



Dear Editor

Having seen the article in *ACT Now* (Autumn 2006) referring to the schools supported by BibleLands in Jerusalem, I felt prompted to write of my own recent experiences.

In May/June 2006 I was privileged to be part of a BibleLands Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As a life long Christian and an RE teacher for over 25 years, it was something I had always dreamed of doing. Our group came from many different backgrounds and places. None of us realised the impact the next nine days would have on our lives.

As part of our pilgrimage we were taken to BibleLands projects. The Nazareth School of Nursing is Christian-based, but many of those training are Muslims and the patients in their care may be Jew, Christian or Muslim. The political problems were kept distinct from individual people – ‘love thy neighbour’ was at the heart of the care and healing given. This was replicated across all the BibleLands projects that we visited.

We visited Bethlehem. The dividing wall between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is growing constantly. To get to Bethlehem, we had to go through an armed Israeli checkpoint. The Palestinians, who are lucky enough to have work in Jerusalem, have to travel through this every day. Sometimes their passage to and from work or school may be delayed for hours. Sometimes it may be stopped altogether. Reasons? None given.

My perception of life in the Holy Land today has been deepened

Within the walls of Jerusalem Old City, day-to-day life continues on the streets. On The Via Dolorosa Christians followed the cross and route to Golgotha; Jews came in the opposite direction to pray at the Western Wall; Muslims stood at the bottom going about their daily routine. Three religions living side-by-side.

At school, my classroom walls are now full of the pictures and experiences I want to convey to the pupils. The visit has provided me with greater opportunities and insight. My lessons are now taught with a passion, knowledge and understanding that I would never have dreamed of returning with.

My personal life has been enhanced by the people I met and travelled with. My perception of life in the Holy Land today has been deepened; my assumptions have been challenged. I will always be grateful for the opportunity and would not have missed it for the world.

Thank you BibleLands!

Catherine Pocock

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editor's mailbox

Trainee nurses and staff at Nazareth School of Nursing



Children at the Helen Keller Centre



The Via Dolorosa where three religions live side-by-side

The checkpoint outside the Helen Keller Centre



The members of the BibleLands Pilgrimage to the Holy Land