

Middle East Traveling Seminar

Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel/Palestine

November 2–20, 2009

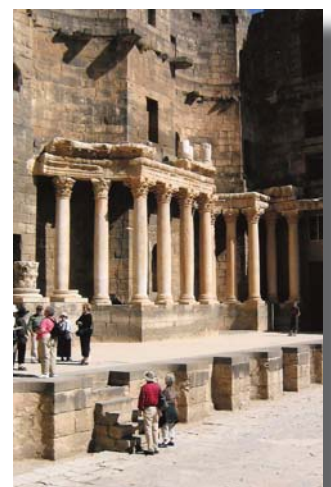
Sponsored by The Middle East Task Force of the Presbytery of Chicago

Pauline M. Coffman, Seminar Leader

Elder, First United Church of Oak Park

Peg Griffiths, Co-Leader

Member, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago



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Introduction

The Middle East Task Force (METF) of Chicago Presbytery has sponsored traveling seminars to the Middle East since 1981. The next traveling seminar is being planned for Fall 2009; it will include visits to Beirut, Lebanon, where we will learn of the impact of the Israeli bombing in July/August 2006 and visit with Lebanese Christians and Muslims, as well as see several archeological sites of interest. From Lebanon, we will travel to Aleppo and Damascus, Syria, where we will visit with Armenian, Orthodox, and Evangelical Christians. We will travel to Palmyra, an ancient Roman castle east of Damascus. Then on to Israel/Palestine, via Jordan. Stops are planned in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Qumran at the Dead Sea, Hebron, Nazareth, and other points of interest. In the recent past, the Rev. Dr. Bob Worley, retired professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, led these traveling seminars, building on his knowledge and experience on the faculty of the Near East School of Theology in Beirut.



The leader of the 2009 seminar is **Dr. Pauline Coffman**, who studied in Beirut her junior year of college (at the Beirut College for Women, now Lebanese American University). She has returned several times, most recently in 2007 as leader of the latest traveling seminar. Pauline has served as Dean of Student Life at McCormick Seminary; Director of Student Services at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and as Director of the School of Adult Learning at North Park University. Upon retirement from NPU, Pauline became chair of the Advisory Board of the Center for Middle East Studies at NPU, where the Rev. Dr. Donald Wagner is Director. Pauline is active in the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the PC(USA).



Dr. Peg Griffiths, a lay leader at Fourth Presbyterian Church, will serve as co-leader of the 2009 seminar. Given her interest in Middle East issues, she has traveled extensively to the region. Currently she serves on the Steering Committee of the Middle East Task Force, and is a member of the interfaith work group—both of the Chicago Presbytery. She has been active in the national mission network for Israel/Palestine. In addition to serving on several boards of non-profit organizations, Peg has developed many educational programs over her career as assistant professor, and as a senior psychologist.

Daily Schedule

Monday, November 2 Departure

Depart Chicago this evening on a transatlantic flight, changing planes in London.

Tuesday, November 3 Beirut, Lebanon

Arrive in Beirut late in the day and transfer to the Casa D'Or Hotel in Ras Beirut. Dinner and overnight at Casa D'Or Hotel.

Wednesday, November 4 Beirut



Walk to the American University of Beirut and/or Lebanese American University. Other visits today will include the Middle East Council of Churches' work with refugees, displaced people and others. Stop at the Near East School of Theology, meet with Mary Mikhael, President

of N.E.S.T., worship and lunch at N.E.S.T. Meet with the Arab Christian-Muslim Dialogue Group. Visit the sister congregation of the First United Church of Oak Park, IL, the National Presbyterian church. Dinner and overnight at Casa D'Or Hotel.

Thursday, November 5 Beirut / Tyre

Visit South Lebanon and the work of the Middle East Council of Churches among Christians and Muslims, the Presbyterian Church in Marjayoun, the Sidon School for Boys and Girls, and then the archeological sites in Tyre with its magnificent ruins from the Phoenicians and the Solomonic period of the Old Testament. Dinner and overnight at Casa D'Or Hotel.

Friday, November 6 Beirut / Baalbeck / Beirut

Visit Central Lebanon with the ancient Greek and Roman ruins at Heliopolis (City of the Sun), now known as Baalbeck. On return trip, visit the Druze Museum in Lebanon and meet with Druze educator. Dinner at the Istambuli Restaurant in Beirut. Overnight once again at the Casa D'Or Hotel.



Saturday, November 7

Beirut / Byblos / Aleppo, Syria

Traveling North towards Syria we will visit with Christians in Tripoli or Byblos. A few miles into Syria, we will visit the magnificent ruins of the 11th-century Crusader Castle, Crac des Chevalier. We will arrive in Aleppo for dinner and overnight at the Mirage Palace.



Sunday, November 8 Aleppo

The group will visit Christian churches; Armenian Evangelical, Presbyterian, and the Syrian Orthodox Church in the morning. Meet for lunch in the Armenian Souk. A visit to the Aleppo Museum is optional for the afternoon. Dinner and overnight at the Mirage Palace.

Monday, November 9 Aleppo

Visit the famous Byzantine Monastery, Qala't Salaam, a few miles outside Aleppo. In the afternoon, explore the Old City of Aleppo, including the Citadel and the wonderful old markets. Dinner and overnight in Aleppo.

Tuesday, November 10 Aleppo – Palmyra

While traveling to Palmyra, we will have lunch and a visit with Christians in Homs. Dinner and overnight in Palmyra.

Wednesday, November 11 Palmyra – Damascus

We spend the day with an orientation bus tour of Palmyra and a walking tour to sites of historical significance. After lunch, we board the bus for Damascus for dinner and overnight at the Damascus International Hotel.



Thursday, November 12 Damascus

Learn about the Middle East Council of Churches' work in Damascus. Visit the Church of Ananias, the Christian section of the "Street called Straight," the Damascus Museum and the Old Market. Dinner and overnight at the Damascus International Hotel.

Friday, November 13 Damascus – Amman

Depart Damascus this morning, stopping at the Roman Provincial Capital at Bosra. Cross the border into Jordan and continue to Amman for a city tour including the Amphitheatre and Museum. Visit with the PCUSA liaison to Jordan and Israel/Palestine and representatives from the MECC Office in Amman at our hotel. Dinner and overnight in Amman at the Golden Tulip Grand Palace Hotel.

Saturday, November 14 Amman – Bethlehem



After breakfast, travel to the King Hussein Bridge and cross into Palestine. Visit the ancient site of Jericho. Continue on to Qumran and view the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found by a young shepherd boy. This afternoon, drive into Bethlehem and visit Al Aida Refugee Camp; meet Abdelfattah Abusroar, Director of Al Rowwad Cultureal & Theatre Training Center. Then check into the International Center in Bethlehem for dinner and overnight accommodations. A special presentation by the Rev. Alex Awad, Dean of

Students, on Israel/Palestine is planned for this evening at the Bethlehem Bible College.

Sunday, November 15 Bethlehem – Hebron – Bethlehem

After breakfast, tour the Church of the Nativity followed by worship at the Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. At lunch, meet with Mitri Raheb (if available). Drive to nearby Hebron to tour the market area, see Abraham's Mosque, and visit the glassblowing factory. Return to Bethlehem for dinner and overnight at the International Center.

Monday, November 16 Bethlehem – Sea of Galilee Area

After breakfast, bus ride to Ramallah where we will visit the Palestinian Authority Headquarters and Arafat's grave. Stop at Jifna, where we will visit the Seraj Children's Library en route to Galilee area for dinner and overnight at the Pilgerhaus Tabgha.

Tuesday, November 17 Sea of Galilee – Jerusalem



Following breakfast, travel to the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee and an early Christian church. Tour Nazareth. Continue to Jerusalem viewing the city from its hills, visit the Mount of Olives, walk along the Palm Sunday route and see the Garden of Gethsemane. Check into our hotel, located in the

Old City. Dinner and overnight at the Gloria Hotel, located inside the Old City.

Wednesday, November 18 Jerusalem

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and then begin a tour of the Old City. First stop is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The tour will include a visit to the Dome of the Rock area. Today lunch is included with a presentation by ICAHD. This afternoon, visit Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Museum) and meet with Rabbis for Human Rights. Dinner and overnight at the Gloria Hotel.

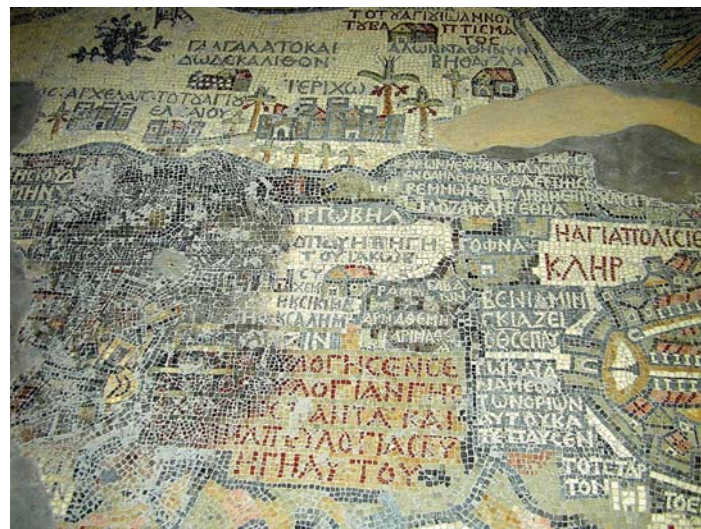


Thursday, November 19 Jerusalem – Tel Aviv

Following breakfast at the hotel, meet with BT'selem, OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Territories) and ARIJ (Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem). The afternoon is free to explore the city on your own. Dinner at the Seven Arches Hotel on the Mt. of Olives. Return to hotel to pack and rest. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.

Friday, November 20 Tel Aviv - Chicago

Board flight early this morning for return to Chicago, with stopover in London. Arrive in Chicago shortly after noon.



Tour Price from Chicago O'Hare International Airport: \$4,295, based on double occupancy

Single Room Supplement: \$775

Optional Travel Protection Insurance: \$280

This tour price reflects special group rates. Deposits received after July 28, 2009, will likely incur additional charges due to supplier contract terms.

TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Round trip air fare from Chicago O'Hare International Airport
- Accommodations in tourist and superior tourist class hotels with private facilities
- Breakfast and dinner daily
- Services of experienced, English-speaking licensed guides
- Airport transfers and portorage outside of U.S.
- Sightseeing and entrance fees
- Service charges, local taxes and border taxes
- Airline taxes and fuel surcharges
- Tips to guides, drivers and hotel staff
- Donations to organizations
- Visas for Lebanon, Syria and Jordan

For further information, contact:

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Chicago, IL 60614
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Email: mgriffithsphd@comcast.net

Tour Features and Conditions

Please read all Tour Features and Conditions carefully. Payment of tour deposit constitutes acceptance of these conditions.

Air Transportation: Air transportation is restricted to the services of any IATAN carrier, in economy class based on nonrefundable fare. Travelers are responsible to provide their names as they appear in their passport. Ticketing will be made 30-45 days prior to departure, after which there will be a charge for name corrections. Tour price includes current airline taxes and fuel surcharges, which are subject to change until ticketed. *Tour participants are responsible for any increase in airline taxes or fuel surcharges imposed by the airline.*

Accommodations: Based on two persons sharing a room in accommodations listed in itinerary, or similar, with private facilities, including service charges and taxes. Single rooms are subject to availability at an additional charge. *If a passenger cannot supply a roommate, the passenger is responsible for the additional charge.*

Meals: In-flight meals and snacks are served according to airline policy. Breakfast and dinner will be provided daily. Opportunity will be given for lunches to be secured by tour members, at their own expense. Beverages with lunches and dinners are not included.

Transfers and Baggage: Transfers between airports and hotels upon arrival and departure are included in the tour price, including handling of one medium-sized suitcase per person, not exceeding 62 dimensional inches (length plus width plus height) or weighing more than a maximum of 50 pounds. *Due to limited luggage storage space on motorcoaches, it is important that each person bring only ONE piece of checked baggage. In addition, a flight bag or overnight case may be taken, which must be handled by the passenger at all times. Baggage allowance is subject to change according to airline policy.*

Sightseeing and Entrance Fees: Are included as indicated in itinerary, using private motorcoach or other conveyance, with local guides where necessary.

Tips and Taxes: Airlines taxes, fuel surcharges, border crossing taxes, and service charges and taxes on accommodations are included. Tips to guides, drivers, and hotel staff are included. Tips for personal services are not included and are at tour member's own expense.

Not Included: Passport fee, travel protection insurance, lunches, and expenses of a purely personal nature are not included. Transportation from your home to Chicago O'Hare Airport and vice versa is not included.

Deposit and Payment: Reservations may be secured upon payment of a deposit of \$500 per person. You will be invoiced for final payment, which is due September 3, 2009.

MTS Cancellation Conditions: Refund of full deposit (less \$100 administrative fee) will be made up to July 28, 2009. If cancellation occurs between July 29 and September 3, 2009, a fee of \$500 will be charged. From September 4 to October 1, 2009, the fee is \$500 plus unrecoverable airline, hotel and tour operator payments. There is no refund for cancellation after October 2, 2009 or for unused tour services.

Protect Your Investment: If you purchase the protection plan upon enrollment with your deposit, any restriction on pre-existing conditions is waived. *If protection plan is purchased after the deposit is received, all coverage is subject to exclusion of pre-existing conditions. Trip cancellation and interruption protection is made available to tour members at a cost*

of \$280 per person. You will receive a detailed description of the protection plan, which you will have ten days to review. Certain conditions, exclusions and limitations apply as set out in the Evidence of Coverage and Confirmation of Coverage. Following is a brief description:

- This protection plan will cover you for cancellation fees if you need to cancel because of death, injury or illness to you, your traveling companion or your immediate family member.
- Trip Interruption or Delay
- Medical Evacuation
- Medical Expenses
- Lost, stolen or damaged baggage

A valid passport is required. If you do not have a passport, you should apply for one immediately. Information on obtaining a passport will be provided upon receipt of deposit. If you now have a passport, please verify that it is valid until May 22, 2010. Visas for Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are included in the tour price and will be obtained by MTS TRAVEL for U.S. citizens, provided a copy of the photo page of your passport is received in our office by September 3, 2009.

All rates and fares are based on current information and are subject to change. Rates are based on a minimum of 20 persons traveling together. Charges will be incurred for individual deviations or special requests apart from the group itinerary.

The itinerary as outlined is an indication of sequence and sites to be included in the tour program. However, the tour operator reserves the right to alter or change the itinerary and/or the sites included should it be deemed necessary due to local conditions, time restrictions, or other circumstances.

In the ever-changing world situation, MTS TRAVEL recommends personal monitoring of news about your destination. For the latest country information from the U.S. Dept. of State, please visit www.mtstravel.com and click "U.S. State Department Travel Warnings" in the middle of our home page.

Photographs: MTS TRAVEL reserves all rights to publish in printed media or the web (mtstravel.com) photographs taken during the tour. By participating in the tour you agree to grant permission to MTS TRAVEL to use photographs in which you may appear.

Guests with disabilities or dietary restrictions should inquire in advance about whether their needs can be accommodated.

Travel Arrangements by:
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Reservation Form
Middle East Traveling Seminar

This tour price reflects special group rates.

Deposits received after July 28, 2009, will likely incur additional charges due to supplier contract terms.

To be assured of reservations, please complete and mail this registration form to:

Dr. Pauline Coffman, 623 South Euclid Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60304, along with your deposit of \$500 per person.

Enclosed is my deposit check of \$ _____
(\$500 per person. Please make check payable to Middle East Traveling Seminar.)

(Please Print)

Name 1 (as it appears on passport): _____

Name 2 (as it appears on passport): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (evening) _____ (days) _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Room Type: Twin/Double Rooming With: _____
 Single

Travel Protection Insurance:

- I/we wish to be covered by travel protection insurance as follows:
- \$280 per person** (Please include this payment for travel insurance along with your deposit payment.) Insurance payments are not refundable.
 - I DO NOT wish** to be covered by travel insurance. **Signature:** _____

Please use this space if second person has a different address, OR if more than two persons are traveling from the same address.

I have read the Tour Features and Conditions for this tour and agree to the terms listed therein.

Signature: _____