

## July 2019 “Grace Greetings”

### Mission Statement:

We are a community of believers in Christ called to be servants to all people.

### “Free Trip to Egypt”

Instead of gathering at church for Potluck Dinner and Bible Study on Wednesday, June 12th, a bunch of us from Grace split into two groups and went to see the movie “Free Trip to Egypt.” The showings we attended were part of a one-day nationwide event called “Day of Unity,” which donned the hashtag #PlegeToListen.

As we watched the movie, I became nostalgic of my first trip to Israel-Palestine in 2010 since we started our trip with a couple of days in Egypt. My tour group was not quite as diverse as the group in the movie; we were mostly Lutheran seminarians and pastors. Another difference was that because of our size, we stayed in western hotels instead of with local host families. Therefore, we didn’t get to have the same immersive experience with Egyptians that the group in the movie did. I was struck when, early on in the trip, many of the American participants commented about how much they had in common with their Egyptian hosts. This “kumbaya” mood didn’t last long; not much further into the movie, the Americans began bickering amongst themselves and expressing discomfort with some parts of the Egyptian culture they were experiencing. I thought the movie balanced these two sentiments well and then during the live panel discussion (that was telecast into our theater afterwards) drove home the point that the goal of the project was not necessarily to change anyone, but to help us all be better at listening and kindness. Tarek Mounib (the creator/producer) at one point during the panel even admitted that it was hard for him to let go of trying to “convert” (in the non-religious sense) Jason (one of the American participants) and that he “could see a whole knew [Jason] when he let go of trying to change him.”

I think our country and world could really benefit from more reminders like this that God calls us to get beyond the “us vs. them” of it all. We can have healthy conversations with mutual respect and agree to disagree—as long as the conflict is not violent in nature. This doesn’t mean we stop working for justice in the ways that God is calling us to, but it means that we don’t look upon those who disagree with us as enemies or evil.

I don’t know how you can watch this movie now that the one-day screening has past, but if you have the chance, I would highly encourage you to see it!

You can read thoughts from other members of Grace who attended the screening on page 6.

Learn more about the project at [www.freetriptoegypt.com](http://www.freetriptoegypt.com).

God Bless,  
Pastor Leslie



## **Reflections on “Free Trip to Egypt”:** *(continued from page 2)*

“I think the lesson of “Free Trip to Egypt” is that bigotry and racism can be transformed by personal relationships. The fear of the unknown can be broken down, but most people live such insular lives that their views are never challenged.”

**Jacob Evans**

“I thought the movie was excellent. After a long career in the military, visiting twenty different countries along the way, I found the scenes in Egypt to be very familiar, having personally experienced the warmth and hospitality of people all around the world. I also found some of the scenes in America to be very disturbing. Intellectually, I was aware individual Americans could be xenophobic and ignorant of international norms and laws, but it was jarring to see it on the screen. For me personally the movie drove home how important it is for us to listen to one another, to be humble, and to recognize that other perspectives might actually be right! And we don't have to travel to put these lessons to work. Yes - I have already recommended the movie to others.”

**Rich Fraenkel**

“I would echo these comments, and also highly recommend this movie. I think another important aspect of this film that hasn't been discussed yet (and maybe it was more in the panel discussion than the film itself) was the message that someone else's beliefs should not create fear, aside from the unlikely event that those beliefs are directly threatening your well-being. I think some of the people in the film struggled with recognizing the sincerity of the religious beliefs of those from other faith traditions, and seemed to interpret the expression of other beliefs (such as the zar ceremony) as a threat to their own relationship with God. It was a good reminder that, as discussed in the sermon today, God did not only speak through what we know as the Bible, and God didn't stop speaking 2,000 years ago. Instead, we are invited, now, to experience God with and through others.”

**Kris McClellan**

“I would HIGHLY recommend everyone see this movie. For me it was a good feeling to see that people around the world basically are the same they can really empathize with each other if they can get past their labels. (Christian, Muslim, White, Black, Egyptian, American). Most of us just try to get through our days taking care of our loved ones the best we know how. In the end we hope it is enough and all makes sense. Ignorance and arrogance are prevalent everywhere, only truly listening to one another face to face can you begin to walk in their shoes. Sign me up. When do we leave?”

**Ed Opperman**

“This movie showed how much the media influences our society and instills fear but once you are introduced to the culture you find that there is really no difference from ours in most cases. The movie addressed a lot of different issues that our society has against other cultures and mostly it is because it is unfamiliar to us.”

**Mary Zech-Washington**

*See pictures from the screening on the next page!*