

## **The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem**

### **Information for Potential Volunteers**

The Rt. Rev'd Suheil S. Dawani, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem welcomes your interest in the ministry of the Christian community in the Land of the Holy One. Bishop Suheil welcomes thousands of pilgrims annually at the Cathedral of St. George in Jerusalem and in meetings throughout the Diocese. All who seek a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer and pilgrimage know the transforming power possible through time spent where our Lord lived, died and rose again.

Christians have been in the Holy Land since the first Pentecost and you are most welcome to explore and learn from this spiritual heritage with the indigenous Christian community. The Anglican presence is a vital part of the Christian and interfaith fabric of the region.

Visitors to the Diocese are sometimes surprised to discover that our parishes and schools, as well as our hospitals and rehabilitation centers, are staffed with trained professionals who each have considerable expertise in their fields of endeavor. We thank God that there are many faithful, talented, motivated and well-educated Christians who serve in a wide variety of ministries here in their homeland. This is an important point to grasp. In many cases, the "success" of the volunteer's ministry in the Diocese of Jerusalem is based less upon the skills they bring than the attitude of Christian servanthood they live.

Some who visit here are moved to consider offering their time, energy and expertise in support of the ministry here in the Diocese of Jerusalem. Please be aware that ministry in this part of God's creation is extremely challenging. This Diocese serves a multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual population in an interfaith and ecumenical setting – not to mention the political and social dynamics.

This brief outline is intended to help you clarify how God may be seeking to use your gifts for ministry and also to help you understand some of the realities of Christian ministry within the context of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

#### **Opportunities come in a variety of ways:**

- 1) A first step may be to join one of the many international partners of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.
  - In the United States: AFEDJ
  - In the United Kingdom: CMS, USPG, JEMECA
  - In Australia: CMS-Australia, ABM
  - In Germany: EMMS

Many Dioceses and parishes from around the Anglican Communion have "companion" or "twinning" relationships with congregations, schools and health care programs. Feel free to contact us for further information on how to establish such a relationship for your diocese or congregation.

- 2) An excellent way to help put your faith in a biblical and spiritual framework in a modern context is to join a course at St. George's College based here in Jerusalem ([www.sgcjerusalem.org](http://www.sgcjerusalem.org)).
- 3) Another form of help to the Diocese may be to live and work as a volunteer somewhere within the five countries of the Diocese (Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon).

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem prefers volunteers who come to us through the various ministry sending organizations of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion and similar agencies of Diocesan partners. (i.e. CMS, MPO/PECUSA, CMS-Australia, etc.)

Whether lay or ordained, retired or a young adult, please review the following information carefully.

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### **Some Basics**

The specifics of your volunteer time here will depend upon the needs of the Diocese at the given time.

Letters from your parish priest and bishop plus two references who can attest to your suitability to serve far from home in a foreign environment will be required. In most cases, both clergy and laity will need to participate in their own national church mission department or similar structure for discernment and training prior to arrival as a volunteer.

Before serving here you will be required to produce proof of adequate health insurance coverage as well as a doctor's certification that you are fit for overseas service.

You will have at least two phone interviews prior to acceptance. One interview will be with Bishop Suheil (or his designee) and the other will be with a member of his staff.

Before serving here you will be required to sign a "hold harmless" agreement which frees the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem from any liability or responsibility should you be injured or worse.

Upon arrival you will participate in an orientation program provided by the Diocese.

## **FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)**

### **Are there paid positions available on the diocesan payroll for ex-pats?**

In a word, no. The resources of the Diocese are stretched very thin. Volunteers are expected to be fully self-supporting through their own fund-raising efforts.

### **What about housing?**

Housing will vary from location to location. Some situations may include living with a family; "rustic" quarters; sometimes a private room or apartment. Housing is not always provided. Each situation is unique to the setting.

### **Is the water safe to drink?**

In most places the water is fine, though you will want to ask when you find yourself in an unfamiliar area. Bottled water is readily available in most areas.

### **What about medical care?**

Medical care is very good in most areas. Two important pointers are to be sure you get enough rest and that you stay hydrated in this very dry climate.

### **What languages are required?**

Fluency in English is required. The language of the indigenous Christian community is Arabic. Having an ability in or desire to learn Arabic is helpful. Some facility with modern Hebrew can also be helpful.

### **Will I have a job-description?**

Yes, you will. That being said, flexibility will be required as the demands of ministry change and sometimes change rapidly due to a wide variety of factors. Rigid adherence to the agreed upon job description is likely to produce frustration for the volunteer. The job description will most likely serve as an important guideline rather than a guaranteed expectation.

### **What should I wear?**

Modest clothing is the rule. Bare shoulders and torsos are not appropriate. Shorts are not often worn by either men or women. Dress lengths below the knee are appropriate. "Body art" as in tattoos and body piercings are not appropriate.

### **Is it safe?**

This is a politically volatile region. Violence against visitors is rare, beyond the occasional pickpocket. That said, "street smarts" are essential in terms of where you go, how you conduct yourself and what you say.

### **Can my boyfriend or girlfriend come with me?**

No. This is a very conservative culture in terms of gender roles and sexual morality. Cohabitation between unmarried persons is not appropriate.

### **Jesus is on my heart. How can I bring others to Christ?**

If converting others is your goal, this is not the Diocese for you. Evangelism of this nature is not helpful in the inter-faith environment in which we find ourselves.

**What about travel on my time off**

Time off is negotiated with each ministry setting. Travel will be according to the situation where you are assigned. Travel in the West Bank is one thing while travel across international boundaries is another and so forth. The Bishop may restrict travel based upon circumstances.

**What about women clergy?**

The Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, of which the Diocese of Jerusalem is a part, does not yet ordain women. Reading of lessons; leading the Daily Office; offering prayers are all approved liturgical opportunities.

**I am an ordained minister outside of the Anglican Communion. What role might I have in the liturgy?**

The ecumenical environment is warm, but only ordained Anglican men are currently allowed to function sacramentally in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. This practice is upheld in the Diocese of Jerusalem, as a member of the Province. The reading of lessons and leading of prayers during the liturgy are approved by the Bishop.

**I have a lot of experience with the Biblical Holy Sites.**

This is a wonderful thing, but the truth is that as a volunteer, your understanding of and competence in the historical, social, cultural and political dynamics of the region as well as familiarity with Anglican polity and ecumenical and inter-faith relations will be crucial.

**I have very strong feelings about the political situation.**

In this part of the world, you will keep your political opinions to yourself. In all times and circumstances as a volunteer for the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, you represent the Bishop and the Diocese, which may require a significant amount of verbal discipline. The various settings of ministry throughout the Diocese include a variety of political, social, inter-faith and cultural perspectives which all need to be respected by the volunteer.

**I am passionate about bringing peace to the Middle East.**

Aren't we all. As a volunteer you will need to leave your agendas at home and be aware of your role as a representative of the Bishop and the Diocese. You will be welcome to share the Bishop's vision for peace and reconciliation, as well as inter-faith dialogue, but as a volunteer guest of the Diocese it is vital to be "singing from the same hymnal" as the Bishop.

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After you've read this over and you are still interested, please e-mail us with the following information:

- 1) What you believe you have to offer the ministry of the Diocese of Jerusalem?
- 2) When you are available and for how long a period of time?

(updated April, 2009)