



Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

scene@synod

17 September 2024



Learning from the wider Anglican family

THE RIGHT REVEREND SEAN SEMPLE
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF CYPRUS AND THE GULF

The Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf held a Zoom Synod on the evening of 17 September, opening with worship led by the Reverend Paul Carr.

Synod Members heard updates from working groups on reviewing the Diocesan Constitution and enhanced episcopal leadership in the Gulf archdeaconry, as well as reports on the Ministry programme, safeguarding, and the recent Provincial Youth Conference held in Famagusta in northern Cyprus. The structure and finances of the Diocese were a focus of much of the meeting — issues Bishop Sean met head on in his Presidential Address, which opened with a reading from Luke 8.22-25:

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A gale swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them,

'Where is your faith?' They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?'

*We cannot be held hostage
to the past nor to any particular national
Anglican tradition.
Rather, in learning from the past;
adopting best practice from our
wider Anglican family;
and being led by God's Spirit,
this diocese can be moulded into an
institution that is fit for purpose,
and has the resilience
to face the geopolitical storms
so characteristic
of this region*

Conventional wisdom suggests that anyone in a new role spends their first 6 months observing, listening and asking questions. In the four months since my consecration, I have attempted to do precisely this by visiting just over half the parishes of the diocese, and spending quality time during these visits with both clergy and laity.

Two topics have dominated most conversations: finance, and the future of the diocese. These two concerns have largely "set the weather" for the diocese, and it is clear that

we find ourselves in something of a storm.

It will not be helpful to either deny the challenges we face, or to panic. Like the disciples 2000 years ago on Lake Gennesaret we must turn to Christ who is with us in the midst of the storm.

(contd p7)

Reports

Safeguarding

Archdeacon in Cyprus the Venerable

*Christopher Fatcher reported to Synod on Safeguarding,
and on Ministry training (next page)*



As Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Archdeacon Christopher began by outlining the main instruments for safeguarding work in the Diocese

Diocesan Policy Statement and Code of Practice

This policy was renewed and approved by Synod in 2022. In 2025 some examination of the diocesan policy documentation should be undertaken to ensure that it fits well enough with safeguarding standards across the Anglican Communion. It may benefit from having a member of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission review it.

Parish Safeguarding Policies

Each parish should have its own safeguarding policy. This should be in line with the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy Statement and may also draw on many of the articles in the Code of Practice. Church Councils should regularly have safeguarding on their agendas and should regularly review the policy. The parish safeguarding checklist has been issued to help parishes review their safeguarding provision. The policy should be readily available for consultation and also be observed by other groups using the church premises if they do not have their own policy.

Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) is the chief trainer in safeguarding for the Diocese, chairs the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, and responds to safeguarding issues promptly as they are raised.

In May the DSA led 3 training sessions in the UAE (2 in Abu Dhabi and 1 in Holy Trinity Dubai). This meant that around 60 people were able to attend training. Holy Trinity has now established a small group to take this work of safeguarding further. In Abu Dhabi the Revd Gill Nisbet set up zoom training which the DSA led with guest pastors and youth leaders of churches and fellowships using the St Andrew's compound.

In September clergy and Readers in Cyprus who did training in 2021 attended a new session to renew their

understanding of the importance of safeguarding.

Accredited Lay Worship Leaders are now also included in this training requirement.

Attendance at training is recorded and certificates issued by the Diocesan Administration Officer, Helen Perry.

Parish Safeguarding Officers and Advisory Panel

Parish Safeguarding Officers (there should be 1 or 2 in each parish) carry out their work according to the description of the work of the (PSO) in the Diocesan Code of Practice. All parishes in Cyprus have PSOs and it is good to report that a growing number do in the Gulf Archdeaconry. There needs to be further work to have an identified PSO in every Gulf parish.

Meeting together with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, the PSOs form the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, which always meets by zoom. Our most recent meeting was in August. As officers change, there is always a need to support and induct new PSOs. It is good practice for an Advisory Panel to have a member who has safeguarding experience outside the church, and who is not an Anglican. We had such representation until earlier this year, when our non-Anglican representative retired. We need to seek a replacement.

There are PowerPoint resources to help PSOs to provide safeguarding training in their parishes for all in positions of responsibility and those taking part in pastoral, children's or youth ministries.

Future priorities

- Make arrangements for training provision to replace the retiring DSA
- Make arrangements to cover casework following the retirement of the DSA
- Appoint a non-Anglican to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel

Ministry training

Archdeacon Christopher, Diocesan Director of Ministry opened his report with an overview of developments on the *Exploring Faith programme* (accredited by Queen's College, Newfoundland)

There is ongoing work to review assignments, the availability of course books and wider reading online. A number of modules need reviewing and refreshing, and bibliographies updating. A student in Abu Dhabi was presented with her degree certificate in May.

A number of new students have joined through the year. Some are in the process of vocational discernment, and a few are simply seeking to grow in theological understanding.

Thanks are due to those who act as facilitators for each module, giving considerable time to working with our students. Many of the students are studying theology in English, which is not their first language.

Summer School A Summer School was held in Cyprus in June 2024 for 9 students from across the Diocese. An account of this is available on the website. It was an extraordinary time of fellowship and learning, around the theology of 'hope'. Bishop Sean was able to join us for a day.

Ordinands, deacons and readers-in-training Archdeacon Christopher, as Director of Ministry, during the summer has been having a conversation with each ordinand, deacon and reader-in-training

along with their supervising priest to make connections between the theological learning, opportunities for practical experience and learning in the parish, and formational development. During the next year there is a proposal under consideration to develop the formational training in the parishes.

Diocesan Readers and readers-in-training There are regular zoom meetings for mutual support with the Warden of Readers. In May Pushpak Gilbert was admitted and licensed as a Reader in Holy Trinity Dubai in a joyful Sunday morning service.

Vocations An exciting development this year has been the growth in number of men and women seeking vocational conversations in both the Gulf and Cyprus. Fr Jim Young in the Gulf and Archdeacon Christopher in Cyprus keep in touch with these potential candidates for attending future discernment conferences.

Accredited lay worship leaders A third course in Cyprus has just been completed. It was attended by 5 participants, who were British-Cypriot, Cameroonian, Lebanese, Nigerian and South African—a real representation of our international English-speaking congregations! The course was led by Archdeacon Christopher with face-to-face and zoom sessions. Certificates were presented by Bishop Sean during a service at St Helena Larnaca.

Ministry Team members

The Venerable Christopher Futcher

The Venerable Michael Mbona

The Revd Kent Middleton

Dr Helen Perry

The Revd Patrick Salvage

The Revd George Vidiakin

The Revd Jim Young

Archdeacon in Cyprus (until 30 September 2024); Director of Ministry and Vocations Adviser Cyprus Archdeaconry

Archdeacon in the Gulf

Warden of Readers

Administrator for Exploring Faith

Representative for SSMs

CMD Adviser

Vocations Adviser Gulf Archdeaconry



AHEAD OF THEIR RETIREMENT AT THE END OF THE MONTH, BISHOP SEAN LED SYNOD IN THANKING FOR THEIR MINISTRIES THE REVD ANNE FUTCHER, SOCIAL CONCERN OFFICER AND ASSISTANT PRIEST AT ST HELENA LARNACA, AND THE VEN CHRISTOPHER FUTCHER, ARCHDEACON IN CYPRUS AND LARNACA PARISH PRIEST. ARCHDEACON CHRISTOPHER WILL CONTINUE IN HIS ROLE AS DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY FOR A FEW MONTHS BEYOND RETIREMENT, ENSURING A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF DIOCESAN WORK



Constitutional Review Committee

*The Very Reverend Dr Richard Fermer, Dean of St Christopher's Cathedral, Bahrain
updated Synod on the work of the Constitutional Review Committee*

Following a motion passed at the February 2024 meeting of Synod calling for a group to review the Diocesan Constitution and Standing Orders (Motion 2, below), Standing and Finance Committee appointed Dean Richard as convener and the Reverend Dr Harry Huskins, a former archdeacon in Canada, as adviser on canon law. In addition to being able to offer essential guidance on canon law and on constitutions, diocesan and provincial, Dr Huskins offered valuable knowledge of experiences in other provinces of the Anglican Communion.

The Constitutional Review Committee held its first meeting on 10 September, at which terms of reference were agreed. Discussion then centred around the consultation process to be undertaken within the Diocese, in line with the Synod motion. The scope of the review was to be determined by that consultation, which was expected to begin in late autumn and which would aim to be as open and transparent as possible, with submissions to be widely sought, and shared via the Diocesan website. The CRC was scheduled to meet again on 8 October 2024, and would be providing an interim report to Synod 2025.

Constitutional Review Committee

The Very Revd Dr Richard Fermer (Convener)
The Revd Dr Harry Huskins (Adviser on Canon Law)

Brig (ret'd) Tim Allen
Ms Linda Balfe
The Revd Paul Carr (replacing the Ven Christopher Futchter)
Mr Chris Clapham
The Very Revd Jeremy Crocker
Mr Mathew Joseph
The Revd Kent Middleton
Dr Helen Perry (Secretary)

February 2024 Synod Motions on reviews of Diocesan Constitution and Gulf enhanced episcopal leadership (*see next page*)

Motion 2

This Synod will establish a working group to review the Diocesan Constitution and Standing Orders, consulting widely to present an interim report to Synod 2025, for approval at Synod 2026, consisting of:

*2 licensed clergy (Gulf) elected by House of Clergy
2 licensed clergy (Cyprus) elected by House of Clergy
2 (Gulf) members of House of Laity elected by HoL
2 (Cyprus) members of House of Laity elected by HoL (*
Convener and an adviser on Canon Law,
to attend meetings and provide support,
appointed by Standing and Finance Committee;
election to include alternates (4)—one lay and one clergy for each archdeaconry)

Motion 16

This Synod affirms the establishing of a working group to examine options to enhance episcopal leadership within the Gulf archdeaconry. The working group, co-opted by and operating under the direction of the Diocesan Bishop, will provide a report of its findings and recommendations to Synod, with interim reporting to the Standing and Finance Committee

Gulf Enhanced Episcopal Leadership



*Bishop Sean updated Synod on the work of
the GEEL Working Group*

Bishop Sean has put together a working group to examine options to enhance episcopal leadership within the Gulf archdeaconry, in line with a motion passed at the February 2024 Synod (Motion 16, previous page).

The group aims to:

1. articulate the reasons that led to the establishment of the Working Group
2. consider the pros and cons of various options that would enhance episcopal leadership in the Gulf
3. report progress to Synod, and in the interim, to Standing and Finance Committee

The group will hold quarterly Zoom meetings of reflection and discussion, and consult with parishes to elicit views about enhanced episcopal oversight, including via a questionnaire to be designed by a qualified external consultant, the Reverend Dr John Aitcheson—a South African academic with extensive knowledge of Anglicanism and a professional researcher. A report of the group’s findings and recommendations will be made to Synod, with interim reporting to the Standing and Finance Committee.

Working group members have been co-opted on the basis of one or more of the following:

1. knowledge of the Gulf Archdeaconry
2. knowledge of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf
3. knowledge of Anglican governance and good practice
4. ability to provide a clerical perspective on what enhanced episcopal oversight might look like
5. ability to provide a lay perspective on what enhanced episcopal oversight might look like

The group has to date met on two occasions. At its first meeting, terms of reference were adopted and office-holders appointed. The second meeting was convened to meet with Revd Dr Aitcheson.

Working Group on Gulf Enhanced Episcopal Leadership

The Rt Revd Sean Semple (Chair)
Mrs Christiana Nwandu (Vice-Chair)
Mrs Deborah Graham (Secretary)
The Revd Dr John Aitcheson (Adviser)

Mrs Louise Bougourd
The Revd Mark Derry
The Very Revd Dr Richard Fermer
Mrs Beulah Miller
The Revd Deborah Moorgas
Mr Gabriel Simpri
The Revd Jim Young

Synod 2025

The next in-person Synod will be held 3-6 February 2025, at Lordos Beach Hotel in Larnaca, Cyprus. A shorter programme aims to help reduce costs, as well as making it easier for clergy and lay representatives from Gulf parishes to return to parishes in time for weekly services. Synod registration forms will be sent out by early November.

Diocesan finances

Honorary Director of Finance Canon John Banfield provided an update on 2024 Diocesan finances, on behalf of Standing and Finance Committee



Income and Expense Summary

€k	Budget	Forecast
Parish contributions	275	190
JEMT	40	35
TEC GFO	75	60
Foundation	40	40
Ras Morbat donations	20	10
Mosaic Middle East	120	120
Other donations	25	25
Total income	525	480
Central organisation	355	359
St George's Baghdad	120	120
Ras Morbat	60	60
Ministry training	20	20
Student chaplaincy	10	10
Barnabas Team	5	1
Total expense	570	570
Surplus/deficit	25	-90
Unrestricted cash	40	-75
Loan required to balance cash		100

Summary

- 2024 budgets presented to Synod in February 2024 projected a surplus of €25k
- current forecasts for 2024 suggest a deficit of €90k
- a loan of up to €100k will be required to maintain minimum operating cash levels
- February 2024 Synod Motion 6 authorises Standing Committee to sign loan agreements up to €100k

Canon John highlighted a predicted €85k shortfall in parish contributions: as of end-July, an additional €100k of 2024 contributions remained outstanding, together with €20k from 2023. The Diocese was therefore required to seek a loan to maintain minimum operating levels.

Income and expense: key takeaways

total parish contributions likely to be c. €85k below €275k budget
total income from other sources expected to be c. €30k below €200k budget
total forecast expense, including €120k for Baghdad, forecast to be in line with €570k budget

Canon John also referred to support for Baghdad, not previously separately identified in Diocesan (ACCL—Anglican Church (Cyprus) Ltd) budgets. Rather, income from Mosaic Middle East and payments to Baghdad had been included in the annual ACCL accounts with Other Receipts and Disbursements. However, following on from discussion at the February 2024 meeting of Synod, he suggested it “might be more appropriate to include these monies in the budget”. He added that the terms of the agreement between Mosaic Middle East and the Diocese were recorded in an MOU signed in 2019.

Some changes to the central diocesan organisation are expected in the coming months—the first being that the Cyprus Archdeacon, retiring end-September, would not be replaced on a like-for-like basis, potentially reducing costs. And as the bishop’s travel was increasing, associated expenses were being monitored to remain within budget, including scheduling trips to take advantage of lowest-cost fares, using local SIMs to control mobile-phone costs and avoiding the use of hotels when possible.

A draft budget for 2025 would be issued for discussion during October/November, together with a more comprehensive review of the central diocesan organisation. There could also be discussion about parish contributions and the possibility of Synod agreement on a mandatory formula for 2025 and beyond.

In turning to Christ, we acknowledge his Lordship as firstborn over all creation,^[1] and specifically as the Lord of this diocese, its churches, and our individual lives. We recognise anew that as followers of Jesus Christ, we are committed to doing *his work his way*. This demands constant self-reflection and prayerful discernment, to ensure that God's will rather than our will is done.^[2]

Canon John Banfield will shortly present an update on our diocesan finances. The stark reality is that we face a AED 400,000/€100,000 shortfall in giving to the Diocese. If it continues, this kind of deficit could easily swamp and sink the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. To navigate through this tempest, some swift and decisive decisions must be made.

The Archdeacon of Cyprus, the Venerable Christopher Fatcher, will retire at the end of September, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his dedicated service as Archdeacon, and for his and Anne's parish ministry at St Helena's Church, Larnaca, over the last five years.

I have asked Christopher to continue in his role as Director of Ministry for a few months post-retirement to ensure a smooth hand-over of this important portfolio, and I am very grateful that he has agreed to do this on a *pro deo* basis.

We can no longer afford to fund the post of Archdeacon in Cyprus from diocesan giving, and so this post will now become a non-stipendiary role held in conjunction with a parish post in Cyprus. In due course, this non-stipendiary model will also be applied to the post of Archdeacon in the Gulf, thus bringing parity to the leadership structure of both archdeaconries. I shall announce the appointment of a new Archdeacon in Cyprus later this year.

In terms of our current Diocesan Constitution,^[3] we require the ministry of Archdeacons. Both the Constitutional Review Working Group, and the Gulf Enhanced Episcopal Leadership Working Group will in the course of their work have opportunity to consider other models of senior leadership in our diocese. Ultimately, I hope that we will be able to identify the most efficient and effective form of leadership for this beloved but unusual diocese, and not settle for a makeshift, "jury-rigged" arrangement due to budget constraints.

Further measures and restructuring aimed at reducing central costs will be announced and discussed at our February 2025 Synod meeting.

Until then there are many opportunities and occasions to celebrate.

- I hope in the very near future to announce the appointment of parish priests to St Andrew Abu Dhabi and St John Muscat.

- On 19 October I shall have the joy of ordaining The Reverend Deacon Innocent Ekpeluchi to the priesthood, at Christchurch, Jebel Ali.
- On 2 November I have been invited to be present at the enthronement of +Mike Harrison as the 72nd bishop of our link diocese of Exeter, and I have also been invited to preach the following day at the morning Eucharist in Exeter Cathedral.
- Later in November I will be meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury to discuss our diocese and region. This will continue discussions that I have initiated with Archbishop Hosam, and the General Secretary of the Anglican Communion, Bishop Anthony Poggo.
- At the invitation of The Episcopal Church, I have been invited to preach at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York in December, and while there I will also meet with the newly formed American Friends of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, and other groups interested in supporting our diocese.

On every possible occasion I will showcase this diocese to the world, and to people who so often do not realise that there is a Christian presence in the countries we serve, let alone thriving Anglican churches. I would like to ask for your help in telling our story – please do send me your stories and pictures of how the Gospel is being lived out in your context, so that I can incorporate them in my sermons and presentations.

In conclusion, I believe it is clear that the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf needs structural, missional, canonical, and practical renewal and reform as it approaches its 50th year of existence. We cannot be held hostage to the past nor to any particular national Anglican tradition. Rather, in learning from the past; adopting best practice from our wider Anglican family; and being led by God's Spirit, this diocese can be moulded into an institution that is fit for purpose, and has the resilience to face the geopolitical storms so characteristic of this region.

The well-known image of a potter and clay^[4] from the prophet Jeremiah comes to mind. What had become spoiled in the potter's hand, was reworked into another vessel, as seemed good to him. In faith, we pray that God would rework the clay of this diocese, as seems good to him.

^[1] Colossians 1.15

^[2] Cf Luke 22.42

^[3] 2 (a); 7 (a) ii; 9; 11; 13 (g); 14 (d); 15 (d); 15 (e); 16 (c) etc.

^[4] Jeremiah 18.1-6

Synod Motions

Four motions were presented to and approved by Synod

Motion 1

Synod approves the holding of this virtual meeting of a special Diocesan Synod.

Lay and ordained Synod members, who have joined a virtual Synod session, shall be deemed present. The usual meeting rules, including the chairing and minuting of proceedings, will be observed.

Voting by 'a show of hands' (Standing Order 63) is accepted as including its electronic and/or postal equivalent (article 6c).

Motion 2

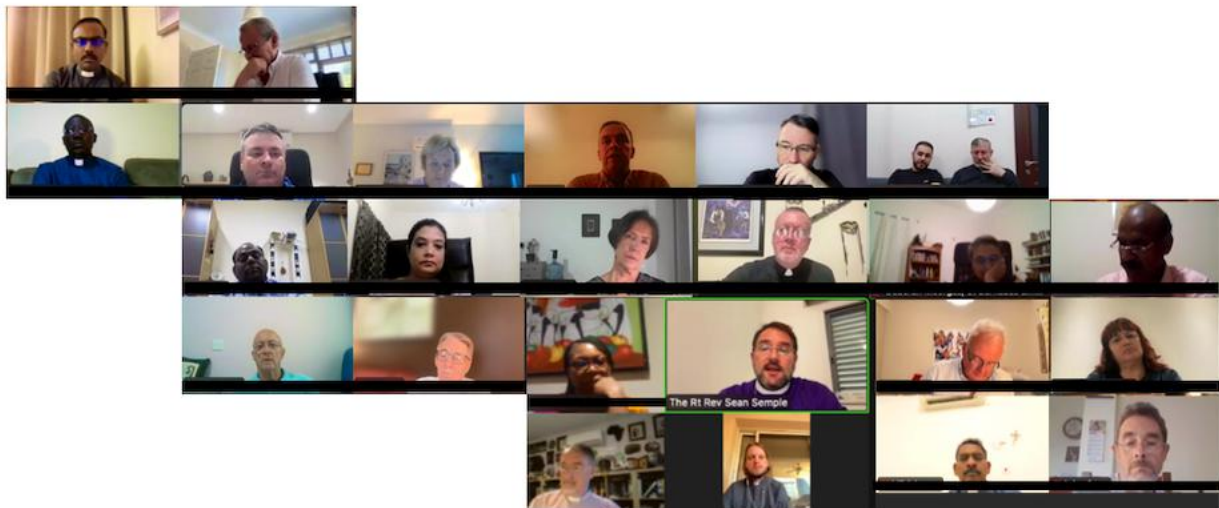
Synod receives and approves the February 2024 Synod Minutes

Motion 3

Synod receives and approves the Safeguarding report

Motion 4

Synod receives and approves the Ministry report



SYNOD MEMBERS HEARD BISHOP SEAN'S REFLECTIONS ON THE NEED FOR RENEWAL AND REFORM AS THE DIOCESE APPROACHES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2026

Provincial Youth Conference

Linda Balfe and the Reverend George Vidiakin reported on the Provincial Youth Conference held in Famagusta, north Cyprus on 25-29 August 2024—on the theme of Under the Tent of Abraham and Sarah: Rethinking Mission for Young Leaders in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East



Supported by USPG, this was the second such event to be held in the Province, following last year's in Rafah, Jordan.

"The youth conferences aim to equip young leaders to participate more fully in the life of the church in the province, developing confidence, knowledge and commitment to serve," said Linda. "This year's event was held in north Cyprus because two young leaders who are absolutely crucial to the chaplaincy of St Mark Famagusta are unable to travel due to visa restrictions. So the conference came to them.

"The group spent a significant amount of time at St Mark's and were extremely grateful for the incredible welcome we got—and the people of St Mark's were so touched that the whole province had come to them." Participants were fortunate to also spend time at St Andrew Kyrenia.

The event brought together 12 young leaders from the Diocese of Jerusalem and nine from Cyprus and the Gulf, along with three leaders from each diocese and three guests from USPG—including the Reverend Canon Dr Peniel Rajkumar who served as Speaker, guiding participants through the themes of the week.

Palestinian participants came from the West Bank, Jordan and Israel; three people came from Qatar, two from Jebel Ali and two from Abu Dhabi.

"The Diocese of Jerusalem is a very close-knit group," said Linda. "Many of the young people grew up together and had been on summer schools together. Our diocese is very different; young people and leaders didn't all know each other. But all were quick to make links across the diocese and the province. Our young leaders were an absolute credit to all of us, and fantastic ambassadors for their diocese and province."

Reverend George outlined the four strands of the conference programme, beginning with worship and testimony. "We had an intense liturgical program," said George. "One of the participants said she had never prayed as much as she did that week!

"There was a service of holy communion most days,



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as well as morning prayer, evening prayer and even one compline, immersing ourselves in the liturgical richness of the Anglican tradition. And we sang—conventional Western hymns in English, but also Arabic religious songs and hymns, and one in Tamil."

Participants shared the story of their faith journey, and were privileged to hear Bishop Sean's own story, delivered, as he said, for the first time.

The second strand was the context of Cyprus—a beautiful but wounded country, divided between two communities, Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot.

"The idea was to help young people, especially those from a context which can be deemed similar to the context of Cyprus, to see another example of division, of frozen conflict, and—more important—of peace-building efforts."

(contd page 10)

Provincial Youth Conference (contd from p9)

The organisation Home for Cooperation, based in the buffer-zone between the two sides, organised a tour of the Old City of Nicosia, with staff providing an overview of the ongoing, sometimes stuttering, process of peace-building. The group also visited the Varosha neighbourhood of Famagusta, known as the “ghost town” of Cyprus, a previously thriving area now lying derelict within the buffer zone. But there was also plenty to enjoy—not least the rich history of Famagusta, and the gothic splendour of its cathedrals and churches

The third strand was religious pilgrimage. Although the north of Cyprus is predominantly Muslim, it is home to important Christian sites. The group visited St Barnabas Monastery, which currently houses an icon museum. The monastery surrounds a beautiful mediaeval church—an important place of worship for the island’s Orthodox community—with St Barnabas’s tomb nearby.

“We also visited the ancient city of Salamis, mentioned in the book of Acts,” said George— “the very city where Paul and Barnabas arrived during their first missionary journey when they came to Cyprus.”

The fourth and final Conference strand was talks/group activity on the theme of hospitality, religious dialogue and mission, led by the Reverend Canon Dr Peniel Rajkumar, theologian and USPG Director of Global Mission.



*The Provincial Youth Conference was organised by the Revd Wadie Far and the Revd Nael Abu Rahmoun (Diocese of Jerusalem); the Revd George Vidiakin, Linda Balfe and the Revd Mark Derry (Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf); and Joel Kelling (Anglican Alliance)
Video and photo credits: Rachael Anderson*

Find out more — and stay in touch!

The Diocesan Communications Team invites you to find out more about the history and news of the Diocese

To send news from your parish, please contact helen.perry@cypgulf.org

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