



## **A new province with Welsh connections**

*As Wales celebrates a century of being a province in its own right, this year sees the inauguration of a new province in the Anglican Communion that has at its head a bishop who was trained in Wales. Despite formal recognition being delayed due to Covid-19, the amazing work goes on, says Canon Dr John Holdsworth*

Bishop Samy Shehata (pictured), currently an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Egypt trained at St Michael's College in the late 1980s and was appointed Bishop of North Africa in 2017. He will now be one of the bishops as the Diocese of Egypt becomes the new Province of Alexandria, named after one of the great early centres of

Christianity.

The Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa covers eight countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti. There are over 150 congregations throughout that area. The diocese supports over 30 institutions which include hospitals, nurseries, schools, the Alexandria School of Theology, of which Bishop Samy is the head, micro-enterprise ventures, vocational training programs, and institutions for refugees, the deaf, and the disabled. The new Province of Alexandria will have four dioceses: Egypt, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Gambella.

In recent years there has been considerable growth in the Gambella area, which is a district of Ethiopia, containing many camps, housing some half a million refugees from neighbouring South Sudan. The region is 90% Christian with Protestant denominations (in which Anglicans are counted) accounting for over 70% of the population. It is an area of vigorous Christian growth. This has been one of the engines for the move towards a new Province.

The Diocese of Egypt is presently part of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, containing also the Dioceses of Jerusalem, Iran, and Cyprus and the Gulf. It has played a significant part in the life of that province including being the venue for a quinquennial Provincial Clergy and Spouses Conference, the most recent of which was held at Luxor, on the banks of the Nile. That province will continue with its three dioceses to be the Anglican presence in the Middle East, under its Primate, Archbishop Michael Lewis, also with Welsh connections, Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf.

The proclamation of the new province was due to have taken place on 20<sup>th</sup> June with a visit of Archbishop Welby to Egypt. That has now been postponed, along with the Lambeth Conference, at which the new province would have been welcomed.