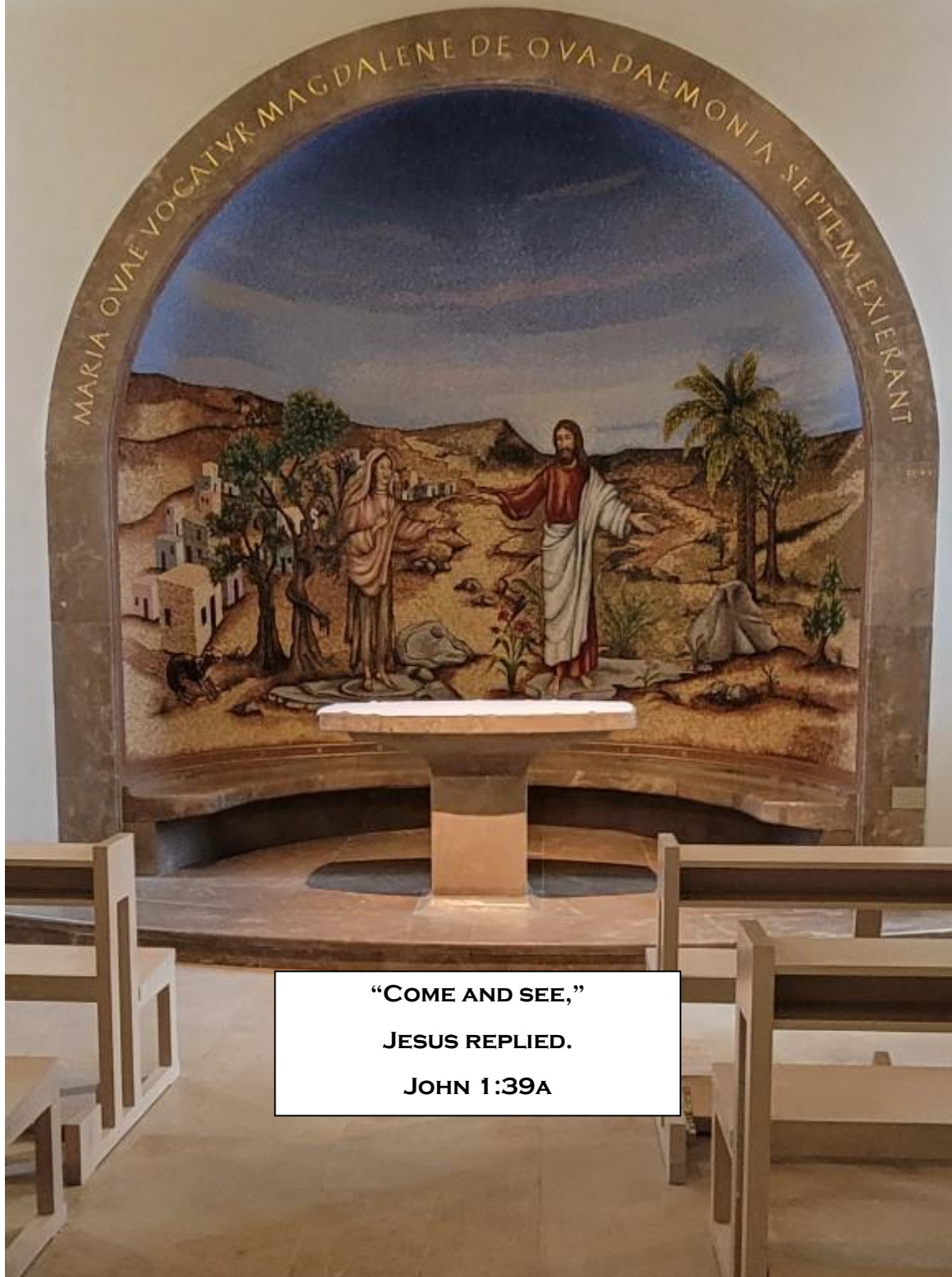


**DEVOTIONALS BY PILGRIMS TO THE HOLY LAND
FROM MARTIN FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN MARTIN, TN**



**“COME AND SEE,”
JESUS REPLIED.
JOHN 1:39A**



Holy Land pilgrims standing on a Bethlehem hillside in the West Bank. From left: Leslie Ary, Nancy Harden, Mary Ellen Foley, Rosemary Coleman, Annette Moore, Vida Peckham, Kim Turner, Alicia Pinto, Sandy Davis, Randy Cooper, tour guide Mona, Chris Butler, Jenise Butler & Greg Moore. (Nov. 2022)

Introduction by Randy Cooper

Christians have no abiding city. Their hope is set on a heavenly country, on the Jerusalem above, a city not made with human hands. --Robert Wilken

Our Christian faith doesn't require us to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Yet Christianity has always had a special relation to the land that we today know as Israel, Palestine, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

Palestine, as that entire land was known for so long, was a majority Christian land for over three centuries, from the late fourth century through the Arab conquest into the seventh century and beyond. Most of the people living there were Christian for several centuries beyond the conquest.

Perhaps those few facts can remind us that the Holy Land is a historical land, not a mere outdoors museum. Christians have called the Holy Land their home since the time of Christ, with many today claiming ancestry back to Bible times. The fact that our tour guide, Mona, was born and has lived all her 38 years in Nazareth as an Arab-speaking Christian should tell us that the Holy Land has always been a land with real people living in a particular time and place. Quoting Wilken again, "Christianity, like Judaism and Islam, is not a European religion; its homeland is the Middle East."

Thirteen of us traveled to the Holy Land in November to listen and learn, to seek and see. We pray that we have returned home better able to live faithfully in the time and place God has given to us. Our Lenten devotions are prompted and informed by our pilgrimage. We share them with our church family as we walk together toward Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter.

The Way of Life by Randy Cooper

Dale Aukerman reminds us that there are two alternatives for all humanity. They are represented by the mounts of Masada and Golgotha.

After the fall and destruction of Jerusalem by Rome's Tenth Legion in A.D. 70, Jewish rebels fled to Masada, Herod's fortress that rose 1,200 feet above the Dead Sea Valley. They held out against the Roman legion until A.D. 73. The night before soldiers entered the breached wall, 960 men, women, and children took their own lives (though some may have been killed against their wishes). Masada has become Israel's national symbol of fighting and defending oneself to death, if necessary. Many men and women are inducted into today's Israeli army atop Masada.

Mount Masada is the path of self-preservation at any cost, whether by individuals or nations. It always leads to Death. Death is capitalized in the preceding sentence to emphasize that it is an aggressive power that can take many forms (reflect upon the "sting of death" in 1 Cor. 15:50-58 and the "reign of Death" in Rom 5:12-21).

Another Jew was killed on another mount called Golgotha. He refused to lead his people to take up arms against the Romans. He gave himself over to them—exactly what the Jews in Masada had refused to do. He even prayed for those who were killing him. Yet Pilate's soldiers guarding his tomb were powerless against the God who raised him. The slain Lamb was raised victorious over Death and cannot be conquered.

Mount Golgotha is the way of life. The central mystery of the New Testament is that "God overcomes the world not through a show of force but through the suffering and death of Jesus," as one has written. Jesus is "the faithful witness" (Rev 1:5). Mount Golgotha is "both the source and the shape of our salvation."

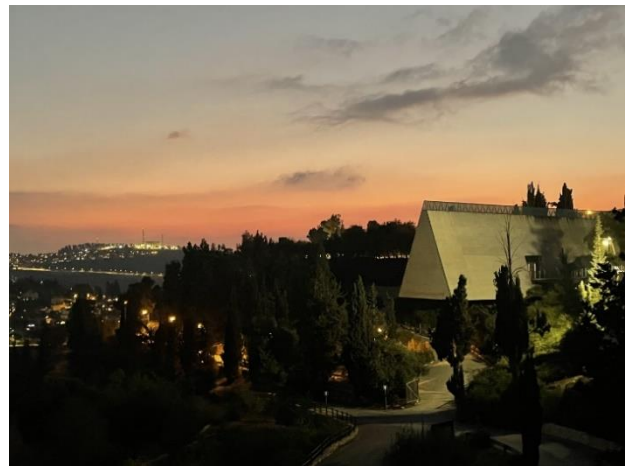
Herod's fortress, called Masada, overlooks the Dead Sea Valley.



The Spirit of Lent by Greg Moore

If we are purposeful during Lent, we are charged and compelled to 'suffer' by becoming uncomfortable, giving up complacency, and working for equality and justice for everyone. It makes us realize our privilege in so many aspects of life as we take away or limit that privilege and thus experience discontent. Perhaps our eyes will be opened to those on the margins and to how man subjugates and vilifies other men. Perhaps empathy and compassion are opened within us. We understand suffering that comes as punishment for wrongdoing. However, scripture tells us that we are assured of blessings and favor of God when we suffer for doing what is right and just. This is not selfishness disguised as selflessness. It is an expression of love shown to us over and over in Jesus' actions. He doesn't just teach but he also heals. And he heals more than what is obvious on the surface. He heals deep inside by giving worth to those he touches. Thanks be to God.

1 Peter 3: 10-12, 17



Upper right: sculpture at Yad Vashem (Holocaust Museum). Center left is a window inside the Church of the Primacy of St. Peter. Center right is the view from the Church of the Primacy of St. Peter with the Sea of Galilee in the background. Bottom right is a sculpture of Jesus and Peter.



Educational Opportunities by Jenise Butler

“Educational Opportunities”-this was the name of the company who provided our tour of the Holy Lands. And for the most part that is what our journey proved to be for me. Educational, it felt, more than spiritual. “Is there anything wrong with that?”, I ask myself. I don’t think so because the more “educated” we become about a land, a people, a culture, situation, conflicts, the more we can see these things for what they really are. Can that not be a form of spiritual growth? To see things more clearly, maybe more like God sees them?

I learned a lot about modern day Israel and Palestine even before we embarked on our trip. Yes, I knew there has been conflict in that region for as long as I can remember. I assumed it had pretty much been going on since Bible times when Abraham’s two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, became the fathers of the Jewish and Arabic races respectively. I watched a DVD that explained how Israel had just become a state again in 1948! (Somehow, I had missed that in history class!) How wonderful that after the atrocities of WWII so many Jewish people could return “Home” to their Promised Land!

But then I read two books by an Arabic priest, Elias Chacour, who lives in Galilee and whose family can trace their Christian heritage back to 1st century. He tells his very personal story of how his family had been run out of their peaceful village when he was a child and forced for years to live as refugees.

As he struggled to reconcile his love for his Jewish neighbors and the mistreatment of Palestinians, he found his calling in the words of Jesus “blessed are the peacemakers”. He has dedicated his life to work for peace between Jews and Palestinians.

Father Chacour begs us not to take sides and to only have love and compassion in our hearts for the Jews and Palestinians. He also uses the phrase “Living Stones”. He asks people who visit the Holy Lands, are you here just to experience the ancient buildings and stones or are you also interested in learning about the people, the “living stones”? We had the “educational opportunity” to have dinner in the home of a Christian Palestinian family in Bethlehem. We had to miss seeing one of the major historical sites in Jerusalem that day to make our dinner, but when the day was over, we agreed it had been more important to spend our time with the “living stones”.

Especially after recent events, may we all during this Lenten season “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” Psalm 122:6.

In the home of a Palestinian Christian family in Bethlehem in the West Bank is the homeowner, Chris Butler, Jenise Butler, Alicia Pinto, Vida Peckham, and the remainder of the family.



The Upper Room by Mary Ellen Foley

The Cenacle (also known as the Upper Room) is a room in Mount Zion in Jerusalem, just outside the Old City walls, traditionally held to be the site of the Last Supper. This was the place where Jesus shared a final meal with his apostles. (Acts 1;12-13, Mark 14:15). The “upper room” of the “Last Supper” is described as place of refreshment, renewal, and rejuvenation (Luke 22;19-20).

Jesus knew that the time of His destiny was at hand and sought one last communion with His disciples before this faithful hour. Jesus Himself chose the place of this sacred communion where He would share these most precious moments with His closest followers

At the time of Jesus, upper rooms were only associated with temples and palaces, and the priest and kings who occupied them. These were the only ones who could afford to construct these large, open, spacious, yet private rooms, secluded from the hustle and bustle of the busy streets below.

“The upper room” has since been representative of a “place of prayer”. A secret quiet time and place that you prepare and set aside for the habitation of your Lord. A place set apart from the hustle and bustle of your busy life where you commune with God and He communes with you. Communion with God still comes when we prepare the upper room (our mind) of our temple (body) to receive a personal visitation from Him. Where loving Him becomes your main priority, hearing from Him becomes your main focus, and serving Him becomes your main desire.



If you don't have an “upper room”, it's time you build one. Prepare a place of personal intimate prayer in your life and invite the Lord to come commune with you there daily.



“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” – Psalms 1:19

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” – Jeremiah 33:3

Reference; Daily Manna by Heart of Worship, Marandia Wright, November 21, 2016



The Garden of Gethsemane by Alicia Pinto

The first place I really set foot in on my first trip to Jerusalem was the Garden of Gethsemane. It moved me so to be in a place, a real place, where Jesus not only walked, but spent a good deal of time in prayer and the last moments of his life.

Jesus came here with his disciples and asked them to do one thing, one simple thing, stay awake. Jesus wanted them to be with Him, to keep watch over Him, and to pray with Him. Yet every time He came back, they were asleep. How many times has Jesus asked us to do one simple thing?

Jesus knew His last days were upon him. He asked His Father to take away this cup, but if He had to drink of it, He would. He was willing to do whatever His Father asked of him. Yet here were the disciples, who loved Jesus, but could not just stay awake.

Jesus asks us all the time to do things – be kind, take care of our neighbors, take care of the poor, basically just show up. Especially, in this day and age, we can find every possible reason not to answer these calls – it’s too hard, I have to stand my ground, it’s too dangerous, I’m too busy,....I’m too tired. What if Jesus had those same answers for us when we come to him on our knees, or just driving in our cars with a quick prayer, asking for much bigger things – “heal my child, keep my family safe, have mercy on our county and world.”

We never hesitate to ask Jesus for what we need. We need to learn to stop doing all of the talking and asking, and learn to listen to what Jesus is asking. All the way back to the Garden of Gethsemane – stay awake, pray, watch over. That’s really not a lot to ask is it.



Our Foundation by Nancy Harden

As we visited the many historical sites in Israel, I was fascinated by the wonders of the architecture. Some structures were hundreds of years old, some thousands and some recently built or rebuilt. I was reminded of the numerous times the words foundation, rock, stone, cornerstone and capstone are used in the Bible in reference to God's unwavering truth. In Mathew 7:25 Jesus teaches: "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the wind blew and beat against the house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

In the mid nineteenth century, a country pastor in England named Samuel J. Stone was concerned that the Church was losing sight of the authority of scripture and the people were mindlessly reciting the Apostles' Creed. He wrote the words to one of the great Methodist hymns to reunite the Church. "The Church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." In 2nd. Timothy Paul teaches against those who wander from the truth and in so doing weaken the faith of others. In Timothy 2:15 he states, "Never the less, God's solid foundation stands firm." When we wander, waiver, stagger, stumble, fail, flounder, and fall, our comfort can be found in Paul's declaration: "Nevertheless! Nevertheless! God's foundation stands firm!"



Nancy Harden with her daughter Leslie Ary at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

Our Guide by Jenise Butler

Mona was our guide during our time in Israel and the West Bank. She was loving, energetic, outgoing, and positive. She was from Nazareth, a mother of four, Arabic by race, and Christian by religion. She loved the historic Christian landmarks she showed us. I imagine we can all still hear her: “Ok friends, are you ready?!” - “Let’s go my friends!” - “Prepare your listening devices!”

There are so many places you can go, see, and experience in the Holy Land, I believe it would be impossible to visit them all in one week. Without a guide it would be hard to know which locations would be most interesting and meaningful. Also, the traffic and navigating the cities were kind of crazy-another reason to have a guide! With few exceptions Mona never left us while she was our leader. She stayed at our hotel, ate meals with us, and went everywhere we went.

The Holy Spirit can be our guide in life if we allow it. We can choose to make decisions and navigate life without the help of this wonderful part of the Trinity, or we can learn to listen to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, movements, and guidance in our lives. The Holy Spirit can guide us in the most wonderful and profound directions for our lives. The Holy Spirit can help us navigate all the twists, turns, and decisions life brings our way.

One more thing about Mona, her accent was hard at times to understand. I believe with time, the more I heard her voice and the way she spoke, it would have become easier to understand what she was saying. I think the Holy Spirit is like this too. We need time; and we need to practice listening to be able to hear and understand what the Holy Spirit is conveying to us. The more we listen to and pay attention to God’s voice through the Holy Spirit the better we will be able to follow Him.

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8



Justice by Greg Moore

Reading of the Gospels would reveal that Jesus did not receive justice. Plots against him. Sham charges. Warped judgments. Public shame and execution. Yet, all during his ministry, Jesus teaches and emphasizes justice. Today, perhaps we still misinterpret justice. We tend to look upon what the court system does or doesn't do as the mark of justice. Even before the ministry of Jesus, the words of Micah 6: 8 echo what the Lord requires of every man: 'to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.' So, what is justice? Perhaps, we must first define 'injustice.' Isaiah addresses this and Jesus seeks to teach us how to overcome injustice by how he lived. The act of justice begins with the individual and continues within the community. It is not merely assigned to the court system or an institution such as 'the government' or 'the church'. Justice begins through individual works of mercy. It is not enough to only embrace works of piety. We must justly love our neighbor by feeding the hungry, offering shelter and clothing for those without, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, welcoming the stranger, the one who is different from us, and taking time to offer hope through Jesus Christ to the lost. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Amen.



Isaiah 58: 1-9



Upper right is the front door of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (which is built over Golgatha). Left: a rock-hewn notch where ties were attached from the the 'Dungeon' below St. Peter in Gallicantu Church. Tradition offers this place as where Jesus may have been held prior to the Crucifixion. Lower left is the ceiling inside The Chapel of the Condemnation in the Old City of Jerusalem. Bottom right, a view of The Mount of Olives.



Etched in Stone by Jenise Butler

Etched in stone or written in stone is used to emphasize that something is fixed or unchangeable.

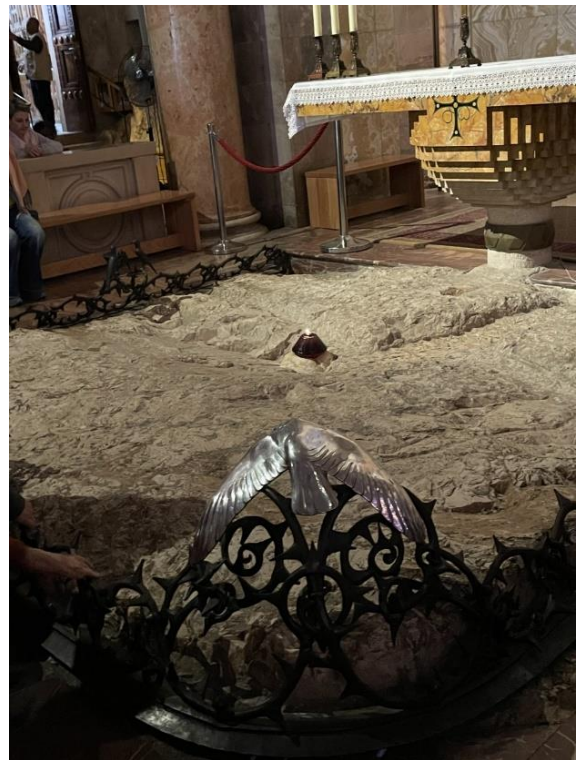
When we were in Israel we saw many stones and rocks. It was amazing to think that historians and archaeologists can be pretty certain we were looking at the stone where Jesus prayed at the Garden of Gethsemane. And the rock where it is believed Jesus prepared breakfast for his disciples by the Sea of Galilee after his ascension. And yet another rock where they believe he multiplied the fish and loaves to feed the 5,000. There were many other stones that remain, from Jewish ritual bathing baths, the second temple walls, the steps Jesus would have ascended to the temple.

Pretty much stones and rocks are all that remain from 2000 years ago. These objects are strong, solid, unchanging, lasting, enduring. Which makes me think of God whose love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and goodness are all these things as well. They have always been there for us and always will be there for us, for eternity.

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Matthew 7:24

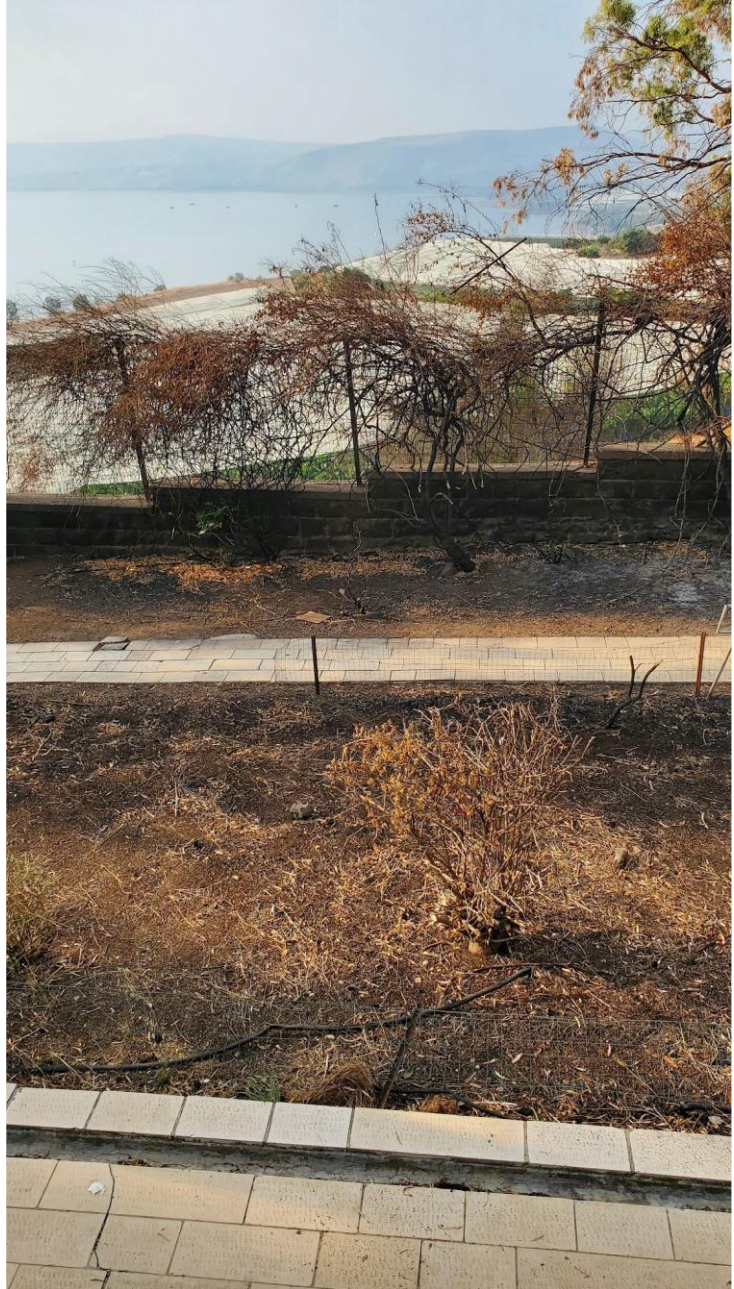


Above the rock from the Garden of Gethsemane and to the right: the rock where Christ multiplied the loaves and fish.



Going up the Mountain Chris Butler

The recent sermon on the Beatitudes, in which Pastor Amanda mentions the followers of Jesus going up onto the mountain with Jesus, made me reflect on the time we spent in Galilee at the Church of the Beatitudes. It is a rather steep incline and would take quite an effort for the followers of Jesus to climb to hear his teachings. The followers then were probably challenged as much as followers are today from the “upside down” teachings of the Beatitudes. For as we all are looking to Jesus for justice, and answers to the problems that we face, Jesus' responses with “blessed are the meek, the grieving, and the poor in spirit”. During hard days or weeks, it can feel like life is a constant walk up a steep hill. But as we walk up that steep hill or face hard times, we have to rely on God's strength even more. Blessed are those that walk uphill for they shall receive His strength.



The view from the Church of the Beatitudes down to the Sea of Galilee.

Mosaics by Leslie Ary

Do you ever wonder if you, or what you do, matters? Is anybody even listening to you? Do your ideas count? Are your efforts seeming to be fruitless? We are each just one person, in the sea of billions of people who have inhabited this earth. How much difference can one person make?

The photo below is an ancient mosaic on the floor of the 5th century Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The mosaics are made of thousands and thousands of tiny tiles, each painstakingly laid in place, one at a time. The mosaic retains its beauty because all the pieces are miraculously still in place, even after all these years. When even one tile is missing, the mosaic loses some of its structural integrity, and it's easier for other tiles to be dislodged. The overall beauty of the mosaic is also diminished if all the pieces are not present.

So too, are we tiles in God's beautiful mosaic. He carefully chose and placed each of us for His larger purpose. The picture is not complete until we are all in it! Each one of us counts! YOU COUNT!

“God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. If all the parts were the same, how could there be a body? As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body.” 1 Corinthians 12: 18-20.



Living Faithfully by Annette Moore

Our trip to the Holy Land would not have happened without Brother Randy. He began soliciting input on such a trip back in 2019, and it was dropped when COVID protocols made international travel nearly impossible. In early 2022 he began again, and our group quickly formed. He drew us together once a month or so for study and reflection on what our trip might mean for us, and he transformed us from a group of tourists into pilgrims in those months of study. Our tour guide was a young Palestinian Christian woman, and she was also vital to our experience. We prayed together and read scripture together at many stops along our tour, and this kept us focused. We also had daily devotions at the end of each day together.



One stop we made, and a reflection Randy made during that stop, has stayed with me as I struggle to understand the distrust and disharmony in our country at this time. At the same time, after going to the Holy Land I realized the distrust and disharmony there has been going on for centuries.

We were at Shepard's Fields. Near the town of Beit Sahure in the Judean hillside outside of Bethlehem. This site is generally assumed to be close to the place where the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. Shepherds were moved out of the cities because they were considered to be unclean, and they kept their sheep (their most valuable possessions) in caves on the hillside. It is most likely Jesus was born in such a cave.



Our view here from the top of the hillside was beautiful. We looked out on a field, and yes, we spotted shepherds and sheep grazing. Again, this was a spot that seemed unchanged from ancient times.



Brother Randy had us imagine that this field was similar to the fields when Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem during a famine, and Ruth began gleaning in the fields. In the story of Ruth, we see love and concern for these foreigners, at a time when that was discouraged, even forbidden, and eventually Ruth became one of the ancestors of Israel's greatest king, David. Ruth's story is placed during the days when the judges ruled; and many Israelites did things the Lord saw as evil. Randy had us reflect on the idea that people could live faithfully in such a corrupt world. People living faithfully in a corrupt world can accomplish great things. People living faithfully can become ancestors of Kings and a messiah. It gives me hope.

Imperfect People by Mary Ellen Foley

On my visit to the beautiful Sea of Galilee, I visited The Church of St. Peter's Primacy. This is the place where Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection (John 21: 1-14). The disciples were weary and discouraged after fishing all night without catching anything. Jesus appeared to them the next morning from the bank of the Sea of Galilee where he called to them to throw their net on the right side of their boat. The disciples caught a net of fish so full that they could not pull it into the boat. Jesus used this miracle to refocus his disciples from their discouragement of the crucifixion and to renew their hope in Jesus the Messiah. Jesus provided the disciples that day a breakfast of fish and bread over a coal fire, with plenty of fish left for the days to come. This beautiful act tells us that if we follow Jesus, he will do amazing things in our lives and provide so much more than we could accomplish on our own.

During this time on the beach, Jesus spoke to Peter. Jesus knew that Peter loved him but he gave him the opportunity to profess his love for him three times just as he had denied Jesus three times several weeks before. With these three questions (John 21: 15-17), Jesus reinstated Peter to the leader of the apostles and told him to teach God's word to Jesus' followers by instructing him to "feed my lambs", "feed my sheep". Everyone makes mistakes, no one is perfect. Jesus will use those who simply love him, not perfectly but, as much as they can. Jesus is calling us, like Peter, to tell others of his salvation. If we first get to know him and love him, then he will use us in great ways.

Jesus uses imperfect people who love him to spread his word.



Lenten Lesson: John 21: 1-17

Integrity by Greg Moore

The road to the crucifixion of Jesus was a path full of challenges to the integrity of men. Integrity may be defined as when our inner self aligns with our outward being; that is, the congruence between who we are and what we do. These challenges to the status quo of power and glory are upsetting to those who have. But we must pay attention. Jesus' challenges were not mere suggestions. He spoke to the crowds about the scribes and Pharisees who valued outward appearance but were 'full of hypocrisy and lawlessness'. His words ring out that 'All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.' And for his challenges, status quo belittled and sought to silence him like they do to this day. But the Son of God will not be silenced. For he is speaking to everyman, then and now. We are challenged to live with integrity, with righteousness. Thanks be to God.

Matthew 23: 1-35

Right is a sculpture inside St. Peter in Gallicantu Church, also known as Peter and the Crow Church. Next is

our group on the Teaching Steps in Old Jerusalem where Jesus taught. Bottom is art mounted outside St. Peter in Gallicantu Church. Bottom right shows steps leading down into the Kidron Valley with the Mount of Olives in the background.



Staying Afloat by Jenise Butler

Most people have somewhat of a struggle to stay afloat in a body of water. Our legs sink, we end up having to tread water. We can do this for a while but then in our human limitations we grow tired.

Because of the high concentrations of salt in the Dead Sea one just leans back and floats like a cork!

Life can be like trying to stay afloat in a normal body of water. It can be a struggle, sometimes we grow weary or tired. Sometimes we even feel like we are swimming upstream!

But if we can learn to let go, relax, and lean back into God's presence in our lives, He will buoy us up. And if we insist on doing things our own ways we can feel like we are swimming upstream. But if we trust God's direction for our lives, we can more easily go with the current we are meant to be living.

One more interesting fact about the Dead Sea-it is the lowest point on earth. Especially then, when we are at our lowest points, God will hold us up with our heads above water.

"The God of old is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms."
Deuteronomy 33:27

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you." Isaiah 43:2



Jenise and Chris Butler floating in the Dead Sea.

Small Pieces by Jenise Butler

While in the Holy Lands we saw beautiful mosaics. Mosaics are decorations made by inlaying small pieces of variously colored material to form pictures or patterns. Aren't our lives kind of like these beautiful mosaics? God places many small, sometimes seemingly insignificant, days, occurrences, people, places, relationships to form a beautiful picture.

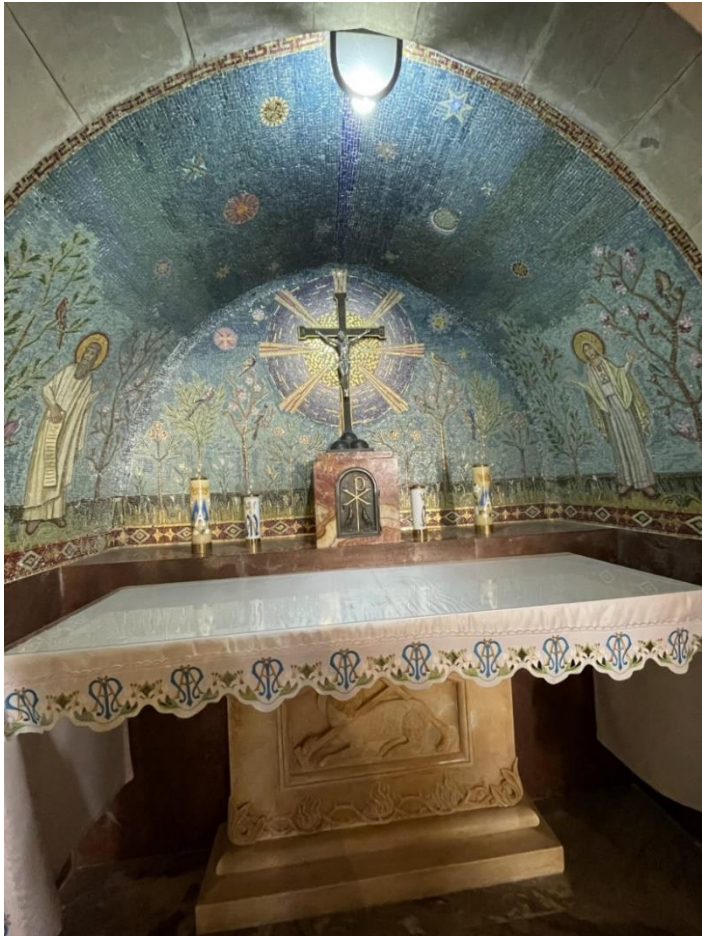
If we were to look at one piece of a mosaic by itself it doesn't look very impressive, only like a small bit of glass or ceramic. But wow, when pieced together by a talented artist it can be dazzling!

Our church can also be like a mosaic with each precious person being a small and maybe seemingly insignificant piece of the whole but when God puts us all together; Wow! We can be a beautiful masterpiece!

(Oh, and by the way, the pieces of a mosaic can be broken pieces of material.)
May we give thanks to God for his majestic artistry in our lives and church and may Jesus Christ be the glue that holds us all together!

In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body.

Romans 12:5



Beautiful mosaic around the altar in the Church of the Visitation in Jerusalem.

Wilderness by Greg Moore

Wilderness. For most, it is not a place of choice. But wilderness is a place that everyone will experience, the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Tempted by hunger, challenging God to protect him, and power over the world by changing alliances, Jesus resisted the devil's testing. And then at his betrayal, his walk to the cross is one of dark agony. We too are tested in the wilderness experiences of our lives, our dark agony. Yet, this wilderness is sacred ground. For it is here that we may come face to face with God in our humility, in our brokenness, and our tenderness. It can be a surprisingly fertile place where the roots of faith grow ever deeper and broader. Be thankful that God is with us on this part of our journey. And if we turn our faces and hearts to see and feel his presence, he walks beside us. Thanks be to God.

Matthew 4: 1-11

Matthew 26: 47-Matthew
27:56



Pilgrim Songs by Chris Butler

During our time in Jerusalem, we were encouraged to read Psalms 120-134. These are known as the Psalms of Ascents or the Pilgrims Songs. These were psalms sung by Jewish worshippers as they traveled up the road to Jerusalem to attend the three major Jewish pilgrimage festivals, The Festival of Passover, the Festival of Weeks, and The Festival of Tabernacle. The psalms were recited as an encouragement to the pilgrims not only for the physical ascent but also for their spiritual ascent of returning “home” back to their promised land. Psalm 123 says, “Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens”. Psalm 121 says, “I lift my eyes unto the hills, from where does my help come from. My help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He will not slumber.” Let us all keep our eyes lifted toward God and be encouraged by these psalms as we travel to our “home” in Christ.



View from the Church of Visitation

I Want to Go to the Church **by Jenise Butler**

While in the Holy Land we saw 15 beautiful and unique churches.

There is a lyric in a contemporary Christian song that says, “I want to go to church”. Why do so many believers, as do I, WANT to go to church? Is it to experience the feeling of God’s presence? To fellowship with other believers? To repent? To be inspired and encouraged? Why do we spend so much money and resources for these buildings?

Several years ago, Chris and I traveled to Russia twice to adopt our son. During our first visit to this intriguing country, I was moved to tears on two occasions. One of these times was when we were shown a picture of 24-month-old Michael right before we met him for the first time. Later, when in Moscow for an overnight layover we had the opportunity to take a tour of the city. The second time I was moved to tears was when we stepped inside the Russian orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Savior. I looked up and saw exquisite murals depicting the life of Christ, and gold trim everywhere. I felt like it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.



I know that for most communities of believers such grandeur is not affordable; and God’s grace and beauty are no less present in the most humble of churches.



However, I am so very thankful for our beautiful sanctuary with the gorgeous stain glass windows, red carpet, old wooden pews, and exposed pipes from the pipe organ. I appreciate immensely all those who have gone before us who have not only passed down their faith but who have also provided and maintained our Methodist church building at Main and McCombs.

The word of the Lord came to Solomon: “As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through the promise I gave to David your father. and I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.” So Solomon built the temple and completed it.
1 Kings 6:11-14

The Church of the Visitation and The Church of All Nations

Thin Spaces by Annette Moore

Our trip to the Holy Land last November was a pilgrimage of ups and downs, both physically and mentally. There were many places we visited so full of people, and so commercialized, that I had trouble connecting them to the Jesus I knew from studying and reading the Bible.



But there were some “thin” spots; places where the past replaced the present, and I felt the presence of the Lord in these places most of all.

One of these “thin” spots was the Sea of Galilee. We had spent the night in Tiberias, on the western shore. The day was warm and sunny, and we boarded a wooden boat, and headed out on the water. The breeze, and the soft sounds of a hymn played over us as we approached the middle of the lake, where we stopped, and just took it all in. In that moment, I knew that our Lord had been here, and was here and would always be here. As I looked at the shore line, I pictured it full of people who were being fed with five loaves and two fishes, and how Jesus had to get out on the water and cross the sea to find some time for Himself. I will remember the feelings of peacefulness and love in that moment forever.

In our overcrowded, over stimulated world, it is difficult to find these thin spots, but they are essential if we are to know and love Christ.

“I am the living bread that comes down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever and that bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” John 6:51



Living Stones by Randy Cooper

Meet our tour guide--Mona Abo Al Assal Christopoulos. Yes, that's her full name! She is one of the 7% of Christians among Israel's Arab population. Her home is Nazareth. She and her husband have four children.

Meet John Nissan. He stood on our bus in Bethlehem and prayed the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic, Jesus's native tongue. Mr. Nissan and his family are a few of the less than 1% of Christians among those Palestinians living in the West Bank. Mona and John Nissan shared how difficult it is to live these days as Palestinian or Arab Christians in the Holy Land. Yet their ancestors have lived there for centuries.

Can we be assured of the presence of Christians in the Holy Land or the greater Middle East in the future? Will the Christian faith lose a vital witness in the world if there are no Christians in the Holy Land in years to come? As inspirational as some of the ancient biblical sites are, only people—not stones and marble—can bear an authentic witness. The Holy Land needs Christians if our faith is to be moored to a land, a place, a time, a people. If there is no Christian witness in the Holy Land, our essential connection to the Old Testament will be weakened. And a faith without the Old Testament isn't Christian.

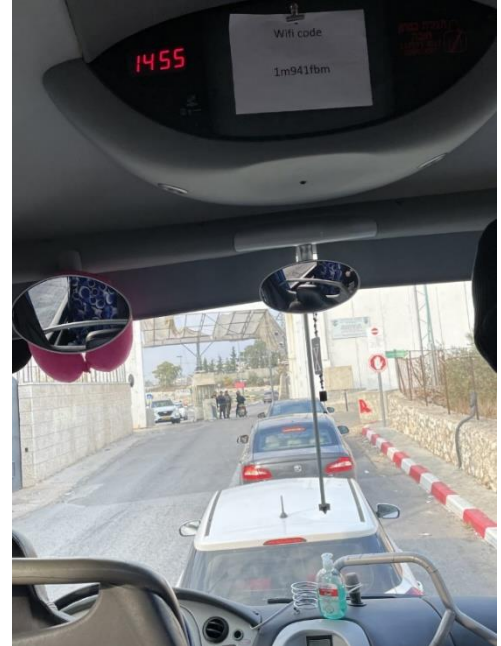
Pray for the “living stones” like Mona and John who make their home in the Holy Land.

Our tour guides:
John, a
Palestinian
Christian in
Bethlehem and
Mona on a hill
overlooking
Nazareth.



Love Your Enemy by Jenise Butler

When passing into and out of the West Bank and places throughout, there are Israeli checkpoints with armed guards. Palestinians are not allowed to freely move in and out or even within their own country. It is also hard for Palestinians to obtain building permits for needed schools and businesses. Due to these restrictions and other reasons, Palestinians feel mistreated and oppressed. Some of the Palestinian families our group had dinners with wish for their children to be able to someday leave permanently. Others lash out in violence. The Israelis feel a need to crackdown and more violence ensues. Even since our trip in November an Israeli raid of a refugee camp turned violent and innocent people died. A Palestinian unleashed anger at a Jewish synagogue and more innocent people died. Our tour guide, Mona, referred to the back-and-forth violence as “ping pong”.



While traveling in and out of the West Bank we passed through several of these checkpoints. The guards looked so young, only doing their jobs. On two occasions they even entered our tour bus with machine guns and asked to see our passports.

Father Elias Chacour in his book “Blood Brothers,” talks about his father, Michael Chacour, and how he embodied the New Testament teachings of Christ. He welcomed the soldiers who needed to stay in their Galilean home in 1947 while the family moved to the roof. He refused to let one of his other sons bring guns into the home. Even when the family was forced out of their village completely, Michael Chacour would only pray for the ones responsible.

May we pray for, and may God have mercy on the Israelis and Palestinians as they struggle to coexist.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy’, but I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Words of Jesus in Matthew 5:43-44



Edge by Jenise Butler

The gospels describe a time when Jesus is rejected in his hometown of Nazareth. He has returned home after beginning his ministry and finds himself in the synagogue. He is handed the scrolls and reads a prophecy in Isaiah describing the coming Messiah. After he sits down, he tells his friends and neighbors that in him this prophecy is being fulfilled.

His hometown people were astonished and furious that this kid whom they had watched grow up, knew his brothers and sisters, knew his father as a good man but a common laborer, claim to be the son of God! How dare he?! They were not having it!

The people ran him out of town to a brow of a hill overlooking the town. They intended to throw him off the cliff but miraculously Jesus was able to slip through the crowd and walk away.

I had the privilege of reading this story from the gospel of Luke on the very precipice where it is believed to have taken place. It was awesome to stand there and be able to see in one direction the modern day city of Nazareth, and to be able to look the other direction and see Mt. Tabor, where some believe the transfiguration described in Matthew and Luke took place.

So maybe one takeaway from this story is when you find yourself on the edge of a cliff about to be pushed over, calmly walk through the crowds of doubts, fears, anxieties, and troubles, and hope to eventually find yourself on a figurative mountaintop transformed into who God created you to be.



The Word Became Flesh by Chris Butler

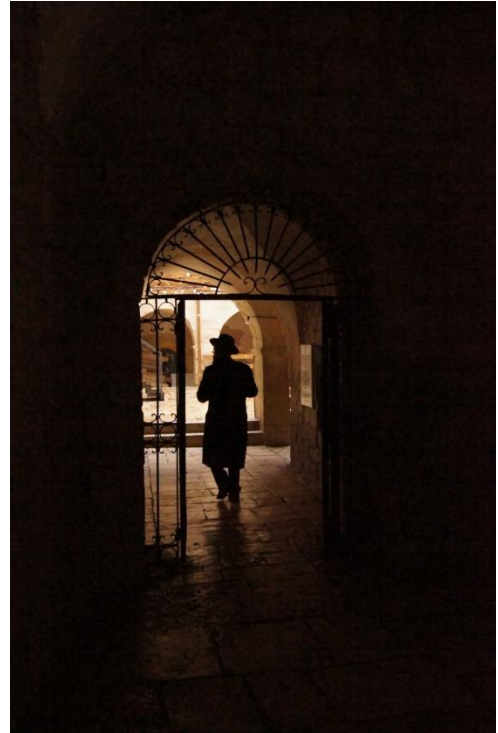
The Christmas carols, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” and “Silent Night” bring up images of a peaceful, silent, sleepy town where the baby Jesus was born with angels and shepherds surrounding Him. And in many ways that is the right picture of Bethlehem because on that night Christ the Savior was born for all the people of the world. Mary and Joseph may not have had the same feelings. They were living in Roman occupied land and traveling approximately 90 miles to be registered for taxes because of a decree by Caesar Augustus, and doing all this nine months pregnant and with no family support. Today’s Bethlehem can be as harsh and as cruel as the Bethlehem of the 1st century. Bethlehem is in the Israeli occupied West Bank. It struggles with a localized economy fighting a very high poverty rate and crippling unemployment. Despite all the problems and the fears that Christians in Bethlehem face now, and all that Mary and Joseph faced, God decided that this was the place where “The Word became flesh”. Pilgrims today can visit the Church of Nativity built above the birthplace of Jesus which Christians have venerated since the 1st century.



Spending Time with Jesus by Greg Moore

Finding our way in the darkness. Read and reread Jesus' words. The Great Teacher seeks to teach every man. Even as the days narrowed and darkened for him, Jesus continued to teach and guide those who listened. Then as now, some will listen and some turn away. But for every man, it is hard to see the path when life darkens. Which way do we turn? Who or what influences our choices? Try Jesus. Spend time with Jesus, in the quiet. Talk to him and then listen, just listen. His promise is this: "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7: 7-8



Relationships by Annette Moore

The Bible teaches us about relationships. We read of Jonathan and David, (1 Samuel 20) Ruth and Naomi, (Book of Ruth) and Moses and Aaron (Exodus 3:14-16). These relationships show us that very different people can come together to advance God's plan.

The relationships formed during our trip to the Holy Land are important relationships. When you travel for long hours in a bus with folks, you develop a closeness and a bond. I am sure relationships like these are what Jesus wanted for us – time spent with other believers with a common goal, to learn more about Him.

I am forever grateful to my bus companions for encouraging me, uplifting me, and helping me to see Christ every day. You are a large part of why our Holy Land trip was so meaningful to me.



**I Look to the Hills for My Help
by Sandy Davis**

As long time Nordic skiers and formerly long distance runners, my husband and I are accustomed to solitude. Peace and quiet surround us on an early morning excursion before a busy city awakes with the morning sun. Midday the paths through a shaded park offer respite to the demands of daily life. When Covid shut down gathering places, we were able to continue walking and skiing, drinking in the beauty of the snow covered peaks and valleys in our mountain home.



What a contrast when entering Jerusalem! How exciting to see crowds of people from every corner of the world! The color of their skin, the mode of dress, the language spoken give a sense of the diversity of those who profess a similar belief that binds us together as creations of our God. All are eager to experience the Holy Land, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, to hear Him speak to the crowds, and have a sense for what He experienced during the last days of His Life.



Whether in crowded places or desolate dessert, in times of trial or joy, we can be aware of God's presence and guidance. The Holy Spirit surrounds us and comforts us. We are reminded: Be still and know that I am God.



Thought for the day: Where ever we are, what ever are our circumstances, God is always with us.

Prayer: Loving Father, may we be aware of Your presence regardless of today's challenges and gifts. Thank you for the comfort and guidance, love and grace You continually provide. Amen.



Nowhere to Lay His Head
By Rosemary Coleman

Continuing to feel an abundance of emotions after having walked where Jesus walked, I find myself in a closeness with Him that awes me each day. Having been a teacher of English, speech, and drama for thirty years, I rarely find myself searching for appropriate words when sharing with others until being asked so many times, “How was your trip?” My hesitancy in finding the best words in response continues when asked about this life-changing closeness to Jesus that I now feel.

Surprisingly, while thinking about my trip this morning, the sculpture of the homeless Jesus came to mind. While visiting and ultimately leaving one of the sites, I noticed a bench with a statue lying on it. Looking further, I realized it was a monument of Jesus lying there fully covered except for the feet with nail holes visible for me to see. How this grabbed me!

Knowing that it was for my own sins and the sins of all mankind, no matter their status in society, that He was crucified, I felt a flood of tears on my cheeks. I was overwhelmed with happiness and sadness, but I found myself in a renewed feeling of thankfulness. Hallelujah! I and all who accept Him are saved by His selfless act of love and grace.

Matthew 25



Trusting God by Kim Turner

As we traveled through the Great Ruth Valley in route to Masada, I couldn't help but think about the struggles of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi.

Ruth was married to a son of an Israelite family and lived in Moab. Ruth's father-in-law, husband and his brother died. Ruth had to make an extremely difficult decision whether to stay in Moab which was her home or go to Judah with Naomi, a place she had never been. Oprah, her sister-in-law chose to stay in Moab.

Ruth chose to take care of Naomi. Together they made a very difficult journey through the desert back to Bethlehem where they settled. Ruth's faithfulness spread far and wide.

Being left alone Ruth and Naomi had to provide for themselves. Ruth found a nearby field that belonged to Boaz. Ruth worked very hard. Boaz was told of Ruth's hard work and faith. He was very pleased and made sure Ruth and Naomi were protected and had plenty to eat and drink. Ruth appreciated this.

Ruth later found that Boaz was a close relative to Naomi's husband making him a Kinsman-Redeemer. Her faithfulness and hard work was rewarded!

Ruth trusted in the Lord and she was rewarded with a husband Boaz, son Obed, grandson Jesse and a great grandson David the King of Israel.

Have faith in God and he will take care of you!

Hebrews 11:6 Reminds us to Seek God



Message of Hope by Kim Turner

It was such an amazing honor to have the opportunity to experience the sights and sounds while at the Church of Visitation, Ein Kerem Israel. The architecture, art work and the joyful noise of prayer and hymns left me with a sense of peace. This is where the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus visited Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. It is said that Mary recited her song of praise, The Magnificat while there. The Magnificat has become one of the most ancient hymns in the Marian Hymnal. One can only imagine the fear and uncertainty Mary must have felt being a young woman unwed and pregnant. What we know is that Mary praised God.

What her words say to me is that no matter what our circumstances we should trust in God. Have faith during all seasons of life.



Luke 1:39-56



Jericho by Jenise Butler

Jericho is the oldest city in the world. It is also the setting for some pretty memorable stories in the Bible like when the Israelites marched around the city for seven days and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. It is near Jericho, where Joshua led God's chosen people across the Jordan river into the Promised Land.

One of the most endearing stories that took place in Jericho was the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector. He was too short to see over the crowd of people so he climbed a sycamore tree to be able to see Jesus.

Like Zacchaeus, sometimes we, too, need to climb to higher places to see Jesus. It can be hard to see Jesus over busyness, news, TV, social media, noise in general. We need to climb higher with prayer, quiet time, Bible study, serving others and going to church. We can also climb higher to see Jesus when we visit those who are sick, or in prison, or in the nursing home, by helping the poor, or maybe by just getting on the level of a child and giving them our full attention.

We got to visit Jericho while in the Holy Lands and see a real live sycamore tree like the one Zacchaeus climbed to see the Lord.



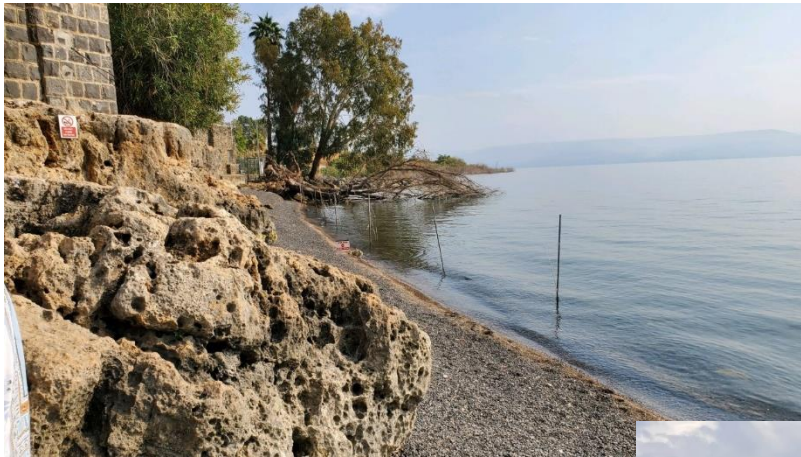
The Sea of Galilee by Chris and Jenise Butler

Of all the interesting sites we saw and enjoyed in the Holy Lands the Sea of Galilee was especially meaningful to us. The Church of the Primacy of St. Peter sits right by the Sea of Galilee and is believed to be the spot where Jesus cooked breakfast for Peter and other disciples after his resurrection. As we stood outside this church Greg Moore read from John 21 and we sang How Great Thou Art. Behind us that day on the sea was an actual fisherman casting nets in the water from a small fishing boat.



After eating lunch at a restaurant called none other than “St. Peter’s Fish” our group got to sail across the Sea while the sun broke through the clouds and our guide played praise music! It was a moving experience.

Unlike many of the sites we were blessed to see in the Holy Lands, the Sea of Galilee has remained unchanged. It has not had a church built on top of it; its location cannot be questioned or debated. It IS where Jesus called several of his disciples, calmed the storm, and walked on water!



Seize the Moment by Chris and Jenise Butler

We had spent a couple hours touring the famous archeological site in Southern Israel called Masada. Masada was an impressive fortress built by King Herod on the side of a mountain in the desert by the Dead Sea around 35 BC.

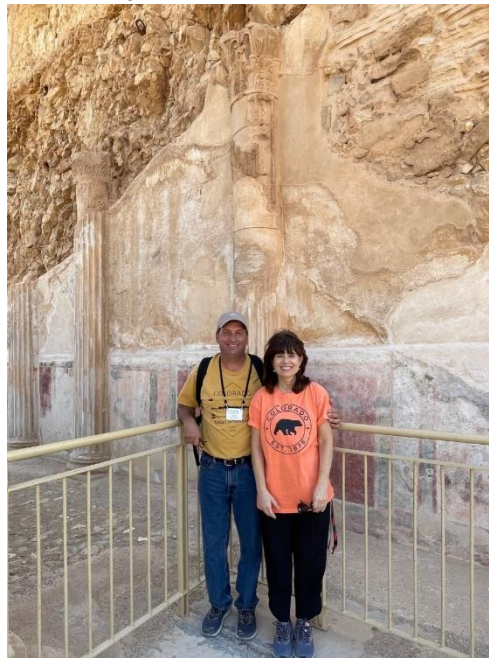
During the Jewish revolt of 70 AD, a group of Zealot Jews retreated to Masada to avoid being killed or taken as slaves by the Romans. Three years later when they were about to be overtaken by the Romans, tragically, 960 Jewish men, women, and children committed suicide.

Seeing the remains of Masada is very interesting. One can see that King Herod built elaborate water storage systems, bath houses with heated floors, porticos, and large areas used for living quarters and storage. Fresco designs have been discovered in various areas. There is evidence that when the Jews lived there, they converted an area into a synagogue for worship.

When we were finished touring as a group, our tour guide told us we had 15 minutes of free time. We made our way to an area we had not explored as a group. 200 steps led down the side of the mountain to the lowest of 3 levels of the palace. We said to each other, "Should we try it? and then, let's go for it!"



At the bottom we found interesting and beautiful remains of the castle and a fantastic view. After looking around briefly and snapping a few pictures we only had 4 minutes to climb 200 stairs and get back to our group's meeting place! We made it, only a few minutes late, and we don't think anyone minded!



And maybe, most importantly, we made a fun memory.

"These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:11

Traveling Together by Jenise & Chris Butler

Special bonds seem to form between people who travel together. You get to know each other better when you share these experiences together. You learn more about each other's personalities and grow closer.

We noticed several years ago when we had the opportunity to take trips with a group of people we ordinarily would only have had work relationships with, that the relationships deepened.

We have a deeper bond now with the group we traveled to Israel with. We got to know Leslie Ary's mom, Nancy. Folk who were mere acquaintances are now cherished friends. We became even closer with some who were already good friends.

We also travel through life with our church family. Among other things we share prayers, joys, sorrows, worship, learning, fellowship, and service. When we see each other out in the community, we feel special connections to one another.

During his life on earth Jesus traveled through Galilee, Judea and Samaria with his disciples. If we take our Christian faith seriously, we too are his disciples, and we too travel through life with Him, growing closer to the King of Kings every step of the way.



The Golden Gate by Chris Butler

The old city of Jerusalem has been surrounded by walls for its safety for thousands of years. The walls have been destroyed and rebuilt several times over those years. Even though the walls that exist now were rebuilt in the 16th century, they were constructed on top of the early walls. In order to enter the Old City, you must pass through one of the gates. The most famous of these gates is the Golden Gate. It is located on the east side and faces the Mount of Olives. In Jewish tradition, the Messiah will enter Jerusalem through this gate from the Mount of Olives. There is an old Jewish cemetery located across from the Golden Gate on the Mount of Olives. The Jews are buried with their feet toward the gate because it is here they believe the resurrection of the dead will begin and they want to be ready to enter Jerusalem with the Messiah. Christians also have special ties to this gate. It is believed that this is the gate that Jesus entered Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday riding a donkey. This gate was sealed shut in 1541 by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman as a defense against the returning Messiah.

It is a comfort to know that a simple stone wall cannot stop Christ from completing his work on earth. Evil and sin will continue to try to block Christ from the world, but we, as believers, have faith and hope in the knowledge that Christ is the Light of the world and will continue to shine.

John 1:5, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”



Steadfast Faith Jenise Butler

The Via Dolorosa is a route located in the Old City of Jerusalem which follows the route that Jesus is believed to have walked on his way to be crucified. The route follows 14 traditional stations, known as Stations of the Cross. It begins with a place where Christians believe Pilate condemned Jesus to death and ends where He is placed in the tomb.

As I anticipated walking the route of the Via Dolorosa I expected a spiritual, moving, meaningful experience. It is amazing to think about walking in the footsteps Jesus walked as he carried his cross.

What did I actually feel as I walked the Via Dolorosa?

Crowded (due to a surge in tourism and crowds of people)

Fatigue (It was in the afternoon and we had already had a full morning.)

Frustration (I had trouble hearing and understanding our tour guide.)

I have come to expect that when I follow Jesus, my days should go smoothly, filled with peace, love, joy, and meaning, and many of my days are. But then some days are like the day I had in Old Jerusalem walking in Jesus's steps. Some days are just overwhelming, frustrating, and tiresome. Some days are just hard.

As Christians what do we do with days like that? We push through them, thanking God for each and every day, the good and the bad, the easy and the hard.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Hebrews 12:1-3



Suffering by Greg Moore

Suffering. Crises in society like the pandemic infection, never-ending war, economic depressions and inequality reveal depths of suffering that have some people question where is Immanuel? How can we believe that Jesus has destroyed the power of evil and death? The answers lie before us in scripture. Jesus spent his ministry healing the sick, restoring the outcasts and shamed to society, feeding the hungry, mending broken bodies, minds, and spirits. He touched the untouchable and ate with sinners. He challenged the rich, the powerful, and the adored by naming their hypocrisy. He sought to awaken religious leaders to the way back to faith in the Father. The ones that Jesus knew best and offered himself to were and are the ones who suffer most. He walked outside the walls of man's power and glory. And then, he was abused and tortured to death because he challenged power to love everyone. Imagine carrying the wooden cross to Golgotha, step by step, amid the jeers of so many that he sought to help. So, where is Immanuel? Open your eyes! He walks among us to this day within this broken world offering hope, healing, and inspiring mankind to live with love and to fear not death. He lives within us if we offer him room. We are the ones to offer hope. We are the ones to feed the hungry. We are the ones to offer clothes to those who are cold. We are the ones who offer money to the beggar without judgmental strings attached. We are the ones who will not stand silent amid injustice. We are the ones to offer healthcare to the ones who cannot afford. We are the ones to include rather than shun. Yes, Jesus lives within us if we offer him room and He walks among us if we open our eyes. Thanks be to God for offering Jesus to show us the way.

Matthew 26: 1-5, 57-68, Matthew 27: 11-14, 24-56



Above left is a casting at Station III along the Via Dolorosa; a religious man in the Ethiopian section of Old Jerusalem; a typical street along the Via Dolorosa in Old Jerusalem; and a sculpture entitled 'Homeless Jesus' in Capernaum.

Carrying Our Cross by Alicia Pinto

As part of the crucifixion story, depending on which gospel you read, it just mentions in a sentence or two about Jesus carrying his cross and then Simon of Cyrene being made to carry it. And while we may realize the weight of the cross and Jesus' weakened condition, I don't think it really hit home how hard that would have been until I walked the streets of Jerusalem myself. The streets are narrow, winding, and hilly. There would have been people lining those streets either to watch or as merchants selling their wares. The stones of the streets are slick, so I'm sure He lost his footing several times.

Do we consider that this could have gone on for hours, not just minutes, as Jesus would have had to stop and rest, and just collapse under the weight of the cross? The physical pain of his injuries plus the wood cutting into his shoulder and hands. Each step would have been torturous. We connect with Him dying for us, but do we really put all this suffering into human terms?

As we go through this time of Lent, we need to go through each of these steps with him. It's just too easy to spend a few minutes in church on Good Friday, go about our weekend and then it's Easter! While Easter is the true miracle, we must go through the suffering before we can get to the miracle. Jesus loved us then and He loves us now. It's hard to appreciate the great depth of that love unless we allow ourselves to be uncomfortable and feel his very human pain. Thank you, Jesus, for loving us that much.



Via Dolorosa by Randy Cooper

Some years ago, the Christian writer Dale Aukerman was walking in the old city of Jerusalem along the *Via Dolorosa*, the traditional path that Jesus walked as he carried his cross to Calvary. Pausing at a corner, he noticed that a couple of Israeli soldiers had stopped a young, bearded Palestinian man and demanded that he show them his Identity Card. One soldier slapped the man on the cheek for no reason other than to humiliate him.

Whether today or in biblical days, a slap on the cheek has always been an insult. Jesus was slapped around by religious authorities (Matt 26:67). He also taught that if someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek to them (Matthew 5:39). The young Palestinian who was slapped didn't respond. He took the slap into himself.

At about the same time, a tourist couple was walking nearby. A little boy was riding on the man's shoulders. He saw the bearded Palestinian and asked, "Daddy, is that Jesus?"

His father might well have said "yes."



Holy Saturday by Pastor Amanda Crice

Perhaps you, like me, have been so grateful to have traveled through Lent with those who have made the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Their insights and wisdom gained in that place have, as Randy suggested in the introduction, illumined what faithfulness can look like in the places where we find ourselves.

On this Holy Saturday, the last day of the Lenten journey, we sit in the questions and uncertainty of a crucified and not yet raised Christ. As you reflect on the wisdom offered by these pilgrims, I invite you to call to mind your own questions and uncertainty about what faithfulness looks like for you here and now. As the guards sealed the tomb on that day, where have you tried to prevent the miracle of hope where it appears that death has won? Where do you need to lean into the companions you travel with on the Christian journey? Where is resurrection longing to come forth?

Matthew 27:62-66

