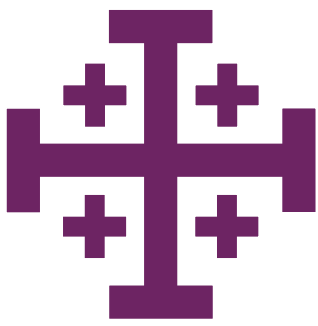


Bible Lands

Winter 2025

Magazine of the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association

www.jmeca.org.uk



Archbishops on peace and justice	4-6
St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai	12-13
The Tent Chapel.....	14-15
Bishop where St. Augustine trod	17-18
Reviews.....	19-21



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

Patron

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable
The Archbishop of Canterbury

Chair

The Reverend Canon David Longe

Administration

Operations Manager: Ms Gabrielle Higgins
Administrative Assistant: Sarah Branch
1 Hart House, The Hart, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7HJ.
secretary@jmecca.org.uk
Tel 01252 726994

Trustees

The Reverend Canon David Longe (Chair)
Canon Dr Clare Amos
The Right Reverend Anthony Ball
Mr John Clark
The Reverend Catherine Dawkins (Hon Treasurer)
The Reverend Dr Alastair Kirk
The Reverend Dr Catriona Laing
Dr James Roberts
Mr David Wright OBE

Consultants

Mrs Carol Hawkey
The Venerable Dr John Holdsworth
Mr Joel Kelling
The Reverend Dr Stephen Need
Mr John Pringle

JMECA Website www.jmecca.org.uk

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.

Bible Lands Editor

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

The next issue will be published in April for Summer 2026.

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

Front cover photo: Icon of John the Baptist.

THE CENTRAL SYNODS OF THE TWO PROVINCES

Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

President Bishop: The Most Rev Hosam Naoum
Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem, PO Box 19122,
65, Nablus Road, Jerusalem 91191
Tel: +972 2 6272932 Website: www.j-diocese.org
Email: bishop@j-diocese.org

Secretary: Rev Fuad Dagher
Email: stpaulch@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Ghassan Isaac
Email: ghassan.isaac@j-diocese.org

Diocese of Jerusalem

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

Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

The Rt Rev Sean Semple
Diocesan Office, PO Box 22075, 1517 Nicosia
Tel: +35722671220 Website: www.cypgulf.org

Diocese of Iran

Vacant. Contact President Bishop.

Province of Alexandria

Archbishop: The Most Rev Dr Samy Fawzy
All Saints' Cathedral, 5 Michel Lutfalla Street,
Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +20 2 2738 0821
info@dioceseofegypt.org
Website: www.dioceseofegypt.org
Email: bishopoffice@dioceseofegypt.org

Secretary: The Ven Dr Imad Basilius
imadbasilius@gmail.com

Treasurer: Dr Maged Botros
Email: dr_maged@aucegypt.edu

Diocese of Egypt

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

Diocese of North Africa

The Rt Rev Dr Ashley Null
Email: bishop@diocesenorthafrica.org

Diocese of the Horn of Africa

The Rt Rev Martin Reakes-Williams
Email: bishopofthehorn@gmail.com

Diocese of Gambella

The Rt Rev Jeremiah Paul
Email: christmission24@gmail.com

Dear readers...

During the upcoming Advent and Christmas seasons we continue to hold in our prayers all the peoples of the Middle East. The tragic and horrific circumstances that have emerged over the last two years in particular have affected us all and we hope and pray that peaceful solutions to the problems will soon be found.

In this edition of *Bible Lands*, readers will be interested to find in the early pages the Archbishop of York's statement on the situation in Gaza and Israel, followed by the Address of the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem to the General Synod in York last June. Both point a way forward along paths of peace and justice. It is a joy to see youth work continuing in Jerusalem in spite of the difficult circumstances.

During the last few months at JMECA, there have been several changes of personnel. Following Bishop Anthony Ball's appointment as Director of the Anglican Centre and Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See, in Rome, we welcome the Rev Canon David Longe as the new Chair of JMECA. We also welcome Gabrielle Higgins on board as our new Operations Manager.

The new archdeacon in the Gulf, Rev Mark Derry, is also welcomed, and we say goodbye with much gratitude to the Very Rev Richard Fermer as he leaves St. Christopher's Cathedral in Bahrain. The fascinating story of the 'Tent Chapel' near Ayia Napa is told, capturing much of the sadness of Cyprus in the early 1970s, whilst an important event at Christ Church, Jebel Ali reminds us of the importance of water for everyone.

St. Catherine's Monastery hit the international news earlier this year and the centre pages here introduce readers to the importance of that monastery and its many treasures. Bishop Ashley Null is now bishop of North Africa and an article here tells of his consecration and interesting ministry in the place where St. Augustine of Hippo once trod. In the Reviews section, three books are dissected, including one on the Transfiguration by Andrew Mayes, and another on pilgrimage in Jerusalem by Rodney Aist. (Mayes was on the staff at St. George's College, Jerusalem and Aist is now.) Also reviewed is the already-well-known *Being Christian after the Desolation of Gaza*. This book is surely obligatory reading for all those who try to be Christian in the face of what has happened recently.

It was announced in early October that the Bishop of London, the Rt Rev and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally, has been elected Archbishop of Canterbury. We keep her in our prayers as she prepares to take on this challenging role in the new year.

Wherever you are and wherever this magazine finds you, we wish you well from *Bible Lands* and JMECA – for this season and for the coming year.

Editor

'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 2026.

Using the 'Praying Around the Provinces' pages, along with the map at the back of *Bible Lands*, please remember in your prayers all those who live and work in our provinces in these difficult and challenging times.

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.



“A grave sin”

The Archbishop of York on Gaza

In July the Archbishop of York issued a statement on the situation in Gaza, reflecting on recent fast-moving events, including Archbishop Hosam Naoum’s address to the General Synod and the letter signed by 28 governments including the UK, demanding an end to the conflict. He describes the war as “a grave sin”. The statement follows in full.

With each passing day in Gaza, the violence, starvation and dehumanisation being inflicted on the civilian population by the Government of Israel becomes more depraved and unconscionable. In the name of God, I cry out against this barbaric assault on human life and dignity. It is a stain on the conscience of the international community, and a flagrant breach of international humanitarian law.

The statement this week by the UK and 27 other states condemning the denial of aid, and the inhumane killing of civilians at aid posts, is an important – if long overdue – sign of growing international resolve to end this war. But while the group stated their preparedness to take further action, there is no time to wait. Action must be taken now to stop this ongoing assault on Gaza, end settlement-building and settler violence in the West Bank, and secure negotiation for a lasting and just peace.

My prayers remain with the steadfast and suffering Christian community in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and most particularly in Gaza after the recent deadly attack on the Roman Catholic Holy Family Church. I stand in pastoral solidarity with the Latin and Greek Patriarchs of Jerusalem, and give thanks for their recent visit to Gaza. There are no excuses for

the bombing of places of worship where desperate people are taking shelter, or hospitals where the sick and injured are being cared for. I echo the words of Pope Leo XIV and say clearly that this barbarism must stop.

With my sister and brother bishops in the Church of England, I have condemned many times the horrific Hamas attacks on 7 October, and I continue to call for the release of those still cruelly held hostage. We deplore every assault on the innocent. But as we said in May this year, this war is now one of aggression – it is a grave sin and it must stop.

Last week the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Rev Hosam Naoum, spoke powerfully at the Church of England General Synod in York. I support Archbishop Hosam in calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, for the release of all hostages and captives and for the rebuilding of Gaza. I support him in rejecting any policy that would amount to the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population from Gaza. And in the name of Jesus Christ, I encourage dioceses and parishes to continue praying for our Palestinian Anglican sisters and brothers and all other Christian communities – and for security, freedom and dignity for Palestinians, Israelis and all the peoples of the region.

*Stephen Cottrell
Photo: diocese of York*

Address to the General Synod of the Church of England* York, July 15th 2025

The Most Rev Hosam Naoum Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem

Good morning, General Synod. Good morning. I bring you greetings, sisters and brothers in Christ, from the diocese of Jerusalem, from our clergy, our laity, our heads of institutions, and our people throughout the diocese of Jerusalem.

Dear Archbishop Stephen, members of Synod, bishops, clergy, laity, I'm really honoured to be with you today and to be present here in this wonderful space where God's word has been discussed and the issues of the church have been deliberated. I'm honoured to address the General Synod here in York, and it's becoming like home for me, knowing so many friends, not only in York, but also throughout the Church of England. So, thank you very much for embracing me yet again and for our being together at this time.

On behalf of my diocese, I want to say how grateful I am for every single prayer and message that we have been receiving throughout the last few months. It has been not only of enormous support and encouragement, but a true witness of God's love among ourselves as the body of Christ. So, thank you very much for everything that you have been doing.

You know that many bishops have visited Jerusalem during these difficult times, including Archbishop Justin and Bishops Christopher Chessun (Southwark), Guli Francis Dehqani (Chelmsford) and Rachel Treweek (Gloucester), and many other clergy and people who visited at these difficult times to be with us. I'm grateful for the House of Bishops' statements that have been really talking and taking our story as Christians in the Middle East and especially in Jerusalem very seriously.

And I would especially like to thank the four bishops for their reports and statements about the settlers' violence in Taybeh (West Bank). It has been very very painful for us to see our own people attacked by settlers and extremists.

On behalf of our people, our clergy and institutions throughout our diocese, and especially for those who don't know the diocese of Jerusalem, that the diocese extends into five countries: Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, with:

- 35 institutions,
- 28 congregations,
- Hospitals,
- Clinics,
- Schools,
- Rehabilitation centres,
- Guest houses.

These are our arms of ministry in which we show faith in God through action and through ministry of reaching out to those who are disadvantaged and those who are sick. Healing the sick, teaching reconciliation with peace and justice, welcoming pilgrims, and offering hope, is at the heart of our ministry in the diocese of Jerusalem, even during difficult times and devastations.

Thank you especially for prayers and support for Ahli Hospital in Gaza, the only Christian hospital that was established in the late 19th century, attacked six times during this war, especially in the second week, recently having its emergency department bombed (on Palm Sunday). I am sure many people witnessed that day which was devastating for many of us in the diocese.

We greatly appreciate the House of Bishops' statement on April 14th, expressing their grief, sorrow and outrage over the Palm Sunday attack. Despite these incredible hardships, which have also included unjust detention of some of our staff and destruction of their homes, and recently also two days ago, one of our main surgeons in the hospital was killed on his way home from the hospital. The hospital has shown remarkable resilience as we continue to be committed to the healing ministry within Gaza. However, we all must come to a conclusion where hospitals continue to be bombed and we should stand against that. Medical supplies are in short supply. The food distribution system is horrifying. With three sites open one hour a day for two million people, it looks for me like hunger games. More than 500 have been killed by IDF soldiers as Ha'aretz newspaper reported last month.

Advocacy is urgently needed for Israel's adherence to the Geneva Convention. Its current practices are unacceptable.

- No bombing of hospitals.
- Lifting of the siege.
- Restoration of humanitarian supplies including food and medicine under UN supervision.
- No targeting of civilians, especially emergency workers and medical staff.

Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

- Release of all hostages and captives.
- Permanent ceasefire needed for the rebuilding of Gaza.
- No ethnic cleansing that is presently being discussed by Israeli and US government.

Until all of this is achieved and established, every other part of our lives and our ministries are covered and shrouded with death. But we are resisting the ministering of multiple life-threatening situations simultaneously including recent Settler violence in the West Bank, including the Christian village of Taybeh, where heads of Churches and diplomats held a press conference in the place of the recent attack – including a statement from King Abdullah II, which was read by Patriarch Theophilus of Jerusalem yesterday morning. Vandalism of Christian holy places and attacks on Christian clergy is on the increase in Jerusalem by fringe extremist Jewish Settler groups. Tax and property issues with the Israeli authorities and the municipality in Jerusalem continue to be a struggle.

The major question that Christians in the Holy Land are struggling to address is what it means to be a church in a time of war. We are battered and bruised, but we are not defeated or crushed. In the midst of ethnic cleansing, threats of deportation, violence, war on every side, economic pressure, the absence of pilgrims, the daily devastation on every side, the Church has to reflect on what makes a Church and how to get at the heart of the gospel. How do we act as a church and how do we proclaim God's holy message?

As a church, we are committed to peace building and reconciliation, and I have said that time and time again. We are committed to reconciliation. These are alien terms that people across the divide refuse to talk. Unfortunately, both Palestinians and Israelis refuse to listen. Yet we are deeply committed to the Lord's teaching and message of peace and love.

In the last few months, we in the diocese of Jerusalem have been reflecting upon two important themes

- The ministry of presence.
- Resilience.

As a Church, we ought to be present among the people in order to provide support, sustenance and healing. This leads to resilience. In time of war, the Church must encourage people to be resilient and tenacious. The Church is to be the source of hope for people itself, especially in hopeless situations. I realize that as a Church, we live and embody the gospel and we are not politicians. However, we need to speak out

in the face of injustice and be prophetic for the sake of our people and our calling as Christians.

But where a church is wounded and constrained, we need the wider body of Christ to help us to be the Church in brutal and damaging times. Are we not only truly the Church of Christ when we are a Church united in Christ's mission? Yes, we are. I would like to leave with you some concerns of the Church in the Holy Land. We will find these helpful and encouraging as we walk together with Churches around the world, our partners in mission and the gospel.

1. The end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.
2. Two-state solution is the only way for a sustainable and durable peace.
3. To reach this end, we all must work diligently for the recognition of a Palestinian state.
4. Protecting the character of Jerusalem and the conviviality between the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and freedom of worship is truly essential.

In these ways, we are advancing the mission of Christ as set out in his inaugural sermon in Nazareth, my home place (Luke 4). To proclaim the good news to the poor, liberty to the captives and recovery of the sight of the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. Through our shared ministry and partnership, I pray that we together by the grace of God's spirit fulfil Isaiah's prophecy as members of the body of Christ in our day.

Our ministry in Jerusalem and beyond is a blessing, really a blessing. We highlight challenges but the opportunities are also great and God's presence, even in the time of war, is also and always a blessing. May God bless our partnership. May God bless the Church of England and all those who minister in God's world and may God bless us all. Amen. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you very much.

**Transcribed and edited for publication*

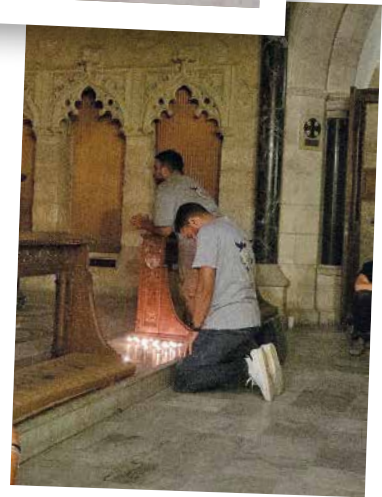




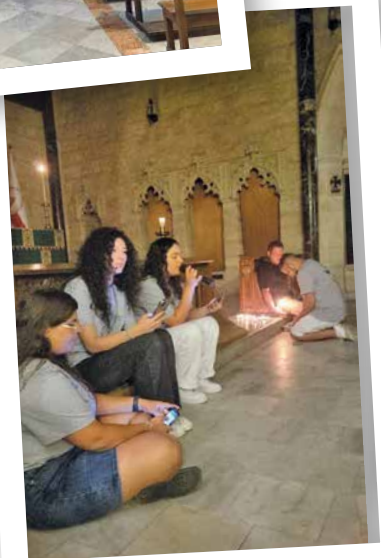
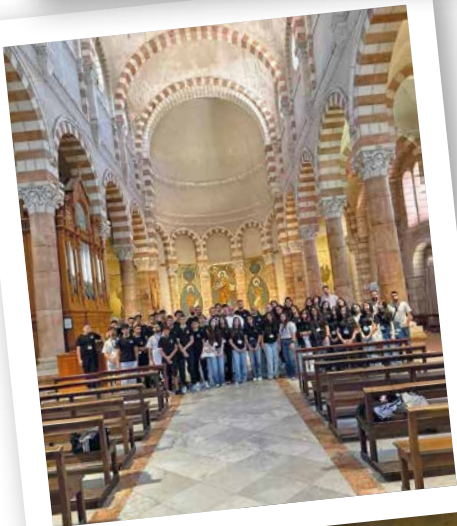
Diocese of Jerusalem summer activities...

'We plan in the Spirit...we are enlightened by hope'

The Youth Department of the diocese continues to organise summer conferences with the support of Archbishop Hosam Naoum, the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, and St. George's Cathedral staff and congregation.



During August this year, the archbishop, accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Rafa Naoum, visited the summer conferences for the primary, middle and secondary sections at St. George's School, where he led Bible lessons, joined in enthusiastic singing, celebrated Holy Communion services at St. George's Cathedral, and gave words of encouragement to youth of different ages, urging them to use their talents in the service of the Church now and in the future.



Gabrielle Higgins – JMECA’s new England International

JMECA is pleased to announce that it has landed a premier league standard appointment for its new Operations Manager. And that is true in more senses than one. Gabrielle Higgins is in the England squad for her chosen sport.

Gabrielle has plenty of evidence for her observation that when she looked at the job description, “it looked like it could have been written for me”. A twelve-year career as a barrister, specialising in property law, was succeeded by almost nine years as the diocesan Secretary at the diocese of Chichester in England. That role nowadays demands a thorough understanding of the requirements of Companies House and the Charity Commission, as well as the responsibilities of safeguarding – all of which expertise will be put to good use at JMECA.

She is an able communicator. Her barrister courtroom skills have not deserted her either. A charming and friendly manner left me with the feeling that at the end of our interview for this article, she probably knew more about me than I about her!

She has been a high-flyer from the outset, studying classics and gaining a first in both Mods and Greats at Oxford (those who know, know) with the University Comparative Philology prize in each. She says that her career in the law was “random” rather than vocational. She enjoyed the “detective” work of piecing a case together but was less impressed with the adversarial context of the courtroom. She found it “very cost orientated”. With a striking turn of phrase, she described the process as, “shuffling money between rich people and syphoning some of

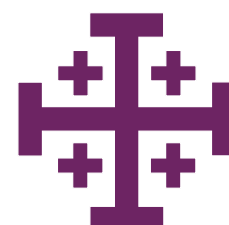
it off as it went past.”

The move to Chichester came as the result of a decision that the time had come to do something socially useful, and particularly something useful for the Church. Brought up in a clerical family (her father was Dean of Ely) she was familiar with Anglican ways but was given the space to develop faith at her own pace, experiencing both ‘high’ and ‘evangelical’ expressions of Anglicanism during her university years, and there moving from ‘cultural Anglicanism’ to an owned and personal faith as a “Liberal Catholic”. Her work at Chichester came to confirm that this was her vocation.

Her sporting achievements might be said to have begun as cox of the Merton College Men’s Boat Club for four years, during which time she coxed the First VIII to win blades twice and the Second VIII to win blades once. However, her chief love is croquet. As a player she was silver medallist in the Women’s World Singles in 2015 and 2023.

She has represented England in open World Singles Championships six times and won a string of other awards. At management level she was treasurer of the World Croquet Federation for three years and is Secretary of Croquet England. She is a current member of the England squad of fifteen from whom six will be chosen as team members for the next World Team Championships.

Gabrielle is looking forward to learning more about the wider Anglican communion, particularly in the areas served by JMECA. It may be no coincidence that Egypt is one of the world’s top croquet nations! Gabrielle began work with JMECA on May 1st.



Rev David Longe – former Jerusalem chaplain is new Chair

The Rev Canon David Longe, JMECA's new Chair, is a cradle Anglican who has always had a passion for social justice.



Although members of his family showed no surprise at his call to ordained ministry, his path there was not straightforward. Following a degree in divinity from Edinburgh, his first instinct was to work for social justice as a lawyer, specialising in human rights law, and specifically the rights of asylum seekers. He certainly speaks with passion as he recalls some of the cases he was involved in, fighting for people who had been trafficked or whose back story was horrific. In retrospect, although he would certainly have regarded this as Christian-inspired work, he believes that God was not calling him to ordained ministry then. But then he was.

David served a curacy in North Lambeth, which brought him face to face with some of the ugly realities of modern urban life, including gang culture and drug culture. His experience there demonstrated to him that the Church was often a “last chance saloon for the vulnerable.” David gives the impression of someone who has never been shy of involvement in life as it is really lived. He says that his down-to-earth approach stems from growing up on an apple farm in Suffolk. Now he is Rector of several villages in Norfolk, but in between he spent three years as chaplain to Bishop Suheil Dawani, Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem – an experience that has shaped his understanding of the role of the Church and of vocation. He regards his life story as one of ‘God calling me into the journey of the unknown’.

It was while David was collecting funds to finance his time in Jerusalem that he first came across JMECA, to whom he says he is eternally grateful for support. He went to Jerusalem as a CMS partner (another organisation that David endorses enthusiastically), and he and his wife Sara ‘fell in love’ with the place immediately. He had a sense that the gospel was being played out in the diocese in a special way, and he gained an enormous respect for the “living stones” who minister, work and pray there, and whom the diocese supports. Asked what his experience has added to his ministry, he says it has given him a world-wide perspective of Anglicanism and widened his horizons. It has given him a new and contextualised

understanding of scripture. He wants to share that in his current parish ministry.

He has done so by leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and by keeping his congregations in touch with the realities of the situation there to inform their prayers. He says so many in the parishes he serves are shocked and grieved by the horrific events playing out in the Holy Land and in particular in Gaza. He sees his parish as “walking alongside” the peoples of the Holy Land, supporting them through prayer and seeking to learn more about the situation. David keeps himself informed by, among other things, reading *Ha Aretz* and other Jerusalem based English language newspapers daily. The ‘walking alongside’ role is one he sees JMECA also undertaking.

David says he is honoured to have been invited to be Chair. He values the role of JMECA as one who has benefitted from its funds in the past, and as he sees it might develop its role of widening the horizons of more people, by telling the stories of the people in the whole area it serves. He believes JMECA can act as a bridge between separate groups who support different aspects of work or specific parts of the JMECA constituency; and between different understandings of Anglicanism that obtain there. ‘Connectivity is the key,’ he says.

David’s enthusiasm is infectious, and that is an enthusiasm fuelled not only by character and experience but by scripture and prayer. Psalm 91 is a favourite:

He who lives in the shelter of the Most High,
who lodges under the shadow of the Almighty
says of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and fortress,
my God in whom I put my trust.’

As he prays daily for Jerusalem and the Holy Land, he often uses a prayer which is found in St George’s Cathedral.

Pray not for Arab or Jew, for Palestinian or Israeli; but pray rather for ourselves that we might not divide them in our prayers but keep them both together in our hearts.

Sleeves rolled up and with passion and enthusiasm, David looks forward to his role at JMECA.



Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East



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.



New archdeacon in the Gulf

From park bench to pulpit (via the graveyard)

The new Archdeacon in the Gulf, the Rev Mark Derry, had his first sense of a possible call whilst sitting on a park bench in Galway on a gap-year-type trip in his early twenties, taking in Europe, the UK and Ireland. He wasn't quite sure how to progress it at that time and it took another twenty years before he was ordained. So what about the graveyard? Well, having married and produced a family, he felt the children needed a good value system, so off they went to the local church, where he amused the kids in the graveyard of St John's in Port Elizabeth (*Gqeberha*) while Debbie, his wife, attended the service inside.



Mark is a cradle Anglican and was brought up in a church family in what he describes as "Bible town" in the Transkei homeland in South Africa. Its nickname derives from the number of churches there. The very name of his town derives from the name of the Methodist missionary who "founded" it. Mark's father was a church warden and his mother a lay minister. He confesses to feeling that church in those days was boring and his main memories are of long hours

spent on hard pews.

Not surprisingly then, his attendance at church when he became an adult was more sporadic, and after his marriage he was quite content to play with the kids in the graveyard. By the time his family was established he himself was established as a sports journalist, and finally he became the Public Relations Manager for Volkswagen in South Africa with what many would regard as an enviable lifestyle.

At about this time he and Debbie attended an Alpha course organised by their local church, and on the residential Holy Spirit weekend decided the time had come for a full commitment. One practical outcome was that Mark revisited the call to vocation that he had had in Ireland, and following what he calls a journey from the back pews to the front, at the age of 41 he was ordained. His talents were utilised quickly as he became the Bishop's Executive Officer, Vicar General and archdeacon in the diocese of Port Elizabeth where he also became an incumbent.

The move to the Gulf came about as a result of joint reflections on where life was taking them at the time of COVID. They opted for a spiritual adventure and took the vacant post at the Church of the Epiphany in Doha, Qatar. Mark confesses that perhaps the upcoming World Cup Football Finals might also have had something to do with it! It was the right

decision and has proved to be the adventure they sought. Mark describes himself as a “contemplative Evangelical”. He has a post-graduate qualification in Christian Spirituality and has a special interest in both Ignatian and Celtic approaches. He says that he has “always been a prayerful person”. His initial theology degree was the first awarded in the diocese of Port Elizabeth to a student on the Theological Education by Extension programme. He followed that up with a further qualification in Biblical archaeology, working for a while at Tel Hazor near the Sea of Galilee.

His background in multicultural South Africa in an area with three different languages means that he brings experiences to the table that fit well with ministry in the Gulf. Mark tells me that the South African approach to problems is always “Let’s make a plan, let’s find a way to do things”. When he asked Debbie recently what she thought his gifts were, she said that she thought he had a gift for preaching and healing situations. He himself confesses a special interest in restoring people who have had bad experiences of church to wholeness within the church. He says that he loves to see people find their voice in church and has a relaxed view of sharing ministry.

His impression of church life in the Gulf archdeaconry, so far as he has seen it to date is that it is far more

congregational in its outlook than he has been used to. This, he believes, is partly due to the isolation of individual churches from each other, in different countries and many miles apart. It is also a product of the make-up of congregations – there are over fifty nationalities at the Epiphany church for example and that pattern is repeated throughout the region. People come with very different ideas of church, and often want to try to recreate the church of “home” rather than to relearn and explore a version of church that is specific to the multi-cultural communities in the Gulf. His first priority as archdeacon, he says, is to get more of a handle on things and understand the region better. Above all it is to build and nurture trusting relationships. Across the diocese as a whole, he believes, there is a “trust deficit” and tackling that will take all his healing skills.

Both he and Debbie enjoy the world of sport, and relaxation often has a sporting theme. As a South African Mark is of course a rugby devotee, and Debbie is a football connoisseur as a supporter of Leeds Utd. Archdeacons have a (completely undeserved) reputation as ruthless bishops’ fixers. While Mark is keen to stress his healing credentials, potential antagonists should note he does have a black belt in Jiu Jitsu!

The water of life in Jebel Ali

At Christ Church, Jebel Ali we are blessed in so many ways as a parish, *writes parish priest the Rev Jim Young.*

An unexpected gift received this week is just one such blessing. A local real estate company in Dubai is running a charity campaign this summer distributing bottled drinking water.



When church caretaker Jit Bhattarai learned of the campaign, he investigated whether the campaign could make bottles available to the church for distribution free of charge.

And so we received a first delivery of 36 cartons – 864 bottles of water, with at least as much again expected next month, to be distributed to those in need.

In the extreme heat of the summer months, water is the gift of life. These supplies will be shared by church members to those in need, given out freely and generously... all in the name of Jesus.



Give it Out, Live it Out

St Catherine's Monastery in the



At the end of May this year, the world was alarmed to hear of a ruling by the Egyptian government relating to St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. The ruling implied that the monks there might lose possession of

the monastery buildings and grounds and be forced to leave. It was claimed in media reports that the famous monastery might change hands and be turned into a museum. This hallowed institution is situated close to key biblical sites at the foot of Mount Sinai and has been a focus of Christian pilgrimage for fourteen hundred years. It is a UNESCO site and its religious significance is considerable. Situated in Egypt, but part of the Greek Orthodox Church, the status of St. Catherine's has often been the subject of political debate. But the idea that it might close sent shockwaves around the world.

Following the initial panic from the announcement, however, it emerged that the Egyptian ruling about the monastery concerned only some of its extensive property and not the monastery itself. By August, and following meetings of Egyptian and Greek politicians, it became clear that the actual monastery itself was to remain in Greek hands and the monks were staying! Complicating the issue somewhat had been an internal dispute among the monks themselves over the leadership of their community. A recent internal attempt to remove the ninety-one-year-old Abbot, Damianos, and install a new one had led to controversy among the monks. Negotiations and pastoral efforts to heal the situation have been made by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilus III, under whose wider care the monastery falls, even though it is technically *autocephalus* or independent from outside governance. In any case, both internal and external instability have caused a great deal of recent stress to the community.

What, then, is the history and significance of this ancient monastery and why did news of its closure cause so

much outrage? Built in the sixth century by the emperor Justinian I, St. Catherine's stands at the foot of the traditional Mount Sinai. The mountain itself, of course, marks the biblical location of Moses receiving the Law, including the Ten Commandments or Decalogue, from God (Exodus 20.3-17), the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf (Exodus 32), and the Prophet Elijah experiencing the presence of God in the 'still, small voice of calm' rather than in the earthquake, wind or fire (1 Kings 19.12).



Because of this, the mountain lies at the root of Jewish and Christian tradition and faith. It was here at Sinai that the Covenant between God and the ancient Israelites was established and although never a Jewish place of pilgrimage, the mountain became a place of Christian pilgrimage even before the monastery was built. For centuries, ascending by foot or camel, Christian pilgrims have climbed the mountain through the night, worshipping God at its peak across a lunar landscape at sunrise. So tangible is the experience of the divine on Sinai that it is often known as the 'God-trodden Mountain'.

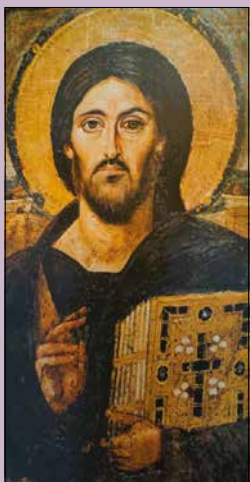
And what of the monastery itself? Little is known about St. Catherine of Alexandria who is said to have lived in the fourth century and been tortured on a wheel (the 'Catherine Wheel') and to whom the monastery is dedicated. The tradition that her body was transported to Sinai by angels stems from the ninth century. Relics of Catherine are held in the monastery church which is, however, dedicated to the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9.2-8; Matthew 17.1-8; Luke 9.28-36). A haunting sixth-century mosaic (recently restored) depicting the transfigured Christ flanked by Moses and Elijah and with three disciples nearby (Peter, James and John) fills the huge apse above the High Altar. The small Chapel of

Sinai Desert. What's going on?

the Burning Bush can be found nearby commemorating the place where Moses turned aside and encountered God in a bush that was on fire but not burnt up (Exodus 3.2). Transfiguration and Burning Bush both tell of the radiance of God shining through creation.



The monastery library contains thousands of important books and manuscripts in numerous languages. St. Catherine's is where the famous *Codex Sinaiticus* (a fourth-century manuscript of the Bible) was discovered by the explorer Constanine Tischendorf in the nineteenth century. Tischendorf 'borrowed' the manuscript from the monastery but it was never returned. His letter of promise can still be seen there today. The codex itself got into the hands of the Russians from whom it was purchased by the British Museum for £100,000 in 1933. Today it resides in the British Library near St. Pancras Station in London. Following a fire at St. Catherine's in 1975, further leaves of *Codex Sinaiticus* were



discovered and are still there. Also on display are documents showing that Mohammad the prophet in the seventh century and Napoleon Bonaparte in the eighteenth century, both protected the monastery.

A further treasure at St. Catherine's is the sixth century 'Christ of Sinai' icon. One of many owned by the monastery, this dates to the time before the so-called 'iconoclasm

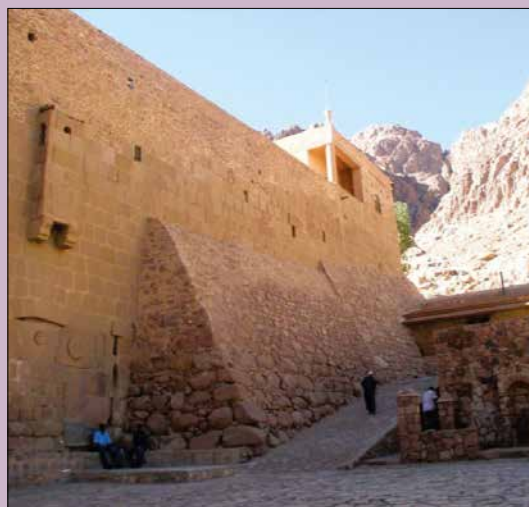
controversy' in the eighth and ninth centuries when some Christians felt that worshipping with icons was idolatrous and so destroyed and burned them. Because St. Catherine's was isolated, some icons survived destruction, including the 'Christ of Sinai' – possibly the monastery's greatest possession.

Finally, there is the Charnel House: a small room in which hundreds of skulls of former monks and abbots are displayed. This often surprises visitors and tourists, but is preserved to remind all who see it of human mortality and the Christian message of the resurrection.

St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai desert is a 'number one' in the world's religious, cultural, and art heritage. With its many rich biblical associations and fascinating historic treasures, it has played an important role down the centuries in Christian faith and pilgrimage. Still today, thousands of pilgrims make their way every year to the Mountain of Moses and the monastery of St. Catherine.

The recent news that this historic place might close was truly shocking to all who know and love it. However, for the time being, it looks as though the monks will stay in their hallowed surroundings and that for the foreseeable future this holy place will remain a house of prayer, contemplation and encounter with the divine.

Stephen Need



Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

The Tent Chapel that tells a story

July 20th is a special day in the Cypriot calendar. In the internationally unrecognised 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' it is marked with huge military parades and is framed as a celebration of how the might of Turkey liberated the Island. But in the Republic south it is marked in a much more sombre way, remembering the huge loss of life and land that occurred in the face of a military operation that began on this day in 1974. In the south it is framed as an opportunist attempt by Turkey, using the excuse of political and civil instability caused by an internal coup some five days earlier, to conquer the island. This led to the separation that still exists between north and south, marked by a so-called green line, patrolled still by UN forces. Anglicans have churches on both sides of the line.



This year, in an attempt to help churchgoers to reflect on these key recent events that have formed modern Cypriot identity, Fr George Vidiakin, parish priest in Ayia Napa, organised a short pilgrimage attended by members of three congregations, to a little known monument with both civil and religious connotations, in the village of Dasaki Achnas, on the edge of the Ayia Napa Municipality: a chapel in the form of a tent.

In 1974, as the Turkish military swept across the Island, terrified villagers from the areas that stood in their path fled with what possessions they could carry. The inhabitants of the village of Achna, close to Larnaca, made for what they hoped would be the security of the British Sovereign base in Dhekelia. They found refuge in the forest area adjacent to the base. Although they were safe, life was difficult there. Living testimony is readily available. Local people speak of how they gave birth there, not knowing whether the fathers of their children, who had gone to fight, were alive or dead. Eventually some 60 thousand to 80 thousand people

made their way there. The deserted village of Achna still exists but photography is forbidden. In the forest, where they lived for months on end, a settlement grew up called Achna Forest in English; literally Achna's little forest in the Greek, Dasaki Achnas, now a most attractive and tranquil place.

The centrepiece of this village, and the focus of the recent pilgrimage, is a chapel in the shape of a tent. Fr George told the pilgrims the story of the chapel. 'The "Tent Memorial to Refugee-hood", also known as the "Chapel of St. Demetrian", was built in 2006 and refers to the stories of the refugees who founded this settlement. Its main message is to remind people of the tents in which those fleeing from their homes



under the pressure of the occupiers lived. It was in such tents in 1974 that refugees pouring out of the occupied areas of Cyprus lived. At the site

of the current "chapel", a priest used to conduct services in a tent church'.

Figures sculpted within the Chapel include a striking feature at the entrance depicting a group of women apparently split in two. Even an icon that one of them is carrying is split. This symbolises the division of the Island.



Another emotive figure is of an elderly woman who may be alive or dead. A mother and child are the subject of a third sculpture. The artist, a local man,



said, 'I have expressed my deepest pain on the faces of these people'.

Speaking at the monument in 2023, the President of Cyprus said, 'It was here that we reached out to one another and through pain and lamentation demonstrated love for our homeland and solidarity with our neighbour, compatriot and refugee'. Fr George comments, 'What the President said is interesting because it expresses the core qualities that characterise Cypriot identity: hospitality, national pride, love for homeland and solidarity with compatriots. These qualities come fully to life at a critical moment when the country is essentially on the brink of collapse. Thanks to them, the nation does not fall apart into pieces but



instead reassembles itself under new circumstances, forging its own identity'.

The visit made an obvious impact on those who took part. Mrs Margaret Charalambides from Nicosia said, 'The sculptures of the people who are presented as cut in half was the most moving. I felt that the one half was of a person longing and hoping to return home, which was no longer possible, and the other half looking forward to an uncertain future which must be a terrible feeling'.

More information about the history of the Chapel can be found at <https://dom.com.cy/en/live/blog/dasaki-akhnas-the-point-of-national-reassembly/>

Photos: George Vidiakin

Dean Richard to Rochester

The Very Reverend Richard Fermer, Dean of St Christopher's Cathedral in Bahrain, and his wife Giseli are to leave the diocese in September 2025, when he will assume the dual roles of Director of the St Benedict's Centre, West Malling and Vicar of All Souls', Crockenhill in the diocese of Rochester in England.

Dean Richard's last Service at St Christopher's was on Sunday 14 September.

"I wish Dean Richard and Giseli every happiness in their new setting", said Bishop Sean, thanking Richard for his work as convenor of the Constitutional Review Committee, and membership of the bishop's Task Force and Gulf Enhanced Episcopal Leadership group. Bishop Sean also thanked Richard and St



Christopher's council for their support in hosting his Consecration and Enthronement Service in 2024.

"The Kingdom of Bahrain has been a very welcoming place for me and Giseli," said Dean Richard, "embodying the vision of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of peoples and faith living in harmony, mutual understanding and respect. I will

always be extremely grateful for having received this hospitality.

"St Christopher's Cathedral is an important partner in that vision, and very much a church of Pentecost, bringing together people of different languages and nations. I have enjoyed serving in such an international congregation."

Bishop Sean joined Dean Richard in sending his prayers and blessing to the people of St Christopher's, called to be "bearers of Christ".



Diocese of Iran

Since the last issue of *Bible Lands*, Iran has suffered losses in the short war with Israel and the USA. Senior military and revolutionary guard commanders were killed along with nuclear scientists. Iranian air defences were destroyed and power plants and nuclear installations attacked. The war led to serious shortages of petrol which was rationed to twenty litres a day and lengthy unannounced power cuts.

This September widespread UN sanctions against Iran have come back into force for the first time in a decade after last-ditch nuclear talks with western powers failed to produce a breakthrough. Iranian currency has dropped to a record low against the dollar leading to further price increases on food and goods.

No Persian speaking churches are allowed to meet for public worship. The closures that took place during the covid pandemic in 2020 remain in force for all denominations – Episcopal, Presbyterian and Pentecostal. So, members of the Episcopal and other Persian-speaking churches rely on friendship, and personal devotion to uphold their faith.

During the Israeli attacks the part-below-ground basement of the Tehran church building was opened for those resident in the apartments in the church compound to take refuge if they wished. Some took advantage of this.

It is widely known that there are many groups of Christians in Iran who meet in homes. The human rights charity *Article 18* (<https://articleeighteen.com/>) monitors their situation and that of other religious communities. Following the Israeli attacks, they reported that 'There has been a notable increase in arrests and hate speech against Christians since the conflict with Israel. More Christians have been arrested in the month since the ceasefire was announced than in the six months prior, with at least fifty-four documented arrests since 24 June, compared to forty between 1 January and 24 June'.

On 10 July, *Article 18* reported that at least twenty-one Christians had been arrested since the ceasefire, in five different cities – Tehran, Rasht, Orumiyyeh, Kermanshah and Varamin. The number of documented arrests has now more than doubled, while the number of affected cities has nearly quadrupled, with Christians also known to have been targeted in Amol, Lahijan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Garmsar, Hamedan, Miandoab, Isfahan, Karaj, Takestan, Borujerd, Anzali, Neyshabur, and Nowshahr.

Meanwhile, monitoring of news sites linked to the intelligence agencies of the Islamic Republic has shown a significant increase in hate speech against

evangelical Christians during and since the conflict, with many seeking to paint them as co-conspirators with Israel. <https://articleeighteen.com/news/16264/>

The Home Office produces Country Policy and Information Notes to assist Home Office immigration staff assessing asylum claims and Asylum Appeal tribunals in their decisions. In their latest Notes on *Iran: Christians and Christian Converts*, there is the following paragraph on house churches:

House churches vary in size, style and structure. Most are small and informal, and consist of close family and friends gathering on a regular or semi-regular basis to pray, worship, read the Bible and/or watch Christian television programs broadcast via satellite or discs smuggled from abroad (including in Farsi). Other house churches may be larger, and may grow organically as members share their faith with family and friends. While some groups do not have any formal links with other Christian groups, others are part of house church networks within a particular city or area. Some house church leaders are trained in Christian theology (either online, via Christian satellite television or through residential courses completed outside Iran). A growing number of house churches have "Internet pastors", where a foreign-based preacher leads the church and provides instruction remotely via the Internet.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/633318488fa8f51d21dbbf85/IRN_CPIN_Christians_and_Christian_convertts.pdf

Please pray for the Church in Iran

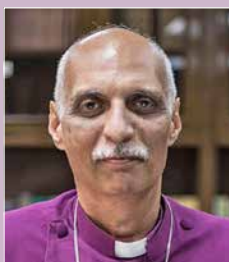
**May the Cross of our Lord
protect those who belong to Jesus
and strengthen your hearts in faith to Christ
in hardship and in ease, in life and in death,
now and forever. Amen**

*(a blessing given by Simon, a bishop in Iran,
at the time of his martyrdom in AD 339)*

**Lord Jesus,
we thank you for all those who
uphold the faith in Iran.
We pray that you will give them courage,
enrich them with the gift of the Holy Spirit,
and strengthen their sense of belonging to
the Universal Church
so that their sense of isolation
may be relieved. Amen**

Province of Alexandria

Province of Alexandria Archbishop Samy Fawzy

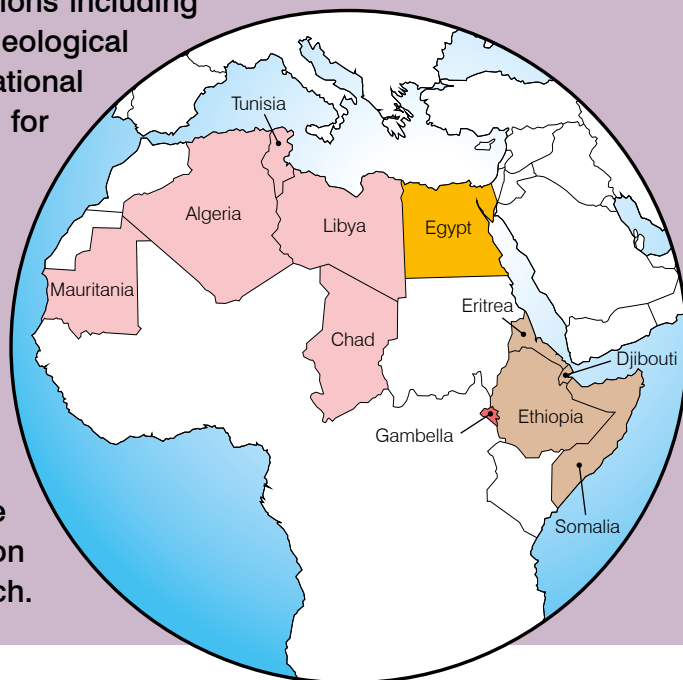


From its beginning in 1839, the diocese of Egypt was committed to serve others as Jesus did. The new Episcopal Anglican province of which the diocese of Egypt is now a part, continues this commitment to serving all people holistically regardless of their religion or social status. Numerically, we continue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



Bishop where St Augustine once trod...

John Holdsworth meets the new Bishop of North Africa



He reminded me of someone – the bishop who had accepted me for ordination all those years ago. They were similar in build. Both were evangelicals with a determined academic rigour. Both were charmingly disarming but with a suspicion that within their velvet glove there might just be a fist of steel.

Bishop Ashley Null is a new bishop, and I am seeing him the day after his consecration to be Bishop of North Africa in the grounds of St George's Anglican Church in Tunis. I want to talk biography. He wants to talk theology. I give in. It seems he is more John Stott than Nicky Gumbel, with the same enthusiasm and mission zeal, backed up by scholarship.

In Bishop Ashley's case, the scholarship centres on the relationship between the Anglican Church and the

English Reformation. He has renown as an expert on Thomas Cranmer. I muse that if he were to choose a regnal name like the recently elected Pope, it would probably be Thomas. He and the Pope would have little else in common. Bishop Ashley founded the Wittenburg Centre for Reformation Studies, with which he maintains a relationship. Members of its staff accompanied the sixty-odd international guests, who had come at their own cost to be part of his special day (which speaks for itself), on a series of tours to such sites as nearby Carthage, sometime home of St Augustine, and provided two lectures. What could truly be called a three-day event included specially imported artistes who gave a concert and an organ recital.

We learned that North African Christianity has a particular character. Unlike its Egyptian neighbour which produced notable desert ascetics, Carthage valued a concept of church based on community. An ancient grave covering mosaic that we saw in the famous Bardo Museum speaks of Mother Church, an image of gathering and enfolding. It was also characterised by placing the concept of grace at the centre of belief and it is easy to see why the Reformers were drawn to it, and why Augustine with

Province of Alexandria

Province of Alexandria Archbishop Samy Fawzy

his view of the relation of grace to forgiveness, and the importance of recognising sin in humanity should be a popular source for Reformed theology. For Bishop Ashley also, Anglican theology is founded here. He speaks with passion about the ministerial task as “the cure of souls”. He says the truly amazing thing about Christianity is its claim that “God loved us when we were at our worst”.

Indeed, it was this history that drew Bishop Ashley to the role he now occupies. He believes that the North African emphasis on grace and gratitude for forgiveness of sins results in a form of Church whose hue should feature among the coat of many colours that is Anglicanism. He truly believes that he was called here to make the links between North Africa and Western Anglicanism more public. He waxes lyrical about future possible international conferences to develop that theme. He would be proud to be called the Anglican successor to Augustine. No wonder, then, he says that, “everyone tells me how weird I am.” Strangely, I was talking to a visitor from Kansas, his home State in America, before I met him, and I asked how she would describe him. She said, “He’s weird, but in a good way!”

The other word that crops up often in descriptions of the new bishop is “bridge”. One of the (possibly weird in a good way) bridge relationships that he has is with elite athletes. Apparently, some of them are really famous though Bishop Ashley can’t be persuaded to name them on grounds of pastoral confidence, which I suppose is just as well because I’m not good on athlete recognition. However, some are in the public domain. One of them makes extensive reference to Ashley in a profile article published in the Sunday Times Colour Supplement. Another describes his pastoral and counselling skills in an Amazon Prime film. Some athletes, it seems, were present among the international guests at the service in Tunis. You could tell them. They were always first on the bus. Ashley himself speaks movingly about the problems faced by these young people for whom he clearly has a deeply pastoral heart. He is keenly aware of the pain many feel of possible failure. He tries to help them see pain as a bridge rather than a loss. He has produced two Olympic lookalike medals for them, each inscribed with one of two Bible verses: Philippians 1:16 (which he quoted at his consecration and is obviously dear to him) and Ephesians 2:10.

Eventually we get round to biography. He describes

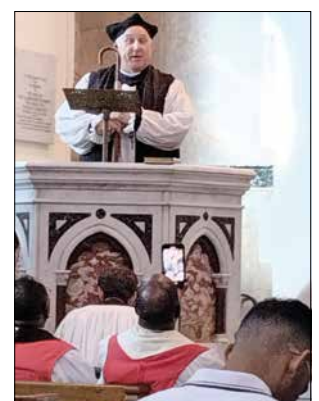
himself as a kid from Kansas. All I know about Kansas is what I’ve picked up from *The Wizard of Oz*, but it seems that he grew up in the kind of place that helped him to have a special regard for the marginalised and disregarded whose voices are not heard. His call to ministry was not greeted well by his parents who were comparatively prosperous and wanted the same for him by training for a more lucrative profession, but his grandfather supported him, and it seems to have worked out well. Following a degree from the Yale Divinity School, he was an assistant at Grace Church in New York, apparently the spiritual home of the really rich.

That was followed by a second Yale degree and a spell as Rector of St Andrews, Liberal, Kansas. (It would be cheap to make a comment about L/liberal here, so I won’t). Then he got a Fulbright Scholarship to Cambridge, UK and spent time as Chaplain at Fettes School and Goodenough College in London whose students included future African Presidents and some of the musicians who came to Tunis. Then he moved to Germany and earned a second Cambridge degree, Bachelor of Divinity which he describes as being in Cambridge, “a post-PhD, PhD in theology.”

As he begins his new role, he sees its great potential. In Chad the Church is growing exponentially, for example, and other jurisdictions may well form partnerships based on the Church’s provision of social services and infrastructure. He muses in detail about future

possibilities and after I’ve written it all down he says, but of course you can’t print that yet. He sees his initial task as one of visiting, seeing for himself, listening and assessing, and paying special attention to the marginalised.

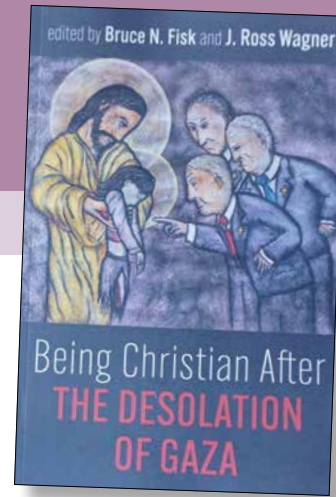
I was left with the impression of someone who is far kinder than the pictures of him on the internet would suggest, and far more fun. He is passionate with infectious enthusiasm for mission potential, and to the point of tears with pastoral concern. Aware of his giftings and calling but self-effacing, he says, “the ultimate act of humility is God putting his name on his followers”.



Being Christian after the Desolation of Gaza

Bruce N. Fisk and J. Ross Wagner (Eds)

Wipf and Stock, 2025



Canon Dr Don Binder, Archbishop Hosam's Chaplain in Jerusalem, is one of seventeen contributors to this recently published volume of essays whose challenge is expressed in its title. Many of the contributors are American and the challenge is initially directed towards American Evangelical Christians but the questions raised are certainly not confined to that group. Bruce Fisk, one of the authors, sets out the challenge in an introductory essay in which he describes the need for a moral reckoning: 'We are responding to Gaza's destruction as would-be followers of Jesus...we are united in our desire to see Christians in the West tell a new story' (p.3).

Despite coming from different contexts, the essays demonstrate some common themes. One is a call to move away from the kind of 'moral clarity' that frames the narrative of the present war as good versus evil. Another is to regard it as illegitimate, and a misreading of the Bible, to see the conflict in eschatological terms as somehow part of God's plan to bring about the end of the world. The essays each conclude with pleas to get back to the basics of a Gospel that is based on justice truth and love of neighbour. Christian Zionism and the simple equating of biblical Israel with the current state of Israel are strongly condemned.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is the longest and contains essays about history and principle. Fisk is responsible for the first two essays which set the current war in the historic context from 1948 onwards, together with an account of the immediate response of what he calls Christians from the West; chiefly the Evangelical constituency that influences American decision makers. He notes the Israeli Prime Minister's attempt to frame the conflict using biblical precedent, recalling his remark, 'Remember what Amalek did to you' (p.63). This reference to 1 Samuel 15 effectively labels today's Palestinians as Amalekites, a perpetual enemy against whom genocide is legitimised.

Chapter three is a graphic description of the effects of bombing. The scandal involved for many readers is summed up in the title, Bombing in the Name of the Gospel. They will be further shocked to learn the titles of Israel's AI bomb guiding programmes. One has the benign name Lavender, one is cynically called Where's Daddy? And the third is called The Gospel, which will be regarded by many Christians as blasphemous. Wider questions of Christian pacifism are also explored.

There is a rare opportunity to study the rise of Hamas, in chapter five. The author points to the new charter of 2017 in which, 'Hamas distanced itself from the antisemitic tropes expressed in the original charter and clarified an important distinction between Zionism as a political project and between Jews as a religious group...' (p.127). Those who read this chapter immediately after descriptions of Christian pacifism will doubtless be uneasy with the discussion about violence as a tactic of the oppressed described here, with examples from the ANC and IRA. The aim of the volume is not to provide an easy answer. Also welcome is a chapter from the perspective of Palestinian Israelis, who make up 20% of the population of the state of Israel.

The second section relates the issues to biblical reflection. There is a chapter about lament; one on theologising and detheologising genocide, and one specifically on Christian Zionism. I was particularly interested in the essay entitled, 'October 7 and Armageddon: Misreading Revelation, Justifying Genocide', since clearly this is where much of what the authors severally believe is bad theology derives from.

The third section, subtitled 'taking our stand with the peoples of the land', includes a number of diary pieces from visitors along with testimony from those working for justice in Israel, under a Christian banner, including the Mennonites.

Don Binder's contribution is a well-researched and well-informed challenge to see biblical archaeology in a new way – as a weapon of war. Some archaeology is not neutral. It can set out to find evidence to support political or cultural claims. In a situation where, 'whose land is it?' and 'whose cultural heritage?' are questions at the heart of conflicts, archaeology is a sensitive and contemporary issue. Several examples from both Jewish and Palestinian attempts to prove their land rights are provided.

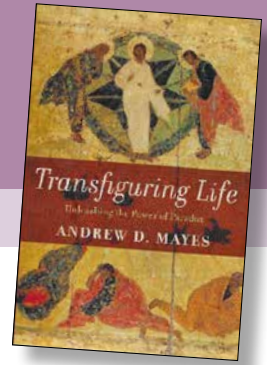
This is no doubt a timely book. It sets out just how varied and incompatible are our interpretations of what it means to be Christian. As in all such collections, readers will make their own choices about priority reading.

John Holdsworth

Transfiguring Life. Unleashing the Power of Paradox

Andrew D. Mayes

Resource Publications, 2025



Andrew Mayes is by now a prolific author in the field of Christian spirituality. He is at his most distinctive best when he draws connections between spiritual themes and particular places, especially in the Holy Land. It comes with the territory of having been a Course Director of St George's College, Jerusalem. Over the last decade Mayes' *Holy Land? Challenging Questions from the Biblical Landscape* has become one of my key 'go to' books to share with pilgrimage groups I am leading to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. In a very special way, it builds connections between physical features of the landscape, caves or seas or deserts for example, asking how they feature in the biblical narrative, and how they may become a resource for our own lives of faith. I recommend it to any who are not already aware of it.

Mayes' most recent book *Transfiguring Life. Unleashing the Power of Paradox* has echoes of that earlier writing. There is the same interest in place – though here of course he focuses specifically on the Mount, or rather Mounts of Transfiguration, and explores what mountains may contribute to our spiritual journey, as we both ascend and descend them.

But it is important to give attention to his sub-title with its reference to 'paradox'. I absolutely agree with Mayes that paradox lies at the heart of Christian faith. When I worked for the World Council of Churches one of my tasks each year was to teach at the interreligious summer school which brought together young Jews, Christians and Muslims. I had to explain in the course of a morning, the 'essence' of Christianity to this multi-faith group (Jewish and Muslim speakers did the same for their traditions). I suggested that 'paradox' was an intrinsic aspect of Christianity. There is an element of paradox in all religions, but perhaps the incarnational nature of our Christian faith means that for us paradox is absolutely central. As Mayes puts it, 'Paradox lies at the heart of Christian belief' (p.5) and as he rightly notes, the transfiguration of Christ is the supreme paradox at the very heart of it.

Each of the chapters of the book explores an aspect of such paradox in relation to the transfiguration: Between Heaven and Earth; Between Humanity and Divinity; Between Control and Risk; Between Revelation and Hiddenness; Between Certainty and Displacement; Between Prayer and Perception; Between Local and Cosmic; Between Memory and Hope; Between Transfiguration and Disfiguration; Between Mystical and Prophetic. They include a wealth of creative and sometimes unexpected explorations drawing

variously on the Bible and on classic and modern Christian sources, some of which are more obvious than others. I particularly cherish Mayes' reference to Teilhard de Chardin.

In the course of these wanderings up and down the mountains of transfiguration, Mayes seeks to demonstrate the importance of the transfiguration for Christian reflection on: ecology and care for the earth; sexuality and identity; healing and wellness; engaging with injustice; living with change; welcoming the displaced; everyday mysticism; and responding courageously and imaginatively to the needs of our world. Each chapter ends with 'Questions' and a 'Prayer Exercise'. I am not quite sure that these will appeal to all readers, but such material is usual in Mayes' other books.

Why do I refer to 'mountains of transfiguration'? That is because this event recorded in the Synoptic Gospels has been in Christian history and tradition located in two different places. I think the location implied by the Gospels is probably Mount Hermon, by far and away the highest mountain in the immediate region. The mention of Caesarea Philippi immediately before the story of the transfiguration would suggest that. However, Christian tradition since at least the third century AD has located the transfiguration at the much gentler and more accessible Mount Tabor in the Jezreel Valley.

Both mountains of course make their appearance in scripture, and in the history and modern realities of the land. Mayes includes pictures of both locations in his book, and seems to hedge his bets. But perhaps that is one final paradox that we should consider. Is the story and message of the transfiguration requiring us to hold together the craggy and frightening grandeur of Hermon, border territory between modern warring nations, and 'miraculously rounded Tabor', distinctive landmark in a valley which is both the bread-basket of modern Israel and location of archetypal biblical wars?

Clare Amos

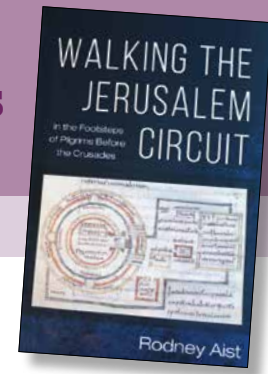


Mount Tabor

Walking the Jerusalem Circuit. In the Footsteps of Pilgrims Before the Crusades

Rodney Aist

Cascade, 2025



This fascinating book by Rodney Aist, the course director at St. George's College, Jerusalem, takes readers in the footsteps of ancient pilgrims who visited Jerusalem in the first millennium after Christ. This is a journey in the footsteps of those who walked in the footsteps of Jesus. Focusing on several churches that are still there – and some that aren't! – the book is designed for practical use along an imaginary pilgrim 'circuit' in and around the Old City. It provides useful information, historical and archaeological background, details about several ancient pilgrims who left behind itineraries and accounts of their experiences, and outlines of prayer and reflection for use at the chosen sites.

Using sixteen stations or locations known to the pilgrims and constructed here into a walking tour of about two and a half miles, the circuit can be done prayerfully over one day or two. Readers familiar with the Stations of the Cross devotion will already know how this procedure is supposed to work. The book is designed for users to carry in hand and refer to while visiting the places, and of course in preparation beforehand and reflection afterwards.

In the first chapter, Aist provides historical context by outlining specific periods in Jerusalem's history. He also recommends the concept of 'commemoration' rather than 'adoration' or 'veneration' as the way to think of what one is doing in traveling the circuit. Drawing on the importance of 'memory' in this sort of activity, the author points out that 'commemoration' is a useful word because it 'lacks the connotation of veneration or worship' (p.xii).

A second chapter provides all manner of practical advice about undertaking the walk. Which days of the week are best, opening hours of churches, admission fees, dress codes, restaurants and cafes, toilets, ID, water, sun screen, appropriate shoes, walking sticks, and pick pockets – are all covered.

Chapter three focuses on the sixteen stations as follows: (1-5) The Holy Sepulchre, including (1) the Tomb of Christ; (2) Golgotha; (3) The Holy Cross; (4) The Centre of the World; and (5) Mary the Egyptian. The circuit then continues with: (6-7) The Church of Holy Sion (no longer existing but remembered near the Cenacle and Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion); (8) The Church of Holy Wisdom (no longer existing but remembered in the area of the Western Wall); (9-10) The Church of St. Anne (The Pool of Bethesda and The Nativity of Mary); (11) The Jephonias Monument (no longer existing but remembered in the

Valley of Jehoshaphat); (12) The Church of Mary's Tomb; (13) The Grotto of Gethsemane; (14) The Church of Gethsemane; (15) The Eleona; and (16) The Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives (no longer existing but remembered at the Mosque of the Ascension).

Each section provides a possible scenario for approaching the site concerned, in prayer, reflection and study. It also provides historical background to the site as well as relevant texts from pre-Crusader, Byzantine pilgrims such as Egeria (381-384), Jerome (fourth century), the pilgrim from Piacenza (570), Sophronius (before 614), Adomnan (680s), Epiphanius (before 692), Willibald (724-726), and Bernard the Monk (870). Relevant gospel texts are also included for reading and meditation. The famous Madaba map, a sixth-century-mosaic map found in the town of Madaba, Jordan in the nineteenth century, is also discussed in orienting readers and finding out what Jerusalem was like in the early centuries. Through this process, contemporary pilgrims become familiar with ancient pilgrims' texts, routes and experiences. It is fascinating to read what some of the ancient pilgrims saw in the churches they visited: e.g., 'Jesus' Crown of Thorns, the column of Jesus' scourging, and the stones of the martyrdom of Stephen' (p.87). The circuit begins at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City and finishes at the place of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives. It has a theological as well as a physical structure.

A little-known tradition, discussed in the book, concerns an early legend that while Mary's body was being carried from Mount Zion where she died through the valley of Jehoshaphat to her tomb in Gethsemane, a Jew called Jephonias interrupted the procession and tried to steal the body. When an angel cut off his hands, they stuck to the bier. But Jephonias repented and his hands were restored to his body. A monument was set up commemorating the incident.

Each station section contains useful questions for consideration and reflection. Black and white pictures relating to the sites enhance the text, and the book provides a useful bibliography of ancient and modern sources.

In all, this rich and imaginative work is an extremely useful resource for pilgrims in Jerusalem – and you can use it at home as well.

Stephen Need

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 Rafa 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.

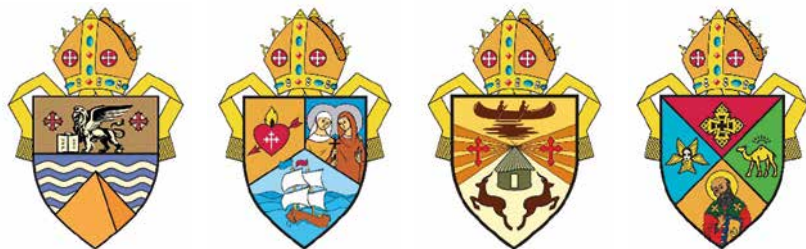
11th The political leadership of the nation. The wellbeing of all people in Iran.

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 Ministry of St Paul's Cathedral Nicosia. The Ministry of St, Christopher's Cathedral Bahrain.
- 17th The Archdeacon in the Gulf, the Rev Mark Derry. 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, Ras al Khaima 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.

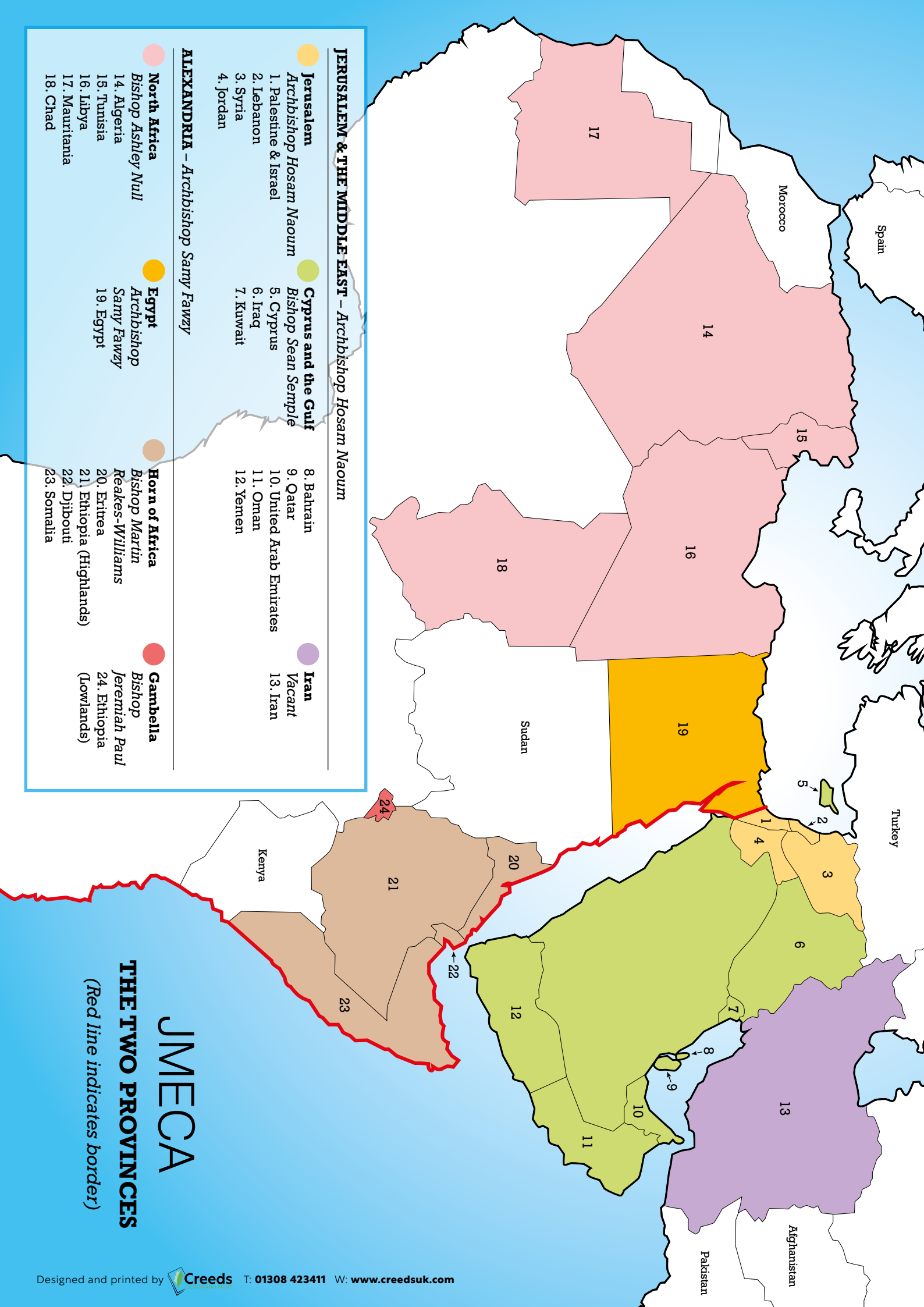
*Almighty and everlasting God, creator and giver of all good gifts, mercifully hear our prayers
and grant to this diocese all things needful for its welfare.*

● 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 Dr Ashley Null, 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.
- 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.
- 28th The Alexandria School of Theology Education System and its campuses throughout the Province. The Chair of the AST Board of Governors, the Rt 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 Rev Canon David Longe. The staff in the office in Farnham: Miss Gabrielle Higgins and Mrs Sarah Branch. 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 Sempke

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 Ashley Nall

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)