

ment of awe as I reflected on the Scripture of Jesus's cousin John the Baptist, baptizing those who repented of their sins and also baptizing Jesus, the Savior of the world. I was reminded that it was on that occasion the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus and he heard the voice of God commending him and offering assurance of love.

It was after that inspiring moment, that Spirit-Filled moment that Jesus was heading to a gruesome experience that ultimately led him to Calvary. Having touched the water of the Jordan, being with the entire group in a boat sailing on the Sea of Galilee, worshipping and praising God as the rain poured and as the thunder rolled, was a powerful reminder and visual to the story of Jesus calling his first disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Having visited the Garden of Gethsemane, we walked the Via Dolorosa (The Way of the Cross), the tradition-



al pathway Jesus took from the "Hall of Judgement" to Calvary and seeing the different stations where it is believed Jesus fell, has touched me deeply. The privilege to walk such path has opened up for me a whole new perspective and understanding of the life of Jesus Christ.

This trip was one in which the Bible came alive for me in varying ways. The rich history and important sites of the Holy Land was well appreciated. This dream fulfilled has left an indelible impact on my Christian life.

In Brief

United Methodist Men's 2018 fall retreat open to all

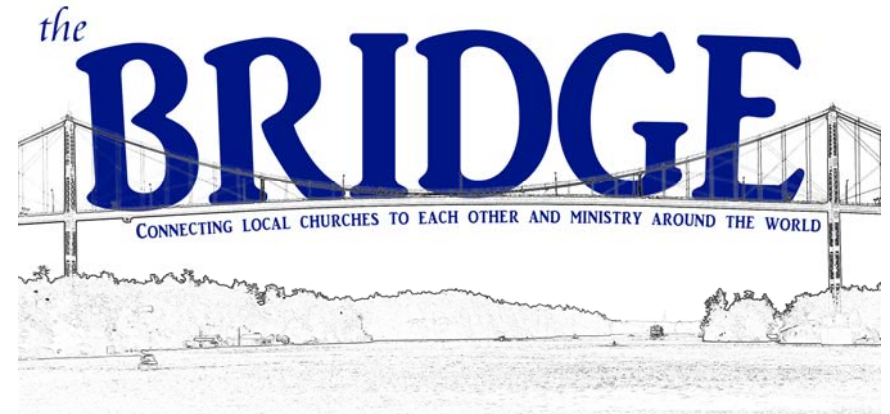
The Upper New York Conference United Methodist Men will host a fall retreat Sept. 7 and 8 at Sky Lake Camp & Retreat Center. The theme this year is "Transformation through Christ: Turn 180°." The retreat is open to all!

Go to <http://bit.ly/UMMfall2018> to read an article about the event, view Upper New York Area Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb's video invitation, and to download a PowerPoint "Save the Date" slide for use in church services.

*The **Bridge** is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world.*

www.unyumc.org

For more stories from the Holy Land follow the Conference Blog series at <http://www.unyumc.org/news/perspectives>.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

A look inside!

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Journey through the Holy Land: An enriching experience for all

By Bishop Mark J. Webb

I was blessed to experience a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with 111 individuals connected to The Upper New York Conference. This experience was designed to provide an opportunity to deepen one's spiritual life by walking the land where Jesus walked and seeing the accounts of Scripture come to life. It was also my hope that this travel experience would continue to strengthen and deepen relationships among people scattered across the Upper New York Conference and encourage others to experience pilgrimage travel and mission experiences together in the future.

Our time together in the Holy Land was rich in every way. From the sights we visited, to the bus rides we took and the various tables we shared, the fellowship and conversation was deep. Watching individuals respond to what they were experiencing and finding times to share those thoughts and emotions with one another, were some of the greatest teaching and learning moments.

This was my first time visiting the Holy Land and I found my mind and spirit responding in various ways. At times I was surprised at the differences I saw compared to what I had imagined as I read scripture. There were moments when the current topography got in the way.

Discussing and learning more deeply about the contemporary issues surrounding this land caused me to struggle and at the same time offered a fresh perspective and new understanding. There were many moments when I simply found myself overwhelmed and I recognize that a trip like this will take awhile to digest and form within my heart, mind, and spirit.

People have been asking me what I was most moved by and while I find that question hard to answer with just one incidence or moment, our visit to the Mt. of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane stirred me. As I knelt and touched a piece of the rock that is similar or identical to the rock on which Jesus prayed, I was overcome with a renewed sense of the decision Jesus made to follow the path God had placed before Him.

I struggle at times with a spirit of surrender to God's plan for my life. In that moment I recognized just how easily it would have been for Jesus to slip back into the desert or call his followers to acts of rebellion, yet He chose to say yes to God's will. I have shared many times that since coming to Upper New York, I frequently pray a prayer that goes like this: "Have your way, O God and if I'm in the way, move me!" I prayed that pray-



er, touching that piece of rock in the Church of all Nations. It was different then and it has continued to be different. My hope is that it will continue to be different.

I give thanks to God for the opportunity to have this experience. I am especially grateful to have been able to share it with Jodi and our youngest son, Ben. I do not take it for granted. Over

the next few weeks, others who traveled on this journey will share their experiences and I hope you will read them with interest and allow the work of the Spirit in their lives to touch yours. Visiting the Holy Land is indeed a life-changing experience. If you have not the opportunity, I pray you will and I hope you will join me now in praying for peace within this holy land.

Journey through the Holy Land: A life-long dream fulfilled

By Pastor Andy Anderson

My trip to the Holy Land was a life-long dream fulfilled. It was indeed a blessing for me to be part of the group

from the Upper New York Annual Conference on such pilgrimage. The beginning to the end was an awesome, spirit-filled experience.

One of the highlights of the trip for me was on the very first day. Bishop Webb led worship and preached on the bank of the Jordan River and part of the worship

experience was witnessing one of our guests in my group being baptized in the Jordan River by his pastor. It was a mo-

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