

## Egypt, Israel and the Occupied Territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria

It is in the midst of the Roman occupation that the incarnation took place;  
it is in spite of the occupation that Mary and Joseph found joy and love in the birth of Jesus;  
it is in spite of the occupation and in the midst of economic hardships that the shepherds came to visit a family of modest means and discovered great joy and peace;  
it is in spite of the occupation that the Magi came to offer their gifts to the child.

We celebrate in the midst of the occupation and in spite of it. Through our celebration we defy the occupation;  
we defy the injustice;  
we defy the oppressors;  
we defy the powers.

They do not possess the last word;  
they can build high walls,  
but they cannot take away our hope;  
they can put us in jail,  
but they cannot take away our joy;

they can prevent us from visiting family,  
but they cannot take away our love;  
they can stop us at checkpoints and impose all kinds of restrictions,  
but they cannot take away our pursuit of freedom and liberation;  
they can prevent us from going to Bethlehem,  
but they cannot prevent the spirit of Bethlehem from reaching us;  
they can treat us as non-humans,  
but they cannot crush our spirit;  
nor can they take away our God-given human worth and dignity;  
they can act with hate and disgust but, by the grace of God, we can always refuse to stoop to the level of hate and maintain our love of God and neighbour that includes them.

Therefore, Christmas makes us defiant.  
We defy the evil-doers because we believe in the goodness  
which they are capable of doing;

we defy hate because we believe in the power of love  
and forgiveness;

we defy despair because we believe in life and hope;

we defy violence and terror – both state  
and individual –

because we believe in the power of peace and non-  
violence;

we defy war and the occupation of other people's  
lands because we believe in the power of  
peaceful methods based on international law  
and legitimacy;

we defy and challenge those who humiliate and  
degrade others,

because we believe in the dignity of every human  
being.

The incarnation took place when God took on our  
humanity, when the Word became flesh and dwelt  
among us. This happened in Palestine under  
Roman occupation. Then, as now, and in spite of  
all the hardships, we celebrate Christ's birth –  
Emmanuel, God with us – giving us hope, joy,  
peace and love.

We are defiant. We are full of hope. We will continue  
to work for peace through justice.

Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth, Peace.

*Naim Ateek*

## Egypt

*(Arab Republic of Egypt)*



## Statistics

**Population:** 76.1 million

**Government:** Republic

**Language:** Arabic (official), English and French  
by educated classes

**Literacy:** 57.3% (men 68.6 %, women 46.9%)

**Religion:** Muslim (mostly Sunni) 94%, Coptic  
Christian 6%

**WCC member churches:** Coptic Orthodox  
Church, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of  
Alexandria and All Africa, Synod of the Nile of the  
Evangelical Church, Presbyterian Church of Egypt

## History

Egypt is located in North Africa, bordering the  
Mediterranean Sea, between Libya and the Gaza  
Strip, and the Red Sea north of Sudan. It includes  
the Asian Sinai Peninsula.

The regularity and richness of the annual Nile  
River flood, coupled with semi-isolation provided  
by the deserts to the east and west, allowed for the  
development of one of the world's great civiliza-  
tions. A uniform empire grew up around 3200 BC  
and a series of dynasties ruled Egypt for the next  
three millennia. The last dynasty fell in 341 BC to  
the Persians, who in turn were replaced by the  
Greeks, Romans and Byzantines. It was the Arabs  
who introduced Islam and Arabic in the seventh  
century and who ruled for the next six centuries.

A local military caste, the Mamluks, took con-  
trol about 1250 and continued to govern after the  
conquest of Egypt by the Ottoman Turks in 1517.  
After the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869,  
Egypt became an important world transportation  
hub, but also fell heavily into debt. Ostensibly to  
protect its canal investments, Britain seized con-  
trol of Egypt's government in 1882, but nominal  
allegiance to the Ottoman empire continued until  
1914. Partially independent from Britain in 1922,  
Egypt attained full sovereignty after the second  
world war.

The completion of the Aswan High Dam with  
funding from the Soviet Union in 1971 and the  
resultant Lake Nasser altered the time-honoured  
place of the Nile River in the agriculture and  
ecology of Egypt. A rapidly growing population

(the largest in the Arab world), limited arable land and dependence on the Nile all continue to overtax resources and stress society.

Following the establishment of Israel in 1948, Egypt supported its Arab allies and fought three wars with Israel. Under the presidency of Anwar Sadat (1970–81) the Camp David accords were signed during the US presidency of Jimmy Carter, bringing peace between Egypt and Israel and the return of the Sinai to Egypt. Since then an uneasy peace has prevailed, marked by the assassination of Sadat in 1981.

Tension in Egypt stems from poverty and sharp divisions between rich and poor. Illegal (but nonetheless powerful) religious parties exist. The Muslim Brotherhood constitutes the strongest opposition to the government, although it has been illegal, and its activities are aggressively curtailed.

Although Islam is by far the largest and most cohesive of the religions of Egypt, the Copts have a long and honourable tradition politically, economically and spiritually. It is an ancient tradition in Egypt that St Mark visited Alexandria and preached the gospel throughout the country, and there has been a Christian presence in Egypt from the apostolic age. Egyptian Christians died in their thousands in the bitter persecution of the third and fourth centuries and formed the nucleus of the great desert communities, an experience which fortified the Coptic church for years to come. The Copts (descendants of the ancient Egyptians) preserved the Coptic language in their liturgy and held fast to "the faith of their fathers". The Copts maintained and renewed the great ascetic monastic traditions that originated in the Egyptian deserts. They remain the largest Christian community in the Arab world. Protestant churches established in the nineteenth century by British, American and European missionaries are relatively small in comparison, yet their numerous social and educational institutions play a key role beyond the borders of their communities.

## Israel and the Occupied Territories



### Statistics

#### Population:

Israel: 6.19 million, including East Jerusalem  
West Bank and Gaza: 3.7 million Israeli residents in Occupied Areas, including the West

#### Language:

Israel: Hebrew, English, Russian and immigrant languages and Arabic

West Bank and Gaza: Arabic, English, Hebrew

#### Government:

Israel: Parliamentary state

West Bank and Gaza: Interim self-government under elected Palestinian Authority

#### Religion:

Israel: Jews 85%, Muslims 12%, Christians 2%  
West Bank and Gaza: Muslims 90%, Christians 6%, Jews 2%, Other 2%

**WCC member churches:**

*Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East (Anglican), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem*

**H i s t o r y**

Israel and the Occupied Territories are located along the Mediterranean Sea between Egypt in the south, Lebanon to the north and Jordan to the east. The area's theological and traditional complexities, as well as political, human rights, cultural and religious concerns, require sensitivity and understanding.

From the nineteenth century, the Zionist movement dedicated itself to the creation of a Jewish state and the physical return of Jews to Palestine. Given impetus by the Holocaust in Europe and increasing immigration (legal and illegal) of Jews into Palestine, the state of Israel came into being in 1948, after the British surrendered their mandate over Palestine. Most Palestinians rejected this arrangement and the majority of the population – some 750,000 Palestinian Arabs – fled or were expelled. In 1967 the annexation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank of the Jordan River and Gaza produced further waves of refugees amid great violence. There are now some 4 million Palestinians scattered throughout the Middle East and Palestine, many of them living in permanent refugee camps. Dispossessed and suffering from severe discrimination and harassment, they are the victims of the Jewish return. For them, the situation worsens daily and represents a betrayal by the world community.

Following the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, Israel withdrew from the Sinai in 1982. In 1994 the Israel-Jordan peace treaty resolved disputes between the two countries. In 2000 Israel withdrew unilaterally from southern Lebanon after 18 years of occupation, and in 2005 Israel quit Gaza.

Bilateral negotiations commenced in 1992 under the Oslo accords between Israeli and Palestinian representatives (from the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza) to achieve

a permanent settlement and establish a Palestinian state. In 1993 an Israeli-PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) Declaration of Principles (DOP) provided for a transitional period of five years to establish Palestinian interim government and transfer certain powers and responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority, which includes the Palestinian Legislative Council elected in 1996. The DOP gave Israel all powers over internal and external security. Direct negotiations to determine the status of the West Bank and Gaza did not begin until 1999, but have continued only fitfully since 2000 due to violence, instability and Israel's constant military incursions into the Occupied Territories. Both sides blame the other for many deaths and the massive destruction of civilian life.

In 2002 US President George W. Bush presented a "road map" towards achieving an independent Palestinian state (a "two-state solution"), but little progress has been made. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon proceeded to separate the two entities with a huge fortified barrier which Palestinians and their supporters claim encroaches on West Bank land belonging to Palestine. Massive attacks on Gaza led to the collapse of the "road map" initiative. Late in 2004, Sharon promoted Gaza's independence along with small sections of the West Bank, in place of a negotiated independent Palestine.

In late 2004, long-time liberation leader and President of Palestine, Yasser Arafat, fell ill suddenly and was evacuated from his Ramallah compound to hospital in Paris where he died within ten days. His death, while mourned by Palestinians, paved the way for presidential elections in January 2005. Mahmoud Abbas, a long-time associate of Arafat, was elected and shortly thereafter he and Sharon began a process towards negotiations, subsequently slowed when Sharon suffered a stroke and Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian parliament.

Local Christians, concentrated in Galilee and the Occupied Territories, are mostly Arab and belong to a wide variety of religious communities,



worshipping together Sunday by Sunday, running clinics and schools, and involving themselves in social service and reconciliation projects. They sometimes express puzzlement at the preoccupation of tourists with holy places and their lack of interest in the living church. The decline in numbers of Christian Arabs is serious. Many of them believe they have no future and leave for Europe and North America. Less than 2 per cent – perhaps no more than 25,000 people – are Christians in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Fifty years ago Christians comprised 10 per cent of stateless Palestinians.

For more than 4,000 years, the “chosen city of God” (Ps. 48:2) has been Jerusalem for all three Abrahamic faith communities. The city is central to their sacred geographies. It has been controlled at various times through all these years by all three faiths. It has been destroyed many times. After Israel declared itself a state in 1948, it proclaimed Jerusalem the “restored and eternal capital”. For religious Jews, it is the holiest of geographical sites.

For Muslims, Jerusalem is the last of the three holiest cities, after Mecca and Medina. They believe that on the mount where Abraham offered to sacrifice his son Ishmael and where the former Jewish temple had stood, Muhammad ascended to the throne of Allah. The Arabs prefer to call the city al-Quds (the Holy) and claim it as the capital of the new Palestine.

Christian medieval maps place Jerusalem at the centre of the earth, indeed of the universe. The city witnessed the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Jerusalem birthed the “mother church” (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22) and the mother of all churches of all nations: “every Christian is born in Jerusalem”.

As elsewhere in the holy land (Israel/Palestine) the number of Christians is declining, largely due to forced or voluntary emigration. In 1948 they numbered about 32,000 or 19 per cent of the population; at the beginning of 2000, they were only 12,000, of the 650,000 city-dwellers. Some are concerned that Jerusalem and nearby

Bethlehem will become bereft of Christian “living stones” and a mere museum for pilgrims. Today, 62 per cent of Jerusalem’s population is Jewish, 36 per cent Muslim Palestinians and only 2 per cent Christian Palestinians.

Christians may be small in number, but they are many in churches: Orthodox – Greek (including Russian and Romanian), Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian; Catholic in full communion with Rome – Melchite, Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Maronite, Latin; Protestant – Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal; non-denominational – Messianic Jews and foreign Zionist fundamentalists. Eighty per cent are members of Eastern churches, 15 per cent Latin Catholic. Although there is no local council of churches, twelve church leaders, including three patriarchs – Greek, Armenian and Latin – try to meet regularly. Christians are in need of encouragement and assurance. It is they who, at no small cost, maintain a Christian presence in the land in which Jesus lived.

## Jordan

(Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan)



### Statistics

**Population:** 5.6 million

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy

**Language:** Arabic (official), English widely

**Literacy:** 91.3% (male 95.9%, female 86.3%)

**Religion:** Muslim (Sunni) 92%, Christian (mostly Orthodox) 6%, Other 2%

**WCC member churches:** None

## History

Jordan is bordered by Israel and the Occupied Territories to the west and Syria to the north. Saudi Arabia is on Jordan's southeast border. The country is mostly arid desert.

For most of its history since independence from Britain in 1946, Jordan was ruled by King Hussein (1953-99), a pragmatic ruler who successfully navigated the complex and competing forces facing his sparsely populated kingdom. These competing forces included the USSR, the US, the UK, various other Arab states, Israel and a very large Palestinian population. Hussein was plagued by wars and attempted coups, and he was subject to several assassination attempts. In 1989 he reinstated parliamentary elections and gradually liberalized his Bedouin society, always watching over his shoulder the Palestinian majority and the still unresolved border separating Jordan from Israel and the West Bank. In 1994, much to the consternation of Palestinian leaders, he signed a formal peace treaty with Israel. After his death in 1999 he was succeeded by his eldest son, King Abdallah II. He has followed his father's policies and Jordan is now an economic and political powerhouse. Amman, its capital, has largely replaced Beirut as the business centre of the region.

Jordan is a Muslim nation, but it embraces the region traversed by Jesus in his earthly journeys, where Jacob wrestled with the angel, the mountain from which Moses saw the Promised Land, and the country of Ruth. The majority of Christians are Greek Orthodox, but there are sizeable Armenian, Latin, Greek Catholic and Anglican communities and some small but thriving Protestant groups. Christians enjoy freedom of worship and have contributed greatly to education and social service.

# Lebanon

(Lebanese Republic)



## Statistics

**Population:** 3.8 million

**Government:** Republic

**Language:** Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian

**Literacy:** 87.4% (male 93.1%, female 82.2%)

**Religion:** Muslim 60%, Christian 39% (Maronite, Melkite, Armenian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant), Other 1%

**WCC member churches:** Armenian Apostolic Church (Cilicia), National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East

## History

Lebanon is on the Mediterranean Sea, with Israel to the south, and the remainder of the country surrounded by Syria.

Lebanon became independent from France in 1943 and has been characterized by great religious and cultural diversity. It features the closest juxtaposition of different communities within a small area of any country in the Middle East. When the republic was established, the various communities agreed on a system of power-sharing based on their relative populations, a system which worked well for many years. The influx of

Palestinian refugees from the wars and deportations in Israel and the Occupied Territories, and the higher growth rate of Muslim communities, changed population ratios. Israeli reprisals for Palestinian resistance led to an invasion and massacres in two refugee camps (Shabrah and Chatilla). A vicious and destructive civil war broke out in 1976, exacerbated by Syria's involvement. The war lasted until 1991, with Syria virtually holding Lebanon to ransom.

The devastating war almost destroyed the capital, Beirut (once known as the Paris of the Middle East), and ended its economic domination of the region. The city and country are now making progress in rebuilding shattered political institutions and infrastructure. Under the 1991 blueprint for national reconciliation there is a more equitable distribution of power, giving Muslims a greater say in the political process while institutionalizing sectarian divisions in the government. Since 1991 the Lebanese have held several successful elections and gradually weakened the power of most factional militias. The Lebanese Armed Forces have extended the central government's authority over about two-thirds of the country. Syria maintained about 16,000 troops in Lebanon, mostly east of Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. Syria's troop deployment was legitimized by the Arab League during the civil war and justified as ensuring that the Lebanese government fulfils all aspects of the 1991 ceasefire. Israel's withdrawal from the security zone it maintained for decades in the south emboldened some Lebanese leaders to insist on Syria's withdrawal, and this intensified after the assassination of former prime minister Hariri in February 2005. Hizballah, the Shia organization which has been allowed to keep its weapons as well as its widespread social service network, gained a share in government in 2005 elections following the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

The majority of Christians in Lebanon are Maronite Catholics who trace their roots to the early church at Antioch and claim unbroken communion with the Vatican. Maronites settled

in the mountains of Lebanon for protection in the ninth century. There are many other Christian communities, amongst which the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolics and Greek Catholics are the largest. Lebanon is an important centre for the Armenian community.

## Syria

(*Syrian Arab Republic*)



### Statistics

**Population:** 18 million

**Government:** Socialist republic

**Language:** Arabic (official), French, Kurdish, Armenian and others

**Literacy:** 76.9% (male 89.9%, female 64%)

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 74%, Alawite, Druze and other Muslim sects 15%, Christian (mostly Oriental Orthodox) 10%, Jewish less than 1%

**WCC member churches:** Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

### History

Modern Syria is on the Mediterranean Sea between Lebanon and Turkey; to the south it is bordered by Jordan and Iraq. Ancient Syria covered a much wider area and included Antioch, where "the disciples were first called Christians" (Acts 11:26). Antioch became one of the great centres of the early church associated with St Peter and St Paul, St Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus occurring within today's capital of Syria.

After the breakup of the Ottoman empire, modern Syria was administered by France until 1946, when it became independent. It declared itself a socialist republic in 1973. Syria is unique among Arab countries: despite a large majority of Muslims, it is a secular state. It has long been associated with Lebanon and intervened for many years during that country's civil war. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Syria lost control of the Golan Heights and in recent years it has held desultory talks with Israel over their return. About 40,000 Syrians, many of them Druze, live there along with some 20,000 Israeli settlers.

There are Armenian and Syrian Orthodox communities in Syria, and the Syrian Orthodox

Church has its see in Damascus. The church, which has suffered greatly through the centuries, has remained close to the Jerusalem tradition of the ancient church. The (Greek) Orthodox Church of Antioch, whose membership is Arab and whose liturgical language is Arabic, is now the largest Christian body. Catholics belong to six different rites. Most Protestants are members of either the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, or the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East. These churches are doing lively work in the field of Christian education. Foreign missionaries were expelled in 1963 and Syrian nationals are not allowed to change their legal registration from Muslim to Christian.

### **INTERCESSIONS**

#### ***Give thanks for:***

- o The Middle East Council of Churches and its efforts towards Christian unity and justice.
- o The efforts of the various churches in Syria to work together to find a common witness, particularly their engagement in finding a common date for Easter for all Christians.
- o The endless source of inspiration that pilgrims of Islam, Christianity and Judaism find in the sacred places in the land called holy.
- o Peace-makers.
- o Rebuilders of Lebanon after the destructive war.
- o Olive trees that have survived many generations and still produce fruit.
- o People replanting olive trees.
- o The Nile and its life-giving water.
- o The pyramids, hieroglyphic writing and other wonders of ancient Egyptian civilization.
- o The ancient churches in these countries which have faithfully transmitted the Gospel from generation to generation, even when severely threatened or persecuted.
- o Monks and nuns who give themselves to a life of prayer and service.



**Pray for:**

- o Peace in the region, especially between Palestinians and Israelis.
- o Respect for human rights and an end to unjust imprisonment and extra-judicial killing.
- o Solutions for refugees, who still yearn to return home.
- o Efforts to confront corruption.
- o The hungry and homeless.
- o Those whose homes are in the slums, the cemeteries, the garbage dumps, the refugee camps.
- o Those who insist on violent solutions and who see force as the primary means of solving conflicts, that they might find more humanitarian methods.
- o The democratically elected officials of each state.

**PRAYERS**

(1)

Lord, hear us.

Awaken in us the desire for the unity of all Christians,  
and convert our hearts.

Purify our faith, removing all merely human interpretations,  
and make us open to your word, entrusted to your church.

Teach us, O Lord, to discern the ways

you are now opening up for us

to enable your churches to come together in fellowship.

Make us ready, O Lord, from now on,

to do together all the things

that our beliefs do not force us to do apart.

(2)

For the presence of children among us and for the gifts which you bestow on us  
through them,

**we pray to you, O Lord.**

For all the poor in Spirit who have accepted joyfully your word of life,

**we pray to you, O Lord.**

For those ministers of the gospel who, in their poverty, become witnesses  
allowing your love to shine through,

**we pray to you, O Lord.**

For those children who cannot be as children, who lack bread and who are  
deprived of love,

**we pray to you, O Lord.**

(3)  
 Pray not for Arab  
 or Jew  
 or Palestinian  
 or Israeli  
 but pray rather  
 for ourselves  
 that we might not  
 divide them in our  
 prayers but keep  
 them together  
 in our hearts.

(4)

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: HOUSE OF BREAD**

The light of God has come into this world  
 to the House of Bread –  
**given for the world.**

It started in Bethlehem –  
**broken for all.**

Bethlehem – in the Hebrew language,  
**“House of Bread”.**

Womb of our hope,  
**let all people be fed**  
**as we share bread in the House of Bread.**

From our neighbours in the mosque next door –

I hear the call to prayer,  
 as a candle of hope is lit in the House of Bread.

**Eating bread together means eternal bonds of love and friendship.**

In Bethlehem, where God visited our world,  
 we still hear God through echoes of the angels’ songs,

**and our high calling is still to give glory to God**  
**and still to be peace-makers.**

In the House of Bread the spirit of the living God rejuvenates us  
**to work in love**

**for peace with justice**  
**and never to despair.**

In the House of Bread the Spirit of the living God  
has refreshed us to commit ourselves to each other  
in joy and pain  
**to work for healing and reconciliation.**

In the House of Bread broken for all,  
the Spirit of the living God has renewed us.  
**God has become our liberator –**  
our Sabeel –  
**our way and our living water.**

The light of God has come into this world  
to the House of Bread –  
**given for the world.**  
It started in Bethlehem –  
**broken for all.**  
Bethlehem –  
**House of Bread.**

(5)

O Lord, I am standing today in front of a 25-foot, 8-metre high concrete wall in Abu Dis, on the Mount of Olives. As I look at it, I see how small I am and how powerless I am. I raise my face toward the blue skies and ask, "Does the Holy Land need a wall?"

When you, Lord, were crucified on the cross in Jerusalem, weren't you disturbed by the sins of animosity that were well-established in the hearts of human beings?

When at the peak of your suffering on that Friday, an earthquake took place at the time of your death, yet the only thing you tore away was the barrier that divided people from God and from each other.

We thank you, our Crucified Lord, that your death on the cross gave us hope, showing us that no walls are needed, either between you and us or between us and our neighbours. Instead, we need to find the humanity of others and accept it.

I pray:

Lord, forgive us for the walls of hate and animosity which human beings so easily create.

Lord, forgive us for being deaf to your holy word and help us to remember that you came to reconcile us to yourself, taking down all barriers.

Lord, forgive us for misusing your precious and sacrificial blood by reaching out only to our friends and dear ones, and not to our enemies.

Lord, I feel powerless, angry and discouraged in front of this concrete, grey barrier of separation. Please do not let hatred penetrate my heart. Do not allow fear to paralyze me in all my difficulties, in my powerlessness.

I pray that the walls may disappear and that animosity will be exchanged for neighbourliness, hatred will be exchanged for love, death will be exchanged for life, despair will be exchanged for hope, and war will be exchanged for reconciliation.

Help me, Lord, as a powerless Palestinian Christian, to experience and share with the world the sacrificial love and forgiveness I receive every day through your death on the cross.

In the name of Jesus.

(6)

We, your servants, offer you, O God, prayers and intercessions on behalf of the peace of the churches and the tranquillity of the monasteries; keep your ministers in righteousness, forgive sinners who turn to you, make the rich rich in almsgiving, provide for the poor, support the widows, educate the orphans, sustain the aged, guard the youth by your cross, gather the dispersed, convert those in error; and let our prayers and intercessions prevail with you, and we will offer praise and honour to your high Trinity, now and always and forever.

(7)

**BLESSING**

Blessed are those who have eaten from the bread of love which is Jesus.

This is the wine that gladdens human hearts.

This is the wine which the lustful have drunk and they have become chaste,

the sinners and they forgot the ways of unrighteousness,

the drunkards and they became fasters,

the rich and they became desirous of poverty,

the poor and they became rich in hope,

the sick and they became courageous,

the fools and they became wise.

(8)

The poor and the needy will praise you, O Lord.

Glory to the Father,

glory to the Son,

glory to the Holy Spirit, who spoke through the prophets.

God is my hope,

Christ is my refuge,

the Holy Spirit is my shelter.

(9)

Pray for the rising of the waters of the rivers this year,

that Christ our Lord may bless it and raise it to its measure.

and grant a cheerful touch unto the lands, support their people,

save the cattle and forgive us our sins.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Pray for the trees, vegetation and the planting of the land this year,

that Christ our Lord may bless them to grow and bring forth plentiful fruit,

and have compassion upon his creation and forgive us our sins.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Pray for the winds, the crops, the vine

and every fruit-bearing tree in the whole world,

that Christ our Lord may bless them, to reach harvesting without harm

and forgive us our sins.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Accord, O Lord, a cheerful touch to the earth,

water it and dispose our life as you deem fit.



Crown this year with your goodness,  
 for the sake of the poor of your people, the widow, the orphan, the stranger  
 and for our sake.  
 For our eyes are focused upon you, our hope, and we seek your holy name.  
 You provide us our food in due course.  
 Deal with us, O Lord, according to your goodness.  
 We call you the One who feeds everybody.  
 Fill our hearts with joy and grace, so that,  
 always having all things sufficiently,  
 we may grow in every good deed.

(10)

How can a womb contain him whom nothing can contain?  
 How can he remain in his father's bosom, yet rest in his mother's arms?  
 It is his good pleasure to accomplish this.  
 Having no flesh, he purposely assumes it for our sake.  
 He who is becomes what he never was.  
 He shares our substance without forsaking his own nature.  
 Desiring to make us citizens of the world on high, Christ, the Only-begotten  
 of the Father, is born on earth as a man

(11)

My Egyptian heart longs, O my God, for the redemption of my people.  
 It has been our shame  
 that the oppression of the Pharaohs  
 drove the children of Israel to the sea.  
 But you, my God,  
     who free us from our sins,  
     and make all things new,  
 chose this same country as a shelter for the holy family  
 and a home to that One who was persecuted and oppressed,  
 that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Thank you, my Saviour, for the greatest gift you have given me.  
 When I was a little girl my heart bubbled with joy  
 every time I was taken to play under the tree in Materialah  
 where you rested with Mary, your mother, and Joseph.  
 I loved to touch the stone upon which your crib was placed  
 in that dark underground church in old Cairo.

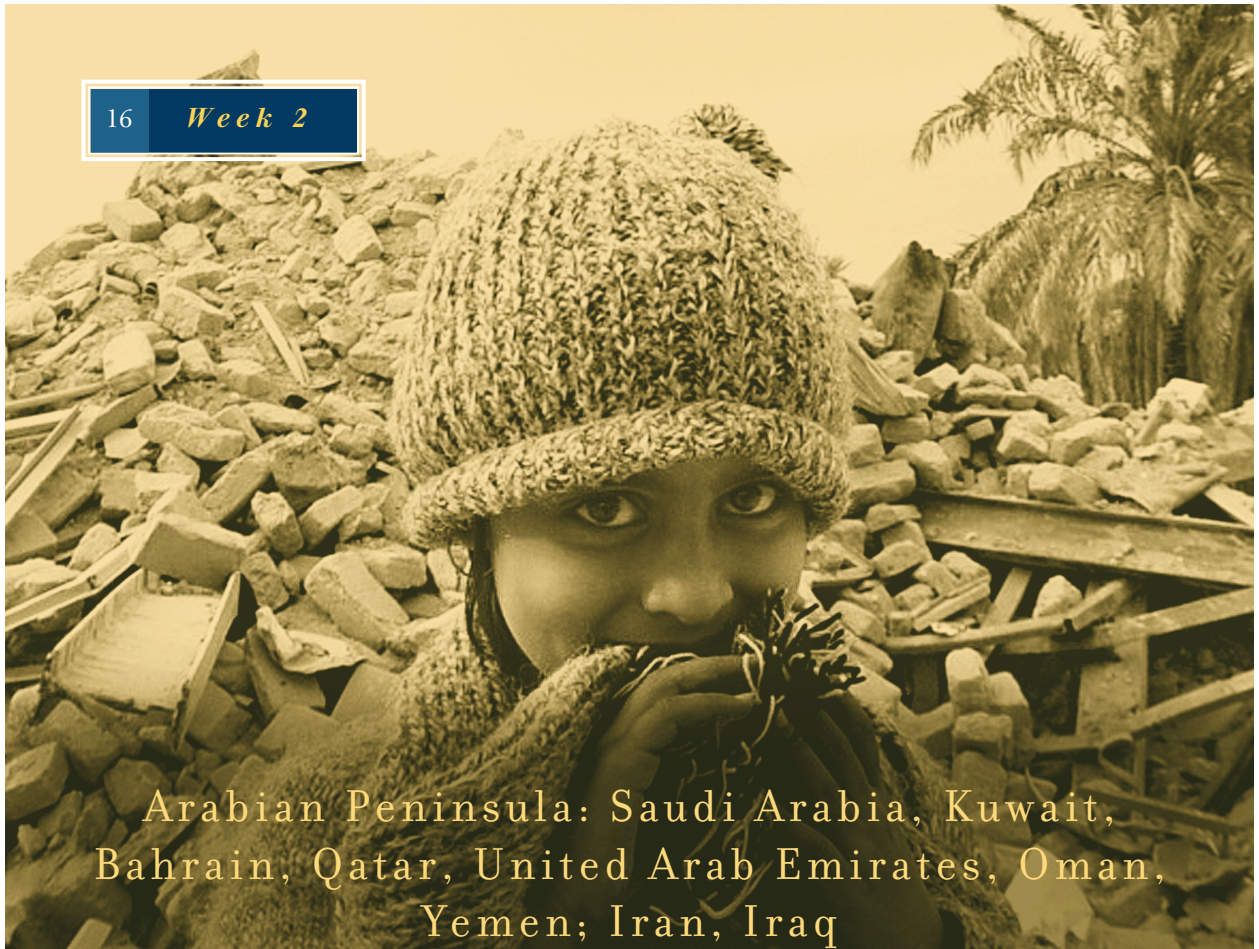
I felt your presence.  
I heard your cry and laughter.  
I wept with the mothers whose children were killed by Herod.  
I rejoiced over your safety.  
I praised and continue to praise you, my Saviour and Redeemer,  
who take us out of darkness into your marvellous light.

(12)

Heavenly Father,  
in the life and ministry of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
you showed us how to live together;  
give this sense of unity to the peoples of the Holy Land today.  
In the death of your Son on the cross,  
you showed how great was your love for us  
as well as your readiness to forgive;  
you brought new hope to your people  
and a desire to work for peace and justice;  
renew that hope in your people today  
and give them a burning desire to find your peace in this time.  
In the resurrection of Jesus  
and in the outpouring of your Holy Spirit  
you showed the disciples  
they had power and authority to conquer in your name;  
convince your people today of the gifts you have entrusted to them  
and so help them to transform their land to your greater glory.  
We ask this in Jesus' name.

(13)

Spirit of the Living God, come afresh on your Holy Land.  
Help your people to restore broken relationships.  
Give them patience to break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust;  
ability to discern personal prejudice and the courage to overcome fear.  
Teach them to respect each other's integrity and rights  
so that your kingdom may be established on earth.  
For Jesus' sake.



Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait,  
Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman,  
Yemen; Iran, Iraq

## Arabian Peninsula

### History

The Arabian Peninsula is located in southwestern Asia, in what is now called the Middle East. It is bounded to the east by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, to the south by the Arabian Sea, to the west by the Red Sea, and to the north by Jordan and Iraq. Seven countries share the peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman and Yemen. The land of Arabia is mostly desert and sparsely populated; fresh-water supplies are extremely limited. With the exception of Oman, the area is rich in oil reserves, which provided for rapid economic development during the twentieth century and a high material standard of living.

The Arabian Peninsula has been populated for thousands of years. Arabs are the dominant ethnic group in the region. They were originally nomadic, semi-nomadic and tribal peoples, often at war with one another until Islam arrived in the late sixth century. Islam took root rapidly

My heart is becoming capable of  
welcoming each form,

It is a pasture for the gazelle and an abbey  
for the monk.

It is a temple for idols and the Kâaba for  
making pilgrimage.

It is the tables of the Torah and also the  
pages of the Koran.

The religion I profess is that of love.

Love is my religion and my faith.

*Ibn Arabi*

throughout the region and served as a unifying force for the Arabian people, who soon spread throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean. From the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, much of Arabia was part of the Ottoman empire.

According to tradition, Christianity came to Arabia with the apostle Bartholomew. Scripture tells us there were Arabs present at Pentecost (Acts 2:11). There was a bishopric during the third century in what is now Bahrain, and Christian communities are known to have existed along the mainland coast by the fourth and fifth centuries. However, during the seventh century, when Islam became the dominant faith in the region, only small, isolated pockets of Christians remained. One legend tells how the chaplain of a Portuguese ship that came to port at Muscat (now the capital of Oman) in the fifteenth century was welcomed by a small Christian community that had continued without a priest for a thousand years. Western Protestant and Catholic missionaries have worked in this area since the latter part of the nineteenth century, but since the governments of all these countries forbid evangelization of Muslims, foreign mission personnel have been generally restricted to medical and educational work.

The development of the oil trade in the Gulf states has led to an important influx of foreign workers: in Qatar and UAE the foreign workers outnumber the native population. While there are some Christians among the native populations of these small countries, the church there is comprised mainly of Christians who have come from other countries as part of the foreign labour force. Most of these Christian communities are led by laypersons; very few have resident ordained ministers, though in recent times some governments have allowed periodic visits from bishops, priests and ministers from immigrants' home churches.

## Saudi Arabia

(Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)



### Statistics

**Population:** 22 million

**Government:** Absolute monarchy since 1932

**Language:** Arabic; also Persian (Farsi), Hindi, Chinese, English and others

**Literacy:** 62% (male 71%, female 50%)

**Religion:** Muslim 94%, Christian 3% (mostly Roman Catholic), Hindu 1%

**WCC member churches:** None

### History

Saudi Arabia comprises most of the landmass of the Arabian Peninsula, with shorelines on both the Red Sea to the west and the Persian Gulf to the east. It is bordered to the north by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait, and to the south by the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen.

The present-day monarch is not only the political leader of the country, but also the absolute religious head. The strictly orthodox Wahhabi movement, dedicated to the reform of Islam, originated here and was the centre of the first Sa'udi kingdom. The law does not permit the practice of any other religion besides Islam, and clergy from other faith traditions are not allowed into the country. However, in recent years, with the influx of foreign workers from other faith traditions, informal meetings for Bible study and prayer do occur. Language, rather than denomination, tends to be the basis for the formation of such groups.

Islam is at the heart of Saudi Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad (570-632) was born and died there. The Holy Shrines at Mecca and Medina attract millions of Muslims annually to the Hajj, which every devout Muslim hopes to undertake at least once in a life-time.

## K u w a i t

(*State of Kuwait*)



### Statistics

**Population:** 2.2 million

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy since 1990

**Language:** Arabic; also Persian (Farsi), English, Kurdish and others

**Literacy:** 78%

**Religion:** Muslim 85%, Christian 13% (mostly Roman Catholic), Hindu

**WCC member churches:** None

### History

Kuwait is at the northeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, on the Persian Gulf. Iraq lies to the north and west, while Saudi Arabia forms its southern border.

The country gained its independence from Britain in 1962, at which time it formed a monarchy and established Islam as the state religion. In 1990 Kuwait was invaded by Iraq, which had long considered the country part of its precolonial

territory. Iraq was driven out in 1991 by a US-dominated international force after six weeks of fighting in what is known as the first Gulf war. During the war, many of Kuwait's oil fields were set on fire, leading to disastrous air pollution throughout the region, and much of Kuwait's infrastructure was destroyed.

In March 2003, during the second Gulf war, a coalition of more than 250,000 troops led by the US used Kuwait as a launching pad to attack Iraq. Fierce fighting has continued in Iraq ever since.

The majority of Kuwait's population is Muslim. Christianity is practised generally only by foreign workers in the Kuwaiti oil fields. The largest Christian presence is the Roman Catholic Church, following Eastern rites (Melkites, Maronites, Chaldeans and others). Several different Orthodox churches represented, including the Greek, Armenian, Coptic and Syrian.

## B a h r a i n

(*Kingdom of Bahrain*)



### Statistics

**Population:** 675,000

**Government:** Absolute hereditary monarchy since 1971

**Language:** Arabic; also Persian (Farsi), English, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and others



**Literacy:** 85%

**Religion:** Muslim 82%, Christian 11%, Hindu 6%, Other 1%

**WCC member churches:** None

## History

Bahrain consists of 33 islands in the Persian Gulf east of Saudi Arabia and west of Qatar.

Bahrain has been a trading centre for thousands of years, and during the seventeenth century came under the influence of Iran. In 1783 the al-Khalifa family came to power and continues to rule today. As in the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, Islam is the dominant religion, but unlike other Arabian countries the majority of Muslims are Shi'a rather than Sunni. There has been tension between these two groups, particularly during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Christians were first in Bahrain in the third century, but disappeared as the population converted to Islam. Today, Christianity is generally practised by foreigners working in the country, and Bahrainis are forbidden to convert. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination. The National Evangelical Church of Bahrain evolved from the Reformed Church in America and is the main Protestant denomination.

## Qatar

(State of Qatar)



## Statistics

**Population:** 840,000

**Government:** Absolute monarchy since 1971

**Language:** Arabic; also English, Persian (Farsi)

**Literacy:** 79%

**Religion:** Muslim 83%, Christian 10% (mostly Roman Catholic), Hindu 3%, Buddhist 2%, Other 2%

**WCC member churches:** None

## History

Qatar is located on a peninsula that juts out from Saudi Arabia into the Persian Gulf.

Islam has been the state religion of Qatar since its independence from Britain in 1970. Due to revenues generated by its natural gas reserves, it has one of the highest standards of living in the Arab world. Christianity is practised openly only by expatriates and foreigners living in the country, most of whom are Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

## United Arab Emirates



## Statistics

**Population:** 2.5 million (including 1.6 million non-nationals)

**Government:** Confederation of monarchies since 1971

**Language:** Arabic; also Persian (Farsi), English, Hindi, Baluchi, Urdu and others

**Literacy:** 79%

**Religion:** Muslim 76%, Christian 11%, Hindu 8%, Baha'i 2%, Buddhist 2%, Other 1%

**WCC member churches:** None

## History

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of the seven Trucial states on the southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf. Oman borders the UAE to the east and Saudi Arabia lies to the south.

The UAE obtained independence from Britain in 1971, since when it has weathered external conflict with Saudi Arabia and Oman, as well as internal disputes between the different emirates. Like its neighbours, it is a Muslim country and since 1975 evangelization and missionary activities by Christians have been forbidden. There is, however, a significant Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican presence among expatriates and foreign workers. The UAE's generosity with oil revenues and a cautiously moderate foreign policy make it an important player in the affairs of the region.

## Oman

(Sultanate of Oman)



## Statistics

**Population:** 2.9 million

**Government:** Absolute monarchy since 1741

**Language:** Arabic; also Persian (Farsi), Baluchi, Hindi, Tamil, English and others

**Literacy:** 59% (male 71%, female 46%)

**Religion:** Muslim 88%, Hindu 6%, Christian 5%, Buddhist 1%

**WCC member churches:** None

## History

Oman is at the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula on the Arabian Sea. Yemen borders it to the southwest, Saudi Arabia to the west, and the UAE to the northwest.

Lacking the oil resources of its neighbours, Oman is the least developed state in the Arabian Peninsula, and continues to have a high percentage of nomadic peoples. Islam is the state religion, and only foreigners follow Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church accounts for about half of the Christians in the country. There are also several Orthodox churches, Anglicans and Pentecostals.

## Yemen

(Republic of Yemen)



## Statistics

**Population:** 20 million

**Government:** Multiparty republic since 1990

**Language:** Arabic; also Somali, Hindi, Persian (Farsi) and many others

**Literacy:** 46% (male 68%, female 23%)

**Religion:** Muslim 99%, Hindu 1%, Christian less than 1%

**WCC member churches:** None

## History

Yemen is at the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, with Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the east, the Arabian Sea to the south, and the Red Sea to the west. Across the Red Sea in Africa lie Eritrea and Djibouti.

The Republic of Yemen was created from the merger of North Yemen (the ancient biblical kingdom of Sheba) and South Yemen (a single-party Marxist state) in 1990. Tension between the two flared up into a brief civil war in 1994. Yemen held its first open presidential elections in 1999.

Islam is the state religion and accounts for 99 per cent of the population. There are just a few thousand Christians in the country, all foreign workers, about evenly split between Catholics and Orthodox. There are several Catholic and Protestant missions: Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity run four homes for the aged in Yemen and a number of other Christian bodies have been assisting in clinics and hospitals at the request of the government. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world.

## Iran

(Islamic Republic of Iran)



## Statistics

**Population:** 69 million

**Government:** One-party Islamic republic since 1979

**Language:** Persian (Farsi); Azerbaijani, Turkic Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, English and more than 30 others

**Literacy:** 72% (male 78%, female 65%)

**Religion:** Shi'a Muslim 89%, Sunni Muslim 9%, Zoroastrian 3%, Baha'i 2%, Jewish, Christian less than 1%

**WCC member churches:** Synod of the Evangelical Church of Iran

## History

Iran is located in southwestern Asia on the Persian Gulf. Afghanistan and Pakistan form its eastern border, and Iraq and Turkey lie to the west. To the north, Iran shares its border with Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan.

Iran was settled over 2000 years ago by the Aryan peoples, from which the country's name is derived, although until 1935 the country was better known as Persia. For almost five centuries, from 1501 to 1978, Iran was ruled by a shah, or king. In 1978 the monarchy was overthrown and an Islamic theocratic republic was established under the leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Ultimate political authority is vested in a learned religious scholar and associates, although in recent times pressure for reform has sometimes been manifested due to popular dissatisfaction and a massive change in demographics. In 1979 Iranian students took control of the American embassy in Tehran, taking hostages who were not released until 15 months later. During this time, Iran was invaded by Iraq, leading to a war that lasted until 1988; the war ended indecisively, caused thousands of deaths, and over 2 million people were forced to flee their homes. In recent years, regions in Iran have been devastated by earthquakes, and the government has come under international pressure due to its nuclear policy.

Most of Iran is mountainous and dry. Air pollution in urban areas and water pollution in the Caspian Sea have become serious problems.

Shi'a Islam has been the official religion of Iran since the sixteenth century. While the rest of the Islamic world is primarily Sunni, Shiites form the majority of the Muslims in Iran. Zoroastrians, also called Parsis, are the largest non-Muslim minority: Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion that began in Iran during the sixth century BC. The next largest minority group is the Baha'i, which arose out of Shiite Islam in Iran in the 1840s under the leadership of Bab Al Din and has since spread around the world, although its members are heavily persecuted at home.

While Christians form less than 1 per cent of the population, the church has a long history in Iran. The Armenian Apostolic Church is the largest church in Iran, and traces its roots back to the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew in the first century. The Assyrian or Ancient Church of the East has existed since the third century. During the nineteenth century, Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic (both Latin and Eastern rites), Anglican and Protestant churches were established in Iran, although their members are almost entirely foreigners. After the revolution in 1978, most church properties and hospitals were confiscated and educational institutions were required to teach Islam. Muslims who convert to Christianity are generally imprisoned and often martyred. During the 1990s the Bible Society was banned, and the government shut down many Protestant and Evangelical churches.

## Iraq

(*Republic of Iraq*)

### Statistics

**Population:** 25 million (estimate)

**Government:** Former dictatorship; since March 2003 occupied by US coalition forces and subsequently ruled by interim administrations

**Language:** Arabic; also Kurdish, Chaldean, Persian, Turkish and others

**Literacy:** 58% (male 70%, female 45%)

**Religion:** Muslim 96%, Christian 3%, Other 1%

**WCC member churches:** Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East



### History

Located in southwestern Asia in the Middle East, Iraq has only a tiny outlet to the Persian Gulf, and is otherwise surrounded by Iran to the east, Kuwait to the southeast, Saudi Arabia to the south and southwest, Jordan and Syria to the west, and Turkey to the north.

Traditionally the site of the Garden of Eden, for thousands of years Iraq, with approximately the same borders as ancient Mesopotamia, was the centre of civilization, including the Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Alexandrian empires. In the seventh century the area became dominated by Muslim Arabs, and from the seventeenth century it was part of the Ottoman empire. Both Britain and Germany controlled some of the land during the nineteenth century, and after the first world war the British invaded. In 1920 Iraqis began an armed uprising, which led to the establishment of an Iraqi monarchy in 1921. In 1932 Iraq gained full independence from Britain. In 1958 a coup led to the dismantling of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic of Iraq. There followed a succession of military governments and

coups until 1979, when Saddam Hussein came to power. Until 2003 he ruled the country as a Baath socialist dictatorship, killing and imprisoning many of his rivals and political enemies.

Iraq has often been aggressive towards its neighbours. In 1948–49 it invaded the newly founded state of Israel. It fought against Israel again in 1967. In 1960 it invaded Kuwait, pulling out when the British intervened. In 1980 Iraq invaded Iran in a war that lasted until 1988.

In 1990 it invaded Kuwait, leading to the first Gulf war. Internally, Iraq fought against Kurdish nationalists who lived in the northern parts of the country for decades. During the late 1980s and early 1990s this conflict took on genocidal proportions, with thousands of villages and towns burned to the ground, half a million people deported to camps, and a quarter of a million people massacred. By the end of the first Gulf war in 1991 almost the entire Kurdish population had become refugees. As a result of these episodes, Iraq was isolated by the international community through economic sanctions, and parts of the country were subject to almost daily air strikes by international forces. This destroyed the economy and impoverished the people of Iraq; many faced severe malnutrition and even starvation. In March 2003 the US

invaded Iraq, claiming the country had nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and was a haven for terrorism. While none of these charges has been proved, the US and British, with a small coalition, brought destruction on the Iraqi people and their economic potential (Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world.) By the end of 2004 fighting raged between various religious and political groups and US forces. Tens of thousands of Iraqis have been killed and wounded. Saddam Hussein was captured, but as the third year of the war and occupation approached, violence, destruction and corruption continued. Sectarian divisions emerged.

Jewish communities in Mesopotamia were evangelized in the first century, traditionally by St Thomas. The church was later strengthened by Assyrian missions. Islam rose in importance in the seventh century, but the church continued. A split in the Assyrian Church in 1552 led to a large segment joining the Roman Catholic Church. The Chaldean Catholic Church is by far the largest Christian community in Iraq today, where it faces persecution from extremist Islamic elements. Christians have been fleeing the violence in Iraq, but are thought to number about half a million.

## INTERCESSIONS

### *Give thanks for:*

- o Christians who practise their faith in countries where they are a small minority; those who meet in house churches and those who provide links to Christians worldwide.
- o Muslims who live up to the ideals of their faith and advocate tolerance and peace.
- o Those who work for democracy and human rights.
- o The graceful architecture of minarets and the sounds of the oud.
- o The preservation of the art of these ancient cultures.



**Pray for:**

- o Peaceful relationships between different tribes, religions and ethnic groups.
- o Those who come from other countries to work, and are separated from their families.
- o Clean water for those who thirst in the desert.
- o Women, who have far fewer opportunities for education and employment than do men.
- o Those who are persecuted for their faith.
- o Healing for wounded bodies and crushed spirits caused by conflict and strife.
- o Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Mecca, that they might be safe during their devotion.
- o The grieving, the families torn apart, the homes destroyed, the businesses no longer functioning.
- o An end to terrorism, lawlessness, and state oppression.
- o International peace-keepers and monitors of treaty obligations.

**PRAYERS**

(1)

You, Lord of all, we confess;  
 You, Lord Jesus, we glorify;  
 For you are the life of our bodies  
 And you are the Saviour of our souls.

(2)

**THE ORDER OF THE HALLOWING OF THE APOSTLES  
 WHICH WAS COMPOSED BY MAR ADDAI AND MAR MARI, THE BLESSED APOSTLES**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father,  
 and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
 be with us all, now, always, and for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

Let your minds be above.

**With you, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Israel,  
 O glorious King.**

The oblation is offered to God, the Lord of all.

**It is meet and right.**

*Deacon:* Peace be with us.

Worthy of praise from every mouth,  
and confession from every tongue,  
and adoration and exaltation from every creature  
is the worshipful and glorious name of your glorious Trinity,  
O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
for you created the world in your grace  
and its inhabitants in your mercifulness;  
you saved men in your compassion,  
and showed great grace unto mortals.  
Thousands upon thousands of those on high bow down  
and worship your majesty, O my Lord,  
and ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels and spiritual hosts,  
the ministers of fire and spirit,  
glorify your name,  
and with holy cherubim and spiritual seraphim  
offer worship to your Lordship,  
crying and singing praise without ceasing,  
calling, one to another, and saying,

**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts,  
for heaven and earth are full of his praises,  
and of the nature of his being,  
and of the excellency of his glorious splendour.  
Hosanna in the heights. Hosanna to the son of David.  
Blessed is he who came and comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the heights.**

And with the heavenly hosts we give thanks to you, O my Lord,  
even we, your feeble, unworthy, and miserable servants,  
for you have brought about great grace in us  
which we cannot repay,  
for you clothed yourself with our humanity,  
that you might make us alive by your Godhead.  
You have exalted our humble state,  
raised up our fallen condition,  
given new life to our mortality,  
forgiven our debts,

set right our sinfulness,  
 enlightened our minds,  
 and, our Lord and our God,  
 you have condemned our enemies,  
 and granted victory to the feebleness of our unworthy nature  
 in the abundant mercies of your grace.

And for all your aids and graces towards us  
 we will lift up to you praise, honor, confession, and worship,  
 now, always, and for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

*Deacon:* Pray in your minds. Peace be with us.

O my Lord, in your many ineffable mercies,  
 make a good and acceptable memorial  
 for all the just and righteous fathers  
 who were well-pleasing before you  
 through the commemoration of the body and blood of your Christ  
 which we offer you upon your pure and holy altar,  
 as you taught us.  
 Bring to pass your tranquillity and peace in us  
 all the days of the world.  
 Yea, our Lord and our God,  
 bring to pass your tranquillity and peace in us all the days of the world,  
 that all the inhabitants of the earth may know you –  
 that you alone are God, the Father of truth,  
 and that you sent our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son and your Beloved,  
 and he, our Lord and our God, came and taught us  
 in his life-giving gospel  
 all the purity and holiness of the prophets and apostles,  
 of the martyrs and confessors, of the bishops and teachers,  
 of the presbyters and deacons,  
 and of all the children of the holy catholic church –  
 who have been signed with the living seal of holy baptism.

We too, my Lord, your feeble, unworthy, and miserable servants  
 who are gathered in your name and stand before you at this hour,  
 and have received by tradition the example which is from you,

while rejoicing, glorifying, exalting, and commemorating,  
perform this great, fearful, holy, life-giving, and divine Mystery  
of the passion, death, burial, and resurrection  
of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And may there come, O my Lord, your Holy Spirit,  
and may he rest upon this oblation of your servants.  
May he bless it and hallow it,  
and may it be for us, O my Lord,  
for the pardon of debts,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the great hope of resurrection from the dead,  
and for new life in the kingdom of heaven  
with all who have been well-pleasing before you.  
And for all this great and marvellous dispensation towards us  
we will give thanks to you  
and praise you without ceasing in your church,  
which is saved by the precious blood of your Christ  
with unclosed mouth and open face,  
while lifting up praise, honour, confession, and worship  
to your living, holy, and life-giving name,  
now, always, and for ever and ever.

(3)

All that we ought to have thought and have not thought,  
all that we ought to have said, and have not said,  
all that we ought to have done, and have not done,  
all that we ought not to have thought and have thought  
all that we ought not to have said, and have said,  
all that we ought not to have done, and have done,  
for thoughts, words and works pray we, O God, for forgiveness.

(4)

Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters  
whereby I may live as long as thy sovereignty endureth,  
and may make mention of thee in every world of thy worlds.

(5)

My God, whom I worship and adore!  
 I bear witness unto your unity and your oneness,  
 and acknowledge your gifts,  
 both in the past and in the present.  
 You are the All-bountiful,  
 the overflowing showers of whose mercy  
     have rained down upon high and low alike  
 and the splendours of whose grace  
     have been shed over both the obedient and the rebellious.

O God of mercy,

    before whose door the quintessence of mercy has bowed down,  
 and round the sanctuary of whose cause loving-kindness,  
 in its inmost spirit, has circled,  
 we ask you, entreating your ancient grace,  
 and seeking your present favour,  
 that you have mercy upon all  
 who are the manifestation of the world of being,  
 and to deny them not the outpourings of your grace in your days.

All are but poor and needy,  
 and you, truly are the All-possessing, the All-subduing,  
 the All-powerful.

(6)

**THE PRAYER BEFORE THE EPISTLE READING**

O our Lord and our God,  
 enlighten for us the impulses of our thoughts,  
 that we may give heed to  
 and understand the pleasant sound  
 of your life-giving and divine commands.  
 Grant us in your grace and mercies  
 to acquire profit from them – love, hope, and salvation,  
 which are useful for the soul and body.  
 May we sing continual praise without ceasing  
 to you at every hour,  
 O Lord of all, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for ever.

(7)

**PRAYER BEFORE THE READINGS**

May God the Lord of all  
make you wise in his holy teaching,  
and may his mercies and compassion be upon the readers  
and those who are listening.  
May you be a shining mirror to all  
who give heed to and obey the word of teaching from your mouth,  
through the kindness of his compassion.