

The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago

Holy Land Pilgrimage

25th May to 5th June, 2018

One year ago the suggestion was made by our then Chancellor H.E. Paula Mae Weekes that the Diocese should arrange a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We took her up on it and we began making plans for the trip. We contacted our Travel Agent and together we finalised dates and put together an itinerary. The response was overwhelming.

On 25th May, 2018, thirty eight pilgrims and a representative from the Travel Agency left the shores of Trinidad and Tobago for Israel via London. The Rt. Rev. Claude Berkley led the team on its spiritual journey with Archdeacon Isaac also providing the necessary support. Unfortunately, H.E could not make the trip having only recently taken up the position of President of the Republic. We travelled for twenty four hours and arrived in Israel on the night of Saturday 26th.

For twelve days and eleven nights we were literally on the go. Nightly, Bishop Berkley led the group through reflections of the day's activities and linked the relevant scripture verses to the sites visited. We then ended with evening prayer.

Our local Guide created nine groups from among the team with each group having a leader. This helped in ensuring that all members of the team were accounted for during the visits to the many sites. This report identifies the group members and the submissions made by the groups to compile this report covering the actual days of the Pilgrimage

On Sunday 3rd of June we attended mass at the St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem where Bishop Berkley read the Gospel and one of our members read the lesson. It was our last day in Jerusalem. On Sunday afternoon, we met as a group for our final meeting with personnel from the Tour company where we were given tokens and presented with Pilgrimage Certificates from Immanuel Tours and the Israel Ministry of Tourism. Very early on Monday 4th we travelled to London to overnight before returning to Trinidad and Tobago on the afternoon of Tuesday 5th June.

We are thankful and we are grateful that we had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land and to be part of our Christian history. We walked where Jesus walked. We visited and held a communion service in the Garden of Gethsemane. We visited places where He performed miracles. We ventured into the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. Our lives will be forever transformed.

Petal-Dawn Hinkson
Diocesan Secretary
June 2018



The Happy Band of Pilgrims



The Altar at St. George's Cathedral

Sunday 27th May, 2018
Report of Groups 1 and 8



Group 1 - Edwina Leacock, Michelle Savary, Lenore Harris, Marsha Savary



Group 8 - Joylyn Paul-Joseph, Brenda Reid, Marguerite Moore, Bishop Claude, Diane Shurland

The “day” actually started with our arrival at David Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv at 12:03 am after a long walk from the plane. Some of us had been concerned that there were no landing cards presented on the plane and assumed that it would be a rigorous process of interrogation, au contraire. No lines, No armed guards or military-styled personnel; the only question being “Is this your first time here?”, and within seconds you are presented with your passport with a barcoded landing card with your picture and status. We entered a doorway, scanned your card and were allowed entry into the Baggage Claim area. ‘Huh, yuh sure we in Israel?’

We were met by Immanuel Tours personnel who ensured that we received our luggage (unfortunately, one person who had met us in London, did not receive his luggage) and we were taken to the Gershon Tours Bus which would be our “home” for the next nine days with our tour guide Iren, and driver Rami. Each seat had an Immanuel Tours backpack, which contained a branded cap, a bottle of water, a map, and an itinerary. This weary ‘Band of Pilgrims’ had arrived in the Holy Land to commence our tour. Would we be changed after this adventure? Would we be the same people after treading the streets where our Lord and Saviour had gone before?

After a few hours sleep at the Metropolitan Hotel (where a light supper had very kindly been left for us), we had breakfast, and boarded the bus at 9:15 am for our first full day in Israel. We were all pleased to know that the bus had WiFi and there were USB ports for charging devices above every pair of seats. We were also presented with selfie-sticks. Oh, the “The Joys of Technology”.



Our Coach for the Journey

We drove through the city of Tel Aviv to Jaffa where we gathered in a little square at the site of the home of Simon the Tanner in Jaffa (Joppa) where it is said that the Apostle Paul had a vision (Acts 9:36-42). The Church of St. Peter is built at this site to commemorate this event.



Door at the rooftop of Simon the Tanner

We formed ourselves into groups of 4 and 5 with assigned leaders who would have the responsibility of locating the other group members for the remainder of the tour. The vibrancy of the city made the House of Simon a gem. Although renovations continue apace, it was a fitting start to the pilgrimage in modern Israel.

We stood in the shade of the date palm trees where Bishop read the Scripture, Acts 10: 9-23. We viewed the sites for a short while, and then re-boarded the bus for our journey to Caesarea Maritima.



Bishop reading Acts 10: 9-23

On the journey to Caesarea Maritima, our Guide gave us the history of the region, interspersed with biblical references. This is the port which was built by Herod the Great, in honour of Caesar Augustus. Welcome to the desert on the sea (and the dust), the first taste of the extravagance and dominance of the Romans. It was also the home of Pontius Pilate during the time of Jesus, and the amphitheatre (which is still used today), was the place for chariot races etc. Phillip evangelised here, and it is the site where Peter baptised Cornelius and his family as the first Gentile converts to Christianity.

We saw a film about the history of the region, as it was a place of trade etc. On the grounds there were examples of stone from all over the Mediterranean and Eastern coasts (marble, granite, limestone) which were used to build the temple and the city. At the amphitheatre, Bishop read Acts 10: 23-26, 44-48.



Stage at the amphitheatre

We left Caesarea Maritima and on the way to Mt. Carmel stopped for lunch at the Druze village. Iren explained that they were a unique religious and ethnic minority among Arab citizens of Israel who have traditionally formed a closed, tight-knit community and practice a secretive religion founded in 11th-century Fāṭimid Egypt. The lunch was interestingly different.

Onward to Mt. Carmel, and the “Place of Sacrifice”.



The entrance sign



The simple altar at Mt. Carmel

We were clueless as to the meaning of Discalced as observed on the sign. Later found out that it means a religious congregation that goes shoeless, or wears sandals. We entered the chapel where Iren informed us that we were allowed to sing (not talk), and here we sat and sang ‘The Crimond’, in this place of peace.

It being Trinity Sunday, we sat in the open air on stone benches, and celebrated the Holy Eucharist with a small loaf of bread, and wine. So emotional, so touching, so profound. Here in this place of miracles, and the slaying of Baal, where we must be reminded of our belief in the Body and the Blood of Jesus. We focused on our own inadequacies and the need to stand firm in our decisions. “Let go and let God”. Continue to pray for Grace to do what is necessary whilst waiting for direction. This happy band of Trinbagonian pilgrims prayed, sang, renewed our faith by reciting the Creed and became energised by the experience.



Bishop and Archdeacon preparing the Eucharist at Mt. Carmel

We went to the rooftop of the church where the Plains of Armageddon/Valley of Jezreel lay before us in all its splendour, with Mount Tabor in the far distance. Is this really where it will all end according to Revelation 16: 14? Nah man, too peaceful and beautiful.

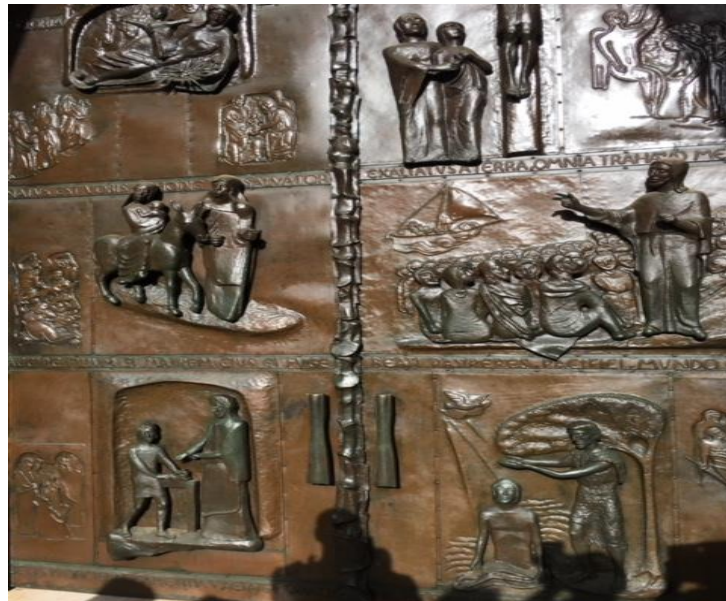


Panoramic view of the Plains of Armageddon

The day is almost over as we journey on to Nazareth, which means ‘the shoot’ in Hebrew; the Arabic capital of Israel which is inhabited mainly by Muslims now. This is the place where Jesus spent most of his early life. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” We will find out.

The Basilica of the Annunciation is an impressive sight where it is said that the Angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary. It is the largest church building in the Middle East, and contains murals gifted from Catholic congregations worldwide.

We read the passage from Luke 1: 26-38 before entering, as we were not allowed to speak inside.



The Grand Door depicting the life of Jesus

It was late evening by this time and there were many other pilgrims inside, viewing the site where it is said that the Virgin Mary received the message.



The shrine

Like Mary, we too are visited by Angels with instructions and news, but unlike Mary, we either don't pay attention, don't recognise what is happening, or deliberately ignore – many times to our peril. But we continue the journey. We'll labour night and day to be a Pilgrim”

Our Tour for Day 1 was over, we walked the short distance to the Legacy Hotel, where the first thing you observed was the big triple arch of a McDonald's restaurant. Even here, we cannot escape it.

After dinner, even though tired, some members of both groups decided that we would take a walk outside to see this city of Nazareth. As we left the hotel, we were reminded that it was the Holy month of Ramadan for the Muslims, and heard the “Call to Prayer” of the muezzin of the Open Mosque (said to be the site of the burial of one of the son's of Saladin) which is situated next to the Basilica of the Annunciation where just a few hours before we heard the peal of the bells of the Christian faith. We were reminded of the similarity with our homes in Trinbago, where the church is next to the mosque and across the street from the Hindu Temple and down the road from the Orisha shrine. Did we expect to see that here in Israel? A peaceful coexistence of religions?



The Dome of the Basilica at Sunset

We entered one of the few shops which was open, Mahroum's Sweet Shop where we were invited to sample a sweet made of honey (reminiscent of jelabi), and other delicacies such as baklava, and nougat. A wonderful end to an amazing day.

In conclusion, Day 1 proved to be both inspiring and surprising. The spiritual significance of the sites visited was impactful. The acclimatisation, not only with Israel and its society but also with the other pilgrims and our guide and driver was interesting. After day 1 it was clear that we were a special group made up of vastly different backgrounds on the same spiritual journey.

Monday 28th May, 2018

Report of Group 2

Group Members

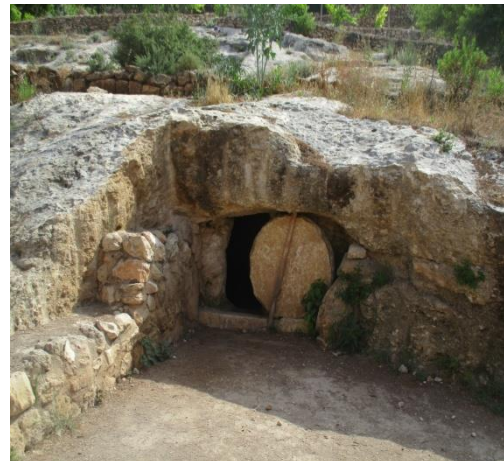
Petal-Dawn Hinkson
Jennifer Frederick
Louis Frederick
Allison Aaron
Florence Cummings

The Pilgrims left the Legacy Hotel at 8.30a.m. to journey to the Sea of Galilee as outlined in the itinerary.

We visited firstly the Nazareth Village reconstructed as it as in the time of Jesus. We met “Joseph” tending his sheep and saw “Hannah” processing wool for weaving. In a desert type hilly setting with very old olive trees spotting the landscape we met with a Carpenter dressed in character displaying original tools from the first century.



431 year old olive tree



A burial tomb

Within this Village was displayed an original olive press that was used in the olden days and the guide took the time to explain the process and the method of producing oil from virgin (first press) to the fourth press which is generally used for fuel. The area was hot and dry but the scene presented was interesting. Pieces of the hyssop plant were broken and given to us for us to observe its scent. Uses of the plant and the reference to Psalm 51 were quite enlightening.

Leaving the village we continued the journey to one of the highlights of our day’s visits – the Sea of Galilee which is also called the Lake of Tiberias. On our way there we passed the purported location of the wedding feast at Cana where Jesus turned water into wine. We were disappointed at not being given the opportunity to visit The Church of the Wedding Feast at Cana which is currently located on this site

When we got to the Sea of Galilee, we all climbed into the boat for the sailing.



Archdeacon with our flag



The boat on the Sea of Galilee

There was an emotional and unexpected raising of the T&T national flag while the pilgrims lustily sang our national anthem. The boat engines were then stilled and we all had time for personal prayer and meditation. The sea was calm and peaceful. We could have imagined the disciples in their boat at that time when Jesus stilled the waters. We could have imagined Jesus standing in the boat and inspiring his disciples and us to become fishers of men. We could have imagined Jesus encouraging his disciples to cast the net out once more after unsuccessfully doing so before. We could have imagined him telling us to make another attempt at whatever “catch” we were unsuccessfully trying to obtain. We could have imagined...

We left the Sea of Galilee and continued to Capernaum where we visited the Church which was built over Peter’s house. We read the scripture Mark 1:21-34, and said a word of prayer before viewing the ruins of the house and synagogue. This was the home at which Jesus stayed while teaching in Capernaum and where he performed a number of miracles; one of the more significant ones being the healing of the paralysed man who could not enter the house because of the crowds.



Statue of St. Peter at Capernaum

His family developed another strategy and let him down through the roof of the house where Jesus could see him and perform one of his miracles of healing. The ruins of the foundation of house can still be seen below the Church built on the site.

We next visited the Church of the Beatitudes where the group sang the hymn *'I cannot tell'*. Our voices sounded heavenly due to the wonderful acoustics.



Altar at the Mount of Beatitudes



Plaque along the path

We then continued the journey to the River Jordan, the place where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Although not part of the itinerary, there was an impromptu renewal of baptismal vows by some pilgrims in a ceremony conducted by Archdeacon Isaac.



Our pilgrims dipping their feet in the River Jordan



Some other groups robed in white being baptised

Because it was not scheduled, some pilgrims were unaware and unable to participate in the ritual. Several of us took the opportunity to wet our feet in the waters of this hallowed body of water as well as to collect water from it for use on our return home.

Today we walked on the land that Jesus walked, we visited the places where he performed his miracles, we entered the river in which He was baptized. As Christians, we give thanks for that enriching experience. At the end of the day we returned to the hotel to spend our final night in Nazareth.

Tuesday 29th May, 2018

Report of Group 3

Group Members

Ann Marie Byer
Russel Byer
Denise Nicholas
Adora Nicholas

Today we started our journey early as we were advised by our Guide, Iren that the drive was long. The first stop was to Mt. Tabor to visit a church run by the Franciscan brothers where it is believed the transfiguration of Jesus took place. Upon our arrival at the base of the mountain we met other groups who were also awaiting the arrival of small mini buses to take us up to the mountain. Four buses were needed to take up our group. At the top, we utilized a sheltered area to conduct our morning prayers before entering the church where absolute silence was required.



Altar at the Church of the Transfiguration

Once viewed, we moved on to an open area where we had a panoramic view of Mt. Hermon in the north to the hills of Samaria in the south. Pictures were taken for future memories with our companions on the hillside being groups from Mozambique and we believe the other was from a Spanish speaking country.

In spite of the solemnity of the moment man's nature sometimes take precedence. As we came down the mountain there was a small war of words between our guide and a fellow guide as to which group was waiting first to enter the mini buses for our trip back down the mountain. Once off the mountain and in true trini style some of us took the opportunity to pick up some souvenirs.

Along the way we stopped to view a sycamore tree. At each stop, we read the scriptures aligned to the area. As we continued on our journey through the wilderness of the West Bank and Jericho, we got our first glimpse of a camel. Lunch was taken at a restaurant in the upper portion of the building which also housed a commercial area downstairs where once again we ‘trinis’ took a little of the down time to shop for goodies and ice cream. Above we saw a cable car transporting visitors to a monastery very high in the mountains. The mountain is believed to be the Mount of Temptation, where Satan tempted Jesus.



Greek Monastery at the Mount of Temptation

Thereafter we hopped on the bus and encountered a check point as we were travelling from Palestine to Jerusalem. We drove into Jerusalem singing ‘*The Holy City*’, it was quite emotional. We had arrived at last. The drive took us to a view point outside of the Hebrew University at Mt. Scopus where we were able to see and marvel at the City of Jerusalem below – our first view of the three legendary domes. We stood quietly, as Psalm 122 was recited.



Jerusalem from Mt. Scopus

These three domes where three Faiths co-exist – the golden Dome of the Rock, the white Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the greyish – El-Aqsa Mosque. Iren gave a synopsis of the area as visits to these buildings would come another day. Cameras were out with everyone vying to get the best shots for this memorable moment.

We left, Mt. Scopus happily tired, and arrived at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel Hotel, which would be our home for the next six days.

After dinner, the evening ended with evening prayer, where a lively discussion ensued about the day's activities.

Wednesday 30th May, 2018

Report of Group 4

Group Members

Ingrid Clarke-Henry
Kivern Clarke
Lynette Joseph
Leo Sullivan

Today our pilgrimage carried us to the top of Mt. Olives in the Old City of Jerusalem. We had a spectacular view of the Old and New City, and of the Domes (Gold, White and Grey).

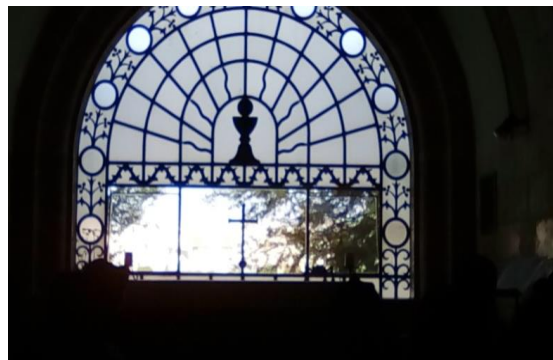


The Dome of the Rock

As we descended the Palm Sunday route, a very steep cobbled street) to visit the Holy Shrines we passed on the left, the tombs of the prophets, and a vast cemetery on the slopes of the hill. Upon reaching the gate of the Chapel of Dominus Flevit (tear drop), we passed the Tomb of Absalom which was written on the walls. The unique part of the Chapel was its tear drop shape.



Entry sign



Window at Dominus Flevit chapel

Then on to the Church of all Nations which is surrounded by the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was betrayed by Judas. “The Rock of Agony” said to be the place where Jesus prayed the night before the Passion can be seen in front of the high altar surrounded by a crown of wrought iron thorns.



The Church of All Nations

Reflections: It was amazing to walk the journey of the last few hours with our Lord. The experience was exhilarating. The Chapel of Dominus Flevit affected us as we sang a hymn and did a reading. Gethsemane is from Get + shemanim (Olive press). Across the street there is a Grotto which is a garden of olive trees, similar to the site where he was betrayed and arrested. Here we read Matthew 26: 36-46 and reflected on that long ago night.



Altar at the Church of All Nations



Reflections in the Grotto

In the afternoon we had a new guide Sana, who took us to Bethlehem. The Royal City of David to the place of the birth of Christ in the Church of the Nativity. The spot of the stable is marked by a silver star. We viewed the Manger and the entrance to Joseph's Family Inn.



The Birthplace marked with a Star



The Manger

Reflection: Our guide gave us a new reflection of Joseph and Mary's experience in Bethlehem. The pilgrims were told that Joseph's family did welcome them but shunned them because Mary conceived Jesus out of wedlock. Joseph's family instead of turning them away placed them in a stable. Hence folklore tells us Baby Jesus was born in a stable with the animals. We also viewed what a stable was like in those days. Food for thought.

Finally we visited the Shepherd's Field where a mass was conducted. Here it was felt that the Shepherds watched and followed the star to where Jesus was born. We were given insight into the ancestors of this place. We were told that Boaz met and married Ruth who was the great grandmother of David from whose line Jesus was eventually born. We were also told that the message for the shepherds was the swaddling of the child, not the star. Newborn lambs which were used for ritual sacrifice were swaddled. Babies were not, so the shepherds knew that this was the Messiah.



Interior of one of the Shepherd's caves

Reflection: One can imagine the angels appearing to the Shepherds when they announced the birth of Jesus. It must have been a frightening experience to see angels appearing in the dead of the night they must have thought that it was ghosts haunting them.

Thursday 31st May, 2018

Report of Groups 5 & 9

Group Members

Claudia Groome-Duke
Myrna Guy
Adonia Bovell
Rosetta Bovell
Cheryl Richards-Lambert
Paula Drakes
Earl Armoogan
Arlene Hinds Gittens

On this day our pilgrimage took us to Mt. Zion and the New City of Jerusalem where we visited specific sites related to –

- The Upper Room
- King David's Tomb
- Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu
- Church of the Visitation at Ein Karem (former City of Juda)

Mt. Zion (Jerusalem):

Mt Zion is another name for Jerusalem. The particular area that is now called Mt. Zion is in the south-western part of the Old City, overlooking the City of David. Some of the most sacred and important shrines to Christianity and Judaism are located in Mt. Zion. Two of these are:

1. The Upper Room - a room similar to that which was used by Jesus for the Last Supper.
2. King David's Tomb – revered by Jews as David is a pillar in Judaism (and Christianity, to a lesser extent)

We also visited a third site in Mt. Zion – the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu, which is built over the Palace of Jewish High Priest Caiaphas.

Like some other historical sites, both the Upper Room and King David's Tomb which we visited may not be the true site of either event but are very close to the locations of the true sites which are somewhere in Mt. Zion.

1. The Upper Room (Mark 14:12-25)

While Jesus, like other Jews at the time, would have travelled to Jerusalem for every Feast of the Passover and lodged in a room somewhere in Jerusalem, this Upper Room is significant because it is believed to be the room of the Last Supper before his crucifixion. The Room, also known as the Coenaculum or Cenacle is a large room upstairs of a typical 2-storyed Jewish building. The practice was to have a particular order of seating for hosts and guests; if this applied to the Last Supper then Jesus, as the host, would most likely have been seated at one end of the dining space. The Washing of the Feet also took place in this Room.



The Upper Room

2. King David's Tomb

This was located downstairs and a short distance away from the Upper Room. Christians believe that Jesus is a descendant of David but it was evident that Jews have special reverence for this site, from the fervent, tactile and emotional prayers we witnessed being offered by one female Jew who seemed to have been offended by our camera flashes. This site is most likely not the actual site of the Tomb but since Jews were restricted from entering the City of Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967, this site was the closest to the actual site and is now the de facto place of David's Tomb. The males had to cover their heads and use another entrance.



King David's Tomb

3. Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu (Mark 14: 53-72 and Luke 22:54)

This church is built over the ruins of the former Palace of Jewish High Priest Caiaphas. It is believed that, after Jesus was arrested in the nearby Garden of Gethsemane, the Roman soldiers brought Jesus to Caiaphas first, before turning him over to Pontius Pilate. It is likely that Jesus would have spent a night or a few hours downstairs in an underground cellar of Caiaphas' Palace. We visited the remnants of such an underground cellar where we sang and reflected on Jesus' thoughts and emotions at that time of his imprisonment (Psalm 88). It is believed that Peter visited the outer precincts of Caiaphas' Palace while Jesus was imprisoned there and that this was the site where Peter denied knowing Jesus before the cock crowed.



Church of St. Peter of Gallicantu



Sacred Pit (dungeon) where prisoners were held

Ein Karem (Spring of the Vineyard) – Church of the Visitation: (Luke 1 39-80)

This area is referred to as the 'hill country' and comprises a central valley with steeply sloping sides. The Church of the Visitation is located on one of the sloping sides and is said to be built over the house of Zacharias, husband of Elizabeth and parents of John the Baptist. Zacharias was blind until John's birth. Mary, mother of Jesus, is said to have visited her cousin Elizabeth here and spent approximately three months during Elizabeth's advanced pregnancy. Mary would have been in early pregnancy herself, prompting the famous thanksgiving reflected in the Magnificat (Luke 1 46-55). Some pilgrims were unable to make the steep climb to the Church.

As we came down the hill, we encountered a group of pilgrims from Paraguay, who were singing '*I have decided to follow Jesus*' in Spanish. They were surprised to hear us join in. We continued down the hill and joined those awaiting us at the bottom, who all joined in, clapping and praising God. What a wonderful experience.



Steep approach to the Church of the Visitation



The Altar at the Chapel

Yad Vashem:

In the afternoon, we visited the Yad Vashem memorial to the victims of the holocaust (1933-1948). It ended a solemn day of pilgrimage. It also provided context to the birth of the nation called Israel after the holocaust in 1948 and land being allocated to Jews; the subsequent invasion and occupation of part of the nation of Israel (today's 'West Bank') by Jordan between 1948 and 1967; and the continued persecution of Jews who survived the holocaust by restricting their movements in Jerusalem (also in the 'West Bank') between 1948 and 1967, leading to de facto historical sites like the Tomb of King David in Mt. Zion.

Spiritual Reflections:

The Upper Room, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu and the Church of the Visitation all provide the basis for the sacrament of communion in particular and our modern liturgy, in general. Despite not always knowing the exact site, the biblical and scientific evidence usually concur that some specific 'activity' did take place in a general locality. It is that 'activity' which is the basis of our faith – the exact site is not necessarily important.

In the evening, about 25 of us opted to attend a concert at the Christ Church in the Old City of Jerusalem, given by the visiting Mount Zion Choir from China. Hymns such as Amazing Grace, and O come, O come Emmanuel, and choral pieces from the Messiah sung in Chinese, with English subtitles, delighted the audience. A beautiful end to a long day.

General Reflections:

The economic aspect of pilgrimage was most evident in gift shops being strategically located, usually at the exits, at most historical sites.

Friday 01st June, 2018

Report of Group 6

Group members

Robert Ramjohn
Carol Ramjohn
Norma Warren
Jeanette Edwards

We left the hotel early for the almost 2 hour drive south to the Dead Sea area, where our first stop was Masada.

Masada

Masada is one of Israel's most popular tourist attractions. Masada comes from the Hebrew word Melsada meaning "fortress". Masada is an ancient fortress in Southern Israel's Judean Desert. It is on a massive plateau overlooking the Dead Sea. Cable cars transported us up the steep mountain where we saw the ruins of King Herod's Palace. According to Flavius Josephus the siege of Masada by the Romans ended in mass suicide of 960 people. Masada is a symbol of Jewish freedom and holds a special place in the heart of the Jews who remember with pride the last ditch stand of a small group of Jews against the Romans in 73 AD.

Scripture reference: Luke 19:41-44



Replica of the Palace and Temple



View of the Ruins

Reflection: Masada represents the tough nature and strong will of the Jews, who over the centuries of prophetic oppression never gave in but always found faith and true meaning of life in God. Their struggle in faith with the Lord from time immemorial was the root cause of their problems in life. Heb 12:5b.refers

The Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea was an amazing place to visit. It is situated in the Jordan Rift valley 400m (1312 ft) below sea level....the lowest point on the face of the earth. It is a land-locked lake receiving water from the Jordan River and having nowhere to go, evaporates leaving behind a rich cocktail of salt and minerals in its water....some ten times saltier than normal sea water.



The Dead Sea with Jordan in the background

Several members of the tour including the Bishop took the opportunity to float in the Dead Sea. This was a novel experience with its sensation of weightlessness. We covered ourselves with the mineral rich mud and after washing it off in the sea some said it really made their skin smoother.

Scripture Reference. The Dead Sea is referred to as the “Salt Sea” and the “Sea of Arabah”. Genesis14:3; Deut:3:17;Deut4:49; Num:34:12; Joshua3:16; Joel2:20;Zech14:8;Eze47:7-10.

Reflection. No fish or plant can live in the Dead Sea so it’s difficult to imagine that the Dead Sea will come back to life as mentioned in Ezekiel prophecy.(Eze47:8-9). But Ezekiel says that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem and where it goes everything shall become fresh and people will stand besides the sea fishing. In John7:37-39 Jesus promises living water. “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and let anyone who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said “Out of the believers heart shall flow rivers of living water” .Yes, as with the Dead Sea even a dead soul can be restored with the promise from Jesus of the living water, which is the Holy Spirit.

Qumran.

We visited Qumran located in the Judean desert where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These scrolls reveal the records of the Old Testament including the Apocrypha.



Stone Jars which housed the Scrolls



Part of the Book of Isaiah

Reflection: While the Dead Sea Scrolls are important for biblical justification we stand by our faith in the Holy Bible.



Sunset at Ramat Rachel

Saturday 02 June, 2018

Report of Group 7

Group Members

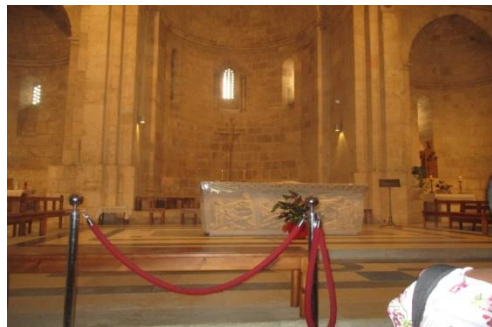
Hollis Lincoln,
Ann Joseph
Elizabeth James Isaac
Venerable Philip Isaac.

It is the last day of touring. We are prepared to visit the Old Jerusalem. We enter through Herod's Gate, one of the seven open gates of the Old City.



Herod's Gate

We wend our way through the very narrow, cobbled streets of the city where most of the shops are closed because it is the Jewish Shabbat. Our first stop is the Church of St Anne constructed on the site of the Pool of Beth-saida. A smiling friar welcomed the group and encouraged us to sing. The acoustics feature a five second echo delay. We selected *In Christ Alone* we were placed at the front of the nave and harmonious voices with a stately rhythm raised a heavenly melody that enchanted the audience (a group of Chinese who almost trampled over our heels) In the courtyard overlooking ruins of the pools the passage John 5:1-18 was read followed by a Litany of Healing and a prayer.



Altar at Church of St. Anne

O! what a trip it must have been for the followers of Jesus as they with curiosity, fear, anger, pain, bundled through the narrow alleys that connected Jesus' condemnation, to His Crucifixion that fateful journey of love from the Court to the Cross to the Crypt. We perambulated keeping step with the Master along with impatient droves of pilgrims also making the Via Dolorosa.



The Fifth Station



Steep, narrow, cobble streets of the Via Dolorosa

Nine stations were visited before we gathered in the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in which the final five were lodged. An altar shrine maintained by Greek Orthodox monks attracts a steady flow of worshippers whose desire is to venerate the place of his death with a kiss or a touch.



Altar marking the spot where Jesus was crucified

Less enthusiasm was displayed to venerate the slab on which Jesus' body was prepared for burial but to get into the magnificent shrine that stands atop the tomb demanded patience and a battle that none of our group wished to pursue.



Pilgrims touching the Slab of Preparation

Resumed walk to the gate to the Jewish Quarter Our next stop was to view the 8-metre-thick wall built to protect the city of David. Onward to the Wailing Wall, armed with prayer requests women and men separate to join throngs who make the trip only for this purpose.



The Wailing Wall

What a place to culminate such an informative, spiritual experience? The Garden Tomb. What a relief to hear that this site was developed by Anglican Christians. This is another site that claims the death and burial of Jesus. Golgotha, indeed the place of the skull.



Golgotha

Information provided by our guide was that the name was given because nature eroded the cliff in the design of a skull and the place was so known even in the time of Jesus. There is also a tomb nearby which is claimed to be Jesus' pre-resurrection resting place. At this point pilgrims were left in wonder to decide the exact purpose for Jesus' years on earth.



The Garden Tomb



Reflections in the Garden

At this site, Evening Reflections were held and we returned to our hotel tired but refreshed.

*And he will teach us His ways And we will walk in His paths:
for out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2.3)*