Mosaic Middle East
PO Box 229,
Petersfield GU32 9DL
+44 (0)1730 267 673
mosaicmiddleeast.org

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St. George's in Baghdad - Twinning Church Update

Thank you for standing in solidarity with the parish of St. George's in Baghdad in prayer. It is means so much to Rev'd Canon Faiz Jirjees MBE and to the members of his congregation to know that people in the UK, over two and a half thousand miles away, are praying for their protection and for their ability to worship freely and to live without persecution. It supports, encourages and emboldens them as they go about their daily business, knowing that other people are regularly praying for them.

Iraq, as you know, has continued to be on the receiving end of occasional hostile military action, as the Iran war rumbles on with its various tenuous ceasefires in place. It is a constant weight on the minds and hearts of all Iraqis who are desperate to be living in peace.

Life for all Iraqis is very strained right now

Since we last updated you, British and US forces have finally left the country, so it is now to the Iraqi government to protect its people. The economy is in a fragile state, due to limitations in exporting oil, so government payments for contracts and employee wages are falling behind. Iraq relies upon imported goods and that trade has been severely curtailed and inflation is on the rise. In response the Iraqi currency, the dinar, has fallen in value and the government have had to devalue their currency once again. There have been many public demonstrations in response to the worsening situation, and sadly it doesn't look as if the war will end any time soon.

Persecution of Christians has been on the rise

For Christians, who are already persecuted in all areas of their lives (including in education, employment, home ownership, their rights, etc), this adds another layer of poverty and misery. The charity Open Doors recently reported that Iraq remains in the top 20 countries where Christians are most persecuted. Persecutors have a twisted view of Christianity being a western religion, rather than recognising that many holy places in the Bible are now part of modern-day Iraq and that Christians have worshiped in the country for over two thousand years. We have witnessed many Christian Iraqi families fleeing Iraq over the last year, due to having credible threats made on their lives. We wish to ensure this does not happen to Christians in Baghdad.

Feeding the poorest of families

Rev'd Faiz's response has always been to give out food parcels to the poorest families, from the funds raised by Mosaic Middle East. Each month, 100 of the families most in need (around 400 people) receive a parcel of rice, flour, tomato paste, tea and beans or pasta, bought and delivered by a small church team. Families are chosen through the church's own pastoral care, using clear and fair criteria. Over the last year the demand from struggling families has increased, and each month (just like here in the UK) the money does not buy as much as it used to.

Request for prayer

Rev'd Faiz has asked us for further prayers for the war to end and for stability in Iraq to be restored. He asks for prayers for peace on the streets, and for the protection of St. George's and its congregation. He urges us all to pray for the barriers to religious freedom to be lifted, so that more people may choose to follow Jesus and be baptised without the fear of recriminations, or the loss of their life.

Invisible dividing line amongst the congregation

There are about 200 families in the congregation. Yet the congregation is unusual, in that it also includes Yazidis, Muslims and people from other faiths too. They all regularly worship, pray and support each other as a loving community. Their priest, Rev'd Canon Faiz Jirjees MBE knows that Muslims cannot freely choose Christianity without fear of retribution killings. And Faiz believes that if the laws change and Iraqi's have freedom of religion and belief, Muslims in large numbers would convert to Christianity. Then, and only then, will it be safe to fully welcome and baptise them into the faith. Until that day comes, the congregation has invisible divisions, that only become obvious when it comes to sacred Christian activities such as in the sharing of the bread and wine.

Rev'd Canon Faiz Jirjees MBE, stands by his faithful congregation. Whilst caring for the congregation, he also oversees the Medical Clinic, Kindergarten and School that were established by St. George's to ensure the poorest families had access to free medical care and a good education.

Your continued prayerful support of St. George's will keep the Peace of Jesus moving, both in word and in action. Your support will enable St. George's to continue bearing witness in the heart of Baghdad – offering food for the body and the soul. This is a time of both urgency and of great opportunity, so we thank you for your prayerful support.

Please continue to remember St. George's in your prayers

Your prayers and support will help to sustain this vital ministry and enable St George's to continue being a beacon of hope, compassion and God's love from the heart of Baghdad. Thank you for standing with us and with the people of Iraq.

Yours in Christ,

Helen Jackson,
Executive Director

PS I have enclosed a few prayer pointers that you may choose to use when praying for St. George's.

St. George's Church, Baghdad



For Father Faez and Sinan
Heavenly Father, we pray for Father Faez and his assistant Sinan as they minister to the congregation at St George's Church. Grant them wisdom, strength, compassion, and courage as they serve your people and proclaim your love. Lord, bless their work and sustain them in every challenge they face.
Amen.



For visitors to St George's Baghdad
Loving God, we pray for all who visit St George's Church in Baghdad. May they experience your welcome, peace, and presence. Draw them closer to you and bless every encounter they have with your people in this place.
Amen.

St. George's Church, Baghdad



For the congregation travelling to worship
Lord God, we pray for the congregation of St George's as they travel to and from services. Watch over them, keep them safe from harm, and grant them peace and encouragement as they gather together to worship you.
Amen.



For the Christian community in Iraq
Lord Jesus, we pray for the safety and wellbeing of the Christian community in Iraq. Protect them from danger, strengthen them in faith, and help them to be witnesses of your hope and love. Grant them courage, freedom, and peace in their daily lives.
Amen.



St George's Kindergarten
Heavenly Father, on World Teachers' Day we give thanks for the staff and children of St George's Kindergarten.

Bless the teachers with patience, wisdom, and joy in their work. Watch over the children as they learn and grow, and may the whole school community know your love, protection, and care.
Amen.