

## Continuation of reflections/photos...



**Rev. Todd Leach, Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Tel Aviv**

“For me, the Holy Land becomes more complex with each visit I make, yet this trip introduced me to bright glimmers of hope within the people we met. One of the many highlights was meeting with Rabbi Roberto Arbib, whose commitment to interfaith collaboration led to writing a prayer book with Muslim and Christian coauthors. Rabbi Arbib has the audacity to believe that interfaith prayer can lead toward peace – he was one of the many bright lights illuminating our journey. In addition, inspired by the Buffalonians with whom I had the privilege to travel, I have returned with a deeper hope in our potential to truly become the City of Good Neighbors for all our neighbors. “



**Eunice Lewin, SUNY Trustee  
Bethlehem**

Here I am kneeling with my daughter Eva in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Touching the 14-point silver star that marks the site of Jesus birth was an experience of a lifetime. I was flooded with emotions and am so grateful for the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. Thank you to the Buffalo Jewish Federation for the amazing journey to Israel.



**Rabbi Adam Scheldt, Director of Spiritual Care, Hospice Buffalo  
Tel Aviv**

Getting to meet Adi Nes (one of my favorite contemporary artists) really encapsulated this Israel trip for me. Adi Nes is accomplished, intelligent, creative, and has been transformative in the space in which he works. For this trip, however, Adi was really just the tip of the iceberg. Our tour bus was full of Adi Nes's. Getting to connect to so many accomplished, intelligent, driven, creative people who have all been transformative in their communities was (and continues to be) a gift. The opportunity to share the beauty and shortcomings of Israel, learning with and from, and forging new connections with such wonderful Buffalo community leaders was an experience that will last a lifetime. And the fact that we did this all through laughter, food, and sharing of ourselves was a truly transformative experience.



**Eva Lewin, physician  
Jerusalem**

This photo was taken in Old City Jerusalem on day two of our journey in Israel. We were on our way to the Western Wall and saw hundreds of people of all ages praising God in different ways. Some followed along evening prayer from Al Buraq Mosque. Others were singing and dancing in celebration of Shabbat. Many like me were quietly praying and trying to take it all in. Visiting the Holy Land was an incredible experience and I feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to share it with my Mom, Eunice.



**Karen McMahon NYS Assemblyperson**

**Yemin Orde Youth Village, near Mount Carmel (south of Haifa)**

This photo was taken at the Yemin Orde Youth Village, a program that helps at-risk young people, often immigrants, transition to a successful life in Israel. We were struck both by the beauty of the place and the success of the program. We were also impressed by the commitment of the people we met, Israelis and Arabs, to create a society that is just and equitable, in the face of so many political challenges. We are grateful to the Buffalo Jewish Federation for facilitating an informative and balanced view of a very complex and beautiful country.



**Matt Frahm, Clarence Central School Superintendent  
Jerusalem**

“By weaving together speakers, visitations, and conversations, the trip created a rich tapestry that helped our group better understand the beauty as well as the complexity that have come to define life in Israel. There is a well-known saying that “we do not see things as they are. We see things as we are.” If that is the case, I can think of no better way to encourage the values of mutual understanding, respect, and inclusivity than the journey you put together.”

“While the sites alone would have made the trip worthwhile, being in Israel with individuals from K-12 schools, higher education, the private sector, non-profit organizations, and the faith community added another layer of fulness to our time together. In addition to coming back with a whole new group of friends, I was also able to return home having seen Israel through their eyes as well as my own.”



**Sister Margaret Carney OSF**  
**Tel Aviv**

As I reflect on our mission to Israel, the word that comes first to mind each time is “intense.” We were present during an intense time for the people—that tension is escalating even as I write this. We had the powerful experiences of standing in places of great spiritual significance for Jews and Christians. We moved each day through a pattern of historic places to present day people working hard to reduce conflict and to strive for a future “shared society.” Their frustration and fear were evident. We could bring only one thing: our encouragement and understanding. I am not sure I have even been immersed in a travel experience that kept me moving daily through a pattern that evoked centuries-old beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges to those beliefs. Our leader from Makor, Ezra Korman, was a gift, a true blessing.



**Molly S. Carr, Ph.D., CEO, Jewish Family Service of WNY**  
**Jerusalem**

"It's Complicated". This is a theme we encountered repeatedly during our time visiting Israel. Politics, religion, historical sites, culture, all we are explained to us with the statement, "it's complicated". The more we learned during the visit, the more I realized how flat my knowledge was. Knowledge gained mainly from media and school. The more we learned the more I saw similarities with the discourse and challenges happening here in the US and our home of Buffalo.

I chose this photo because it was the first group selfie we took. We, a group of strangers, from all aspects of life in Buffalo, coming together to learn and experience this rich and complicated place. A group coming together to build bonds to bring back to Buffalo as we work together to make our community stronger. This photo is a reminder to me that no matter how challenging and complicated things can be, we can only begin to effect change when we come together.



**Timothy J. Sember, Chief Mission and Strategic Integration Officer, Trocaire College  
Jerusalem**

I was blessed and humbled to go to Israel as part of the JCRC Civic Leader Trip. My wife, Valerie, was also able to join me for this life-changing experience. For me as a Catholic, to visit the actual sites of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection literally brought Scripture alive. To see the countryside, the hills and mountains, the valleys, the walls and gates of the city of Jerusalem, and so much more was a gift that brought new insight and understanding to the life of Jesus. Added to this was the cultural, political, historical, and relational aspects of Israel and Palestine. We often heard the phrase "it is complicated" to describe the situation and the lives of those who seek a peaceful resolution to the region. The tension is juxtaposed amidst the sacredness that is so very much present. And at the heart of it all it is about families who seek nothing more than living life to its fullest in love and grace. Perhaps this was the greatest gift I left with - a commitment to seek out and support communities in which gifts and talents are shared - in which serving the needs of those less fortunate is foremost and in which justice and peace for all is sought with respect and dignity. Hakarat HaTov.

**The participants included:** Poet Laureate Jillian Hanesworth, Williamsville School Superintendent, Dr. Darren Brown-Hall, Clarence School Superintendent, Matt Frahm, the director of the National Federation of Just Communities, Rene Petties-Jones, Timothy Sember, the VP of missions for Troicare College, Assemblywoman Karen McMahon, Sister Margaret Carney, Molly Carr of Jewish Family Services, Rabbi Adam Scheldt of Hospice Buffalo, Rev. Todd Leach from Westminster Presbyterian, SUNY trustee, Eunice Lewin, Thomas Kim, the CEO of Community Action Project, Judge Craig Hannah, Leah Halton-Pope, the senior advisor to Crystal People-Stokes, the JCRC team, Mara Koven-Gelman, (JCRC Senior Director, Deborah Goldman, JCRC co-chair, Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein, JCRC rabbinic consultant and rabbi of Congregation Shir Shalom, Cantor Irwin Gelman, president of the Buffalo JCC and cantor at Cong. Beth Abraham and BJF CEO, Rob Goldberg.