

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

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To the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

Ascension Day, 2017

My dear Brothers and Sisters in the Province,

I feel extremely privileged and honoured to have been elected as the President Bishop of the Province and to serve in this role for the next two and a half years. It is my hope in this role I may further understand the needs of the Province and articulate and advocate those needs both within the Anglican Communion, to the wider church and world as we seek to serve Christ in this Province.

I realise that I represent a wonderful and diverse community from Syria to Somalia and from Algeria to Iran. It is a community bound together in the body and through the love of Christ. Christ's presence among us helps us know that we are united through His body so that whatever our cultural differences are, Christ love speaks to and reaches into something deeper and more wonderful: that we are God's people here on earth.

We know that as Anglicans in this region we have much to witness to and much to celebrate. We celebrate our church as a Communion that always strives to work for and live in the Truth as revealed in Scripture, that honours a tradition which has been passed down since the Apostles; and understands that God reveals himself day-by-day in our lives and the lives of those whom we serve. We celebrate the work of the church in our Province: the establishment of schools and hospitals which serve some of the some of the poorest and most marginalised individuals whose suffering is so great. We celebrate because these institutions are a living symbol of the love of Christ for all. We celebrate the work of our parishes, whose prayerful and pastoral presence speak of our Lord's call for each of us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul and with our mind, and to reach out and love our neighbours as ourselves, whoever they may be. I pray that these parishes and institutions may be emboldened to continue courageously in their work as witnesses to the Gospel.

It is my hope that the Province will grow ever closer as a family in Christ. I believe we will grow together as we root ourselves in prayer and fellowship. One way we can do this today is to pray together the collect for Ascension Day:

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend,

and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God,
world without end. Amen.

Through our prayer and fellowship we come together as the body of Christ, strengthening the Christian presence in our communities and bringing the reconciling love of Christ to those we encounter. Through the Church's ministry of reconciliation we reveal Christ to the world. This ministry is especially important in this region where we experience so much tension.

It is my hope and pray that I may be able to travel widely through our Province during my tenure as President Bishop. I look forward to understanding how we witness through our Churches, hearing stories of how God is alive and at work, and learning how we can continue to build up Christ's Kingdom in earth. I hope that those in the Province, who are able to, can visit Jerusalem. I am saddened knowing that for many to visit Jerusalem will be difficult.

Although I will not be able to meet you all, I want you to know that you will be daily in my prayers and in my heart. I ask God that I may have the strength and courage to be your President Bishop.

I request that you do hold me, and all the Diocesan Bishops, in your prayers, so that we may be strengthened in wisdom, courage and faith to lead this Church.

Finally, please pray for Bishop Mouneer both giving thanks for his tireless leadership of the Province and now as he enters a new stage of Ministry. I am looking forward to working with Bishop Mouneer and Bishop Michael and the Vicar General of Iran, the Reverend Dr Albert Walters, as we work together as Brothers in Christ to lead this Province.

Grace and Peace

+ + *Suheil Dawani*

The Most Reverend Suheil Dawani
Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem
President Bishop (Primate) of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East