

# The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

## June 2015 Newsletter



Greetings from Bishop Suheil Dawani

*Dear Friends,*

*Following a month of Graduations and Confirmations we have continued some into this month, but there have been other signs of hope as well as some pain for the Christian community.*

*We were delighted to be able to launch the restoration process of St Saviour's Church in Acre. As you will read, we had many clergy and members of the Community at this event, including those of other faiths. However, within a couple of weeks we were shocked with the news of the vandalism and serious fire at the Church of the Multiplication at Tabgha, which was caused by extremist groups. This is not the first, and we fear not the last, Church to be vandalized in this way and causes not only great sadness for the Christian Community responsible for the Church in Tabgha, but also fear about which Church will be next. We need to ensure that the Status Quo is maintained and that all places of Worship are respected and kept safe. Please pray for respect and protection for all places of worship in the region.*



*You will also be able to read about some important activities in which some of our young people have been taking part with the Peace and Anti-violence workshop in Jordan, the Youth Retreat and Conference in Beit Sahour and more...*

*As we go in to the Summer we pray for rest and relaxation for our Clergy and all those involved in our Institutions, that we may know God's renewal and restoration for the work that He calls us to undertake to bring peace, healing and justice in the region.*

*Salaam, Peace*

+ Suheil Dawani

## Savior's Church in Acre; A New Beginning!

**By The Very Revd Hosam Naoum, Dean of St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, I had the pleasure of accompanying our Archbishop Suheil Dawani to the coastal city of Acre to a special event to launch revival and restoration of the Ministry of St Saviour's Church.



We were welcomed by a large crowd composed of Parish Priests, parishioners and community members. Among the dignitaries were Mr. Hatem Faris, Mr. Hisham Al-Shami and Mrs. Wala Ramal, members of the Municipality of the City and representatives of local churches, including Father Nael Helu and Father Andrew Bahhouth. Also my brothers from the other Episcopal Parishes in the Galilee Rev Bilal Habibi, Rev Fuad Dagher, Rev Hanna Dalleh, Rev Canon Hatem Shehadeh, Rev Imad Daibes, Archdeacon Samuel Barhoum, and Rev Nael Abu Rahmon.

The event started with a welcoming parade of the Akko Christian Forum Scouts Band that led us through part of the city until we reached the Church. Mr. Hatem Fares started his speech of welcome by saying, *"This is a historic visit Your Grace. It has come after many years of waiting.*

*It is good that you are now among us to launch the revival of the church in Acre".*



In his speech, Archbishop Suheil emphasized the importance of the restoration of this church, which has come in response to the desire and call of the people of the city of Acre, to serve others.

*"Humans are the most important creatures we have. God has created them in his own image and we must respect their rights and therefore respect the idea of creating an atmosphere of rapprochement and cooperation, an atmosphere that helps the promotion of peace, security and stability for all the people especially in this City. The message of the monotheistic religions is love, respect, promoting tolerance and living in peace and tranquility. We are one family working together to serve the city in the*

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name of Christ Jesus for the glory of God and the service of humanity". In conclusion, the AB thanked all who contributed to the preparation of the event and those who attended from Acre and beyond.

Several key speakers welcomed Archbishop Suheil and expressed the importance of this visit supporting such an important event and step in Acre. Among the speakers were Father Nael Helu Meronite Parish Priest of Acre, Father Andrew, Rector of the Melkite Catholic Church, Mr. Amin Wasfi Honorary Consul of Russia, and Jenny Tannous, Judge in the Magistrate's Court in Acre; they all confirmed that to launch the restoration and revival of the church service in the Episcopal Church is important both for the churches themselves and also for people of all religions dwelling in Acre.



I was very encouraged by the youth who participated in this event. First at the Acre Christian Forum Scouts Band and later by one of the members, Vaheh Ardakian, who was the youngest speaker at the event. Vaheh gave a speech on behalf of his colleagues and called upon all churches to pay attention to the needs of young people in the city. He said, "we very much look forward to have a meeting place outside the old city and we are very excited".

The restoration of churches and revival of ministry in Episcopal churches of the Holy Land is not new to the Diocese of Jerusalem. In March 2011, the Church of St. Paul in West Jerusalem was re-dedicated to serve the larger community of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Church of St. Peter Jaffa is currently in the process of being restored, to revive its ministry to serve foreign workers and expatriate staff in the Jaffa and Tel-Aviv area.

#### **Brief background History of St Savior Church:**

**Service in Acre started in 1874 by the late Rev Khalil Kavar;**

**In 1901 the church began to provide medical services to the people of the city and surrounding villages, until the Synod of the Church made the decision to start building Savior's Church in 1946 inaugurated and dedicated in September in 1947.**

**The 1948 war began and our parishioners escaped the city due to acts of violence. Despite that the ministry continued, but gradually faded over the years until completely halted in 1979. Today in 2015, we see a new beginning, new horizons and new potential for a dynamic ministry in the city!**





## Reflection on the attack on the Church in Tabgha

**By Archdeacon Samuel Barhoum**  
**Christian Formation Department Director**

On Thursday, 18 June, I woke up to the news of an arson attack on the Church of the Multiplication at Tabgha on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus fed the 5,000 in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish.

This is not the first time an attack on a sacred place has occurred. Since 2011, 49 attacks have happened on holy places, as well as harassment of clergy. These events continue as no one has been brought to justice or even identified. No one has been caught and punished, thus there is no deterrent, so we expect additional attacks in the future, because these incidents are a result of these perpetrators being educated to hate, to reject those who are different from them and to fight them.



I went with Archbishop Suheil, clergy and laity from the Galilee to show solidarity, to show that the stones of the church may be burnt or destroyed, but we, the Living Stones, the indigenous Christians, who have kept and continue to keep the faith since the time of Jesus, will continue to keep our faith; our hearts are churches that cannot be destroyed.



When we got there it was devastating to see everything smoldering; the bibles, hymnals and leaflets given to pilgrims. The smell was horrible. We saw the door to the monastery burnt in an attempt to harm the monks, men of peace whose mission is to minister to people, no matter who they are or where they come from. I also saw the graffiti in Hebrew spray-painted on the wall, "the false idols will be eliminated". It was heartbreaking to see the devastation and it brought to mind the verse in John's gospel; "They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God".

But through all this, we are reminded that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Despite all things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. This gives us hope to persevere no matter what happens. Jesus taught us that we need to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Therefore, we need to pray for those who seek to destroy and burn our places of worship and cause harm to us, just because we are different from them. We need to pray for those who teach hatred and rejection. This brings me to the parable of who is my neighbor, and Jesus' response that my neighbor is "The one who showed mercy"! Consequently, we must follow Christ's example and show mercy to all around us, whether they are people who love us or not. We must accept the other as a brother. If we look at the word 'brother', it has the word 'other' as part of it. The same applies to the word brother in Arabic and Hebrew, is it a coincidence for the three languages to have this?! Thus, the others, those who are different from us, are also our brothers and sisters, as we are all created in the image of God.

In returning to the church that was burnt; this is the church where Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish. He blessed the food, but gave it to His disciples to distribute to the people. He gave them the authority, the leadership to feed the people and respond to their needs, so the question is where are those with authority? Where is the leadership to respond to the people's needs? Where are those with authority to bring the perpetrators to justice? It seems we are waiting for another miracle to happen.

That is why my work as the Director of the newly established Christian Formation Department in the Diocese is so important. Trying to teach the acceptance of the 'other' through raising awareness and dialogue within the Church and with people of other faiths, because when we do not know the 'other', we remain within a circle of fear, suspicion and rejection, but with awareness, we are able to build bridges and break down walls and barriers. As we believe that whatever happens, the power of love will overcome the love of power and hatred.



To learn more about the Christian Formation Program in our Diocese, contact [formation.ministry@hotmail.com](mailto:formation.ministry@hotmail.com)

## Celebrating Ramadan's Iftar at St George's - A time of Celebration and Unity

Each year Archbishop Suheil hosts a special Ramadan Iftar in the Peace Garden at St Georges. This is the sixth consecutive year that dignitaries and representatives of the Muslim and Christian religious leadership have come together, under the patronage of the Episcopal Church, to celebrate this special occasion together.

This year the focus of the evening was best summarized by Mr. Azzam Al Khatib, Director General of Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem, in his speech:

*"We were and we will remain the best and finest model of coexistence, tolerance, love, brotherhood and acceptance of the other; a model that should be followed in other parts of the world".*

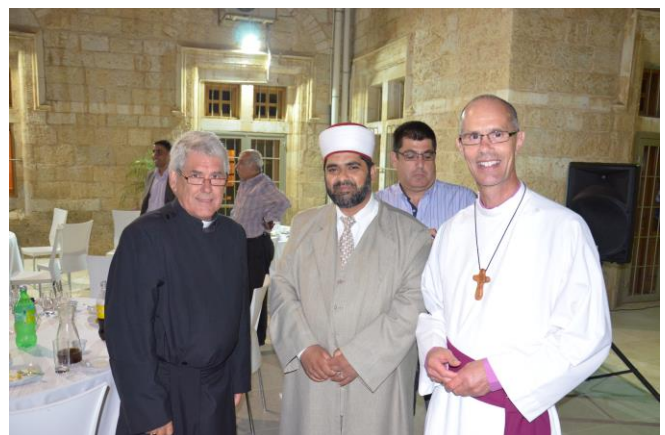
Later, Dr. Jawad Naji, Advisor to the Palestinian Authority and representing the Prime Minister of the PA Dr Rami Hamdallah, conveyed the Prime Minister's message by expressing how much he valued the Christian-Muslim relations and affirmed that Palestine is for the whole Palestinian people, with all its components and constituents.



In his speech, Archbishop Suheil re-iterated the need to unite and work together in a region where turmoil has prevailed: *"More than ever, we need to nurture a culture of enlightenment that is able to confront extremism and sectarianism and divisions of people".*

Among those present were Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem, Mr. Alastair McPhail, British Consul General in Jerusalem, Mr. Walid Obeidat, Jordanian Ambassador, Sheikh Omar Kiswani, Director Al Aqsa Mosque, visiting

Bishops from Australia and UK, Christian and Muslim Religious leaders, representatives political, economic, medical and civil society organizations, visitors from the city of Hebron.



## NEWS FROM OUR INSTITUTIONS...

### An Eagle View of TSS!

#### Theodor Schneller School – Marka, Amman / Jordan

##### Big Sigh! School Year Ends and the summer fun starts

June 9<sup>th</sup> marked the end of school year for all TSS students. After a long week of exams, students of the different streams - vocational (car mechanics, carpentry and blacksmith) as well as the academic, completed their exams!

*"We wish our dear students a safe and fun summer break! By now, all children and teachers are ready for their time off. We will resume school year 2015/16 on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> of August!"* said Dr Khalida Masarweh, School Principal.



#### Schneller School- Peace Haven, Home of Peace Education



Each year, the TSS team conducts a special training for TSS boys and girls, as well as for University young men and women, a special workshop on peace and anti-violence. During June the workshop focused on preparing school students on different topics including principles and culture of dialogue, understanding and accepting the other. These workshops are part of a series of the TSS culture into promoting non-violence at society and school. At the end of the workshop, children received a special certificate in recognition of their hard work and participation.

#### Day of Independence Celebrations: Relaxation, bonding and fun

On the occasion of Jordan Independence Day, TSS held a special Sports Festival Day. More than 160 students and 20 staff members participated in this festival. TSS students and UNRWA School students (Hitteen Refugee Camp) in addition to Syrian and Iraqi refugee students and their families came to join the fun, group competitions and activities.



This effort was organized by the TSS in collaboration with CCPA aiming at fostering stronger and more meaningful interaction among the students with each other and with their families.

*"Our national day of independence is such a special moment, that's why we organize such an event during such timing"* said Bishara Tannous, lead organizer of the event. *"It was so much fun to see everyone engaged, not only our students, but also people from the surrounding community at large enjoying their time".*

***Theodor Schneller School in Amman Jordan is one of the Educational Institutions of the Diocese of Jerusalem, built in 1959 to serve the orphans. This year, the school has graduated 20 tenth grade students from the Vocational Training section from Amman, Zarqa and surrounding areas.***

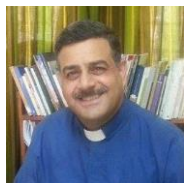
*For more news, connect with us through FB:*

صحيفة مدرسة تيودور شنلر /Schneller School

## From our parishes

### St Philip Church / Nablus

**Rev. Ibrahim Nairouz, Parish Priest  
Nablus**



I am very pleased to send my warmest greetings to all of our dear Newsletter readers from the city of Nablus, or historically known as Neapolis (Greek for the New City)

It is the very biblical place where Philip Preached the Gospel and started the first Church in the City (Book of Acts 8) and later followed by the Apostles Peter and John. They prayed with them and conducted the very first confirmation!

Also not far from here is the historic and spiritual place of the important encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman where the Jacob well stands till this very day!

Our beautiful city is known for many things among which - Its oriental sweets, most prominently Kanafeh, olive oil soap and it is where our dear Archbishop is originally from!

It is the same city where our presence and ministry has continued for more than 160 years which has been running through a kindergarten, a major hospital (St Luke's) and two churches, St Philip in Nablus and Good Shepherd Church - Rafidia (town adjacent to Nablus).

Among the many things that has kept us very busy during this month, I would like to share with you some highlights:

### Off, To the City of Abraham...

As the Diocesan advisor to the work of the Women's committee, I had the pleasure to join Archbishop Suheil and Mrs Shafeeqa Dawani, with women from the Good Shepherd and St Philip Churches, to Hebron City. More than 120 women and Parish Priests from parishes in the Galilee and Palestine attended this exciting event. The core of the visit was around the Russian Orthodox Church (known as the Russian compound or Abraham's Oak Tree). We also visited the tombs of the Patriarchs and finally enjoyed a superb lunch at the Royal Factory in the city. Before departure, we had the opportunity to visit the city's main market!



### 167... a number to remember!



Graduation from the National Christian Kindergarten is a reminder of our abundant blessing to our ministry in Nablus. This educational facility started in the very same year our ministry commenced in the city in 1848.

This year Archbishop Suheil, graduated 20 children of the 167<sup>th</sup> cohort. Joining him were the Director of the kindergarten, members of the Church committee, Kindergarten teachers and parents.

## Youth Retreat and Conference

More than 30 young man and woman gathered from Rafidia and Nablus parishes in Beit Sahour for a special Youth Retreat and Conference. The theme was "Living Christ, with self and among the family".

Each day, we started with a Bible Study and a reflection on the Word of God. Then a reflection was given for the youngster to reflect on and then share within their group. At the end of each of the three days we concluded with fun, entertainment and team building activities.



## The Blessing and Inauguration of St Philip Church by AB Suheil

Following months of hard work towards internal renovation and restoration of the Church, all the work is now complete! St Philip's Church is now re-opened for worship following the blessing and inauguration by Archbishop Suheil.

Proudly, all the renovation funds were donated by the generosity of Parishioners and the local Church Fund.

We welcome visitors and pilgrims coming to our city  
Come and worship with us, walk with us in the footsteps of Philip and the apostles! Come and witness "the Great Joy" as put in Acts 8.

**National Christian Kindergarten is one of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Institutions. It is located in the heart of the old city of Nablus, adjacent to the historical church of St Philip. Today the School has more than 50 students and 6 staff members from Nablus City.**

**The ministry of educating children was the core of the services in Nablus in 1848. The very first cohort of 21 students, which started on 5 September of the same year, was composed of Christians, Muslims, Jews and Samaritans.**

**St Philip's Episcopal Church, built in 1876, and currently serves more than 70 families in the city and neighboring village.**

## Pray with Us:

- + For our region where religious extremism continues to sweep through many of the countries, that the ministry of the Diocese of Jerusalem transmits hope, peace and love at all levels
  - + For Christians of the Middle East, especially those have flee from the ongoing strife, and the 8000 Iraqi Christians who crossed the border in the last few weeks from Mosul into Jordan.  
Pray that our parishes and programs that focus on refugees revive the hope in their lives.
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More stories and information are available at: [www.j-diocese.org](http://www.j-diocese.org) Email enquiries to: [info@j-diocese.org](mailto:info@j-diocese.org)

Donations may be sent to: The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, PO Box 19122, Jerusalem, 91191



The Episcopal 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 church supports 33 institutions, which include hospitals, clinics, kindergartens and schools, vocational training programs, as well as institutions for the deaf, the disabled and the elderly, reaching out to interfaith neighbors in mutual respect and cooperation.