

## Reflection on “Our” Holy Land

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In September 2016 I was so blessed to spend two weeks of my sabbatical in the Holy Land, or as those of us of Abrahamic faiths might call it “our” Holy Land. It is “our” Holy Land because it is the land where our faith was born through patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, and saints. For Christians, it is “our” Holy Land because it is where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, lived, moved and had his being; where Jesus died and was raised from the dead.

My pilgrimage to our Holy Land was facilitated by two wonderful companions in Christ from Connecticut: the Rev. Nicholas Porter, Executive Director of Jerusalem Peacebuilders (<https://www.jerusalempeacebuilders.org>) and Ms. Anne Lynn, President of the American Friend of the Diocese of Jerusalem (<http://www.afedj.org>). I had four goals for my pilgrimage.

First I wanted to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. I wanted to see those places where Jesus taught, healed the sick, and proclaimed the Kingdom of God. As a disciple of Jesus, I wanted to know the places where Jesus called his followers to come and follow him. I wanted to experience first hand the way of the cross, the location where Jesus was crucified, and the site of the first Easter where Jesus triumphed over death.

I also wanted to visit the “living stones” of the Christian church in our Holy Land. As one who has traveled extensively throughout the Anglican Communion, I wanted also to meet and break bread with our immediate Anglican sisters and

brothers in Christ in the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem. Witnessing the incredible work of the Episcopal Church in Israel/Palestine through its numerous schools and health institutions, under the leadership of their faithful and dedicated pastor and archbishop Suheil Dawani, was a profound gift.

Third, I am acutely aware of the pain and violence that the people of Israel/Palestine experience as a daily reality. I needed, however, to experience, in flesh and blood realities the division, alienation, and separation that exists between Palestinians and Jews. Traveling throughout Israel, the East Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem gave me a profound awareness of the challenges and difficulties in this troubled land, and helped to focus my prayers and activism for peace with justice.

Finally, I wanted to support Nicholas and Anne and their ministries through Jerusalem Peacebuilders and Americans Friends of the Diocese of Jerusalem, respectively. I am so impressed by the work and faithfulness of Nicholas and Anne and the incredible service in God's mission of reconciliation and restoration through their organizations. We in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut can be thankful, and even a bit proud, of all that Jerusalem Peacebuilders and Americans Friends of the Diocese of Jerusalem do in God's name. They are well deserving of our prayers and support.

I thank God for the privilege of going on sabbatical. I thank God for all those who walked with me in Israel/Palestine. I thank God for the Church in Jerusalem. And I thank God for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the land where he lived, died, and rose from the dead: "our" Holy Land. I will never be the same. Thanks be to God

