



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST  
**DIOCESE OF CYPRUS AND THE GULF**

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*FROM: THE DIOCESAN OFFICE*

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**DIOCESAN NEWS – JANUARY 2010**

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**ABU DHABI**

*(Adapted from THE NATIONAL, Abu Dhabi – November 2009)*

The Crown Prince has pledged to help fund the refurbishment of the capital's St Andrew's Church compound, a group of ageing buildings that draws tens of thousands of worshippers every week.

The announcement that Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, who is also Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, will "take care of any shortfall of funds" in the project to revamp the complex into a modern place of worship was made by Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, at a Remembrance Sunday service this week.

"It took me utterly by surprise," said the Revd Clive Windebank. "It shows how the country's leadership is not only tolerant, but respectful, accepting and supportive of Christians in the community."

St Andrew's Church has been raising funds to refurbish the compound, built between 1970 and 1984, for a number of years, and has collected more than Dh2 million (US\$540,000) so far, but costs are expected to exceed Dh10m.

In July, Fr Windebank asked Sheikh Nahyan to pass a letter to the Crown Prince outlining the building plans and asking for assistance.

"We have many ongoing fund-raising efforts and have been working to raise funds for the rebuilding for several years," Fr Windebank said.

"But the need for funds is seemingly endless. Sheikh Mohammed has said he appreciates the efforts we are making to raise funds – and they must continue – but he has offered to pay whatever the shortfall is."

He said he was informed of Sheikh Mohammed's donation only 30 minutes before the Remembrance Sunday service began and that Sheikh Nahyan then took the microphone to pass the news to the 550 people assembled to mark the annual commemoration of those who sacrificed their lives in times of conflict, including representatives of about 40 embassies, and local girl guide and scout groups.

Although an Anglican Church, and part of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, St Andrew's compound also hosts services for more than 80 Christian denominations, from the Ethiopian Orthodox, to the Kerala-based Mar Thoma church and Seventh Day Adventists.

Fr Windebank said he was constantly being asked for more space. The compound is usually "bursting with people", he said, particularly on Fridays, when more than 20,000 congregate from 5am to nearly midnight in the churches, chapel, halls and worship rooms. The buildings are also used for community activities such as toddler groups.

Restricted by the size of the compound, the project mostly covers renovation work rather than expansion, although there are plans to pull down the thrift-shop building and rebuild it with a second storey to provide more space for congregations. The courtyards and outdoor areas will be landscaped, a new outer wall and entrance constructed and old buildings renovated.

“It’s been used by millions of people in the last 30 years and is now shabby and worn,” Fr Windebank said. “We intend to build a St Andrew’s Centre that will be worthy of the 2030 plan. The wonderful generosity of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed has now made it possible to turn all of these aspirations into a reality.”

The church started in 1966 on a piece of land on the Corniche, a gift of Sheikh Zayed, the late founder of the UAE, before moving to its current site.

St Andrew’s Church also has a strip of land in Musaffah, donated by Sheikh Zayed in 2004, but has yet to build on it, lacking funds. “With the increasing number of expatriates living on the mainland, the development of this site is also now a priority,” Fr Windebank said.

In his seven years in Abu Dhabi, Fr Windebank said, one of his main aims had been to build understanding between Islam and Christianity.

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### **CHRIST CHURCH, ADEN**

The Bishop in Cyprus and the Gulf is due to ordain Catherine Mary Dawkins to the diaconate on Friday 15 January 2010 at Christ Church, Tawahi, Aden.

She will serve as deacon and assistant chaplain in the Yemen.

Please pray for Catherine, her husband Nigel, and the people of Christ Church.

+ Michael Cyprus & the Gulf:

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### **ST BARNABAS, LIMASSOL**

The Bishop and the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf wishes to congratulate **Mr Keith Nigel Shonfeld**, the Treasurer of St Barnabas, Limassol, for being awarded an MBE (Order of the British Empire) in the Queen’s New Year Honours list. Keith is a cemetery administrator for the British Cemetery Committee and his award comes for services to the British community in Cyprus.

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