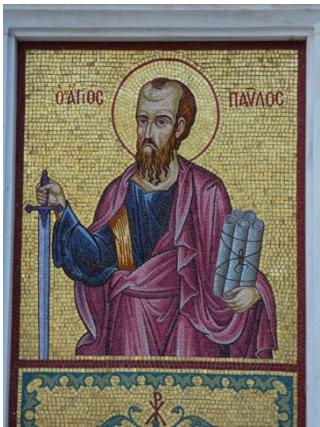


Reflections on our Ecumenical Pilgrimage – Bishop Jim Gonia

We are heirs of the preaching legacy of Paul ...

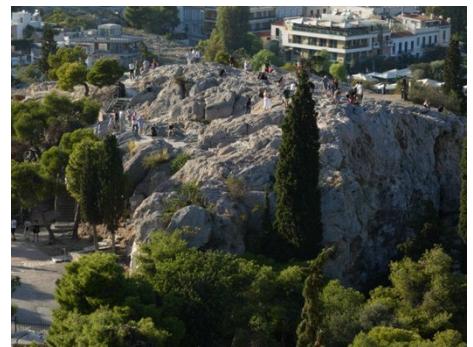


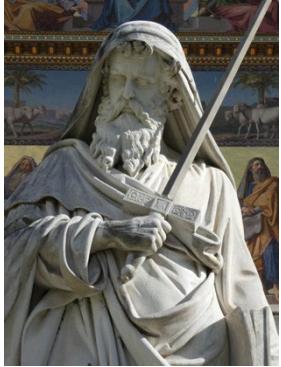
As we made the journey across Greece – from Philippi to Thessaloniki to Corinth and then to Athens – the story of Paul’s preaching – to any and all who would listen – led our way. Paul was deeply invested in his preaching ministry in Corinth, spending a full eighteen months there as he supported himself as a tentmaker. (Acts 18: 1-11) When members of the synagogue were unreceptive to Paul’s message, he focused on the Gentiles residents of the city: *and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized. (Acts 18: 8b)* Thus was born a church community to whom Paul continued to preach and provide nurture from afar, addressing two of his letters to the faithful there.

The preaching ministry of Paul became particularly real when we stood on the ***bema*** in the ruins of ancient Corinth, where city officials addressed the public, and where it is said that Paul was brought for judgment before the proconsul Gallio, on the accusation of conducting illegal teachings.
(Acts 18: 12-16)



Athens provided another vivid reminder of Paul’s commitment to preaching the gospel in the multicultural and multireligious context of his day. After visiting the remains of the Acropolis and Parthenon, dedicated to worship of Athena (the Greek goddess of wisdom, arts, literature and war), we descended to a smaller dome known as ***Mars Hill***, also called the Areopagus. It is from here that Paul delivered his famous sermon to the people of Athens, one that continues to be a favorite of mine for its contextualization of the gospel.
(Acts 17: 16-34)





Paul's commitment to *proclaim the message* and to *be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable* (2 Timothy 4:2) is the reason many statues and icons of Paul feature him holding a sword. The sword doesn't reference some proclivity to violence on Paul's part, but rather his deep-seated call to proclaim the Word of God that is *living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword*. (*Hebrews 4:12*) As members of a church body that is passionate about the clear proclamation of the gospel, it is clear that we are heirs of the preaching legacy of Paul.

Daily postings and photos from the Ecumenical Pilgrimage can be found on the [Rocky Mountain Synod Facebook page](#).