



## NEWSLETTER

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

September 2009

### Bishop Hosts Interfaith Ramadan Celebration

Celebrating the importance of solidarity and good relations between faith communities in the Middle East, Bishop Suheil Dawani hosted Mr. Ali Ayed, the Jordanian Ambassador to Israel and Sheik Azam Khattib, Head of the local Islamic Waqf at an iftar held in their honor at the St. George's Cathedral Guest House in Jerusalem. Each day during the month of the Islamic Ramadan, Muslims abstain from all food, drink and smoking during the day, humbly focusing on purifying body and soul. The evening dinner (iftar) breaks the daily fast for the Muslim community during this holy month.

Bishop Suheil warmly welcomed the Ambassador and the Sheik, among a variety of other local Muslim leaders who were joined by the leadership of the Arab-speaking congregation at the Cathedral of St. George. Both the Ambassador and the Sheik shared their perspectives on the importance of the holy city of Jerusalem and the current political situation.



*Iftar at St. George's guest house*

Sharing in this special occasion were invited diocesan clergy, the headmaster of St. George's School, and men of the local Arabic speaking congregation at the Cathedral of St. George. This relaxed evening was well-received by all involved, given the importance of the Christian minority amidst the Muslim majority in this region. The dinner was an important event of solidarity, demonstrating the critical importance of maintaining good relationships between faith communities as well as emphasizing the cordial relations of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

### ***Bishop Dawani participates in Heads of Churches Meeting***

Bishop Suheil Dawani, accompanied by his Chaplain the Rev'd Canon Robert Edmunds, attended the monthly meeting of the Heads of Churches, hosted by His Beatitude Theophilus III, Greek Patriarch and Bishop of Jerusalem. The Heads of Churches are comprised of the thirteen Christian Churches recognized by the State of Israel which include Greek, Armenian, Syrian, and Ethiopian Orthodox, Latin Catholic (Roman Catholic), Coptic, Latin, Melkite,



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Maronite, Anglican and Lutheran church bodies as well as the Custodians of the Holy Land (Franciscans). This ecumenical body of church leaders meets regularly to discuss and act on issues of common concern for the Christian community in Jerusalem and throughout the region.

### ***Confirmations bring hope at all times of the year***

**ZEBABDEH, WEST BANK** - Sunday, August 23, 2009 Confirmation in Zebabdeh is a village event.

Assembling the scout band and numerous youth from other village churches, the confirmation class of St. Matthew's Church processed through the village to their confirmation service. As the parade wound its way up the hill, past the Catholic Church and many houses, people came out to enjoy the celebration, with some joining the parade after the scouts, confirmands, Bishop Dawani, Archbishop Hiltz, and other clergy, families, and invited guests. With standing room only in the small church, the congregation worshipped, prayed, sang, and witnessed as twelve young people reaffirmed their faith in Christ, choosing to become confirmed members of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Jerusalem.



**SALT, JORDAN** - On Friday September 11, 2009 the Rt. Rev. Bishop Suheil Dawani confirmed twelve new communicants in a joyful celebration of commitment in the Church of the Good Shepherd in Salt, Jordan. The Church and its courtyards were crowded with the members and friends of congregation supporting these young people in their faith journey.



Priests serving with Bishop Dawani are (from left), Archdeacon Luay Haddad, (Bishop Dawani), Father Hanna Mansour, and Brother Andrew de Carpentier, director of the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf.

## ***American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem visits area***

Phoebe Griswold, President of the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, and Anne Lynn, Director of the organization, recently spent a week visiting institutions and partnerships in the Diocese. This in-depth visit was designed to provide helpful information to AFEDJ about the mission, context and complexities of the issues facing the diocese in order to better assist Americans in understanding the importance of supporting Christians in the birthplace of Christ.

Conversations with priests and administrators of various diocesan institutions provided many insights about the nature of the diocesan ministries and their significance in building a healthy society for the benefit of all people, Palestinians and Israelis, Christians, Jews and Muslims. Extensive discussions with Rev'd Canon Robert Edmunds, Chaplain to the Bishop, and his wife Deborah Edmunds, Personal Executive Assistant to the Bishop, helped in gathering and analyzing information, contrasting it to American expectations, and conveying important issues to American supporters.



***AFEDJ President Griswold with Bishop Dawani and AFEDJ Director Lynn***

## ***New Leadership Coordinators of Kids4Peace meet with Bishop Dawani***

Bishop Dawani recently met with Mr. Yakir Englander, Kids4Peace Jerusalem Coordinator (left), and Father Joshua Thomas (right) who will be the new Executive Director for Kids4Peace USA effective January 1, 2009, to discuss the promising future of the Diocese's Kids4Peace program.

Started and based in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, Kids4Peace embraces children from all three Abrahamic traditions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.



With balanced representations of children and leaders from each faith group, Kids4Peace brings people together for intensive cross-cultural interfaith education and peace-focused experiences. Since the beginning of the program, Kids4Peace has involved over two hundred children, influencing their families, peers, and schools, in Israel, Palestine, and North America.

Each year, Kids4Peace selects twelve children to engage in each overseas camp experience. These children return to share their experiences with their peers and continue in a follow up program through December of the camp year. In the following year, they may choose to join the alumni group which delves further into sharing and understanding each other's faith. This follow up program also involves community outreach in which Kids4Peace engage in community volunteer projects, such as a program for disabled youth.

Kids4Peace is grateful for the longstanding commitment and leadership of Dr. Henry Carse as he retires this year, while welcoming Father Thomas as he brings his pastoral role and his youth experience to the leadership team. In positive and fruitful meeting, Bishop Dawani, Yakir, and Father Joshua, explored future possibilities to strengthen and expand the Kids4Peace program.

## *Jerusalem's Episcopal Diocese Works to Build Ecumenical Partnerships*

***"Father Ibrahim told us the significance of our coming was that we broke their isolation; they are no longer alone."*** – excerpt from the website of Grace Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Va, describing its partnership with sister churches in Palestine.

In an effort to strengthen the diminishing Christian presence in the Land of the Holy One, and to build relations between parishioners at a fundamental level, Bishop Suheil Dawani is encouraging ecumenical partnerships between international and diocesan parishes. These partnerships are based on the strong belief that churches in other regions can share and learn from diocesan parishes, assisting local congregations while at the same time benefiting from the rich cultural and biblical history imbedded in Middle East Christians who have roots dating back to the first Pentecost.

Some parishes of the Diocese of Jerusalem have had parish relationships for years, but most do not. Bishop Dawani has asked his Chaplain, The Rev'd Canon Robert Edmunds, to coordinate the building of new and needed relationships for a number of diocesan parishes ready to undertake the commitment involved. In the past year, Canon Edmunds has matched inquirers from the Church of England and the Episcopal Church USA with parishes recommended by the Bishop, and is receiving encouraging responses from all involved.



The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem invites you to explore this idea with your parish, understanding that such commitments require a generosity of exchange and an openness to learn. Many Diocesan churches in this region are increasingly isolated, given the emigration of Christians in search of full employment. The benefit to those who reach out in solidarity to Christian brothers and sisters in the birthplace of Christianity is local hospitality and the desire to share traditions and biblical understanding with other Christians who will walk with them through the current challenges.

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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.



