



Dear Friends,

So much of the news of our day is centered on the current events of a relatively small crossroads of the world. But the Middle East and its conflicts play a very important role in our lives, even in the West. Who are the people who live there, and what are the roots of their conflicts, specifically the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? As a believer in Christ, how can I understand these people and what role might I find myself in? Hope Ventures International invites you to join us on a Journey of Understanding.

The purpose of this Journey of Understanding is to understand the issues and challenges facing both sides of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in order to have a better understanding of how to work and pray toward reconciliation. The trip is designed so that we spend our first days in Jerusalem exploring the Israeli perspective, time in Bethlehem exploring the Palestinian perspective, then we finish by traveling up the Jordan River Valley into the Galilee, visiting the sites where Jesus ministered and processing what we have learned.

The group will meet with both Israelis and Palestinians, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and will visit with strategic leaders who are involved in reconciliation works. Our desire is to help dismantle stereotypes and help to build bridges of understanding that will cross cultural, historical, and religious barriers, both in the region, and at home, among our spheres of influence.

This year we have the great opportunity to join in the Christ at the Checkpoint Conference sponsored by Bethlehem Bible College. The theme of the conference is "The Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism" and will feature speakers from a wide array of perspectives. The aim of Christ at the Checkpoint is to challenge Evangelicals worldwide to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel-Palestine by engaging with the teaching of Jesus. The conference brings together Palestinian Christians, Messianic believers, and internationals to build understanding and unity. (The cost of the conference is included in the Journey of Understanding.) More information may be found at www.christatthecheckpoint.com.

Dates of the 2016 Journey of Understanding are March 3-14, 2016. The cost of the trip will be \$1700 per person plus airfare. This price includes ground transportation, meals, lodging, and tour fees, and all conference costs. (Hope Ventures can arrange for the airfare, or you can make your own arrangements. We anticipate the cost being somewhere between \$1200 -1600.) We will stay in hotels and guest houses and eat most of our meals in restaurants.

Hope Ventures International is hosting this Journey of Understanding in partnership with The Reconciliation Walk...the Journey Continues. You may learn more about these organizations on our websites: www.hopeventuresinternational.org and www.recwalk.net. Your spot on the team may be secured with the submission of a \$150 non-refundable deposit and an application form (found on the Hope Ventures website).

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Please call me at (830) 708-1243 or email me at info@hopeventuresinternational.org. I will look forward to hearing from you soon.

In Peace,

Marianne Smith

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