



The Diocese of Jerusalem

On 20 January 2021, the Bishop of Southwark, The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, The Most Revd Suheil S Dawani, will sign a covenant between the two Dioceses. We have had close links with the Diocese of Jerusalem for many years and the Bishop and the Dean have led three Diocesan Pilgrimages to the Holy Land.



In 2018, The Revd Canon Richard Sewell, formerly Team Rector of Barnes Team Ministry in the Diocese of Southwark, became the Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem. He remains an Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral which has further strengthened our link.

The Jerusalem Bishopric was first established in 1841; in 1976, a Province known as the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East was constituted which extends across five countries (Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan). The current Bishop of the Diocese is Archbishop of the Region.

The Diocese, which contains 27 parishes with 8,000 members, focuses on four main areas of work: health, education, youth and the empowerment of women. As part of its work, the Diocese runs more than 33 institutions which focus on the poor and needy and provide high-quality services to all people without prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of religion, social class, gender, education or political affiliation. The institutions include 20 schools and vocational training centres, seven health centres and rehabilitation centres, two hospitals, and four guest houses for pilgrims. The Diocese also runs a Women's Empowerment Programme and a Youth Leadership Programme.

The Most Revd Suheil Dawani became the 14th Bishop in Jerusalem in April 2007. His vision for the future of his Diocese is to engage in the ministry of peace and reconciliation by strengthening the Christian presence in the Holy Land. His focus is on working together with overseas partners and collegially in ecumenical inter-faith affairs, as well as encouraging the faithful to join efforts for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

In referring to the importance of Jerusalem, Bishop Suheil emphasises that he sees it as his duty, and that of all Christians, to make Jerusalem a model for peace between the three Abrahamic faiths. He says, “It is our task to give hope to the hopeless. In our daily lives may we be guided by the star of God's love.”

The situation of the people in the Holy Land has been precarious for many years. Unemployment amongst the Christian population and the Palestinians has been high for some while and those who are employed often spend hours reaching their places of work.

The Coronavirus pandemic has made life much harder. In the Holy Land, the situation has been exacerbated because much of the economic activity and employment for people there is related to pilgrimages, and the tourism industry has been decimated by the pandemic. For instance, at Christmas we know that many pilgrims would usually be in Bethlehem

and other parts of the Holy Land, and the shops and street vendors would be able to make a living. In 2020, however, pilgrims and tourists were unable to come and those who rely upon them found themselves without an income and no longer able to feed and clothe their children or meet the needs of their families.

In early March 2020, Bishop Christopher and The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, the Dean of Southwark, led the first Ecumenical Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Bishop Paul Hendricks and Fr Philip Andrews from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark. Nearly 70 people accompanied them around the holy sites and shared the experiences of seeing where Jesus lived and had his ministry. It was a wonderful time and we were so sad to have to leave a little early because of the pandemic. Whilst we were there, however, we also saw the hardship which many were experiencing and now the situation is much worse.



Southwark pilgrims in Jerusalem before the pandemic.



One of the Comboni Missionary Sisters talks about their work with people on the other side of the Wall.

The Diocese has experienced a sharp downfall in income because of the lack of pilgrimages and because outpatient clinics had to close in all medical centres and hospitals. As well as this, the Diocese has been unable to collect school fees during this time.

In the past, the Diocese has helped those unable to provide for their families through its schools, hospitals and other institutions, but with the fall in income brought about by the pandemic it can no longer do this. So, with our help and some resources of its own, the Diocese of Jerusalem hopes to be able to offer \$100 (about £74) to up to 50 vulnerable families so they can feed themselves for about a month. This would enable them to buy basic food such as rice, sugar, beans, tomatoes, lentils, sardines, tuna and cooking oil.

The main aim of this project will be to ensure food security among the families of the parishes of the Diocese; families with no income, families which are large, and families which contain members suffering from chronic illness will be prioritised.

Please pray for the people of the Holy Land and for peace with justice in this holy place. Please also consider whether you are able to show compassion for the people in the parishes of the Diocese of Jerusalem by offering enough money to pay for a month's worth of food for a family, or something towards this, by donating through the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call: southwark.anglican.org/lentcall