

What Is the Weight of a Snowflake?

By ANE Communications & Event Specialist Marianne Fitzkee

On Saturday, December 13, ANE members Carrie Fitzkee, Galen Fitzkee, Janice Sommerhoff, and I participated in the 66th Annual Peace Pilgrimage from Nazareth to Bethlehem (Pennsylvania).

The pilgrimage was started by a Quaker man in 1960 as a Christian witness for peace that seeks to reflect the non-violent life of Jesus Christ. It is an ecumenical event that welcomes people of any age or background to join the 10-mile trek, symbolic of the journey of Mary and Joseph.



In years past I have walked with my maternal grandfather, paternal grandmother, and dad, but my grandparents aren't up for such a long journey anymore, and my dad was tied up with pastoral duties (read: he had procrastinated on his sermon).

Since it's always been a family affair, I convinced my brother and my cousin, a first-time pilgrim, to join me. Janice contacted the District Office about promoting the event, and we decided to carpool.

On our car ride, we played the Brethren game, swapped BVS stories (both Janice's father and I served in Ecuador), and shared music and restaurant recommendations. As we walked, stopping at churches along the route for snacks, hot chocolate, and temporary respite from the cold, we continued to connect with one another and fellow pilgrims, all of us united in our desire for more peace in the world.



A [video](#) by pilgrimage organizers shares the following quote by John K. Stoner about the pilgrimage's purpose: "A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey. It is undertaken more to move your soul to a different place than to move your body to a different place. It does something about enemies by doing something about ourselves. A pilgrimage makes peace by making friends. Single people, families, denominations, and ethnic groups merge together at Nazareth. We walk together to Bethlehem. You meet new people, you renew old acquaintances, and you share a story, or a candy bar, or your cold hands, and then you feel warmer and so does the world."

I definitely had cold hands, and so did a 15-year-old exchange student from Spain who was less than enthused about spending her Saturday plodding along the highway for five hours. Thankfully, I had spare hand warmers I could share. Practicing Spanish with her and reminiscing about my time studying abroad in Spain, certainly warmed my heart (and distracted me from my cold hands), and I think she appreciated it too.

Upon arriving to Bethlehem, we stopped in a plaza to sing Christmas carols before trudging the last blocks to a church basement where a simple meal of soup and sandwiches awaited us. Singing with others and gathering at round tables with other pilgrims reminded me of love feast.



To conclude the day, a local choir sang for us. One of their pieces was called “The Weight of a Snowflake,” based on a German folktale. The winter parable goes:

“Tell me the weight of a snowflake,” a sparrow asked a wild dove.

“Nothing more than nothing,” was the answer.

“In that case I must tell a marvelous story,” the sparrow said. “I sat on a branch of a fir tree, close to its trunk, when it began to snow, not heavily, not a giant blizzard, no, just like in a dream, without any violence. Since I didn’t have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake dropped on the branch-nothing more than nothing, as you say-the branch broke off.”

Having said that, the sparrow flew away.

The dove thought about the story for a while and finally said to herself: “Perhaps there is only one voice lacking for peace to come into our world.”



As our little group drove home from the pilgrimage in light snow, those final words echoed in my mind.

Next year’s peace pilgrimage takes place on December 12, 2026. I plan to go again and would love to walk with more members of the ANE family! May we all walk in the way of the Prince of Peace throughout the year and make this often-cold world feel a little bit warmer.