

ECUMENICAL PILGRIMAGE

TO THE HOLY LAND & JORDAN IN THE YEAR 2022

Led by Revd Jessie Anand, Minister, LTCC

Reflections from the Pilgrims:

Krishanthi & Gladstone Worthington

Gladstone and I started our pilgrimage a day and half prior to the group and we joined the pilgrimage family in Tel Aviv on the 29th of May. On the 28th of May we had time to visit a few holy sites in Jerusalem at our pace, walking through the old city stepping on the cobbled stones. I was imagining how busy and difficult it must have been for our Lord to carry the cross with the crowds mocking and jeering and beating him as he kept falling down. The Western wall was busy as it was the sabbath and Jerusalem day on the 29th. I too wrote my petition and prayed at the wailing wall. Touching the wall was surreal and humbling. God is listening to the thousands who come far and wide to pray at this site and answers their prayers in His time. We sat quietly, prayed and thanked God for his goodness and mercy to our family at the Holy Sepulchre. I was able to write psalm 26 at the church and meditate on his word. I sensed God's peace, overwhelming love and comfort in this church.

We proceeded to the Garden tomb where the steward arranged for us to have communion. This was a very special time to give thanks for all his blessings on our family and the opportunity to praise God for his faithfulness and guidance. We then travelled to spend time in the Garden of Gethsemane where our Lord Jesus prayed before he was betrayed. I did not want to leave the peaceful surroundings. We sat at the bench watching the golden gate where it is believed Christ will triumphantly return and it is only then the Golden gate will be flung open. What a wonderful site it will be. I spent time continuing to write psalm 27 and 28 and reflecting on his word.

The olive trees are a reminder that the garden will be preserved for generations to remember the site of his betrayal by his disciple. We too often betray our Lord in our thoughts, words and actions on how we treat our fellow brothers and sisters. The rock of agony reminded me that in our journey on earth there will be periods of hardship and it is on those occasions that we are moulded and equipped to face the next season of our life. It is comforting to know that Jesus also prayed for his cup to be taken but then obeyed his Father and went through the difficulty.

On the 29th morning we went up to the Mount of Olives and made the Palm Sunday descent to the garden of Gethsemane. The path was steep and I was imagining the beautiful site of palms being laid for our Lord to ride down on the donkey. What a wonderful joyous site it must have been for those who joined the procession.

Before going down the mount we also managed to visit the tombs of Zechariah, Malachi and Haggai. Whenever I read any scripture from these books of the bible, I will always remember the place I visited with fond memories of our precious time at the holy land.

We were pleased to join the pilgrim family on the 29th afternoon and journey through to Galilee. On the 30th of May we visited Cana where Jesus performed his first miracle. We renewed our marriage vows and proceeded to the mount of Transfiguration. I loved this Church and the two side chapels one dedicated to Moses and the other to Elijah. Jesus calls each one of us to be transformed by his grace each day. What a dazzling site it must have been for the disciples to experience and the transfiguration of our Lord alongside Moses and Elijah. We also visited Mary's well this day. I was humbled to drink from the spring. The water was fresh and rejuvenated all my senses. I will never forget this experience.

Pothagar amma read a scripture from the book of Isaiah at the Jewish Synagogue. I could imagine the crowd eagerly listening to our Lord Jesus when he read the scripture in the synagogue. It was a spirit filled moment of the day. I have a lovely photo of our pilgrim family at this synagogue which I will treasure for years to come.

On the 31st of May, Rev David Jebb celebrated the Eucharist at the mount of the beatitudes. This was a poignant moment in our journey as the whole pilgrim family worshiped in one spirit, prayed, and gave thanks for His mercy and faithfulness. We visited the site where Jesus took five loaves and two fishes and multiplied one boy's offering to feed five thousand men and women. It reminded me of God's power to multiply our offering each day if we bring ourselves and what we possess. Often it is very hard to let go of what we possess, and our selfish attitude prevents us to share but when we give, God turns our offering to bless us abundantly and through this our families and friends experience God's blessings. What an awesome God we worship. I enjoyed the boat ride on the sea of Galilee as we danced and sang songs as a pilgrim family. I could imagine our Lord relaxing in the boat with his disciples. An unforgettable memory to treasure for years to come.

We renewed our baptismal vows at the river Jordan. The whole group joined in the renewal and we spent time reflecting on Jesus's baptism. I was able to write psalm 29 to 31 and reflect on his word. I thank God for sending His son to save me from my sin. John 3:16 reminded me of God's love and compassion on his people and his continuous request to us all to spread the gospel and be a witness to him.

Our time at Jordan was an eye opener of God's amazing creation. The old roman city in Jerash was breath taking. We had time to take a beautiful group photo of the pilgrim family. Petra was dazzling in pink stone which you could only marvel. God gave me the strength to withstand the 40-degree heat and the ability to walk to experience these beautiful old sites. Wonderful memories to treasure for years to come and share with family. The young and old riding on horseback was amazing to see.

On the 3rd of June we visited Mount Nebo where God revealed the promise land to Moses. It was a land which was fairly barren with rocks, stones, gravel, and a few greeneries here and there. The promise land that God has blessed us with is also similar. It is up to us how we cultivate and turn our land into the land of milk and honey as he has given us all the resources.

I will treasure the memory of Mount Nebo as it reminded me of God's faithfulness and promises to us each day. Visiting Moses spring invigorated my senses as I stepped into the water. This is where Moses hit the rock and water gushed out to quench the thirst of those who were camping in the desert. This was an awesome experience to wash in this spring. There were visitors coming to fill their water jars and quench their thirst.

On the 4th of June we visited the Pater Noster, the place where Jesus thought his disciples to pray the Lord's prayer. Standing at the site praying our Lord's prayer was a spirit filled moment. We sang the Lord's prayer and were able to see the Lord's prayer translated in many languages, including Tamil and Sinhala. We also visited the Bethlehem- the Nativity Church where Jesus was born, and the wise men paid homage to Christ the King. What a joyous experience. My heart was filled with prayer and praise to our father who sent His son to be born in a manger because there was no room in the Inn. Gladstone and I visited the Church of the Nativity on two subsequent occasions as our hotel was very close to the church and relished this opportunity to come and bow at His feet. The sun rise from our hotel window was breath taking. The memory will linger for years to come.

On the 5th of June we celebrated Pentecost Sunday at the Shepherds field and Pothagar Ayah celebrated Holy Communion. It was a joyous service of thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the 6th of June Pothagar amma celebrated Holy Communion with our pilgrim family at the St Peter's church, which is built over the site of the house of the High Priest Caiaphas, where Jesus was held before he was tried and taken to be crucified. The dungeon where Jesus was held was a dark, lonely place. It was a sombre moment in our pilgrimage. Our Lord suffered there in silence as he awaited to commence his journey on the way to the Cross.

Our Pilgrimage was drawing to a close as on the 7th of June, we celebrated holy communion at the St George's cathedral in Jerusalem and gave thanks for blessing our pilgrim family to journey together as we experienced God's presence throughout our time at the Holy Land. I did not want to leave Jerusalem as it was a wonderful spirit filled time where I made new friends, strengthened old friendships and experienced God's love, power and his miracles each day. I learnt the current challenges the Palestinians face and the rising tensions between Israel and Palestine. I will continue to uphold these country men and women in my prayers.

Our reflections each night reminded us of God's wonderful promises, his ministry on earth and his calling to each of us to journey with him each day. I came home refreshed, anointed, and uplifted that our God reigns, and he is risen indeed as the tomb was empty and He lives forever in my heart.

Krishanthi Worthington

22nd June 2022

My recount of the recent visit to the Holy Land and Kingdom of Jordan: May 28 – June 7, 2022.

Krishanthi and I had the privilege of spending a day and a half on our own exploring Jerusalem before we joined the group on 29th.

We landed at Tel Aviv airport on Saturday, 28th, it was the Sabbath, we experienced the real first-hand taster of what Sabbath meant for Jews, nothing happens on that day. The meaning of Exodus 20 v8 became live. Then, I understood the scripture (Mark 2v 27-28) where Jesus, our Saviour, challenged the Jews, and He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath".

Jerusalem is the Holy City, with so much tension and division. Sunday 29th was the Jerusalem Flag Day. We were advised to leave the city early as possible because they were expecting things may turn ugly with violence and bombing. It so happened in 2021. Another first-hand experience of the Israelites and Palestine conflict.

We went on a boat trip in the Sea of Galilee as all of you who previously went to the Holy Land would have done. This time we learnt to dance a Jewish dance on the boat. That created a lot of fun. We too sang a few hymns on the boat to our hearts' content but later suffered with a bit of sore throat. The boat man had a good business of selling his trade goods.

Travelling through Kingdom of Jordon was a great experience. Visiting the biblical significant places: Mount Nabo where God took Moses to show him the Promised Land which Moses was denied to enter, there he died and God buried him (Deut. 34v 4-6); Moses Spring where Moses stuck the rock to get water to the grumpy Israelites; and then to Petra, the pink coloured sandy royal tombs monuments. This is a breath-taking scene. My goodness, walking for more than a kilometre in the 40 degree heat and it was an endurance challenge. We all passed with flying colours except a few sought the help of horse-pulled carts and took a ride on horsebacks.

Revd Jessie and Revd Anand Asir were wonderful Spiritual leaders and they ensured that we did not get distracted by the religious rituals but our spirituality is well wetted during the ten days of the pilgrimage. We had plenty of scripture readings to remind the places we visited in the Bible combined with Holy Communion. Pothagar amma led the signing in every opportunity possible; in the coach, and at holy sites. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and insightful pilgrimage.

Gladstone Worthington

