



**The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & The Middle East
Diocese of Jerusalem
The Most Revd Suheil Salman Dawani**

Christmas Message - draft 3

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I write this message from the Holy City of Jerusalem to wish you a peaceful Advent, as we journey together towards the Incarnation in a stable in Bethlehem.

The message of the Prince of Peace is dear to us, and so important for us to meditate and reflect on throughout our earthly pilgrimage. In this Diocese, I have called all to reflect on their ministries, recognizing that situations are not easy: In Syria people face extraordinary difficulties. We have had to close our church - I hope temporarily - in Damascus. In Jordan the church's understanding of hospitality - as throughout Europe and the world - is challenged in welcoming the refugee: to welcome the stranger is to welcome Christ in our midst (Matt. 25:35). In Lebanon we are challenged again to respond with compassion in the wake of horrific violence in November. And in Palestine and Israel, we are called daily to seek and pray for peace between Palestinian and Israeli.

Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Christ, when we ready ourselves for His presence revealed in the world. The Prince of Peace teaches us to serve and shows us that through the Holy Spirit we must not give up hope when things seem hopeless; that in the face of violence we must not be tempted to hate, but that we must have compassion. The Prince of Peace shows us what healing is, between neighbors and between communities. I pray daily for those who grieve, that the Holy Spirit, the comforter (John 14:26), may grant them solace and healing in their hearts.

As part of our discipline of prayer here in Jerusalem, we have invited our friends, far and near, to use at the beginning of Advent and on Christmas Eve a special litany, which is set out below. This litany was written as the troubles here in Jerusalem escalated and I believe can be used in this Diocese and adapted for other places where there is conflict, pain and suffering.

I pray that God is with you, your families and your friends this Advent and Christmastide that He may inspire you in your ministry, wherever that may be. May Christ sow a seed of love in your heart that pours out in abundance (2 Cor.9.6) through your life.

Grace and Peace,

++ Suheil Dawani

The Most Revd Suheil S. Dawani
Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem & the Middle East