

Friends of the Holy Land Tenth Anniversary Service

London, Glasgow, Coventry 14-16 November, 2019

The Most Reverend Suheil S. Dawani

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is my great delight and privilege to bring you greetings from Jerusalem, where I know many of you have visited in the past on pilgrimage.

We are always happy to welcome you there, and I hope that many of you will be coming to visit us soon. That way you can see in person both the many challenges and the great joys we have in our Christian ministry there.

In our second lesson, the Apostle Paul invokes the powerful image of childbirth when he speaks about all of God's Creation groaning in labor for the final redemption of the World.

Over the centuries, perhaps no part of God's creation has groaned more loudly for redemption than the region where our Lord Jesus Christ once ministered during his earthly life—the region that we call the Land of the Holy One.

That is the Land where the Diocese of Jerusalem has its ministry. It is also the place where the Friends of the Holy Land has so generously given its support over these past ten years.

During his earthly ministry, this is where our Lord healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, brought hearing to the deaf, and preached to all the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

We Christians in the Holy Land seek to continue this ministry in these same places, as Christ has called us to do. We are the "Living Stones" in the Land—the bearers of Christ's reconciling love.

We look to show forth this love in three important ways.

First, we seek to remain as the worshipping Christian community of faith in the Land—the living witnesses of our Lord's great miracles in his homeland.

But our witness is getting harder to share. One hundred years ago, we Christians were more than 25 percent of the population. Now we are less than 2 percent.

Still, with Advent and Christmas just around the corner, we are getting ready to display our Christmas lights on our churches. In this way, we can tell the world that we Christians are still here, we have always been here, and we are not going away!

We will continue worshiping in our churches and preaching from our pulpits the saving message of God in Jesus Christ. And we will continue to welcome the thousands of pilgrims who come to us each and every year, sharing with them our Christian witness.

The second way we show forth the love of Christ is through our work of reconciliation. Though we are relatively few in number, we Christians are a great force behind the movement to live together in the Land in harmony and peace.

We are bridge-builders across the region. We bring together the three Abrahamic faiths, working to promote mutual respect and good relations between the different ethnic and religious communities. And we do this by maintaining very good relationships between the Christian churches—always there to support one another.

The third and final way in which we seek to show forth Christ's love is not just by words, but by deeds. It is not only through our worship of Christ in our churches that we look to show forth his message of peace and reconciliation. It is also through our hospitals and schools, and through our clinics and our rehabilitation centers that we let the light of Christ shine into the darkness of human despair.

We are grateful that the Friends of the Holy Land has been so faithful in praying for our ministries and supporting them financially. We could not continue our work without your help.

You have given relief to the sick in our Penman Clinic in Zababdeh. You have given support to the refugees living in the camps in Northern Jordan. You have granted scholarships to our young students to study in our schools and to attend summer camps in Galilee and elsewhere in our diocese.

In these and many other ways, you have helped us to let the light of Christ continue to shine in the place where our Christian faith had its birth.

My brothers and sisters, we know that Creation will not stop groaning in labor until the Last Day, when God himself will deliver our final redemption.

In the meantime, with your prayers and support, we will continue to proclaim Christ's message of hope, healing, and reconciliation in the part of the world that is very dear to God's heart.

May God bless us in this partnership. And may God bless the lives of all those for whom we minister together in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.