

Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

Province of the Episcopal Church in
Jerusalem and the Middle East



The Office of the Bishop

6 January 2026

Today marks the fiftieth Anniversary of the Episcopal Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East and its constituent dioceses.

The Right Reverend Leonard Ashton was instituted as the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf on 5 January 1976 at St George's Collegiate Church, Jerusalem. This act formalised the creation of the Diocese, followed the next day by the inauguration of the Episcopal Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East—a Province originally consisting of the four Dioceses of Jerusalem; Cyprus and the Gulf; Iran; and Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa, the latter becoming the Anglican Province of Alexandria in 2020.

At midnight on 5 January 1976, as the new Province came into being, the Collegiate Church of St George the Martyr formally changed its name to become the Cathedral Church of St George the Martyr, serving not only the Diocese of Jerusalem but also, in a unique way, the whole Anglican Communion. At the same moment, the Jerusalem and East Mission became the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association (JMECA), which continues to provide generous support for the maintenance and development of the Province and its Dioceses.

It was deeply poignant for me to be in St George's Cathedral at midnight on the 5 January 2026 to give thanks for our Province and Dioceses, and to commend them anew to God.

Each of these new beginnings fifty years ago occurred under the midnight stars of Jerusalem, on the Feast Day of the Epiphany. At Epiphany we celebrate the manifestation of Christ to the Magi, thus symbolising the revelation of Christ to the nations of the world. This symbolism and theology of the Epiphany seem particularly significant to the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, composed mainly but not exclusively of Christians drawn to the Middle East from all over the world.

And so today as we celebrate our Golden Anniversary and begin our Jubilee Year, we give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the lives and ministries of Anglican Christians who, over these fifty years, have reflected the light of Christ into some of the most traumatised, complex and challenging places in the world. We pray that Christ, the Prince of Peace, may grant us grace and strength to work for the "unarmed peace"^[1] of the Gospel in our region. And we continue to open our lives and structures to the refining and transforming presence of the Holy Spirit.

I invite you today to give thanks with me for the witness of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, and to pray that the faith, hope and love of Christ may continue to be manifest through our lives and ministry in the nations we serve.

+Sean

The Feast of the Epiphany 2026

^[1] Message of His Holiness Leo XIV, LIX World Day of Peace, 1 January 2026, p6