



Friends of the Anglican Province of Alexandria
Supporting churches in Egypt, North Africa, Horn of Africa and Gambella
Registered Charity 1181201



FAPA NEWSLETTER – Advent 2022

Dear members and friends of FAPA,

Advent greetings in days when “visitation from above” seems to be very much needed around our weary planet. The eyes of world have recently been focused on Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt where the COP conference saw national leaders seeking to hold one another to promises previously made about action to slow down/reverse disastrous climate change. Some areas of our Province see and feel the current effects of climate change, and – along with other local bodies – seek to alleviate cycles of famine and flood. At the same time, churches and institutions seek to minister to the most vulnerable in their areas. Our prayers for places and people around the Province continue, therefore, to be much needed.

In this newsletter we bring you a report from The Right Reverend Anthony Ball, assistant bishop to Archbishop Samy, who is tasked with addressing the legal and practical steps, finding potential leadership, and helping to bring into reality the new Province of Alexandria with four functioning dioceses – by 2025. He writes of some significant recent steps within the Province.

We in FAPA especially give thanks for the generous recent service of Canon Huw Thomas who is stepping down as the incumbent of Holy Trinity, Algiers where he has served as a locum for past six years. Huw’s involvement with the Diocese/Province has stretched over many years and many places besides Algeria! We pray that he will enjoy good health in (renewed) retirement and the peace that comes from knowing he has been a faithful servant. Huw offers us encouraging news of the development of the Church in Algiers.

It is encouraging to learn that several of the churches/ministries in Egypt needing the presence of English-speaking ordained ministers now have one in place. Dr Matthew Anderson is combining ministry at St John the Baptist, Maadi with a role in the Centre for Arab-West Understanding. Rev Jeff Jacobs is serving the English-speaking congregation at All Saints’ Cathedral and Rev Dr Jeff Boldt has joined the faculty of the Alexandria School of Alexandria.

I first met Professor David Ford in Luxor at a Clergy and spouses conference organised for the then-Province of Jerusalem & the Middle East. David offered some vignettes from his research and studying of the Gospel of John. He later kindly forwarded to me his notes for the Bampton Lectures where he was readying his material for publication. This Advent, consequently, I am reading my way through his *The Gospel of John – A Theological Commentary* (2021; Baker). The publication condenses (well, for an academic!) his rich insight into the fourth Gospel. David reads the Gospel whilst at the same time listening to the Old Testament (especially Septuagint version, and especially the Psalms –

the most quoted OT book in John), to the Synoptic Gospels and to other texts of relevance. Plus he elucidates the Gospel's message for today. I am reading it very much with my "experience of living in a Muslim context" hat on. Over and over again, John's Gospel proclaims the divinity of the Son. If you need encouraging or reassuring about that, this commentary will do hugely encourage you!



But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

Bishop Bill, FAPA Chair

PS. Tunisian Pilgrimage. Please do consider joining the FAPA pilgrimage/exploration of the past and present: Carthaginian, Roman, early Christian, Islamic, modern..... in May 2023. Details are found at the end of this newsletter.

Please Do Not share Textual and photographic details contained in this newsletter outside the FAPA membership

A report from Assistant Bishop Anthony Ball

Inaugural Synods

The inaugural Synods have been held for three of the dioceses in the Province – in the order they occurred: Gambella (14 and 15 September), the Horn of Africa (19 September) and North Africa (4 to 6 October). In a church that is episcopally led and synodically governed these were important moments in the life of each diocese and the Province as a whole, and key steps in the ongoing preparation for the election of diocesan bishops in 2025. Inevitably a significant element of the business of the Synod was the approval of constitutions and standing orders followed by the election of Synod officers and representatives to various bodies - including to the newly formed Executive Boards and to the Provincial Synod.

Both of the Synod meetings in Ethiopia were presided over by Bishop Kuan, the Commissary Bishop as visa issues prevented Archbishop Samy and Bishop Anthony from participating. A bout of COVID



meant that Bishop Kuan had to delay his travel by a week – but it was wonderful for him to be back in the country for the first time since the dioceses had been formed. The Synod in Gambella had been planned to coincide with **the inauguration of the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd**, in the construction of which he has had such a key role. The inauguration took place as planned on 11 September, with the Regional Vice President, ecumenical and other VIP guests swelling the congregation.

Bishop Kuan and the Gambella Anglican Centre Archdeacon Jeremiah



The **Gambella Synod** was held in the Anglican Centre with clergy and laity joining together for fellowship, deliberation and worship. In addition to the constitutional business, reports from many of the mission centres were shared and the life of the diocese discussed. A key concern was how best to enact the vision of becoming a self-supporting diocese. At present the diocese is almost entirely reliant on external funding for clergy salaries and other ministry expenses. Bishop Kuan has been offering teaching (via WhatsApp!) on giving and the powerful example of Buhfai Tham ('Handful of Rice') practiced in Mizoram, NE India.

The flooding from which the region suffered has also affected churches and the houses of many clergy. Financial constraints mean the Diocese is not able to offer much support for rebuilding and repairs. A donor has provided for the building of a new church, Christ the Servant King, in Gambella town. There remains an urgent need to acquire the land for some new churches elsewhere (for which financing is being sought) as development and inflation means the price of land is rising fast.

Another need that was acknowledged is that for ministers – both ordained and lay – to serve the congregations. It was a great joy that during the Synod 73 new Lay Ministers were licensed - adding to the 55 who had been licensed during Bishop Anthony's visit in January. Please pray for the ongoing discernment of how best to provide for ordained ministry, particularly the plans for bi-vocational (self-supporting) ministers.

Alongside the Gambella Synod there was the final meeting of the Area Assembly of the Anglican Church in Ethiopia (ACiE). It was the predecessor of the Diocesan Synods and had first gathered in the time of Bishop Andrew Proud. The ACiE continues to be the umbrella body for both Dioceses and provides the legal identity of our churches and their ministry.



Shortly after the Synod the aged diocesan car broke down and remains off the road. It is an essential tool for ministry and communication throughout the Diocese. However, the very high vehicle tax rate means that cost of a second-hand replacement is beyond the scope of the budget. We are praying for external donors to come forward and are in discussion with one about a shared-use vehicle for the Diocese and St Frumentius College. Donations to support the Diocese's contribution would be welcome!



Following on from his time in Gambella, Bishop Kuan travelled to Assosa to preside over the first **Synod meeting of the Diocese of the Horn of Africa**. Assosa is the capital of Ethiopia’s Benishangul-Gumuz Region and there are three refugee camps where the Diocese has churches. Representatives from Addis Ababa travelled to Assosa but, as the conflict was still raging, it was not possible to have any representation from Mekelle (nor the other countries of the Horn covered by the Diocese). The Synod started with introductions from the clergy and churches. Those around Assosa had increased

significantly in size to accommodate those who had been driven out of two other refugee camps as a result of local conflicts. There were now 8 churches in Tsore camp, 4 in Sherkole camp and a new congregation in the Bambasi camp – many pastored by four South Sudanese refugee clergy – as well as the 3 churches in Addis. Between them the churches use 12 different languages for worship. The Synod heard about the support that St Matthew’s had offered and that Revd Deng Mark Khor was to be posted to Assosa for an initial year to seek to establish a church there, and to be Area Dean for the region with a view to growing the church presence. Please pray for the is initiative and for the resources needed to establish a new church, support an Area Dean and introduce a programme of biblical formation for local churches. Alongside the business of the Synod there were plenty of opportunity for prayer, fellowship and getting to know one another over meals.

A particular focus of prayer is the need for food in the refugee camps, where rations have been reduced. Following the Synod the clergy in the refugee camps became the first members of the Goats Economic Empowerment Project – given 3 female and 1 male goat to look after and breed (with all odd-numbered baby goats returned to the project for new participants). Four South-Sudanese clergy based in the camps were licensed in a visit by Bishop Anthony in November, alongside 37 Lay Ministers. Please pray too for the 60 baptised and 200 confirmed in Tsore and Sherkole during that visit.

At the beginning of October Archbishop Samy presided over the inaugural **Synod of the Diocese of North Africa** which was held in the grounds of St George’s, Tunis. The visa issues this time affected some of those coming from Libya and Chad – meaning there was a much depleted House of Clergy.



Nonetheless there were representatives from Algeria, Libya, Tunisia who gave presentations about the life and ministry of their churches, with Revd Yassir Kodi (based at the Cathedral in Cairo) describing his recent visit and developments in Chad and a video presentation from Mauritania. In Chad, Anglican clergy, who had been ordained in Nigeria, had established congregation in the capital and other parts of the country. Funds from the Province had supported church-building and Archbishop Samy recounted how when he had sent some funds to support the clergy they had opted instead to use the money to buy land for another church that was at that point meeting under a tree. The theme of the Synod was “One Body” and the participants were encouraged as, in the daily Bible Study on 1 Corinthians 12 and in the Synod discussions, the sense of shared mission in their very different contexts was reinforced. Bishop Anthony led discussion about the Constitution and Standing Orders and gave a presentation on safeguarding.

We had expected the Synod’s opening Eucharist to include two ordinations – Deacon Crimson from Libya and Felix Ndoubahidi from Chad – and it was a sadness that they were not able to be with us.



The service did, nonetheless, include Confirmations and the licensing of a Lay Minister for Christ the King, Tripoli. Worship at the Synod was primarily in Arabic and English, but also included French. Within the context of the Synod we had the tremendous joy of a service for **the Graduation from St Cyprian Theological College** of the first cohort of 7 students which had been delayed

because of COVID. The diplomas for these local North African leaders, were presented by Archbishop Samy following a powerful address by Canon Dr Ashley Null, the Chair of the Board of the Alexandria School of Theology. We give thanks to God for this important development and pray for their future ministries within the Diocese. The Synod also discussed the future of St Cyprian and passed a motion requesting the AST Board to continue to providing theological education on the campus, and to explore expanding the provision.

Bishop Anthony Ball November 2022

A letter from Canon Huw Thomas HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, ALGIERS

Algeria, it is said, has a long history but a short memory. Certainly the bloody conflicts of the second half of the twentieth century can serve to hide from the memory of this beautiful country its much earlier significance, not least in the springtime of the Christian history in Roman North Africa and Europe. The remains of that day are there to be seen in the ruins of Annaba (Hippo) and Tipaza and other sites visited by the occasional tourist.

But the Christian paradigm of death and resurrection continues to assert itself and Algeria's twentieth century saints and martyrs of the Atlas Mountains Monastery, of Oran and Algiers, recently beatified, bear their witness of faithful presence and service which recall that earlier day.

Our Anglican presence here is very recent when seen in the context of history, being but a century and a half in age and already searching a new purpose, for long past are the days when it served the spiritual needs of seasonal visitors from England in addition to a small resident, consular and business community.



Today, as inheritors of a prominent site and splendid church buildings for which we thank our benefactors of the Victorian past we find ourselves a place of Christian hospitality for a far more varied community away from homes in sub-Saharan Africa to study in Algerian universities, or members from diplomatic, business or development backgrounds resident for shorter or longer terms in or around the capital city and coming from various countries. What brings us together is rarely a common Anglican tradition but rather the practice of prayer in the English language, not easy to find elsewhere.

This means unsurprisingly we are seen by many in this Islamic context, not least by the authorities, as 'the church for foreigners' and herein ironically lies much of our protection and safety from active opposition.

The law prohibits proselytizing but there is an evangelism of which the offering of hospitality can be an effective agent. The Anglican way is better able than some traditions to offer hospitality to Christians from differing expressions. Its openness of welcome and respectfulness of other faith traditions can also serve sometimes to attract and draw others to seek the face of Him we strive to follow.



In recent years the long perseverance of Bishop Mounier in negotiating the recognition of our rightful ownership and repossession of our church and site has allowed us to open our gates to many to enter. Little by little, week by week, we welcome passers-by with greater frequency, including both needy and curious, migrant and native.

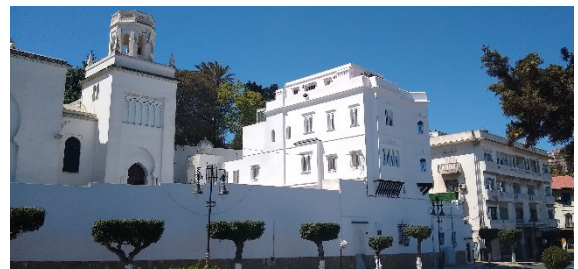


Above all, gently and with due care "the church for foreigners" is seeing a new thing whereby its hospitality is being not only shared but led by those for whom Algeria is their native home. This must surely be the future pattern though doubtless in the time and wise discerning of our hospitable God. For now we rejoice that in the summer Archbishop Samy licensed, after training and preparation three Lay Ministers for Holy Trinity Church, all Algerian and one of whom is warden and one treasurer.

All this is very small and not to be compared with greater movements of the Spirit in the story of this part of North Africa but the small watches of the night not less to God belong and as a new Anglican diocese of North Africa struggles in its birth pangs we look forward to new shapes and patterns emerging.



Time is too short to tell of our recent refurbishing of the church interior, the need now to restore the exterior and the sharing of our adjacent building with Scuola Roma, the Italian school providing us with necessary rental income and a bridge into a wider community.



Personally as we now seek a new and more permanent ordained ministry here and my long-extended locum tenens ends please unite in prayer that essential visas and residence permits might be issued to facilitate an appointment.

Meanwhile as St David of Wales, whose Celtic spirituality would possibly have found many resonances with our Berber/Kabyle cousins, urged in his farewell:


BE JOYFUL, KEEP THE FAITH, AND DO THE LITTLE THINGS.

Huw Thomas. November 2022

FAPA – Tunisian Pilgrimage Tour 9 Days 5th -13th May 2023

A private tour arranged for FAPA members and friends – it will be led by Trustees Richard Hibbert and Andy Wheeler. Details are available in the Notices section of our website www.fapa-egypt.org



Double  [click for brochure](#)
FAPA 2023 Tunisia
Pilgrimage Tour (UK)