Peace to you in the name of the Lord

Greetings from Bishop Suheil Dawani

Dear Friends,

I begin this letter with Christmas Season Greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

Throughout the Diocese of Jerusalem, this month has been very busy, moving with expectation through Advent and into the long awaited celebrations of Christmas.

It has been our great pleasure to welcome the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States, Her Grace Katharine Jefferts Schori, who participated in our celebrations throughout Christmas and preached at our Christmas Eve Mid-night Service. Bishop Katharine concluded her stay with a visit to the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza.

We were graced with the young voices of the St. George’s Cathedral Boy’s Choir and enjoyed the music of The Holy Family Chimes Group from Raineh. Our Diocese is burgeoning with talents and gifts that we are sharing with our community and it is my pleasure to give my continued support of these programs.

As we breathe in the wonder of Christmas and share in the joy of the Epiphany season, we kneel before our King in humility and prayer. We turn to the Prince of Peace in quiet awe and lay before Him our hopes for forgiveness, reconciliation and everlasting peace.

May this New Year bring us into a deeper understanding of how much we are loved by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Salaam,

+ Suheil Dawani
Celebrating Advent at St. Matthew’s Zababdeh

Bishop Suheil Dawani visited St. Matthew’s Zababdeh on December 2nd to celebrate the beginning of Advent and the coming of Christmas with the congregation there. Accompanied by his chaplain, Canon John Organ, and assisted by Fr. Na’el Abu Rahmoun, Bishop Suheil presided and preached at the Holy Eucharist. After service, Bishop Suheil cut the ribbon to open the Christmas Bazaar and joined in the festivities with other local Christian denominations who came to enjoy the afternoon. The Christmas Bazaar will run throughout the first week of Advent with Bar-B-Q’s and the selling of local handmade items. Zababdeh is a village in the Palestinian Territories with a 60% Christian population. St. Matthew’s is a vibrant congregation with many children and young people.

Visitors from Us.

Bishop Suheil and The Very Revd Hosam Naoum greeted The Revd Canon Edgar C. Ruddock, Us. (formerly USPG - United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) on Sunday, December 2. Fr. Edgar was here with a group and brought greetings and gifts for Fr. Hosam which were given during coffee hour after the 9:30am service.

Us. is a church-based charity, from the United Kingdom, working in direct partnership with people and communities around the world. Us. supports the development of local skills and the empowerment of communities, leading to change from within.

Hi Tech Bible Challenge

On Friday, Dec. 7th, Bishop Suheil and fellow clergy of the Diocese went to Nazareth to support the youth who were participating in the High Tech Bible Competition. The Bible Competition is a program encouraging youth to know their Bible.

Bishop Suheil was interviewed by the media about promoting Bible literacy among young people.

Clergy of the Diocese of Jerusalem attending the Bible Competition in Nazareth were The Very Revd Hosam Naoum, Dean of St. George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem, The Revd Imad Deibes and The Rev Canon Zahi Naser, Christ Church, Nazareth, Fr. Fuad Dagher, St. Paul’s, Shefa’Amr, The Ven. Samuel Barhoum, Holy Family Church, Raineh, and the Bishop’s Chaplain, Canon John Organ.
Second Sunday in Advent Celebrations

St. George’s Cathedral welcomed 3 Bishops this morning - Bishop Keith Slater, Australia, Bishop Alan Bartlett, USA, and Bishop Robin Smith from England, here visiting St. George’s College for the Executive and Foundation Meetings being held in the coming week.

The Second Sunday in Advent was celebrated at St. George’s Cathedral with the Annual Parish Luncheon and fundraising event held after services. The Arab/English congregation enjoyed a delicious lunch in the Guest House and much fun and enjoyment was had by all.

First Jerusalem Business Forum

Bishop Dawani accepted the invitation to attend the First Jerusalem Business Forum on Wednesday Evening, December 12, 2012. The initiative for the forum came from Palestinian business people in East Jerusalem, whose goal is to bring to the community new investment in the areas of tourism, housing, and information technology. The forum has received the support of H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas, H.E. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, along with representatives of the International Community, as well as the Quartet Office In Jerusalem, including Mr. Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of England, who has been directly involved in the coordination of the Business Forum.

Bishop Dawani was very pleased to attend the Business Forum and to encourage Palestinian business people of East Jerusalem in their efforts to increase investment that would help strengthen the overall economic and social well-being of the community.

Christmas Lunch at St. Luke’s Hospital, Nablus

Bishop Suheil attended the Annual Christmas Luncheon of St. Luke’s Hospital in Nablus on Thursday, 13 December, 2012. The hospital’s Christmas luncheon is a long tradition of bringing together the dignitaries of Nablus to celebrate Christmas with the hospital’s leadership and staff. Attending the luncheon was His Excellency, the Major of Nablus, Mr. Ghassan Shakaa, as well as many other leaders from government, social and security organizations of Nablus.

Addressing the full house, Bishop Dawani spoke about the deeper meaning of Christmas and in particular of Jesus coming into the world to bring a message of peace, hope, and love to all mankind. Bishop Suheil reiterated the important role the hospital has in providing health care to all the citizens of Nablus and expressed his gratitude to Mayor Shakaa for the tremendous cooperation between Muslims and Christians in the city. A lovely meal was served and Christmas Carols were sung. Bishop Dawani was joined by members of the diocesan staff, Dr. Hisham Nassar, Mr. Ramzi Hallac, and Canon John Organ.
Women’s Workshop, Nablus

The Women of the Diocese held a Women’s Workshop in Nablus on 13, December, 2012. Over 200 women were present and enjoyed a day of Bible Study and Christmas Cheer. Joined by their parish clergy, the Workshop was part of the continuing efforts of the Diocese of Jerusalem to affirm and support the role of women in its life and witness.

Bishop Dawani brought greetings to those gathered and conveyed his great and joyful appreciation for the Workshop, as well as his thankfulness for the leadership provided by Mrs. Dawani, the coordinators, and the parish clergy.

Meeting with Heads of Churches of Nablus

Bishop Suheil held a special ecumenical meeting with the clergy of Nablus in the presence of Mayor Shaka’a, where matters concerning the Christian Churches in Nablus were discussed.

Christmas lunch and Pageant at the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Home

The Rt. Revd Suheil Dawani, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, and his wife Mrs. Shafeeqa Dawani joined the family of the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Home for Christmas lunch on Friday, December 14th. Bishop Dawani was warmly received by Sister Najah Ranteesi, the Home Director, Mr. Iyad Rafidi the Principal of the school, the board of trustees of both the Home and the School, the children of the Home and some invited families.

Bishop Dawani gave a prayer of hope for a better future for the Holy Land, the children and their families; he also expressed his wishes for a blessed and peaceful festive season of Christmas and a good beginning to the new year of 2013.

Bishop Dawani visited each and every table at the Christmas pageant, talking to the people, expressing his happiness to be amongst them at this annual ceremony, sharing and listening to their problems and hopes.

At the end of the luncheon, Bishop Dawani called all the children next to the Christmas tree, where Mrs. Dawani placed Christmas gifts from Jerusalem for the children and workers. With a big fatherly smile, Bishop Dawani gave each of the children their gifts.
Christmas Concert at St. George's Cathedral

On the evening of the Third Sunday in Advent, December 16, St. George’s Cathedral enjoyed a Christmas Concert featuring the St. George’s Boys Choir, newly established this fall, The Holy Family Chimes Group from Raineh, in their third public performance, and Ina Dodakova, Organist for the English congregation at St. George’s Cathedral.

The evening was a joyous celebration of the coming of Christmas with music and singing. The little children sang like angels, O Holy Night being the highlight of the evening. The Holy Family Chimes, with conductor Fadi Ramadan, were wonderful and Ina Dodakova played a number of pieces from various artists.

Bishop Suheil gave his blessing to finish the evening. The Very Revd Hosam Naoum and the Archdeacon Ven Samuel Barhoum gave thanks to the Bishop for his ongoing support and mentorship of these musical programs.

ETVTC Christmas Dinner

On December 18th, the ETVTC was humbled to have as honored guests the Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, the Rt. Rev. Suheil Dawani, the Palestinian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Mrs. Rula Ma'ayah, and the mayor of Ramallah, Mr. Mousa Hadid. Our guests, along with the Director of the ETVTC, Giovanni Anbar, gave speeches at our annual Christmas Dinner at which the students of the hotel management school catered and served. It was the ETVTC's and the students’ privilege to serve these distinguished guests. The school is looking forward to receiving them again in the future and continuing to educate and train the future of Palestine's hospitality industry.

A visit from the Mayor of Jerusalem

Mayor Barkat of Jerusalem, and a delegation from the municipality, visited Bishop Suheil on Dec. 19th bringing Christmas greetings to the Bishop and the Diocesan Staff.

Bishop Suheil visited the Greek Catholic Bishopric

Bishop Suheil attended an event, hosted by Archbishop Elias Shakour, at the Greek Catholic Bishopric in Haifa on Dec. 20th. All the churches from the Catholic family, the Orthodox family and the Anglican Church were represented. President Shamon Peres was the guest of honour, bringing Christmas greetings to the Christians communities in Northern Israel.
Heads of Churches in Ramallah

Bishop Suheil, with the Heads of Churches, went to Ramallah on Dec. 22 to bring Christmas greetings and congratulations to President Mahmoud Abbas on the upgrade to non-member status of the state of Palestine. The President spoke of the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people. President Abbas hosted the Christian Leaders and gave his best wishes for Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Bethlehem Simulcast with National Cathedral

Bishop Suheil Dawani joined Bishop Younan Munib, on Saturday Dec. 22, for the sixth annual joint simulcast Christmas service with the people of Bethlehem and the Washington National Cathedral in the United States. Prayers, readings, and hymns alternated between Washington, D.C., and Palestine via the Internet, bringing together people of different lands, languages, and ethnic backgrounds in celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace. This joint Anglican/Lutheran Readings and Carols Service emphasized the birth of the Prince of Peace in Bethlehem and the hopes and efforts of Christians here and in Washington for Peace in the Holy Land.

To watch the simulcast, please visit: http://www.nationalcathedral.org/exec/cathedral/mediaPlayer?MediaID=MED-603U3-GC001O&EventID=CAL-5TS13-AF000M

Advent Dinner in Kufr-Yasif

Bishop Suheil, with his Chaplain, Canon John Organ, attended the Advent service of Readings and Carols in the Church of St. Savior in Kufr-Yasif Sunday evening, December 23rd. The Church of St. Savior was filled to capacity with an intergenerational congregation. The service was a blend of tradition and modern music. It was a joyful celebration followed by a wonderful meal and warm fellowship.

Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols in the Shepherd’s Field

It was with great pleasure that Bishop Suheil welcomed the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States, Katharine Jefferts Schori to St. George’s Cathedral and Guest House. Her Grace Katharine joined Bishop Suheil and fellow clergy in the Shepherd’s Field to begin the celebrations of Christmas Eve, where Bishop Suheil gave a homily focusing on peace with justice.

A large group of pilgrims from Nigeria raised their voices in song to welcome the new born King. Lamb cooked in the ovens of the cave was served after the service of Lessons and Carols, to the enjoyment of all.
Christmas Eve in Bethlehem

Bishop Suheil led the Lessons and Carols Service in the Chapel of St. George in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on Christmas Evening. Bishop Suheil spoke to the more than 100 worshippers, welcoming President Mahmoud Abbas, Her Grace the Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and fellow clergy. In his homily, Bishop Suheil spoke of the recent UN resolution in granting non-member status to Palestine and of the need of peace with justice. The evening was delightful as Christmas hymns and readings were shared.

Christmas Eve Mid-night Mass

Christmas Eve celebrations culminated with a mid-night Holy Eucharist at the Cathedral of St. George the Martyr in Jerusalem. In a wonderful gesture of ecclesiastical partnership and fellowship, Bishop Suheil invited Her Grace the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, Katharine Jefferts Schori to preach and co-consecrate at the evening’s mass.

Bishop James Magness, The Revd Canon John Peterson, The Very Revd Dr. Graham Smith, Canon John Organ, Canon Bill Broughton, the Revd Dr. Yazeed Said and the Very Revd Hosam Naoum, Dean of the Cathedral were also among those who assisted at the altar.

Worshippers from around the world gathered to rejoice in song and praise in the early hours of Christmas morning. As is tradition, everyone gathered in the Guest House for hot chocolate after the service.

Christmas Day and Lunch

Christmas Day celebrations were held at St. George’s Cathedral on the morning of Dec. 25th. Bishop Suheil welcomed Her Grace the Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, and they joined with family members and friends for a lovely Christmas lunch at the Guest House.

Presiding Bishop visits St. Andrew’s Church in Ramallah

Bishop Suheil and the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the USA, Katharine Jefferts Schori visited St. Andrew’s Church in Ramallah on Dec. 30th. Her Grace Katharine preached the sermon and joined in fellowship with parishioners after service. The Revd Hanna Daleh and Canon John Organ also participated in the service.
The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Newsletter

Following a luncheon served by the parish, Bishop Suheil and his guests were hosted by Prime Minister Fayyad, who discussed the Christian presence in Palestine and the need to support Christians in the Holy Land.

Bishop Suheil and Her Grace Katharine also took time to visit the Arab Episcopal Medical Centre in Ramallah, and St. Peter’s Home for the Elderly in Birzeit.

Reception for Christian Communities with President Shimon Peres

Mr. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel hosted Bishop Suheil and fellow Heads of Churches, at the annual reception in honour of the Heads of the Christian Communities in Israel. The reception was held in the morning on the Eve of the New Year at the President’s residence in Jerusalem.

King Abdullah visits Al Hosn

In December King Abdullah paid a visit to Al Hosn and met with the Church leaders in the area to wish them a Merry Christmas. Rev. Samir Esaid, along with other local clergy, were honoured to be invited to dine with the King. This significant visit demonstrates King Abdullah’s support and respect for Christians in Jordan, which is a true blessing.

Saint Mary’s Church, Irbid

At Saint Mary’s Church we had a fantastic Christmas Dinner Celebration. A large number of people came to enjoy the party, delicious food, and live entertainment which included several sketches and Christmas Carols from the youth group in Amman.

The Arab Episcopal School, Irbid

What a successful year 2012 has been for the Arab Episcopal School. We are pleased with the many accomplishments. We have completed the construction of the third floor, thus making room for our 8th graders, and next year 9th graders. We held our 10th year anniversary celebration with a huge party, which included performances from all of our students. We were honored to have the Mayor, and the Governor of Irbid attend our celebrations.

We had a joyous Christmas season with our students; we even had a visit from Baba Noelle. In addition, the children in our kindergarten performed the Christmas story for their parents. Our students greatly enjoyed decorating and getting into the Christmas spirit.
The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Amman - Monthly Lecture Series in November –

The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Amman invited Dr. Johnny Awwad - Associate Professor of the New Testament at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut- to present a series of talks as part of its Monthly Lecture Program.

The first lecture explored Jesus’ exorcism of evil spirits in the New Testament. Dr. Awwad listed the different incidents where Jesus confronted people with evil spirits manifested in physical symptoms. This was a major part of Jesus’ ministry of liberating people!

In his second lecture, Dr. Awwad explored the book (allegedly named Gospel) of Barnabas. He examined its historical background, and identified the evidence that indicates that the gospel could not have been written in the second century as is generally claimed.

We are thankful that Dr. Awwad accepted our invitation and we hope to have him in the near future. We also give a special thank you to Mrs. Rana El Far who continues to help in organizing and managing our Monthly Lecture Program.

More stories and information are available at: www.j-diocese.org
Email enquiries to: 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.