

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

She-ma yisrael, adonai eloheinu, adonai echad

Hear O' Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One



WALKING WITH JESUS

West Virginia Conference United Methodist Church | Fall 2019

*A collection of Prayers and Reflections for the journey
from Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball*

An Order for Morning Prayer

Call to Prayer: (Psalm 96: 2 – 4)

L: Sing to the Lord and bless his Name,

P: proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.

L: Declare his glory among the nations

P: and his wonders among all peoples.

L: For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;

P: he is more to be feared than all gods.

The request for Presence (Psalm 90:14)

L: Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning,

P: So shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Blessing One: Creation. A Thanksgiving for Creation

(A prayer or scripture reading)

Blessing Two: Revelation (A Scripture Reading)

The Shema

All: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

(Silent reflection)

All: Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time.

The Morning Psalm

(Suggested Psalms: 145; 150; 18; 91; 81; 93; 100; 94; 95)

Response (Silent reflection, meditation, witness, song, or prayer)

Blessing Three: God alone is Eternal Redeemer

Who is like You, Lord, among all that is worshiped? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders?

(Exodus 15:11)

The redeemed sang a new song for You. They sang in chorus at the shore of the sea, acclaiming Your sovereignty: "The Lord shall reign throughout all time." (Exodus 15:18)

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for the Day

All: Lord God, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your almighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We are on the Way!

“I am God Almighty: walk before me and be blameless ... I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

Genesis 17: 1, 7 (NRSV)

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Reflection: Your Pilgrimage has begun. You have been walking with Jesus for a period of time in life and faith. You know the old, old story and have experienced the covenant proclaimed in Genesis: God Almighty is your God and our God—a God who will never leave us or forsake us. Jesus is a part of God’s Covenant with God’s people. As we now prepare to step onto the ground where Jesus walked, fully human and fully divine, timeless stories will become rooted, connected to the ground, connected not somewhere far off, but to the here and now.

On this journey we seek to enter the Bible—the living, breathing word of God—and seek to become a part of it. On this pilgrimage, we will take the ancient and yet contemporary sacred Judeo-Christian text (Old Testament and New) and approach it as a seeker, a pilgrim...traveling, listening, looking, talking, experiencing.

We seek to learn not only with our heads, but with our travel, with our feet, our eyes, our ears, with all our senses. In these coming days we will walk where Jesus walked. We will wander down paths he knew. We will seek to feel and experience his presence anew. And, walking with Jesus, we will seek to hear God’s Word and God’s call on our lives in new and renewed ways with excitement, passion, hope, joy, and response!

Prayer: “Shema”

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God’s glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Day One

✠ **Itinerary:** Arrival in Tel Aviv and transfer to hotel in Bethlehem

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Bethlehem – Matthew 1:1-25

Reflection: Ever wondered about why Matthew's Gospel begins with the genealogy of Jesus? Many people skip over the first 17 verses of Matthew and jump into what they consider the "real story." I would argue, however, the real story, the story of redemption and transformation, the story of forgiveness and new life, is grounded in the genealogy, for the genealogy graphs all of us sinners into the story.



The family tree described here is a witness to the power God has to overcome the sin of humanity. Jesus' family tree included prostitutes (Rahab), adulterers and murderers (David), idol worshippers (Solomon), persons who were thieves and failed to tell the truth (Jacob), persons who were wanderers and immigrants (Abraham, Ruth). Jesus' family tree included men and women who were imperfect people...just like us. And yet, through these imperfect people, God worked to fulfill the promise to be our God and claim us as God's people, ultimately gifting this world and God's people with a Messiah, a Redeemer, with Jesus.

As you walk with Jesus and as you walk where Jesus walked, I invite you to ponder these questions: In what ways have you departed God's will for your life? How is God calling you today? How do you see

God working to keep you walking more closely with Jesus and keeping you on track, with God's purpose for your life even in times of challenge and/or doubt?

From Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, the Good News we can claim and proclaim with certainty is that your past doesn't dictate your future – so can you hear your Savior calling?

✚✚ **Itinerary:** Jericho, Qasr el Yehud Baptismal Site,
Qumran, Masada

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Jericho – Joshua 6:1-21 (The Battle of Jericho);

Luke 19:1-10 (Jesus and Zacchaeus)

During the days of Jesus, the ancient site of Jericho was largely abandoned and there was a newer settlement to the south, which had been built by King Herod.

In Jericho Jesus performed the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus and encountered Zacchaeus. Jericho is believed to be the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world. In ancient times, Joshua sent two spies into the walled city, where they were aided by Rahab, the prostitute. Because of her assistance, she and her family were spared when the Israelites attacked the city.

After seven days of circling the city with the Ark, the Israelite army shouted and the walls of the city came down. Jericho was the first major conquest by the Israelites after they crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land. Jericho appears in 58 Bible verses

Jericho Road – Psalm 23

Qasr el Yehud Baptismal site – Mark 1:4-13;

Matthew 3:13-17 (Jesus is baptized by John)

According to tradition, this spot at the Jordan River, is both where the Israelites, led by Joshua, crossed the river to enter the Promised Land following the Exodus from Egypt; and where approximately 300 years later, the Prophet Elijah crossed the river in the opposite direction, to be taken into heaven by 'fiery chariots', witnessed by his disciple Elisha.

This is also believed to be the place where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. The exact location for these events cannot be identified but they occurred in the proximity of Jericho. However, since the Dead Sea was a natural barrier between the land of Moab across the Jordan, when approaching from the south, the first option of crossing by land into the Promised Land was from where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea, just to the north of its northern shoreline.

Reflection: As Jesus stands in the river and John baptizes, water pouring over his head and body, Jesus sees heaven rip open, and through that opening came the flutter of wings, the Spirit of the Living God coming down on him like a dove, as if he was being anointed with spirit.

Then Jesus hears a voice, a voice he may never have heard so distinctly before. The voice speaks a message that combines two pieces of Hebrew scripture. First, Psalm 2:7, which was understood to refer to the divine king to come: “This is my beloved son.” Second, Isaiah 42:1, which was understood to refer to a mysterious unnamed figure, the Suffering Servant: With you I am well pleased.” Putting these two images together was the defining moment in Jesus’ life. The voice expressed both who he was and how he was to be who he was. “Yes, you are the Messiah, but the way you will bring about the divine kingdom is through the power of suffering love.”

Jesus may have gone to the Jordan feeling the weight of the task ahead, uncertain of the future, doubting who he was or what he was to do. What Jesus received at the Jordan was the greatest gift God could give, the only thing Jesus lacked to accomplish his work, the one thing Jesus needed to empower the rest of his ministry – affirmation. God baptized him with affirmation: “You are my cherished, loved child, I am extremely proud of you.”

Jesus’ baptism was an experience of God’s claim on his life and an affirmation that invigorated the rest of his life and work. Can remembering and celebrating our baptisms hold such possibility?

God has affirmed your value and called you by name and our world needs you to be the Body of Christ for the world today – giving God’s affirmation, love, hope, and life. Listen for God’s Voice. God is claiming you even now.

Qumran – Isaiah 6:1-8 (God Calls Isaiah)

Qumran is a deserted area at the northwest corner of the Dead Sea. Its cliffs are dotted with caves. In 1947 a young Bedouin boy discovered ancient scrolls, in one of the caves, that became known as the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” The scrolls included a variety of writings, including some copies of Old Testament Biblical texts. The scrolls do not include any Christian or New Testament texts.

Excavations of the area have uncovered remains from 5 periods when Qumran was inhabited. At one time, the Essenes lived there, transcribing texts from the Bible. Some of these texts date back to 200 BC. Also, a continued search of the caves in the area found scrolls of almost every book in the Old Testament.

When Titus and his Roman legions arrived at Jericho, the Essenes hid the scrolls in nearby caves and fled. The dry desert air kept their secret for almost 2000 years.

Reflection: Can you hear your Savior calling? God’s voice has been calling for longer than most of us can imagine. The Dead Sea Scrolls are usually thought to have been produced by a group known as the Essenes. The Essenes were a group who are believed to have literally abandoned Jerusalem in protest against the way the Temple was being run. So, this group went out in the desert to prepare the way of the Lord, following the commands, as they saw it, of the prophet Isaiah. They went to the desert to get away from what they saw to be the worldliness of Jerusalem and the worldliness of the Temple.

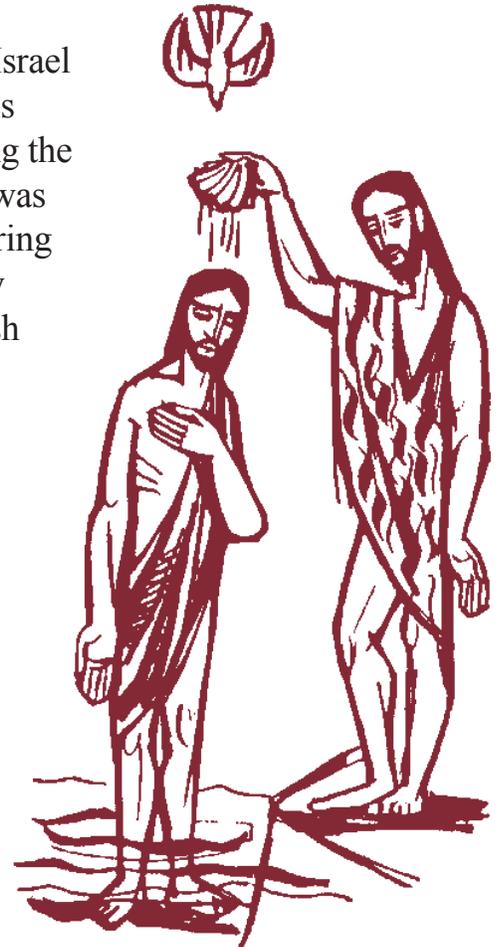
The Essenes were not a new group in Jesus’ day. They been around for a hundred years. But it would appear that the reign of Herod, and the reign of his sons and the Roman Procurators, probably stimulated a new phase of life of the Essene community...and in Jesus’ time it seems that there was a growing protest against Roman rule and worldliness.

The Essene Community at Qumran brings us back to calling. Most calls are not as dramatic as those of Isaiah. Often a call is simply what is called for in a specific season, time, and/or context. Calls are formed and reformed over time as we are formed and transformed by God’s Spirit.

Remember, our God is continuously making all things new...even us and what we are called to do and be in God’s Will. So, let yourself be open to God’s guidance. Repeat a prayer phrase that has been used by God’s servants in scripture: “Here am I, Lord” – then listen deeply and if you choose to act on what you hear from God. End your prayer with “Send Me!”

Masada

Masada is an ancient fortification in the Southern District of Israel situated on top of an isolated rock plateau, akin to a mesa. It is located on the eastern edge of the Judaeen Desert, overlooking the Dead Sea 20 km (12 mi) east of Arad. The siege of **Masada** was one of the final events in the First Jewish–Roman War, occurring from 73 to 74 CE on and around a large hilltop in current-day Israel. The siege was chronicled by Flavius Josephus, a Jewish rebel leader captured by the Romans, in whose service he became a historian.



Day Three

✠ Itinerary: Herodian, Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity, Shepherd's Field

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Herodian

Herod the Great built this monumental fortress and palace on the highest hill in the Judean desert, 15KM south of Jerusalem. Herod was buried in the site which bore his name. The site was later a rebel stronghold and hiding place during the great revolts against the Romans.

Bethlehem – Luke 2:1-20 (Birth of Jesus)

Christmas Creed From Latin America

I BELIEVE in Jesus Christ

and in the power of the Gospel which began in Bethlehem

I BELIEVE in the One whose spirit glorified a small village,
of whose coming the shepherds saw the sign, and for whom there was not room in the inn.

I BELIEVE in the One
whose life changed the course of history, for whom the kings of the earth had no power, and
who was not understood by the proud.

I BELIEVE in the One to whom the poor, the oppressed, the discouraged, the afflicted, the
sick, the blind, the leprous, gave welcome and accepted as Lord and Savior.

I BELIEVE in the One who with love changed the hearts of the proud and with his life showed
that it is more important to serve than to be served and that the greatest glory is giving your life for
others.

I BELIEVE in peace, which is not the absence of war, but justice among all people and
nations and love among all.

I BELIEVE in reconciliation, forgiveness, and the transforming power of the Gospel.

I BELIEVE that Christmas is strength and power, and that the world can change if with
humility and with faith we kneel before the manger.

I BELIEVE that I must be the first one to do so.

Anonymous

(Translated by Joyce Hill, retired missionary)

Church of the Nativity

The gospel accounts don't mention a cave, but less than a century later, both Justin Martyr and the *Protoevangelium of James* say Jesus was born in a cave. This is reasonable, as many houses in the area are still built in front of a cave. The cave part would have been used for stabling and storage...thus the manger.

In 326, Constantine and his mother St. Helena commissioned a church to be built over the cave. This first church, dedicated on May 31, 339, had an octagonal floor plan and was placed directly above the cave.

The Constantinian church was destroyed by Justinian in 530 AD, who built the much larger church that remains today. In 1847, the theft of the silver star marking the exact site of the Nativity was an ostensible factor in the international crisis over the Holy Places that ultimately led to the Crimean War (1854–56).

In 1852, shared custody of the church was granted to the Roman Catholic, Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches. The Grotto of the Nativity, a rectangular cavern beneath the church, is the Church of the Nativity's focal point. This is the cave that has been honored as the site of Christ's birth since at least the 2nd century.

Shepherd's Field – Luke 2:8-20; Psalm 23

Reflection: If the shepherds hadn't responded to God's messengers, the angels, and hurried to see the newborn Child of God, then Mary would not have had this experience and witness to treasure up and ponder in her heart. The shepherds' treasure became Mary's treasure. And Mary's treasure has changed the world for untold numbers of people across generations!



God's word bears fruit when we listen to it, treasure it, ponder over it, and share it with others. God's word transforms the everyday things into extraordinary things and transforms tedium into eternity. Like the shepherds, we need to be on the watch, looking and listening. And when you hear God's voice you need to hurry and draw near to Christ.

If we listen and respond to God's word, great good comes to us and those we touch. If we don't hurry to be in Christ's presence and share his light with everyone we can, then God's kingdom suffers. When walking with Jesus and hearing God's word we are prompted to step out of our comfort zones to reach out with God's love to another, we ought to take action. We ought to take action so that we and they may not miss out on the life-giving treasure God revealed to the shepherds and has given to all the world.

Day Four

✠✠ Itinerary: Caesarea, Mt. Carmel, Megiddo, overnight in Tiberias

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Caesarea – Acts 10:24-48 (First Gentile convert)

Reflection: Acts 10: 34 (NRSV) – *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”*

Conversation around acceptability is as plentiful in our day as it was in Jesus' day and in the days of the first century Christian Church. Peter understands that he has been prepared by Jesus and called to go to “the other side”—called out of his comfort zone—to proclaim the good news to everyone and most especially to people who are not like him, who have not grown up with the scriptures, who do not yet know the ways of God. In this one verse Peter is sharing the Good News with all those who are not Jewish...to people who had not grown up in or been born into the faith or knew anything about the scriptures or Jesus or faith.

Peter's statement is an amazing one. Ponder this statement. Turn it over in your mind. Wrestle with what it says to you. Extract its truth. “No partiality.” “Every nation.” “Does what is right.” “Is acceptable.” There is wideness to God's mercy, grace, and love.

What do we need to learn from this statement? What call do you hear to examine and maybe even change your attitude toward others as you walk with Jesus? What good news do you hear for yourself in this statement? This passage of scripture sounds remarkably like another: *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Galatians 3:28 (NIV)

Oh Lord, what is it that we need to learn and change in our lives and attitudes as we walk more closely with you and one another and as we seek to “cross over to the other side” as Peter did to share the Good News with those who are not like us?

Caesarea Philippi – Matthew 16:13-20 (Peter’s confession of Christ)

Reflection: Is there something we can learn from Jesus’ “first team?” Well, let’s look honestly at the Disciples, the team hand-picked by Jesus. His team included at least one who was second career. It included siblings—and you know what can happen between siblings—the good and the not so good.

There were persons who knew more about water, sun, moon, stars, and tides than they knew about people. There were bean counters and dreamers. There were disciples who doubted, betrayed, misunderstood, and made mistakes. There were some who wanted to be—and thought they should be—the greatest. There were know-it-alls, there were some who smelled like fish, there were some who knew and were concerned about the rules (and some who were not), and none who were the first to take up the towel and basin to wash others’ feet.

I don’t know about you, but it sounds to me like Jesus’ hand-picked team is just like yours and mine: a motley crew, a crew that still needs to learn and to grow—emotionally, spiritually, administratively, and theologically. It’s a crew that needs to be reminded of their baptism (God’s claim and affirmation of their lives). It’s a crew that makes mistakes, needs forgiveness, needs redemption, needs reconciliation, and needs salvation.

It’s a crew that needs to gather around the table to remember and to be filled anew with God’s Spirit. It’s a crew that hesitates and needs to be coached into washing feet. Yes, we have been given a team, a crew that needs all this, but most importantly we have been gifted with a crew who needs leaders. Clergy and laity through whom Christ shines. Leaders who can clearly and consistently answer Jesus’ question, “But who do you say that I am?”

Who do you say that I am? - Jesus seeks to know. What does your life say about Jesus? What does your mission strategy (or lack of one) say about Jesus? What does how you handle congregational issues and disagreements with members of your congregation or even your pastor, lay leader, or DS say about Jesus? What do your words—all your words with all people—say about Jesus? Remember, Jesus said that it is what comes out of person that can make them unclean. What do your actions both seen and those taken when you think no one is looking say about Jesus?

Leaders, seeking to walk with Jesus, called for this time and place: Who do you really say – with all of your life – who do you say that Jesus is?

Mount Carmel – I Kings 18:6-40 (Elijah and the prophets of Baal)

Reflection: In I Kings 18:20-22, we find a pretty discouraged Elijah:

“I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord.” Ahab and Jezebel chase Elijah. Elijah calls the people of Israel to worship and there is no response. Have you ever felt discouraged or alone in your walk with Jesus, unable to feel his presence, unable to see God acting? What spiritual habits do you need to put in place? What spiritual resources, what regular use of the means of Grace can save you from spiritual depletion?

Megiddo – II Kings 23:29-30 (Death of King Josiah)

Megiddo is a raised fortification that protects and overlooks the Jezreel Valley. It dominates the route between Egypt and Syria, and because of its position, many battles were fought in this area. In fact, there may have been more battles fought there than in any other place in Israel. It has become one of the largest archeological excavations in Israel. In the future, the armies of the world will assemble there at Armageddon (Mount Megiddo) (Revelation 19:14-16) for the great battle. Megiddo appears in 12 Bible verses.

Tiberias

Tiberias is a city in the time of Christ, on the Sea of Galilee, first mentioned in the New Testament (John 6:1 John 6:23; 21:1) and then by Josephus, who states that it was built by Herod Antipas, and named in honor of the emperor Tiberius.

Tiberias was the capital of Galilee from the time of its origin until the reign of Herod Agrippa II. Many of the inhabitants were Greeks and Romans, and foreign customs prevailed there: to such an extent as to give offence to the stricter Jews. The Gospels give us no information that the Savior who spent so much of his public life in Galilee, ever visited Tiberias.



✠✠ **Itinerary:** Capernaum, Mt. of Beatitudes, Sea of Galilee
 Boat Ride, Tabgha, Chapel of the Primacy, Magdala

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Capernaum – Mark 1:21-34 (Jesus teaches and heals)

In Capernaum Jesus found his first disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John. Jesus left Nazareth and made his home at Peter's house in Capernaum after he heard that John the Baptist had been arrested. In Capernaum Jesus healed the Centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, the paralyzed man who was lowered through the roof, a man who was possessed, and many others.

It was in Capernaum that Jesus directed Peter to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth to pay the Temple tax. On leaving Capernaum, Jesus condemned it along with other cities that had not heeded his call to repentance. A church was built in the 4th century over what is believed to be the house of Peter. Since then, a new church has been built on the site. Capernaum appears in 16 Bible verses.

Reflection: Capernaum: it is a city where Jesus was constantly in intense service to others. Jesus was busy, busy, busy! How do you feel the morning after an exhausting day where there was just one thing after another? Jesus had been at the synagogue. He was teaching and casting out unclean spirits.

After synagogue, he went to Simon's House – probably looking for a little rest, and a meal, and fellowship...the same things many of us look forward to after attending Church. But the hostess, Simon's mother-in-law, was ill with a fever. So, no rest for the weary...Jesus goes to work healing. And, if that weren't enough, in the evening they brought to Jesus all manner of those who were sick or possessed and there was even more healing and casting out evil spirits.

Jesus must have been exhausted, must have felt that everyone wanted a little piece of him. The next morning, you might have thought he would sleep in. That's what many of us probably would have done. But Jesus, even though he had to be bone tired, got up early to go off by himself and pray. What do you think Jesus prayed about? In the midst of every thing and everyone tugging on him, asking for him, expecting great things from him, do you explain his heart's apparent longing to be in conversation with God?

Reflect on your own life. How do times of intense service, mission, and ministry affect you? Does your activity, your participation in mission and ministry, prompt you to talk to God about what you have experienced and what has taken place? How is God speaking to you this day about your acts of service?

Mount of the Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1-12 (Jesus Teaches)

Reflection: In baptism God says, “You are my beloved, with you I am well pleased. Think about Matthew 5 in relation to what God says to Jesus and to us at our baptisms. Jesus, in his sermon on the mount, pronounces his blessings *before* people have had a chance to respond to his call, *before* they’d left anything to follow him, *before* they had been found worthy or unworthy.

The blessings come in his very first sermon, right up front: blessed are you, blessed are you, you indeed are very blessed. Jesus, in fact, carries on, continues, God’s original blessing in person, word, and action...a proclamation and witness that is important to hear.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who grieve, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the peacemakers.
- And blessed even are those who are persecuted, for theirs too is the kingdom of heaven. (These were a people under occupation. In a sense Jesus says, “Don’t allow the occupation to occupy you! Don’t allow it to dwell within you and consume you. Instead, dwell, live out of, consume and be consumed by the blessing of God.”)

In other words, blessing can live alongside suffering and trouble. In fact, blessing can bring us out of suffering and trouble. *What hope* this can give to a hurting world! Blessing means that the presence and goodness of God will be with you when you need it most.

If you and every member of your congregation made a concerted effort to be pure in spirit, meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers—to really walk with Jesus—how would your community be transformed? How might the beatitudes bring people together? How can God use you in your church to reflect the character and spirit of Jesus?



Sea of Galilee – Mark 4:35-41 (Jesus calms the Storm)

Reflection: The Disciples had been walking with Jesus, listening to his teaching, witnessing his miracles. And yet, when they get in the midst of the storm, they seem to forget that Jesus is present. We sometimes find ourselves asking the same questions as the first disciples: “Jesus, don’t you care?” How do we walk with Jesus and abide in the mystery of God’s presence in seemingly uncontrollable circumstances or storms?

Tabgha – Chapels of primacy & multiplication

Matthew 14:13-21 and Mark 6:30-44 (Feeding of the 5000);

John 21:1-25 (The big catch and restoration of Peter)

Reflection: Empty and filled. Dying to self often calls us to give up both our personal preferences and our time. When our service is costly, God can fill our hearts and multiply our compassion as well as the outcomes or results. As you walk with Jesus in this place of multiplication, he is asking you a question. Can you hear it? “Do you love me?” Jesus calls you to multiply care for others with nothing less than his own love...which is more abundant than you can ask or think. “Do you love me?” Jesus wants to know. How will you respond?

Magdala

Magdala is known traditionally as the birthplace of Mary Magdalene. Mary is named at least 12 times in the gospels, where she is described as one of several women traveling with Jesus and his disciples and personally supporting his work. She was one of the women who witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion and planned to tend to his body after the Sabbath. Mary Magdalene was the first eyewitness of the risen Christ and was commissioned by Jesus to inform the disciples of his resurrection.

Day Six

✠✠ Itinerary: Cana, Nazareth, Tel Dothan, Samaria, Mt. Ebal, Mt Gerizim, Nablus, Jacob's Well and overnight in Jerusalem

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Cana – John 2:1-11 (Jesus turns water into wine – first miracle)

Ever notice that sometimes God asks us to do things that just do not seem to make any sense? “Fill the jars with water,” says Jesus. Have you ever thought about what the servants might have been thinking? How about the one that takes that first ladle of the water from the jars to the wine steward to taste? That servant must have been trembling in his shoes.

But the water has turned into great tasting wine. The best! When we run short in our walk with Jesus, Jesus will provide! Our job in walking with him is, as the old hymn goes, to trust and obey. We, like the servants, are to trust and obey in our walk. And maybe even more importantly, to pour out to others the gifts of transformation and new life.

Nazareth

Nazareth appears in 28 Bible verses: Matt 2:23, Matt 4:13, Matt 21:11, Matt 26:71, Mark 1:9, Mark 1:24, Mark 10:47, Mark 16:6, Luke 1:26, Luke 2:4, Luke 2:39, Luke 2:51, Luke 4:16, Luke 4:34, Luke 18:37, Luke 24:19, John 1:45, John 1:46, John 18:5, John 18:7, John 19:19, Acts 2:22, Acts 3:6, Acts 4:10, Acts 6:14, Acts 10:38, Acts 22:8 and Acts 26:9.

The story from Luke 1:26-38 where the Angel speaks to Mary is one of the more familiar passages in scripture. But also, we have the passage that asks the question, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Nazareth is a place of challenge. With what is Jesus challenging you as you walk with the historical and the very present Jesus?

Tel Dothan: Genesis 37:12-28

The day Joseph's brothers pastured their flocks in the Dothan Valley, they sold Joseph to some Ishmaelites traveling the highway on their way to Egypt. At the time everything seemed to work against Joseph. God seemed *very* much absent, and yet was still very much in control. The brothers only saw the present, but as they had the opportunity to look back on later events, they came to an experience that ultimately provided much needed food...and a change of life.

Samaria

Samaria appears in 113 Bible verses

Jews and Samaritans were not friendly with one another. Jews thought the Samaritans were unclean. However, Jesus showed another way. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well? When you walk with Jesus, you may say or do things in expanding God's Kingdom that some of your own people will not understand and may criticize.

Jesus crosses the boundary of his culture's understanding of what is acceptable. As you walk with Jesus, how can you expand your ideas of what is acceptable so that you might meet the needs of "the unacceptable" as Jesus did? What is Jesus attempting to show you or teach you?

Mt. Ebal:

Mount Ebal appears in 5 Bible verses: Deut. 11:29, Deut. 27:4, Deut. 27:13, Josh 8:30 and Josh. 8:33.

Mt. Gerizim

Mount Gerizim appears in 4 Bible verses: Deut. 11:29, Deut. 27:12, Josh. 8:33 and Judg. 9:7.

Mount Gerizim is a mountain next to Mount Ebal, overlooking the Valley of Shechem. In Deuteronomy 11:29, Moses tells the Israelites that when the Lord brings them into the promised land, a blessing shall be proclaimed from Mount Gerizim, and a curse from Mount Ebal.

Nablus

One of Palestine's largest cities, located between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. Home to Jacob's Well.

Jacob's Well – John 4:5-42 (Jesus and the woman at the well)

Jerusalem

Jerusalem appears in 719 Bible verses.

The original site of Jerusalem, as it was during the days of King David about 3000 years ago, is still sometimes called the City of David. It is south of the Temple Mount and is surrounded by hills, as reflected in Psalms 125:2, of which the NIV translation reads: "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore."



Day Seven

✠ Itinerary: Mt of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane, Mt. Zion,
Upper Room, St. Peter in Gallicantu, Garden Tomb

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Mount of Olives – Luke 19:37-44; Mark 11:1-11; Matthew 21 (Palm Sunday walk)

Reflection: Can you place yourself in the crowd that gathered that day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem? Imagine the sun beating down, the shouts of the crowds, the sounds and smells of the animals. Can you see yourself among the people spreading cloaks in the road, making a kind of carpet upon which the donkey and its rider would travel? Are you joining the chorus of "Blessed be the king who comes ...! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!"

In Luke's gospel, the religious leaders disapprove of the crowd and the shouting and they tell Jesus to order his followers to stop. Jesus tells the religious leaders that if the people were to stop, that the stones would shout and sing. What do you think the stones would say? How do you (or do you) express joy in the presence of Jesus with whom you take this daily walk of life?

Garden of Gethsemane – Mark 14:32-52 (Jesus prays and is betrayed)

Reflection: Sometimes we underestimate what it cost Jesus to submit his will to God's Will. The price of saying yes led to the cross, to the very giving of self—all of self—on behalf of others. A surrender of our will to God's Will...that is what Jesus models. We must be pliable in God's hands, allowing God's designs and desires to mold and shape our hearts for the present and coming days.

"Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Thou art the potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting yielded and still. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Hold o'er my being absolute sway. Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see Christ only, always, living in me!"

Mt. Zion

The room of the Last Supper and the Tomb of David are in the Mt. Zion area.

Upper Room – Luke 22:7-23; Mark 14:12-29; Matthew 26:17-35 (The Last Supper)

Reflection: When was the last time you thought about, talked about, taught, or shared about why we celebrate communion? What's this practice all about? (for the modern world?)
Good question.

We share this meal to:

1. Remember Jesus, his life, his teachings, his new interpretation of the Passover meal, his creation and institution of something new—The Lord’s supper/Eucharist/Communion—and to remember Christ died for us while we were still sinners.
2. Rejoice, for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26, NIV). Death does not have the last word.
3. Repent. Sharing communion provides opportunity to examine ourselves and, if the Holy Spirit shines a piercing light on anything in our lives that is unworthy of the body and blood of the Lord, we have the opportunity to repent and experience forgiveness and cleansing anew so that we might celebrate worthily.
4. Reconcile. We are all a part of the one body: the church of Jesus Christ. If I have resentment toward even one person I really am judging myself. I’m no better than anyone of you here. At this table we are on equal standing.



The table of Holy Communion is Christ’s table, not the table of The United Methodist Church or any one congregation. It is not a meal in the clubhouse for members only! It is open to all regardless of age or church membership. The table is open to anyone who seeks to respond to Christ’s love and seeks to lead a new life of peace and love.

Christ invites you to take the bread and the cup that proclaim his loving sacrifice of love for everyone and to commit yourself once again to participate, proclaim, and walk today and the days ahead in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

St. Peter in Gallicantu

The Church of St Peter in Gallicantu stands on the eastern slope of Mt. Zion. The church commemorates the apostle Peter’s triple denial of his Master, his immediate repentance, and his reconciliation with Christ after the resurrection.

Garden Tomb – Mark 15:42-16:8 (Jesus arose from the grave)

Reflection: Walking with Jesus means you will encounter the unexpected. Meeting an angel at the tomb was bewildering. Jesus had told them to expect the resurrection, and yet all are astounded that they do not find the body of Jesus at the tomb.

Jesus had astounded the people many times earlier through healings, walking on water, multiplying a boy’s lunch, and a catch of fish. And at each point along the way, I hear Jesus asking the same question he asked his first disciples when they were on the boat together after Jesus had calmed the storm: “Do you not have faith yet?”

As you continue to walk with Jesus, how will you respond when you meet God unexpectedly?

Day Eight

✚ Itinerary: Old City, Cardo, Davidson Center, Southern Wall Excavations, Teaching Steps, Western Wall, Pool of Bethesda, Antonia Fortress, Via Dolorosa, Church of the Holy Sepulcher

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Old City

At the heart of the Jewish, Islamic, and Christian religions, the old city is a walled one-kilometer area in the center of Jerusalem. The Old City is home to the Western Wall (aka Wailing Wall, and in Hebrew, "Kotel"). This is the last remaining wall of what was the Jewish Temple and is today the holiest site in the world for Jews. Above the Western Wall lies the Dome of the Rock, important for Muslims as the site where the prophet Muhammad is said to have risen to heaven.

Within the Old City

Cardo: Jewish Quarter of the Old City; Davidson Center: Contains visual aids, artifacts, videos; Southern Wall excavations; Teaching Steps

Western Wall – Psalm 122 (Prayer for Peace)

Reflection: We have been and are on a pilgrimage. We seek to walk with Jesus each and every day, but also, on this pilgrimage, to walk where Jesus walked. We seek to enrich and engage our souls and deepen our relationship with Jesus and with God's mission and ministry.

We seek to experience sacred space within and without, and so we pray this ancient prayer of the Psalms: *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers." For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. Amen* (Psalm 122: 6 – 9)

Pool of Bethesda: John 5:1-18 (The healing at the pool)

Reflection: Jesus asks the man at the pool, "Do you want to be made well?" Jesus challenges this man to change. Yes, he was sick, but this is the life that this man has come to know. He knows how to function in this life as he is. Change? Being made well? That would change everything!

What ways of life do we keep perpetuating because we are afraid to be made well—in body, mind, or spirit—in this life? Jesus walks with us because he seeks to make us well. As we walk with Jesus, Jesus turns and asks us the same question, "Do you want to be made well?"

Antonia Fortress – John 18:28-19:1 (Trial before Pilate)

Reflection: In John 19 we see Jesus dressed in purple, wearing a crown that mocks rather than honors him. Jesus, weary, worn, bruised and bloodied, looks nothing like a king in the purple and a crown of thorns. Pilate says, “Here is your King!” The tragedy in this moment is not only the impending death of Jesus, but that people fail to recognize God in Jesus.

Will you, can you, recognize the Jesus who walks with you and prays that you will walk with him? Jesus may be in the child who needs you to listen. Jesus may be in the neighbor who needs your help with something. Jesus might be in the abused, who needs you to intervene.

Jesus walks with you, is present with you. Can you see him? Will you recognize his presence? Take courage and ask for the grace to see and experience Jesus in the people and places you meet along your journey so that you may serve your God and King.

Via Dolorosa – Luke 23:26-33; Mark 15:21-32; Matthew 27:32-44 (The way to Calvary)

Reflection: Only Mark’s gospel tells us that this was a life-changing experience for Simon because, in our reading from Mark 15, Mark says something else which no other gospel mentions: “they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country.” Only Mark tells us this, that Simon was passing by, coming out of the countryside into the city of Jerusalem, but the Lord was travelling out of the city.

These two men were travelling in opposite directions on that day. Simon was coming in and the Lord was going out. Simon, who was walking into the city, suddenly found himself turned around at the instructions of the centurion and found his life walking in exactly the opposite direction. For Simon, meeting Jesus turned his life completely around. His experience of meeting the Lord would utterly change his life to walk in the opposite direction, following in the footsteps of Christ himself.

Simon would never ever forget that moment of contact with the Lord on Golgotha’s height. I think he was transformed by his contact with the suffering servant. How about you? Will you allow your walk with Jesus to turn your life around and transform you?

Church of the Holy Sepulcher – Matthew 27:32-60; Luke 23:44-56; Mark 15:33-47 (Death and burial of Jesus)

Reflection: “Truly this man was God’s Son!” Ponder this confession. Is it yours? *“Go to dark Gethsemane, ye that feel the tempter’s power; your Redeemer’s conflict see, watch with him one bitter hour. Turn not from his griefs away; learn of Jesus Christ today. See him at the judgement hall, beaten bound, reviled, arraigned; O the worm-wood and the gall! O the pangs his soul sustained! Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn of Christ to bear the cross.”* (“Go to Dark Gethsemane” UMH 290)



Day Nine

✠✠ **Itinerary:** Return to U.S. or on to an extension

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

The reflection for this day is a prayer for the end of this particular journey. It is **an adaption of an ancient prayer that comes at the end of the Pilgrim Mass:**

O God, who brought your servant Abraham out of the land of the Chaldeans, protecting him in his wanderings, who guided the Hebrew people across the desert, we ask that you watch over us, your servants, as we walk with your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, and as we journey forth in your love

Be for us our companion on the walk,
Our guide at the crossroads,
Our breath in our weariness,
Our protection in danger,
Our shade in the heat,
Our light in the darkness,
Our consolation in our discouragements,
And our strength in our intentions.

With your guidance may we arrive safe and sound at the end of the Road and be enriched with your grace and love. Enable us as we return safely to our homes or extend our pilgrimage, to continue to walk even more closely with Jesus and to be filled with joy and thanksgiving.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Call to Prayer:

L: God is a faithful King.

P: Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

All: Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time.

A Reading: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. And these words which I command you this day you shall take to heart. You shall diligently teach them to your children. You shall recite them at home and away, morning and night. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, they shall be a symbol above your eyes, and you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your homes and upon your gates. (*Deuteronomy 6:4-9*)

Prayer: Help us, our dear Lord, as we come to the end of this day, to lie down in peace; and awaken us to life again. Spread over us Your shelter of peace, guide us with Your good counsel. Save us because of Your mercy. Shield us from enemies and pestilence, from starvation, sword and sorrow. Remove the evil forces that surround us, shelter us in the shadow of Your wings. You, O God, guard us and deliver us. You are a gracious and merciful King. Guard our coming and our going, grant us life and peace, now and always. Praised is the Lord by day and praised by night, praised when we lie down and praised when we rise up. In Your hand are the souls of the living and the dead, the life of every creature, the breath of all flesh. Into Your hand I entrust my spirit: You will redeem me, Lord God of truth. Our God in Heaven, assert the unity of Your rule; affirm Your sovereignty, and reign over us forever. Amen

Biblical Verses (These biblical verses recall God's blessings and protection in ancient times:)

Then Jacob said: "May the angel who has redeemed me from all harm bless the lads. May they carry on my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac. May they become teeming multitudes upon the earth." And God said: "If you will listen diligently to the voice of the Lord your God, doing what is right in His sight, heeding His mitzvot and keeping all His laws, then I will not inflict upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the Lord am your healer."

The angel of the Lord said to Satan: "The Lord rebuke you, Satan. May the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Is not this man a brand snatched from the fire?" Behold Solomon carried in his litter — sixty of Israel's heroes are its escort. All of them are skilled swordsmen, all trained at war, each with his sword at the ready to ward off any danger of the night. May the Lord bless you and guard you. May the Lord show you favor and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you kindness and grant you peace.

The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Blessing and Thanksgiving

This is the day that the Lord has made! Thank you for your blessings throughout this day. Thank you for walking with us, Jesus, as we seek to walk more closely with you. Bless us now as we rest and fill us with your spirit this evening in ways that renew our mind, body, soul, and spirit so that we may awaken to your fullness of life ready to learn, and grow as disciples who multiply your transforming love and grace!

*** Adapted from various resources*



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