



# THE OLIVE BRANCH

CHRISTMAS 2024

*The Association of Friends of Cyprus and the Gulf*

## Emmanuel, God with us

Over the years, having lived in different parts of the world, we have collected a variety of Nativity scenes from several countries, which now display in our front window. I have two favourites: one from the Philippines, which has the wisemen riding on water buffalo, and the other from Peru with the characters in very distinctive and colourful dress, particularly their Andean chullo, but each is a portrayal of Christ coming in different cultural contexts. Recently I have been reading Barbara Brown Taylor's *Home by Another Way, Biblical meditations through the Christian year*. Here is a short extract from Christmas Eve: *'Tonight we are living in the eternal now of God's coming among us. His name is Emmanuel - the God who is with us - who is made of the same stuff we are and who is made of the same stuff God is and who will not let either of us go...None of heaven's escalators are going up tonight. Everybody up there is coming down tonight, right here, right into our own Bethlehem, bringing us the God who has decided to make his home in our arms.'*

Wherever we are this Christmas, may we know the joy of Emmanuel, God with us. Happy Christmas!

## Bishop Michael's 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee



Many congratulations to Bishop Michael Lewis, as he celebrates twenty-five years as a bishop since his episcopal ordination and consecration at York Minster, as well as forty-five years as a priest.

A jubilee mass will take place at St Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia on the feast of St Ambrose on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30pm. Refreshments will follow in the grounds of the Cathedral and all are most welcome to attend in person.

*The Next Zoom prayer for the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf is Tuesday 18th February 2025 at 2pm (GMT)*

*Other dates set for 2025 are: Tuesday 20th May 2.00pm (BST) and Tuesday 28th October (GMT)*

One of the core aims of the Friends is to *pray for the work of God and ministry throughout the Diocese*. Using a powerpoint presentation as a guide and lasting no longer than an hour, we gather to pray on Zoom for the breadth of the life of our Diocese and it is a great encouragement to do that together. Zoom joining codes are sent out in advance. Please encourage those who have the life and mission of the Diocese at heart to join us.

## New Bishop of Exeter

The Enthronement of the Bishop of Exeter, the Rt Rev'd Dr Mike Harrison, was an opportune time for the Bishops of the three partnership Dioceses: Exeter (+Mike), Thika (+Julius) and Cyprus and the Gulf (+Sean) to come together, to get



to know one another and to pray and discuss how possibilities for building on all that has gone before might be fostered. On the following Sunday morning Bishop Sean preached at the main Eucharist in Exeter Cathedral.

The Friends sent Bishop Mike greetings and assurance of our prayers for the Enthronement and his new ministry and received a very warm letter in response. He wrote: *'I look forward to developing strong relationships and partnership in the gospel with Cyprus and the Gulf in the future.'*

## Friends Gatherings in 2025

### South-West Day in Gloucester Tuesday March 11<sup>th</sup> 2025

We meet in the historic St Mary de Crypt for coffee between 10.00am and 10.30am with a Eucharist



following and then for lunch. In the afternoon a visit has been arranged to the Gloucester Maritime Museum

and there will be refreshments before departing. Full details will be emailed in the New Year.

### All Hallows by the Tower, London Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025

AGM, Eucharist, and lunch - an opportunity to hear up-to-date news from the Diocese, to gather with our Bishop, to receive reports from the previous year and elect our committee, as well as to gather as Friends.

### Northern Gathering in York Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Meeting in the Bar Convent, York – an opportunity for those who live further north to come together, but with an open invitation to southerners to come and visit this beautiful city.

### New Vicar of All Hallows

We are delighted to welcome The Reverend Nicol Kinrade, who is currently serving as Chaplain to the Bishop of Hereford, as the new Vicar of All Hallows-by-the-Tower, the Diocese's UK base, as well as overseeing several other City churches. It sounds as if she is returning home: before ordination, she worked in the museum sector based at the Tower of London and she knows already knows +Sean from his years serving in parishes in Hereford Diocese.



The main way to keep in touch with Diocesan news is through the Diocesan website:



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<https://www.cypgulf.org>

## This Autumn's Northern Gathering



A gathering of twenty-two members of the Friends took place in York at the Bar Convent on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October with two former Deans of St Christopher's Cathedral, Bahrain, Alan Hayday and Chris Butt, presiding and preaching for the first time together at the Eucharist in the lovely Convent Chapel. It was lovely to welcome John and Mary Banfield, who had come from the deep south. There was time to catch up with one another over coffee and lunch, and for those who'd come the night before over curry and in the afternoon there was the opportunity to visit the York Castle Museum. As ever we are grateful to Ron and Bernice Maitland who have been arranging the Northern Gathering for ten years.



### JMECA Meeting London

Chris Butt (Chair), Linda Smith (Secretary) and Rachel Bainbridge (Treasurer) represented the Friends at a significant coming together of the diocesan bishops of the Provinces of Jerusalem and the Middle East and Alexandria in the Jerusalem Room of Westminster Abbey on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November arranged by the Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association on the occasion of their AGM.

