a long time; it’s been taking a long time

anyway. But the cause is not lost because there are people who are committed. And just as in our earthly pilgrimage we know things will not be perfect, things are not perfect: we do what we ought to do, in our commitment to God’s mission for peace and reconciliation. And it is so difficult – which is why we find people, rather than committing themselves to peace and building trust, becoming more radical and fanatic, because it’s easier: it’s easier to defend yourself when you are fanatic, because you have nothing to defend but your own thinking or your own cause.

“We have chosen the difficult path, and we will cling to it, and I am sure we will find more and more people.

“Once the war is over, there will be more chance to speak about

the future, because I think people will come out of this misery thinking, ‘What have we achieved in all of this?’ We have seen so much death, so much violence, so much destruction, so much agony.

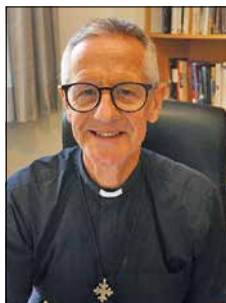
“We have to learn from our experiences and look to a future filled with relationships, good relationships, being good neighbours and building trust among each other. This is the only path. I know that now this language is not only foreign, but alien. But they will come. I hope – I hope in our lifetime – that people can really understand that the only way forward is peace in our region.”

Archbishop Hosam Naoum is Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem and Primate of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East



One year of war and no end in sight...

The dean of St. George's College, Jerusalem, the Rev Canon Richard Sewell, reflects on the current situation in the Holy Land.



The Israel-Gaza war began early for us on Saturday 7th October. Our group of pilgrims was receiving a lecture from course director Rev Dr Rodney Aist, prior to a visit to Bethlehem and specifically to the Basilica of the Nativity. My phone started to buzz manically with notifications about 'terrorist activity' around the Gaza border in Israel. It was clearly different from other types of upsurges of violence which had happened previously, so I immediately cancelled the visit to Bethlehem and said we would stay within the college grounds all day. Little did we know then the full scale of the horrors of October 7 and we could not have imagined the terrifying destruction that would follow afterwards, right up to the present day.

Since then, we have not been able to run any pilgrim courses at all. With the situation dangerous for travelling, we are to all effects, closed. Closed to pilgrim groups but definitely not closed up with no signs of life. The college management team and I have been keen to ensure that we keep all the staff employed either full time or part time. We talk, in good times, about the college being a family. A family doesn't discard people in hard times so it has been important to find a way to maintain staff on some kind of a salary. Of course there is still some work to do. We have a few travellers passing through, bishops and others on solidarity visits, journalists and NGO staff who know the appeal of the college and the cathedral close. But these are few in number.

Our course director Rodney Aist and I have been making short on-site films about the holy and historic places. These ensure that we maintain a profile amongst our supporters. They can all be seen on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@richardsewell4849/videos>

This means that while people are currently unable to come to Israel/Palestine on pilgrimage, we can at least give them a taste of what the college does, in terms of the way we approach the sites, archaeologically,

historically and spiritually. But as the war has progressed it has got harder and more challenging to get around the country. Clearly everyone knows that it is impossible to get into Gaza, but travelling in the West Bank is also much more difficult because of internal checkpoints and flashpoints of violence which are far more frequent in these days. For those who live there, it makes travelling incredibly difficult but even for us, when we seek to visit places such as Nablus and Jericho, there are risks which serve as a disincentive to make the journey.

Inevitably, there has been a significant financial impact on the college as there has been for almost every sector of the community and the country. With no income from pilgrimages and ongoing costs of salaries and the maintenance of buildings and the cost of utilities, we have taken a heavy blow. Consequently, we have launched a fundraising campaign 'Let light shine in the darkness...' to address the significant shortfall between income and costs. We are also looking to restore our emergency reserves which have been decimated by two years of COVID and now the war. If any would like to support the College in its time of great need, all the information about how to donate is on the College website:

<https://www.saintgeorgescollegejerusalem.com/>



St George's College is an institute of the diocese of Jerusalem although we serve the whole Anglican Communion as the Anglican Centre for pilgrimage in the Holy Land. We want to ensure that when the war finally ends, the college is in a strong position once again to be the key doorway back into the Land and into the life of our diocese. Since we are not a commercial enterprise, all the benefits of the success of the college are fed back into the ministries of the Anglican church and to local people.

The economic impact of the war has been almost immeasurable for all parts of Israel/Palestine as well as for Lebanon but Jordan has also been impacted. The suffering is greatest for those who

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Jerusalem Archbishop Hosam Naoum

have suffered the loss of lives and the obliteration of their neighbourhoods. But there is no part of the country which has not been severely affected. So many Christian families are dependent on the pilgrim and tourist trade that their livelihoods have collapsed. But there are many other economic effects too. To detail the impact on all the peoples of the whole region would take up another article. Needless to say, I do not minimise the effect that the war has had on Israel and its Jewish population but our perspective in the college, is primarily through the Palestinian experience.

Strangely, Jerusalem, which has been the boiling pot of the conflict at times in recent history, is more like the eye of the storm in the present conflict. The Holy City has been eerily calm for much of the time since October 2023. Except, on several notable occasions when missiles have been fired at, or over, Jerusalem and we have had to run to the college bomb shelter as sirens scream their fearful warning. In fact, the most obvious impact is in the Old City which has been almost completely devoid of pilgrims.



Many of the tourist shops have been closed, rather like they were during the pandemic and so we can wander the winding streets unhindered by weary, limping pilgrims and visit holy sites without queues or crowds. We yearn for those busy days once more. The college and

the Cathedral Close have always been and continue to be an oasis of calm whatever is occurring in the neighbourhood or the wider context. For the college staff I sense that coming in to work even when for some the workload is a far cry from the busyness of normal times, is something reliable in the midst of

frighteningly uncertain times. The 'fellowship of the close' for those of us who are resident, is a constant source of encouragement and strength. Added to that, we are continually assured of the prayers of friends of ours and friends of the college and this is a boon. We feel uplifted by prayer and the grace of God.

I am regularly asked if, in all this suffering, I see any hope. The reply which I have come to favour is that I distinguish between optimism and Christian hope. I do not see grounds for optimism at present. I cannot see the route out of the present unholy mess and I cannot see the path towards the justice and peace which we desire. My Christian hope is founded on the conviction of the promise of God in Christ to be with us in our suffering and to never leave us without comfort. The seeds of encouragement which I cherish are the extraordinary acts of dedicated service of the staff of our Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza and of many others who serve vulnerable people too. They belong to the wider Christian community and indeed also in the words and acts of Muslims and Jews who resist the magnetic draw of hatred and division and who work against all odds for the goal of reconciliation which they cling onto with faith.

While we wait for that day, we are called to remain steadfast and determined. As we do not have the luxury of despair, we commit actively to seek the goals which we proclaim in the grace and mercy of God.



Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

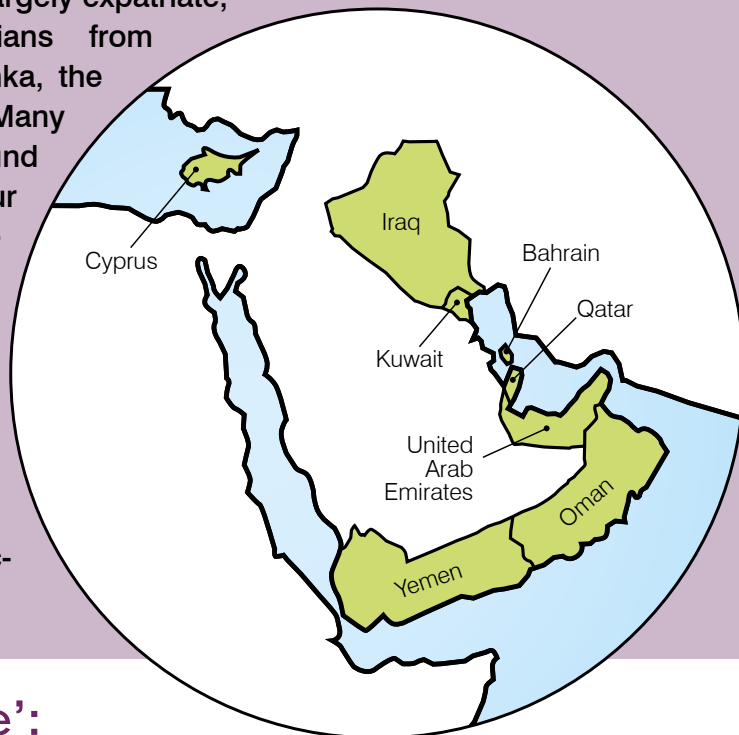
www.cypgulf.org

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.



Being 'Formed for Hope': the Cyprus summer school

It was a privilege to be able to participate (as a Trustee of JMECA) in the diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf's ministry summer school, held this year 16-22 June in the Angels' Hills resort in Cyprus. The theme of the week was 'Hope' – surely something that is desperately needed at the present time. Indeed, the location of the gathering itself spoke of current difficulties in the region: the summer school was originally going to be held at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut but several months previously it had become apparent that it would be very difficult to hold an international study week in Lebanon, given the ongoing tensions and conflict that the country was – and is – living through. So we had to trade the Near East School of Theology, with its excellent library, for a beautiful and peaceful area of rural Cyprus. Beauty had to compensate for the lack of access to books. As you will see however, during the course of our week we made sure of listening to the realities of the Middle East and of the human condition.

We were fortunate to have present with us two of the

current teaching staff of the Near East School of Theology, Rima Nasrallah and Wilbert van Saane, and it was they who suggested that we should explore 'Hope' through the spectacles provided by Romans 5.3-5: "... we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces *hope*, and *hope* does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

Hope in this passage from Paul is not easy, nor is it a facile optimism. It builds on and from suffering, endurance and character. It is the kind of hope that feels appropriate for these difficult days. I have to confess that someone who is deeply Anglican in my thinking and biblical studies, Paul's Letter to the Romans is probably not my own natural theological starting point, but it felt very right for the context in which we found ourselves and the present times.

The title for the summer school 'Formed for Hope', was a reminder of the goal of Anglican ministerial formation.

Those present during the week as students were not very large in number but



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they were very committed. They came from the Gulf region, from Iraq and from Cyprus itself. Some were training for ordination as deacon or priest, others for forms of lay ministry. One had originally been ordained priest in another Christian tradition, and had recently become an Anglican, and the summer school formed part of his preparation for exercising his ministry within the diocese. Organizing theological education and training in a diocese as widespread as that of Cyprus and the Gulf is of course a major challenge; those on the diocesan training programme study "Exploring Faith", an online course validated by Queens College in Newfoundland, Canada. But meetings even on Zoom cannot quite replace in-person gatherings, and with that in mind the diocese seeks to hold an in-person summer school every two years, previously in Beirut, though this year in Cyprus. Those, such as Archdeacon Christopher Futcher, the current diocesan Director of Ministry, who organised this summer school, and his predecessor Archdeacon John Holdsworth who had developed the current structures for theological education, should be commended for their creativity and hard work in building up theological education in this quite unusual diocese. It was very good that in the few days before his installation in St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia, Bishop Sean Semple was able to take time to spend a morning with us, both giving and receiving hope from his visit.

A visit to Larnaca one afternoon made a considerable impact on us. At St Helena's Church we met with three young women who had come as asylum-seekers to Cyprus from other parts of the Middle East. They had been displaced from their original homes, and often their families, due to the wars and unrest still continuing in countries like Syria and Iraq. Many of us were moved by the way they thanked us for giving them the opportunity to be heard.

As I listened to their stories I was deeply reminded of the particular vulnerability of women, especially young women, in so many parts of the Middle East. Our practical visit was complemented by a workshop organised and presented by Rima Nasrallah exploring the Book of Ruth, an Old Testament book which can read almost like a textbook recounting the sorrows, dangers, and yet also joys associated with migration. Rima's reflections on Ruth acted as a counter-point to her Bible study on the story of Rizpah, the concubine of Saul, whose sons were put to death by David (2 Samuel 21.8ff). Does Rizpah's resilience in the face of appalling tragedy contain any seeds of a message of hope for us at this time?

Especially for the participants who had come from the Gulf region the news of the many deaths in Mecca

during the Hajj pilgrimage feast of El Adha as a result of the exceptionally hot temperatures in the region was a further reminder of the 'groaning of creation' (Romans 8.22) in these days.

In the evenings there were several deeply personal sessions led by Anne Futcher, John Holdsworth and Christopher Futcher, in which we heard about living with serious illness, or caring for a spouse with dementia, or the current populism and authoritarianism which seems to be such a feature of geo-politics at the present time. Where do we find hope in the middle of all this?

Throughout our gathering we were reminded of the words of Michael Ramsey which seemed so apt for our working together in these difficult days: *"To be a theologian is to be exposed to the vision of heaven and the tragedies of mankind."*

My own contributions to the week included a Bible study which looked at the foundational nature of lament in the Old Testament... where hope seems to begin with a cry to God when everything seems absolutely hopeless. It is a message which speaks into these days. I also offered a talk which tried to draw together the story of creation in the Book of Genesis and the New Testament's vision – found in the Gospel of John, the Letter to the Romans and elsewhere – of the ministry, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as bringing into being a new creation, in which our vocation as human beings to reflect the image of God is more fully realised. The summer school took place only a week or so after the death of the great German theologian Jurgen Moltmann, one of the 'giants' of the last 50 years, so it felt appropriate to draw on his words in this context:

'In Christ's resurrection we recognize the presence of God's promised future and our new beginning. Through Christ's resurrection the powers of death-oppression, exploitation, sickness, and alienation-are already being overcome. Resurrection hope enlivens our senses and opens us to the beauty of life. Loving life, we are filled with compassion and incensed by evil and injustice. Resurrection spirituality allows us to discover that our heaven lies on a new earth, the resurrection of the whole groaning creation.' (Jürgen Moltmann)

I am grateful to George Vidyakin, one of the participants based in Cyprus, for drawing to my attention the remark by Václav Havel, a renowned Czech author and politician, who said: 'Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of

how it turns out". That measured comment spoke well into the hopes we had for the summer school itself.

From my perspective as a JMECA Trustee I came away feeling that theological education should be one of the key areas where our organisation continues to offer support to the dioceses and provinces that we work with in the Middle East. Good theological education is vital to the present and future health of the Church. Christopher Fletcher summed up how I think those of us who were present felt about our time together:

"Our shared reflections on the last evening revealed how all of us had been challenged by our studies together," said Christopher, "learning more about ourselves and our vocational paths, more about suffering and perseverance, more about relating Scripture to our personal lives, the lives of others, and the life of the world."

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
look favourably on your whole church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery;
and by the tranquil operation of your
perpetual providence,
carry out the work of man's salvation;
let the whole world feel and see
that things which were cast down
are being raised up,
that those which had grown old
are being made new,
and that all things are returning to perfection;
through him from whom they took their origin,
even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(A 5th century prayer from the Gelasian Sacramentary, translated by William Bright, 1861 used during the summer school)

Clare Amos

Life with serious illness Social Outreach Forum 2024 – Cyprus

'Enriching'... 'insightful'... 'deeply moving'... 'supportive'... 'thoughtful and thought-provoking'... These were just some of the reflections shared by participants during, and following, the 2024 Social Outreach Forum.

On 12th September, forty-eight people, drawn from a range of not-for-profit organisations and from different churches across the island gathered online to consider the theme *"Life with serious illness"*. Following introductions from Bishop Sean (Chair) and from Rev. Anne Fletcher, (Convenor), there were three short presentations which looked at *"Life with serious illness"* from different perspectives.

Canon John Holdsworth, speaking from personal experience of caring for his wife who had suffered from dementia, shared "Seven things that Dementia Carers need to know". As one participant, with experience in supporting cancer sufferers and their families, commented, he spoke of *"everyday issues that all chronic sufferers and their primary carers face... Mr. Holdsworth's words touched me."*

Maria Evangelou, drawing on her long experience in nursing, focussed on the loneliness and isolation inherent in serious chronic illness from the sufferer's perspective. Noting how the impact of loneliness escalates over time, Maria stressed how important it is for the sick person to retain a social network and the presence of loved ones.

As one participant later put it, Alexandros Tifas,

the third speaker *"elegantly explained to us the role of the carer and its importance"*. Drawing from his experience as a mental health nursing officer, Alexandros focussed on burnout in caregivers and its prevention through both recognising its early signs and by practicing self-care.

Following the three presentations, participants formed small discussion groups to reflect on what they had heard. Issues raised within groups covered concern for the care of asylum-seekers and refugees who fall sick; the importance and value of knowing what information and support can be offered to both the seriously ill person and their carers; coming to terms with not always being in control of our own health, or that of our loved ones; and how churches can best support the day-to-day needs of ageing congregations.

Compassion and care – and gentle humour – shone out amidst the most painful of situations in the reflections shared and stories told. The openness of participants and speakers, and their honesty and courage, was deeply appreciated.

Reflecting on the afternoon, one participant said, acknowledging the words of Alexandros Tifas: *"We must learn to say 'yes' when we are offered help."*

During the final plenary, each speaker was asked to identify the one thing *they* wanted participants to take away. For John Holdsworth, it was that, despite the dementia, the person we love is still there. For Alexandros Tifas, it was putting self-care for the caregiver first. And for Maria Evangelou, it was simply this: *"Be There!"*

Kenneth Cragg's 'Poetry

I first had the joy of getting to know Bishop Kenneth Cragg when I was Course Director of St George's College, Jerusalem (1975-78). Kenneth used to come regularly – twice a year I think – as a 'Guest Lecturer' on some of our longer courses. I particularly remember the occasion he joined us as I led a group of our students on a seven hour walk through the Judaeian wilderness from Abu Dis to Mar Saba. Twenty years older than anyone else in the group he definitely struggled with the heat and distances of the day – but was determined to make it. I was very thankful that he did: I really did not want to be responsible for the demise of another Anglican bishop in the desert, only a few years after the mysterious death of Bishop James Pike!

My husband Alan had also already encountered Bishop Kenneth through his regular visits to Lebanon to speak at ecumenical and interfaith conferences that were held at Broummana. After Alan's and my marriage in 1978 there were several further occasions he came to Beirut while we were living there. He had of course himself been chaplain of All Saints', Beirut for several years in the 1940s, and among the somewhat battered collection of chaplaincy apartment furniture Alan had inherited was a desk with the initials K.C. that had originally been used by Kenneth in those days.

After we left Lebanon near the end of 1982 our friendship with Kenneth continued and we were grateful for the way that he was willing to come and speak at the colleges and institutions that we found ourselves working in over the years: Westcott House, Cambridge; the Acts

Centre, Southwark; the Canterbury School of Ministry, the Anglican Communion Office. In turn it was my blessing to be the co-editor of the Festschrift, *A Faithful Presence*, which was presented to Kenneth in 2003 by the Archbishop of Canterbury to mark his 90th birthday. Our friendship continued until the end of Kenneth's long life, in November 2012, aged 99.

A particular privilege of being part of Kenneth's circle of friends was one's place on his Christmas card mailing list. Home-typed on an increasingly wonky manual typewriter, the cards always contained a poem personally

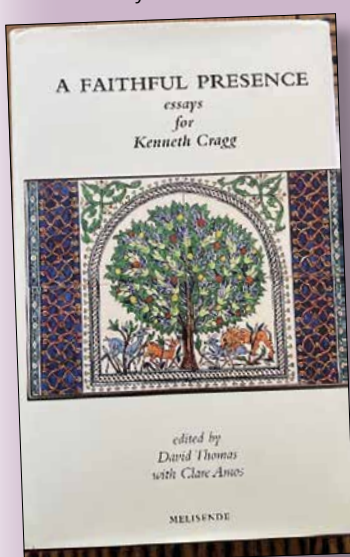
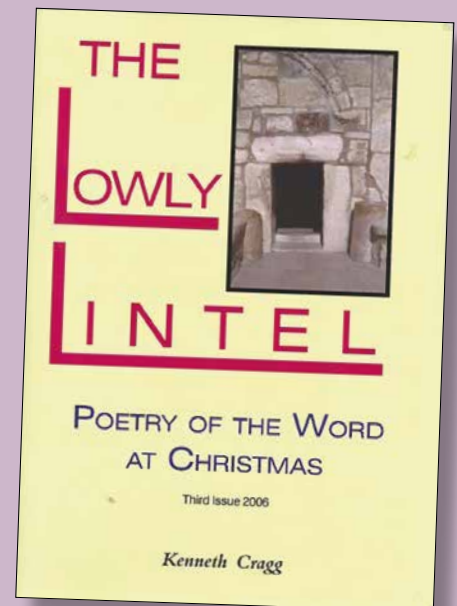
written by Kenneth for that year. We still have several of those original cards and treasure them. We received one for Christmas 2010; I am not sure that Kenneth managed to send out a Christmas card the year before he died.

Those Christmas poems stand among the many important contributions that Kenneth made to the life and ministry of the Christian Church in the Middle East, particularly in its Anglican expression. They bring together profound learning with a deep spirituality in which his love for this region and its peoples is clearly apparent. In fact, there is a chapter devoted to them in that Festschrift, *A Faithful Presence*, written by Richard J Jones. The title of the chapter, *Singing of God's Incarnation* exactly captures what was a grounding bass of Kenneth's poetry and a key theological motif.

At Kenneth's own initiative, these poems were eventually collected and published in a more durable form, as a small book. Initially appearing in 1987, with the title *Poetry of the Word at Christmas*, it then re-appeared slightly enlarged in 1996. In 2006 a further enlarged edition came out, now called, *The Lowly Intel*, the title drawn from one of the poems. Copies of these collections are still available, at least second hand, for those who search online.

For this article for *Bible Lands*, which itself will appear shortly before Christmas I include two samples from these poems of Kenneth. The first, an extract from *Middle East Christmas 1967*, was written for Christmas 1967, shortly after the Six Day War. We are taken in our mind's eye to the Sinai desert...

**Comfort ye, comfort ye...
In the desert a high way
through the litter of tanks
and the sub-bleached bones.
Voices still in the wilderness –
the bark of the guns
and the crackle of rifles
Spluttering hate in the sands...**



of the Word at Christmas'

And where is 'the way of the Lord',
that we should make ready?

The way in the cry;
in the cry of dissent,
In the voice of an anger
that burns
and that melts

To contrition and pity and pardon,
yearned for and given.

A highway in the desert
Through the waste of the heart
to the springs of forgiveness
From the clamour of wrongs
To their bearing and saving.

The way of the Lord
in the womb of the lowly,
In the greeting of the Spirit
for the patience and the travail.
The way of the Lord in the flesh,
in the word and the deed,
In the path of the Christ –
Nazareth Bethlehem
Galilee Golgotha,
The oil and the wine in the wound
and the pence at the inn,
The bread and the breaking
The cup and the taking
In the journey to birth
and the wonder of angels,
In the journey to death
And the scars in the hands and the feet,
In the mystery of the readiness of God
for the Cross of the world.

How shall we make ready his way
Except his way find us ready?

They are words which seem only too resonant in the Middle East these fifty-seven years later in which so much hate continues to be 'spluttered'.

The second poem I have chosen is a gentler one, and reflects Kenneth's long and deep love for the town of Bethlehem, hallowed for him as the home of the incarnation. It takes as its starting point the fact that the entry to the Church of the Nativity is now through a lowly doorway, to enter through which nearly every adult has to bend down. For Cragg this becomes a symbol both of the incarnation of God in Christ, and the response that we are called to make to it.

To enter is to stoop. Humility
Reciprocates the lowliness of God.
This aperture requires your body bent
In token of a heart that kneels,
Fit vestibule of well discarded pride.

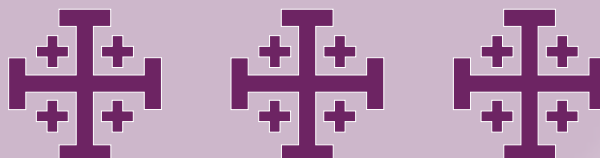
On access to the columned nave
Resume awhile your normal stature.
Recall how infant story rose to manhood's height
And trod this common earth,
Retrieving from its ever turning scene
Life's parables of liberating truth
And costly workings of the way of grace.
You are here to learn 'the Word made flesh,'
Emmanuel, the music-master of your soul.

The ultimate perception still awaits.
Beneath the sanctuary deep lies
The meaning of the manger. Again
You must descend. The shrine of birth
Has here the very contours of a tomb
To cradle nativity in the climax of a Cross.
Into a Gethsemane this incarnation came.

The architecture tells the unison
Of birth and death, the seamless robe
That consummates the swaddling clothes,
The crown of thorns that mint's the Magi's gold
And validates their frankincense and myrrh.

Here fact and faith propose your
kneeling ground.

Clare Amos



Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

Carolina 'catalyst' is Community Outreach Coordinator

Stella Lail Perrin says she hopes to be a catalyst, enabling the Church in Cyprus to serve, as she begins her work as the new Community Outreach Coordinator. She succeeds Rev Anne Fletcher, the pioneer in the role, who retired, along with her husband Christopher, in September.



Stella was born and has spent most of her life in North Carolina, USA. She was immersed in church life from the get-go as a member of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. She says, "In my deepest soul I'm a Baptist," but is quick to point out that her denomination is different from the Southern Baptists. Her Baptists have liturgical worship, have an ecumenical outlook and ordain women ministers, of whom she is one. She is fascinated to discover the Anglican Church. She worships and is very much at home in St Helena's Church in Larnaca where she feels both welcome and comfortable. "I am humbled to be part of the Anglican Church," she says.

Her own vocational path through ministry has a distinct theme of service. She describes mission as, "Our call to be the presence of Christ in our own communities and beyond." Christians are called to be, "the hands and feet of Christ." Her first degree was in Psychology and Religious Education. Later she gained an MA in Counselling, and prior to her ordination, an MDiv. Although serving as an Associate Pastor she had a special role in counselling and working with people who had special needs. Using the ecumenical partnerships of her denomination she spent placements in an orphanage in Guatemala, and more recently with refugees from the European war, in Moldova.

COVID proved a significant stage for her, and as life returned to normal after the outbreak, she sought a new challenge in which she could use her skills as a minister and counsellor. Through another denominational partnership, this time with a faith-based NGO called All4Aid, she moved to Larnaca in October, 2023 as one of their Field Personnel in the role of Mental Health Educator. She continues in that role alongside her new Anglican post. All4Aid works closely with refugees. Stella spends time at Kofinou Camp where she runs a weekly Women's Group, and

has plenty of opportunity to use her specialist skills operating from the NGO's base in Larnaca. It was in this role that she first met and worked with Anne Fletcher.

Bishop Sean has recently promised that the Church will do all it can to help in any future emergency evacuation from Lebanon, and Stella's experience will be invaluable. She is very impressed with the bishop whom she describes as having high expectations of himself and the Church. They have already had meetings with High Commissioners. On the diocesan website she has set out an initial three-part strategy, which describes well her priorities.

1. Prayer – use the intercessions during Sunday services to pray for those who are in danger and for those who may have to flee, and encourage parishioners to pray daily for refugees. Pray for open hearts to receive asylum seekers and to meet them where they are. I will soon be sending out a prayer guide if you would like to use it or distribute it among congregants. It's easier to love and serve those for whom we have prayed.
2. Assess your strengths and your assets – what is it that your church might have to offer? Time to volunteer? Space for persons or organizations to use? What skills might your congregants have to offer that could be needed (including simple language teaching, making hats/scarves/blankets).
3. Become familiar with resources in your area. What nonprofits or humanitarian aid organizations are in your area? What services do they offer? Have you introduced yourself to them? How could your congregation offer support to them? We are stronger more effective when we work together.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
Ecclesiastes 4:12.

Stella will be organising a Christmas stocking appeal for the children at Kofinou Camp, maintaining a tradition now some ten years old. In the summer, in cooperation with St Helena's, she managed to provide one hundred and five back packs and school uniform white shirts for the refugee children to help integration into school feel more normal. On her immediate agenda are meetings with the local clergy and helping to maintain the partnerships established by her predecessor. That is what she means by being a catalyst.

For Stella personally this feels like a job she is called to do. She is fond of quoting the example of Esther who was called to a role she might never have expected because she was needed at that time (Esther 4:14).

The story of Henry Martyn (1781-1812)

The road to hell begins with good translations!

October 19th, the lectionary tells us, is a day that we celebrate Henry Martyn. I suspect that the day will go unmarked for the most part, but he has a special connection with our province and points us to an important role within the history of Christian evangelism that we rarely recognize.

Martyn was born in Truro, Cornwall. His father was a merchant and so they could afford to send him to Truro Grammar School where he showed the academic prowess that took him to St John's College Cambridge. There he was greatly influenced by one of the great evangelical clergy of the day, Charles Simeon, and he decided as a result that he would abandon his ambition of becoming a lawyer in favour of being a missionary. And so he became ordained with that in mind in 1803. However, a family financial crisis meant that he had to adjust his plans, and relinquishing the independence he had anticipated, took a job as Chaplain in the East India Company.

The voyage there took ten months and there are many accounts of his exercise of ministry on board. He appears to have been a particularly fiery preacher. One sailor is said to have remarked, "Mr. Martyn sends us to hell every Sunday." Having arrived in India, he found himself ministering primarily to European expats. Martyn was drawn to the native population and included them in his services and ministry in a way that alarmed some of his English members. There was a constant fear of insurrection, and it was forbidden, when Indians were present, to say the Magnificat which was thought to encourage revolutionary aspirations with its talk of bringing down the mighty from their thrones.

But Martyn served the Indian population in a way that his intellect allowed – by translating the New Testament into the version of Hindustani we know as Urdu, as well as into Arabic and Persian (aka Farsi). Following advice from his mentor, Charles Simeon, he wanted to be able to reach the leaders and thinkers of Indian society in their own language. He set up schools for the children and in his journals he wrote, "I learned that the power of gentleness is irresistible and also that these men are not fools. Clearness of reasoning is not confined to Europe".

Frustrated by the constraints of the East India Company, he decided to move to Persia, i.e. modern-

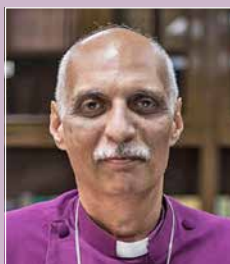
day Iran, so that he could check his translation into Farsi against usage there; hence our interest in him in the province which includes the diocese of Iran. He arrived in Persia in 1811 and spent the better part of a year in Shiraz, reportedly the first Protestant missionary to live in Persia. Unfortunately, he had only a year to live, and he died at the age of 31 of TB, but with a fabulous legacy of translation behind him.

Most biographical accounts of Martyn's life make reference to his love for a woman named Lydia whom he wanted to marry. She had turned him down before he left for India, but he had hopes of reviving the relationship and apparently intended to return to England with that in mind, from Persia via Arabia, where he wanted the check his translation into that language as well. He wrote many letters to her which are extant. His death thus seems doubly sad.

His story points us not only to a pioneer of evangelism through making the scriptures accessible to many more people in their own language, but also to the more general craft of translation. Today gives us a shout out for translators. The story of the translation of the Bible is a fascinating one and one that we normally take for granted. When it comes to translations of the Greek text into English, early translations into other languages are one of the sources that translators use to ascertain what the original Greek text looked like. A student once asked me where the originals of the New Testament were kept. Of course, there are no such originals available to us. Modern translators rely for a translatable Greek text on a whole variety of sources, including some much later Greek texts, scraps of text on ancient papyri, reports of early sermons and academic works that quote scripture, and early translations. Notable among them are the Syriac translation (the Peshitta) and the Armenian translation, sometimes known as the 'Queen of the Translations.' There were translations into Persian dating from the 4th and 5th centuries, but only fragments of them remained.

It is good to remember pioneer translators. It is good also to recall the place of the Bible in mission and evangelism. Missionaries like Henry Martyn believed that bringing the Christian faith involved bringing the book, the record, the rationale. Nowadays that can often be at least partially replaced by something called 'spirituality.' However, that in turn reminds us that the Bible does not speak for itself and those who think it does are more of a problem than an asset. The Bible also needs commentators and interpreters, but they need translators to be able to start that task. They may not necessarily take us to hell every Sunday, but they are also part of the Christian economy.

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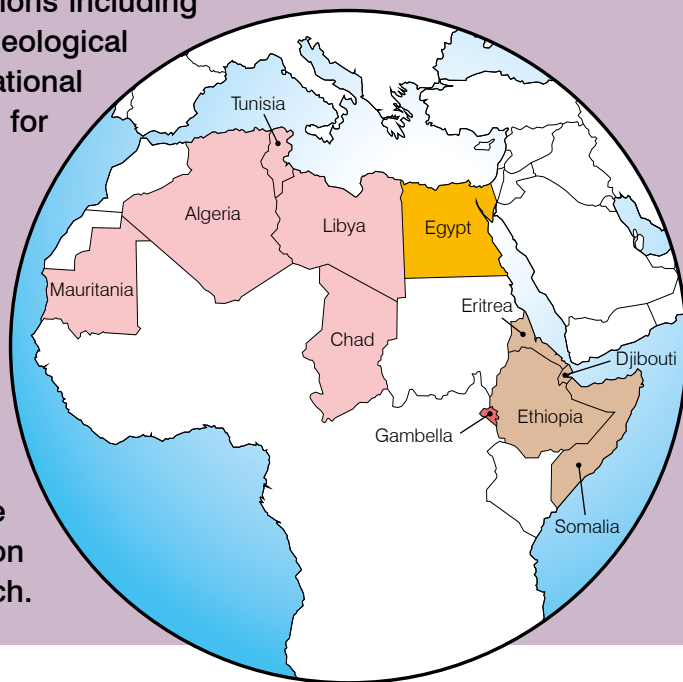


From its beginning in 1839, the diocese of Egypt was committed to serve others as Jesus did. The new Episcopal Anglican province of which the diocese of Egypt is now a part, continues this commitment to serving all people holistically regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically, we continue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



Now I'm sixty-four

There can be few clergy with so long and so varied an experience of the Anglican Church in Northern Africa as Canon Medhat Sabry who celebrated his sixty-fourth birthday in October.

Medhat was born in Cairo and brought up in a Christian family. His father's side of the family had produced Presbyterian clergy, but young Medhat followed his mother's Anglican practice (she worked in an Anglican Church school) and quickly became involved in his local church in Old Cairo, Jesus the Light of the World. His Vicar was to become the first elected Bishop of Egypt, and indeed would later ordain him. His own decision to serve Christ was made at his confirmation at the age of thirteen, but with the gentle mentoring of his parish priest he concentrated on his education until it became clear what he was being called to do with his life.

Having achieved a degree in chemistry, he became the first Egyptian ordinand to be sponsored for training in England. This took place at Trinity College, Bristol at the time when Rev George Carey, later to become Archbishop of Canterbury, was principal.



Having completed his studies there, and discovered a particular love for Old Testament study, Medhat moved to the San Francisco Seminary to complete a Master's degree and a PhD, accredited by Berkeley.

Although his study concentrated on the Old Testament, he was initially alarmed by a view of the Old Testament that cast Egypt as "the bad boy". It was the Rev Colin Chapman, a lecturer at Bristol, later to become Principal of the CMS College at Selly Oak, Birmingham, and a lecturer at NEST in Beirut, who convinced him to research a more positive role for Egypt, and so his D. Min thesis centered on the ten plagues that preceded the Exodus. Medhat regrets the tendency against preaching from the Old Testament nowadays. He believes that it is impossible to fully understand the New Testament without a grounding in the Old Testament. (Don't get him started on the significance of blood!) He himself frequently refers to the Old Testament and is gratified that people are so interested when he does so.

He was ordained in 1986 to a curacy in Alexandria and after three years moved back to Cairo, where, based

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Province of Alexandria Archbishop Samy Fawzy

at St Michael's Heliopolis, he spent the next twenty-one years. Though St Michael's was his base, he had a wider brief and was responsible for establishing new churches and reopening ones that had closed. These included churches and church plants at Izbet al Nachal, Maadi, and churches for the increasing numbers of Sudanese migrants. Church establishing has been very much a hallmark of his ministry. He reopened the church in Tripoli in 1993, and during a later spell as chaplain in Casablanca, established a church in Rabat. He describes the part of his ministry that gives him most satisfaction as "serving the unserved and reaching the unreached."

Medhat believes that the establishment of the Province of Alexandria opens new possibilities for ministry. This is partly due to migration from the centre of Africa towards the north, but also from the more local oversight that the new structures allow, and he points to the new churches in Chad as examples.

Canon Medhat is a theological educator. Apart from founding and opening churches he began a seminary in Cairo, now the Pentecostal Seminary, where he has taught systematic theology and Old Testament. He

was also part of the group that worked towards the establishment of the Alexandria School of Theology. For ten years he was a member of the Standing Committee of the former Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. He is proud to have prepared Egyptian people for ministry but also Sudanese, Syrian and even Indian. He continues to teach about Anglicanism throughout the province, most recently as part of the BUILD course in Chad.

Having recently returned from a spell in the diocese of Europe, first in Morocco and then in Madrid, he was hoping to take up a permanent post in Algiers, but visa problems have so far prevented that and he has been working in Cairo, assisting Archbishop Samy with ministry-related projects including the production of a manual for clergy in the diocese of Egypt, and the setting up of a review process for clergy. Presently he is seconded to the vacant chaplaincy/parish of Oman.

Canon Medhat is a proud husband, father and grandfather. As his birthday arrives, he eschews any mention of retirement. Whatever the maximum age for stipendiary ministry might be, "I shall never retire as a priest," he says.

Sensing hope in Chad: mission among the mud and mosquitos

The Anglican Church in Chad reached a new milestone in September when it hosted the annual synod of the new diocese of North Africa. This was the first synod at which the members from Chad were physically present. They heard a stirring account of work already set in motion with an ambitious agenda that could see Chad forming a new diocese before very long. The meetings were held at the Bakara Catholic Retreat Centre on the outskirts of the capital 'Ndjamena, with the proceedings predominantly in French, during three days in each of which the programme filled fourteen and a half hours.

Bishop Anthony Ball presided, joined by Canon Captain Richard Mayabi from Anglican Mission Africa, a Kenya-based Church Army-related organisation working to establish and support churches in eleven different countries of Africa to date, with several more countries on the radar, including Chad and Tunisia.



Other guest speakers included Bishop Yassir Eric, who has been described as the most unusual bishop in the world. Nominally a bishop in the Church in Rwanda, he is a bishop without a territory as such, looking after people all over the world who have converted from Islam to Christianity, from a base in Germany where he lectures on Islam at the University of Heidelberg. His personal testimony of conversion to Christianity from having been an aggressively militant

Muslim was remarkable. (See <https://english.katholisch.de/artikel/52415-the-most-unusual-bishop-in-the-world-lives-in-swabia> for further fascinating details). He was the preacher at the final eucharist at St Paul's Church in 'Ndjamena.

The content of the synod included the essential elements of any Anglican Synod, but the abiding memory is of accounts of growth, both evidenced so far, and planned in Chad. This rather overshadowed reports on interesting and encouraging activity in the other longer-established churches in three

of the other countries of the diocese: Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, and some initial notes about Mauritania.

In Chad there are three stages on the way to becoming

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a church, recognised as such by the diocese in its allocation of ministry leaders and its ability to be represented at synod. The initial stage is that of a plant. As it grows to a certain size it becomes recognised as a mission centre, but it is only recognised as a church when it has at least a hundred people on its Electoral Roll and an average weekly adult attendance over six months of at least sixty. In many UK churches that would be a difficult level to achieve. In Chad, if we go by what was reported, there will be dozens of churches within a few years. Indeed, when a geographical area such as Chad has seven or more churches which have three years' evidence of being self-financing, then they can form a new diocese, and that is a possibility by no means remote.

A recently ordained minister, Rev Felix (surnames don't really feature), gave a report from Chad which was reinforced by Bishop Anthony. Felix painted a picture of the walls of Jericho falling as he described a mission strategy which concentrated on villages at the perimeter of cities, well placed to evangelise those cities as a second stage. Many Muslims want to become Christian. He reported that as many as a hundred people per month were being baptised.

Bishop Anthony had visited Chad on four occasions during the past year. This is a country tolerant of both Islam and Christianity. Most Muslims are in the north of the country and the bishop had made one visit there. The local authorities in one area in the north want the Anglicans to take over the running of a hospital originally founded by Baptists. He had confirmed some sixty-eight candidates in various places. A cathedral complex in 'Ndjamena was planned, land had been designated and some funding had already been achieved. The bishop's priority is to build an educational facility on the complex, which will help to sustain the complex financially. In a move some bishops might consider brave, he invited the churches to send him an account of their expectations of a bishop. The diocese as a whole was 'getting to grips with' safeguarding.

It became clear that there is a genuine desire to learn more about Anglicanism. At the synod there were some sessions devoted to that end which combined



reflections on the readings at the Offices with various perspectives on the Anglican Church: its history, structure and ethos. Following the synod proper, there was the first meeting of what will be a two-year, partly residential course for evangelists and church planters. Some twenty-seven people attended, men and women, and each will be expected to plant a church as part of the course. Canon Captain Richard was overflowing with enthusiasm for the project which he outlined, and from which, he said, he expects great results.

It is some reflection of the Anglican culture that the Mothers Union is to become established in the diocese. They have a great mission enthusiasm which in Africa usually translates into acts of community service as well as bringing colour and vibrancy to worship.



Chad is regularly cited as one of the ten poorest countries in the world. It has oil reserves but a combination of conflict, poor infrastructure and the effects of climate change on a population that largely depends on rain-fed agriculture means that life is a struggle for most Chadians. The synod was held



during the rainy season. Floods were common, disrupting transport, and leaving stagnant water in which mosquitos thrived. Unsurfaced roads were churned into mud. The church 'buildings' are simple shelters at this stage but there is no shortage of energy to build an Anglican Church in Chad.

To be there now transports one, as few other places could, to those nascent churches in the middle east that Paul wrote to two thousand years ago. The questions people had in Chad this Autumn mirrored those that Paul faced: what is this new thing; how do we worship; how do we relate it to our experience of religion up till now; and what practical behaviour needs to change to be at one with the gospel? (When, at the end of his report, the bishop asked for any questions, it was notable that the first one was about polygamy). It was good to be there.

The Church in Chad was founded by the Anglican Church in Nigeria

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Centre for interfaith understanding goes from strength to strength

Since its formation in 2022, the Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership, a mission of the diocese of Egypt, has grown in its scope and reputation, fulfilling the vision of Bishop Mouneer who has maintained his close association with it as overall director of the Centre. It now has a Director of Academic Studies, Dr Matthew Anderson, and a Director of International Partnerships and Communication, Mr Kareem Gerges.

The Centre's activities during the last few months give an indication of its energy and ambition. Recognising the importance of telling their story to the wider world audience, in the summer the Centre organized a journalistic writing workshop in collaboration with the Gusour Cultural Centre, at All Saints' Cathedral, Cairo. The aim of this workshop was to provide participants with the foundational skills needed for sound journalistic writing. Journalist Muhammad Al-Ahmadi from the Youm Al-Sabe'a newspaper provided the instruction, and participants felt they had acquired a deeper foundational understanding and gained a more developed skillset going forward for the writing of press news.

A delegation from the diocese, led by Archbishop Samy, visited His Eminence Dr Nazir Ayyad, on Wednesday 14 July, 2024 to congratulate him on his recent presidential appointment as the Grand Mufti of Egypt, wishing him continued success and prosperity in his duties, and praying that God would guide him in all that brings goodness, peace and love. Dr Nazir Ayyad is a member of the Centre's Board of Trustees and has been a significant supporter in promoting dialogue, peace and cooperation between religious communities.

A meeting at Al-Azhar University focused on exploring ways of continuing and growing the current cooperation between the Centre and Al-Azhar. The delegation expressed its deep gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality from Al Azhar, looking forward to the continued growth of this fruitful collaboration to strengthen the values of understanding, partnership and peace in Egyptian society and beyond. A further academic link was celebrated in August when Dr Ahmad Dallal, President of the American University in Cairo (AUC), visited the Centre. Dr Ahmad, a renowned scholar of Islamic studies, shared his own interfaith experiences and expressed his deep interest in advancing interfaith dialogue and cooperation.



The discussion focused on potential collaborations between AUC and the Centre to foster interfaith peace and understanding in Egypt and beyond.

In September the Centre partnered with Dialogue Across Borders in organizing a third round of the "Journey of Learning" interfaith program. This residential conference offered Christians and Muslims an opportunity to listen and learn from one another about their respective faiths during three days together. The program was led by Rev. Dr Matthew Anderson with the assistance from the Centre's Director Bishop Dr Mouneer Anis, and from Al-Azhar University professor, Dr Isma'il 'Abdallah, together with a diverse group of lecturers and participants from Al-Azhar University, the Coptic Orthodox Theological Seminary and St. Leo the Great Coptic Alexandria Catholic School, interns and staff. This program is unique and unprecedented in modern Egypt in its aim to facilitate learning and dialogue around explicitly theological and doctrinal topics. The conference addressed several important subjects, including the place of women in Christianity and Islam; perspectives on war and violence in scripture; the challenge of social integration in the Middle East and Europe; and looked at stories of Joseph and Abraham in the Qur'an and in the Bible.



On Saturday, September 28, 2024 the Centre in collaboration with the Dialogue Company and Al-Azhar University, co-organized a workshop to mark World Peace Day which falls annually on September 21. The workshop was designed to train young Christian and Muslim adults on the principles of dialogue and peace-building.

CCMUP continues to engage with critical global discussions on migration, religion, and cultural heritage, reinforcing its mission to advance peace and solidarity across different cultures and faiths. A brief but highly recommended video about its work can be accessed at: https://t.ly/b_NqO

Province of Alexandria

Former Head Teacher heads for Algiers

As long as visas are issued, the next Chaplain at Holy Trinity Algiers will be a former headmaster from Manchester UK.

The Rev Craig Watson and his wife Elaine, herself a former maths teacher, hope to be heading for Algiers within the next few months; and although Craig “hates flying” they’re both excited about the prospect of this new adventure. Adventures are not exactly new to either of them. Back in the eighties they taught in Oman and worked as Anglicans with the then Protestant Church of Oman. In 2021, following distinguished teaching careers that saw Craig as Acting Head, Head and Principal Improvement Adviser at schools in the Bolton area, early retirement beckoned. On Elaine’s initiative, they went to work in Nepal, at the Kathmandu International Study Centre, a training project to help improve educational standards; and with the Kathmandu International Christian Congregation (KICC), where Craig ministered.

Craig uses the Intercontinental Church Society (ICS) daily prayer calendar and had noticed that Algiers featured for a long time as a vacant church and felt called there. He has experience of living and relating with other faiths. Originally ordained in Bradford Diocese and working as a Self-Supporting Minister in the diocese of Manchester alongside his work and partnerships with Church schools, gave him ample opportunity to build interfaith relationships. He speaks French “reasonably well” (his own self-deprecating description) and hopes to improve; and he has been used, from his time in Nepal, to relating with the Embassies of English-speaking nations. He has met with members of the Church Council but looks forward to seeing how the church there works.

His favourite mode, he says, is listening, and encouraging others to be a listening community; or as

he puts it: “listening to God together and seeing what pops out.” He loves building community; a task in which Elaine plays a vital part. She says that although she has been a career teacher she is not an “up front” person but relishes getting alongside people. They both believe that when ex-pats have no extended family to hand, the church community has a special role. Elaine says she wants their home to feel like an extended family home. Speaking to them, it’s easy to see that they exude a sense of friendly welcome. Their own (two) daughters are looking forward to visiting.

Craig is well aware of the sensitivities involved in working in countries where Christianity is a tiny minority,

but also aware of the importance that the church has for Anglophone ex-pats from many places. His vision of church employs one of his favourite words – breadth. He loves the breadth of the Anglican Church itself, and also the breadth of other Christian denominations in what will be an international church. Finally, he

looks forward to living in an international community that involves another element of breadth. His educational experience will certainly be useful in the diocese as Bishop Anthony pursues his vision of a church that encourages educational opportunities.

Won’t that hatred of flying be a problem? No, says Craig, “That’s just an example of God’s sense of humour!”





Jerusalem

St. George's Cathedral Organ Happy 40th Birthday!

Our editor writes:

It was Easter Monday, 23rd April (also St. George's Day), 1984 when the internationally-renowned organist Peter Hurford from St. Albans Abbey gave the opening recital on the new organ in St. George's Cathedral, Jerusalem. I was living in the city at the time and remember clearly this exciting and fitting climax to a long and challenging saga.

The then dean of the cathedral, the Very Rev David Elliott, and his staff had decided that the old Bevington organ (south of the High Altar) needed replacing. It was really struggling to survive and David was a keen musician. He had designed a marketing brochure and had been raising money for a new organ for some time. After several years he was nearing the required amount: £100,000. The chosen builder was Rieger of Austria – a specialist in designing organs for use in challenging climates. Peter Hurford had been advising from the beginning; Lionel Dakers of the RSCM was also supportive.

Some people thought the new instrument would be way too big as it was to fill nearly the entire west end of the cathedral, providing a grand new entrance into the building. Others, perhaps more musical, were more than satisfied with the proposed plans!

For everyone, there was much excitement and anticipation as news broke that the Rieger had arrived by boat in the docks at Ashdod on the coast of Israel. Sealed in a forty-foot container, the organ had been built and then dismantled and packed in Schwarzach, Austria ready to be unpacked and reassembled when it arrived in Jerusalem.

But there was one major problem: the Israeli authorities wouldn't release the organ from the docks until a 100% tax payment had been agreed! As a result, the delivery to Jerusalem was delayed for months and only after much negotiation, further money-raising and partial payment of tax, was the mighty monster released and delivered to St George's. Finally, it was assembled in the cathedral and Peter Hurford did the Easter Monday recital. Inevitably, settling the tax bill took an age!

Writing in the Summer, 1984 edition of *Bible Lands*, Brother Gilbert Sinden, course director at St. George's College at the time, gives some interesting detail. The organ case, he says, 'is made of solid French oak which had been smoked in salamonica fumes which darken it somewhat, before its final treatment with pure beeswax'. He adds, 'The organ encompasses thirty one speaking stops and forty four ranks of

pipes on two manuals and pedals'.



The spectacular Rieger organ in St. George's has certainly enhanced worship over the past forty years and has put the cathedral on the 'organ map' of Jerusalem and the Middle East. It is an instrument much loved by locals and visitors alike and many a recital has been given on it since Hurford's.

Bible Lands wishes this 'King of Instruments' a Happy Fortieth Birthday – and many more to come!

Today, Ina Dudakova is organist at the cathedral. She can often be heard giving a rousing rendition of Widor's *Toccata* after services!

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

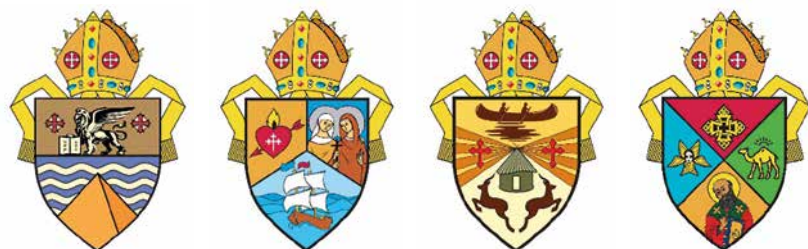
- 2nd The Archbishop and Dean of St George's Cathedral, the Most Rev Dr Hosam Naoum and his wife Raffa and family. For wisdom as he leads the church in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The administrative staff.
- 3rd The clergy serving the parishes and institutions in Israel, Palestine, 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 new 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 Very Rev Jeremy Crocker and his wife Beth. The Dean of St, Christopher's Cathedral Bahrain the very Rev Dr Richard Ferner and his wife.
- 17th The Archdeacon in the Gulf, the Ven Dr Michael Mbona and his wife Christine.
- 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.

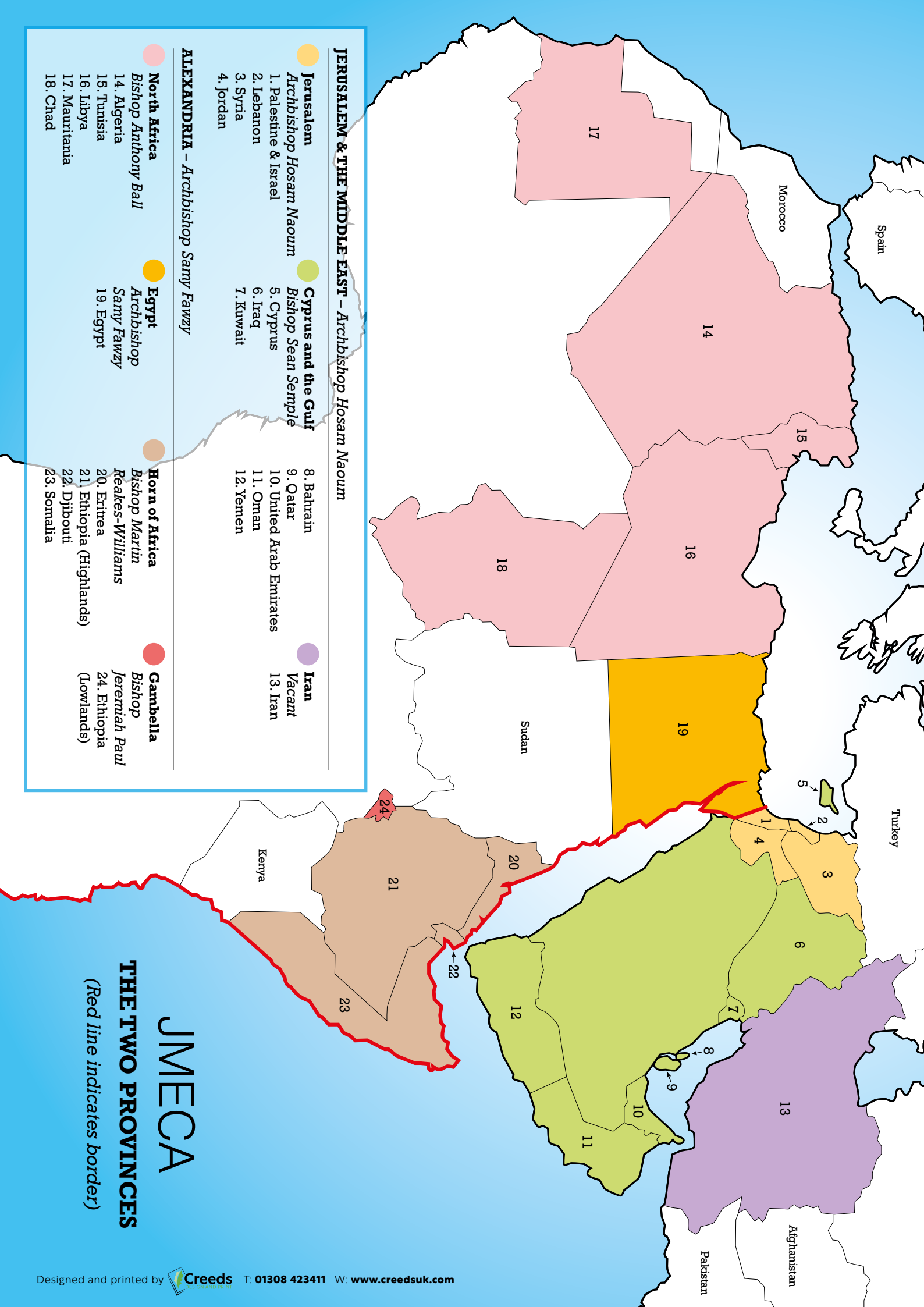
*Almighty and everlasting God, creator and giver of all good gifts, mercifully hear our prayers
and grant to this diocese all things needful for its welfare.*

PROVINCE OF ALEXANDRIA

- 23rd The Province of Alexandria. The Archbishop of the Province, the Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.*

- 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

Iran

Vacant

8. Bahrain
9. Qatar
10. United Arab Emirates
11. Oman
12. Yemen

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)