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Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
The Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem

General Synod Presentation – The Anglican Church of Canada
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I bring you greetings in my name and on behalf of the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

Allow me to offer my deep appreciation to all of you for your presence here today; for your prayers; for your support and your commitment to the ministry of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

There are so many of you who have given so much of your time and effort to make the arrangements for Shafeeqa and myself to be with you for this visit. I would like to thank Primate Fred Hiltz for his invitation to be with you and for the commitment of the Church of Canada for your brother and sister Anglicans in the Diocese of Jerusalem.

I know there are so many more to thank – you each have a vital role to play in helping the Christian community in the Land of the Holy One. I want to assure you that the support of the Church of Canada and my Diocese continues to be critical now and for the future. Your commitment to the twenty-seven parishes and thirty-five institutions of education, health care and rehabilitation provides hope for the future for our people and our neighbours.

The challenges to Christian ministry throughout the five nation region of my Diocese serves are ongoing. The rise of extremism, born out of increasing frustration among Muslims, Christians and Jews about the stagnation of the peace process continues. Local Christians are finding their way to other places where opportunities are better which diminishes the Christian presence in the Land of the Holy One.

These challenges continue and yet we are a people who overcome challenges with the love of Christ. Jerusalem is the city of the resurrection where death has been defeated and eternal life given to all who will believe.

This is the same city over which Jesus wept and it is the same city in which the resurrection is proclaimed. Sorrow and hope; death and life; cross and

resurrection; Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We are a people of hope and your commitment in helping keep that hope alive is as important now as it ever was.

Part of our hope is found at St. Luke's Hospital in Nablus which is among the finest hospitals in the West Bank. The care and compassion of the staff for our patients is on the highest quality. Our doctors and nurses continue to provide excellent care and plans are in place to renovate the fourth floor of the hospital to provide added services to the community.

Also in the West Bank, our Penman Clinic at St. Matthew's Church in Zebabdeh has a significant new development. I was there recently and met with a family who are donating five dunums of land, which equals one and one quarter acres, for the expansion and relocation of our clinic. This land will allow us to move the clinic from the basement of the church and expand health care to include the delivery of babies and the improvement of our dental and general medical program.

Many people ask about our hospital in Gaza. The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital continues to provide medical care for the people of Gaza. The situation in Gaza continues to be very difficult in all ways for all the people there. Jobs, schools, consumer goods, food and services of all kinds are an ongoing struggle. In the face of all of this, the medical staff at our hospital works under the most difficult circumstances, and yet they provide hope for the people they serve.

Providing health care for those in need throughout the Diocese without regard to religion, politics, age or gender is a sign of hope.

Our diocesan schools are also signs of hope. Our Diocese runs 13 schools in 5 countries with 7,100 students.

In Jordan, we are moving forward with changes to our Schneller School for boys and our Bishop's School for boys. Both institutions have a proud history of service and we are in the process of improving their programs and facilities. Our Aliyyah Girls' School, in Amman, continues to thrive as one of the finest educational programs in the Middle East.

Our schools provide a rigorous education which is training the next generation of leaders in business, religion and politics. Our graduates have learned the

values of the Christian faith which include tolerance, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

Our faculties show our students how Christians and Muslims live and work together for the benefit of not just a few, but for the benefit of all. Our families, Muslim and Christian alike, appreciate our approach to education and our faculties are among the best in the region.

These institutions of education and health care continue to provide the compassionate witness of the Christian Church. These relationships between doctors and nurses with their patients and their families and between teachers and their students in each community promote tolerance and mutual respect between neighbours which helps prevent the growth of extremism.

The presence of the local Christians of the Land of the Holy One is critical for the future of the Middle East. At the present time the total number of all the indigenous Christians of Israel and the West Bank are less than two percent of the population and continues to decline. At the present rate, in twenty years it will be hard to find a local Christian in the Holy Land. None of us wants to see this happen.

The voice of local Christians is a vital voice of moderation and tolerance which is of benefit for all three Abrahamic faiths in the Holy Land and for the world. The late King Hussein of Jordan once said: "The Christians are the glue of the Middle East." Peace and reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel of Christ. This is our ministry which we carry out every day with compassion through our institutions of healing and in our class rooms as we teach values to educate young citizens for the future civil society we must re-build.

The ministry throughout my diocese is full of joys and challenges. The Church of Canada is a welcome partner for the future. I was pleased to welcome Bishop John Chapman, Canon John Bridges and Margaret and Glenn Bloodworth from the Diocese of Ottawa in April. I look forward to a closer partnership with the Diocese of Ottawa as we move forward. Thanks to the invitation of Bishop Chapman, Shafeeqa and I will visit Ottawa before we go back to Jerusalem to better understand the ministry of Christ in that Diocese.

In addition, our relationship with Canada is being strengthened this summer with the presence of a Canadian seminarian at the Cathedral of St. George in

Jerusalem. Kerri Brennan, a seminarian from Bishop Chapman's diocese, recently arrived in Jerusalem and I am sure she will experience the life here.

Allow me to thank in public Bishop Ingham and the Diocese of New Westminster for their generosity. Others in Canada also were helpful through their congregations, for which I am grateful. Thanks to this outpouring of support, the Al Ahli Arab Hospital has recovered and continues to provide excellent care.

All of these relationships – visits, advocacy, fund raising, and awareness mean a great deal to us in Jerusalem. I thank you for our past support and your willingness to remain our partners in the years to come. This is a clear sign that we are the one body of Christ.

In this ministry of my Diocese I am reminded of St. Paul's written word of encouragement to the Church in Rome.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. (8:28) ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (8:35) ...

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:37-39)

I take St. Paul's words to heart. I hope you do too. Our ministry in the Land of the Holy One is built on such words. Your ongoing partnership in this ministry is vital. In a way, you have the opportunity to provide the hope to the Christians in my Diocese which St. Paul offered the Christians of Rome. In the face of all who may try to do so, nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Last year, the Diocese of Jerusalem was blessed to welcome His Grace, the Archbishop of Canada Fred Hiltz for his first visit to Jerusalem which was very much appreciated by church and institutions.

He came as a friend and a pilgrim, witnessed in every step and move the people's suffering and what it means to live in that troubled land under difficult circumstances. His Grace was faithful and honest to reveal the real picture and the need to work for a just and genuine peace in the land of the Holy One.

He also witnessed the words and terms mostly used in the Palestinian dictionary such as, check points, seize, humiliation, walls and poverty, especially when he visited our hospital in Gaza.

Your Grace, this visit to our Diocese left a very deep impression of the true servant of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, on the day of the Pentecost the church was born complete in its oneness, universal in its calling and holy in its life. No longer we are strangers no longer to feel left out from our homes, or church or society.

We belong to a reborn community that welcomes the stranger and the homeless. Heals the sick, gives strength to the weak, upholds the oppressed, comforts the broken hearted and witnesses to the love of God in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The good news in the message of Pentecost liberates us, removes our fears and sense of loss.

We are one family strengthened by prayer, fellowship and love, renewed in our calling by the Holy Spirit to hear the gentleness of his call.

"Well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over little. I will set you over many things, enter you into the joy of Your Lord."

May God bless you for your commitment and your compassion. May God bless the ministry we share in the Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Thank you very much, I am honoured to be part of your General Synod.