



THE MESSAGE BOARD
A Newsletter from
A. Roy Medley, General Secretary



Personal Reflections

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Meeting Challenges: Middle East Study Tour

Part 1

The first challenge of the Mission Study Tour to the Middle East was met successfully. All twelve participants made it to JFK in time for our departure on Turkish Air en route to Beirut via Istanbul.

Our trip has several goals. One is to become more familiar with the life of the church in the Middle East. Another is to learn how Christians and Muslims in the Middle East are building bridges of understanding and commitment to the common good in the face of the rise of radical Islam. Finally, we hope to better understand the forces at play that make the Holy Land such a powder keg.

Twelve of us are making this pilgrimage: ABC vice president Patti Stratton and her husband, Jonathan; budget review officer Jim Ratliff; Riley and Joyce Walker of ABC/Dakotas; Marshall and June Peters of ABC/Mid-America; Alan Newton of ABC/Rochester-Genesee Region; associate general secretary for Mission Resource Development Leo Thorne and his wife, Yvonne; and me and my wife, Pat.

In preparation, we have read many articles and books, including *Cross and Crescent* by Colin Chapman, and *Blood Brothers* by Elias Chador. During our time in Lebanon, we will be studying with Dr. Chapman, a Christian scholar in Islam; meeting with a Christian-Muslim dialogue group in Beirut where I will present a paper on "Religious Liberty in the American Political Experience;" learning more about Baptist life in Lebanon; and meeting with the Prime Minister of Lebanon.

As I sit on the plane above the Atlantic, I am reminded by the Turkish script on the map and menu images on the TV screen ahead of me that we are entering a culture that is so greatly different from our own: a culture shaped by Islam, where our own culture is shaped by the Christian faith.

I am also keenly aware that we enter a part of the world associated with fear for many of us because of the rise of radical Islam.

Part of our challenge will be to strip away our fears and prejudices in order to genuinely meet the people of this country in the Spirit of our Lord who dared to venture into Samaria for the sake of his Messiahship. May his Spirit and example guide us as we enter the homes and lives of the people of Lebanon.

Living Christ, whose advent brought the Light of the World into time and space, lighten our path and direct our ways that we might glorify you now and forever, One God, Holy Trinity. Amen.

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