



LIVING STONES IN JORDAN

April 7th-16th, 2015

Photos and notes from the Pilgrimage

Jo Simister, Vice Chair, Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust

The purposes of our Pilgrimage

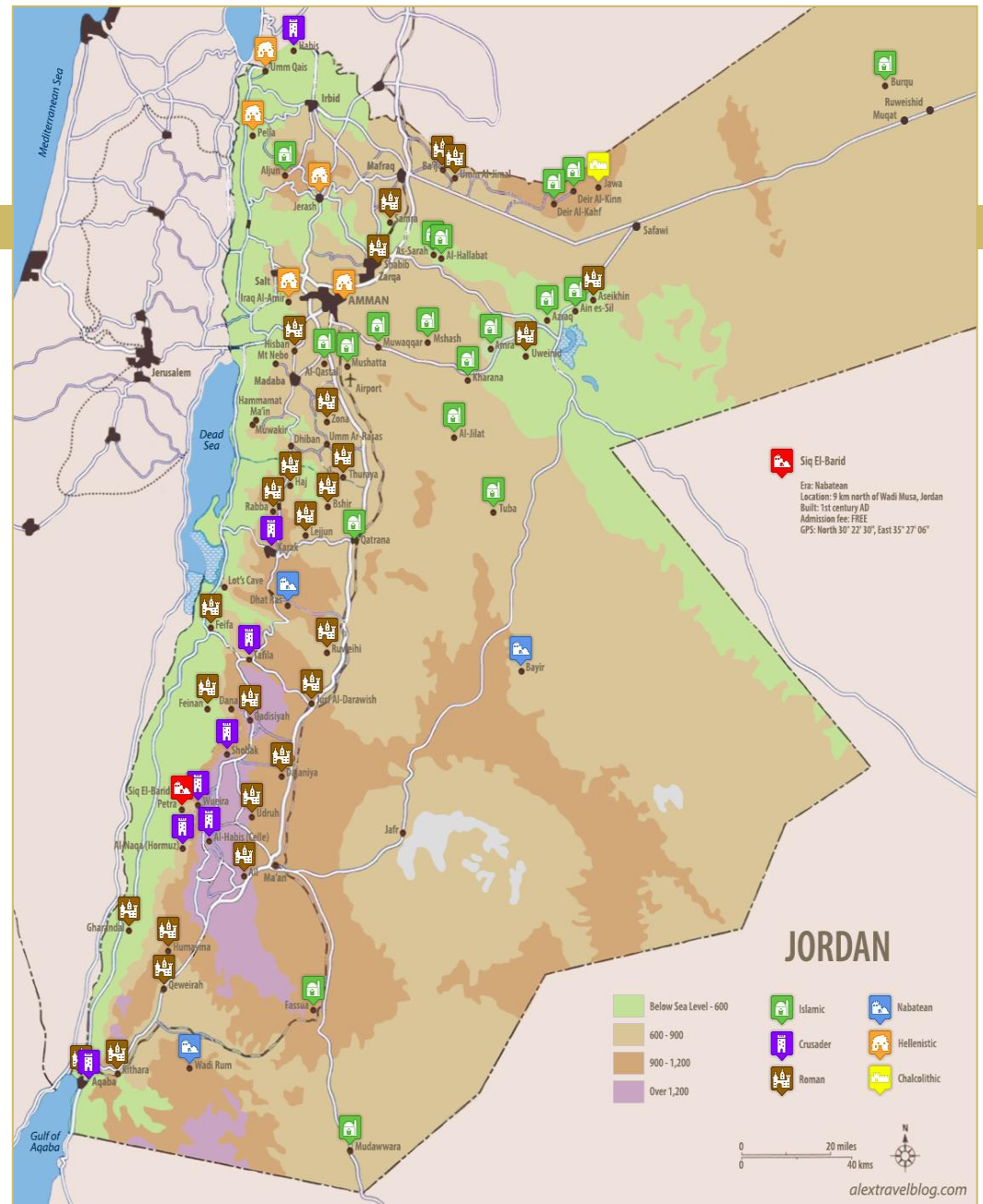
- Meeting and worshipping with the Christian communities in Jordan as they celebrated Holy Week and Easter together. (In Jordan, Catholic and Protestant Christians observe Easter on the same date as the Orthodox churches, which was April 12 in 2015.)
 - ▣ *Read more about Holy Week in the orthodox tradition at <http://www.stgeorgegreenville.org/OurFaith/Holy%20Week/HolyWeek.html#> and <http://www.stgeorgegreenville.org/OurFaith/Holy%20Week/HolyWeekHistory.htm>*
- Finding out more about work being done for refugees from neighbouring conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.
- Visiting sites of religious or historical importance.
- Clergy accompanying the group included Father Philip Kehoe, who had a ministry in Jordan for a number of years, Fr Dominic Robinson SJ and Deacon Duncan Macpherson who is Honorary President of Living Stones.
- Two of Living Stones Vice-Chairs, Ms Jo Simister (pilgrimage and outreach) and Dr Lesley Dawson (scholarship and twinning), were among the group.

Programme

- Holy Tuesday April 7 : Arrivals at Queen Airport, transit to hotel in Amman.
- Holy Wednesday April 8: Baptismal site, Mount Nebo, and Madeba for Orthodox service of the Holy Unction.
- Holy Thursday April 9: Amman citadel and Roman Theatre and Blue Mosque, evening Mass with Latin Catholics in Amman.
- Good Friday April 10: Good Friday ecumenical walk in Fuheis, Burial Liturgy with Syrian Orthodox
- Holy Saturday April 11: Jerash and Anjara; Easter Vigil at Melkite Cathedral.
- Easter Day April 12: Anglican Eucharist in Zerqa, meeting with refugees at Mar Yusef.
- Easter Monday April 13: Meetings with church and community leaders.
- Easter Tuesday April 14: Departures, or visit Ain Musa (Moses spring) and Petra.
- Easter Wednesday April 15: Return to Amman via Kerak to meet local Christians and visit the Crusader castle.
- Easter Thursday April 16: Departures – visit to Umm Qais (Gadera), Pella and Ajlun for those leaving in the evening.

Jordan

- Jordan has a great variety of historical sites from biblical and early Christian times (yellow, orange, brown, red and blue markers).
- Much of Jesus' ministry would have taken place to the east of the Jordan river, including the Graeco-Roman cities of the Decapolis (orange markers).
- Moses was shown the promised land from the mountains of Gilead – but not allowed to pass over.
- The tribes of Manasseh, Gad and Reuben held lands to the east of the Jordan river.



Day 1: Elijah's Hill...



- About 9km north of the Dead Sea, and within sight of Jericho on its western shore.
- Traditionally the site of Elijah's ascent to heaven (2 Kings 2:11).
- John the Baptist lived in a cave on the west side of the hill, and preached and baptised at a spring nearby (Luke 1:17).
- Remains of many monasteries and churches, place of pilgrimage in mediaeval times.
- <http://www.baptismsite.com/index.php/online-tour.html>



...the baptismal site...



- ❑ A long winding path leads down to the site of 'Bethany across the Jordan' where Jesus was baptized by John.
- ❑ Churches of various denominations are located nearby, some currently under construction.
- ❑ We renewed our baptismal vows, in sight of full immersion baptisms taking place on the opposite bank.

...Mount Nebo...



- A place of pilgrimage since 4th century, when a church was built on the highest point, later enlarged in 6th century.
- Site of Moses death (and possibly burial) (Deuteronomy 34:5) and where Jeremiah hid the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant (Maccabees 2:4-7)
- Byzantine mosaics currently being restored, two only are open to the public.
- We were given permission to celebrate Mass in the chapel.



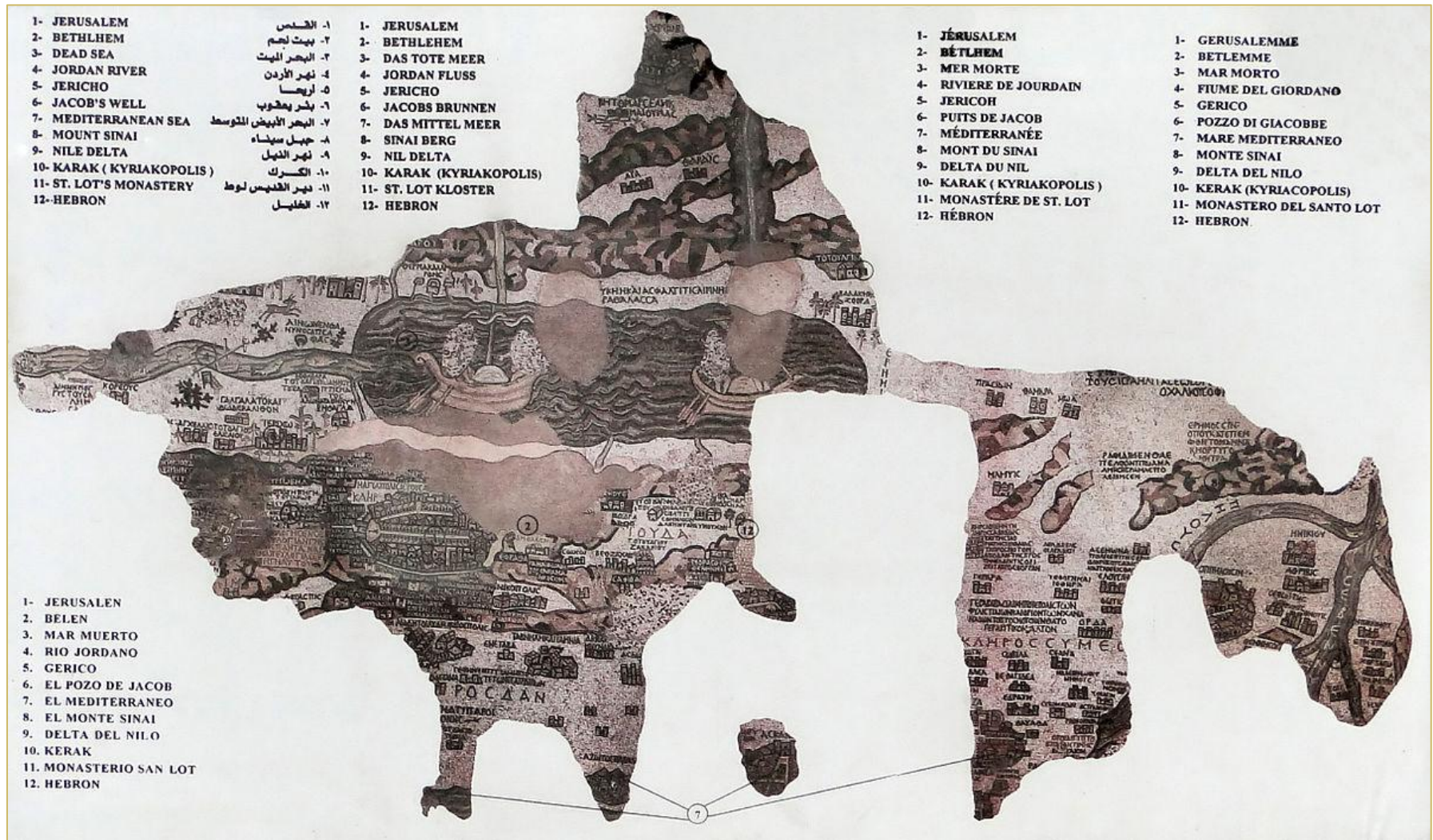
...St George, Madeba (Gk Orth)...

- The Madaba Map is a map of the Middle East. Part of it contains the oldest surviving original cartographic depiction of the Holy Land and especially Jerusalem.
- It is the surviving third of a 6th century floor mosaic in the early Byzantine Gk Orthodox church of Saint George at Madaba, Jordan.
- At the time of our visit, the mosaic itself had been covered by a carpet to enable the celebration of the Holy Unction Liturgy of anointing and prayer for healing and forgiveness, which we joined briefly.
- We were able to view a replica of the map for an explanation, while sipping glasses of reviving sage tea. (See next slide.)



...and the Madeba map.

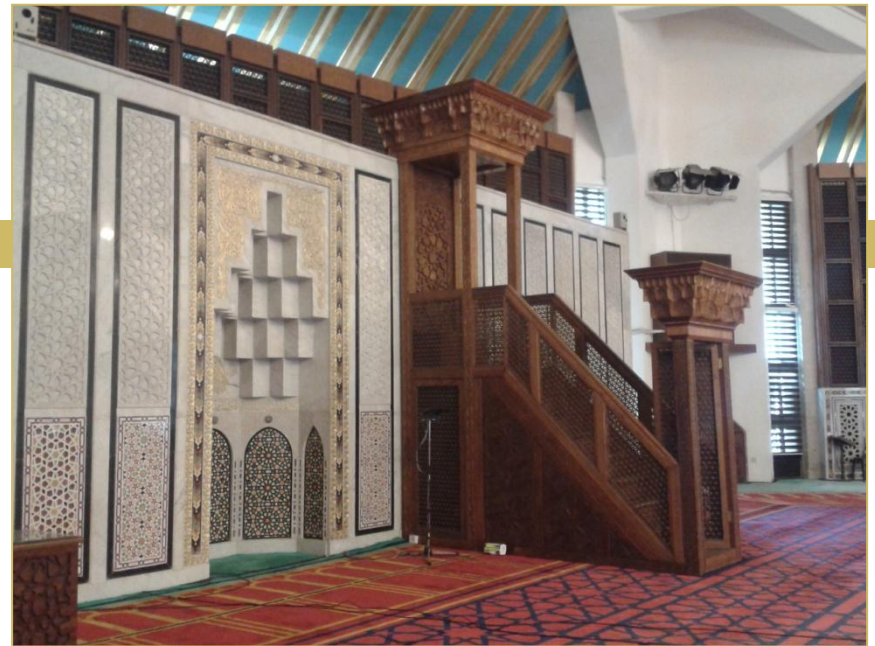
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madaba_Map; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madaba>



Day 2:

Blue Mosque...

- ❑ Completed in 1989 by King Hussein as a memorial to his grandfather, the King Abdullah 1 mosque holds 7000 worshippers inside and a further 3000 outside.
- ❑ The only mosque in Amman which welcomes non-Muslim visitors.
- ❑ There is a separate women's prayer room for 500. Women visitors are given gowns to wear.
- ❑ A small museum and a bazaar.



...Coptic Maundy Thursday Liturgy...

- Visited the Coptic Church across from the mosque briefly, for the morning liturgy
- The Coptic church is one of the many recognised denominations in Jordan, with the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic (Latin), Melkite Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, Anglican, and Assyrian churches, Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist, United Pentecostal, Latter-day Saints, and Presbyterian and also small numbers registered as religious societies such as the Evangelical Free Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Assembly of God, the Baptist Church, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance.
- Christians in Jordan are estimated to be around 5% of the 6.5m inhabitants (reduced from 20% in the early 20th century).



...Amman citadel...



- Amman is the country's political, cultural and commercial centre and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.
- Chosen by Abdullah I in 1921 to be the capital of the newly formed Emirate of Transjordan; mostly developed since 1967.
- Called Rabbath Ammon or Rabat Amon by the Ammonites, 13th Cent BC; later conquered by Assyrians, Persians, and then Greek Macedonians who renamed it Philadelphia; part of the Nabataean kingdom until 106 AD when Philadelphia came under Roman control and joined the Decapolis.

...downtown lunch...



- A celebration of the chick pea – a selection of salads, dips and falafels, served on a plump fresh pitta bread on a platter of kitchen paper – basic and delicious!
- This inexpensive all-night cafe became famous when the king dropped in for a Ramadan breakfast early one morning, with his family and friends.
- <http://www.anothertravelguide.com/eng/asia/jordan/amman/destinations/restaurants/hashem/>

... and market...



□ We paused at the stalls near the Nymphaeum, and found fresh produce – some unexpected:

- Herbs, salads
- Sweetmeats
- Dates
- Chickpeas, almonds
- Thistle heads



...Roman theatre and museum...



- Amman's most ancient remains date from the bronze age, but there are significant Roman and Umayyad ruins, and two museums displaying the archaeological finds on the Citadel and near the Roman Theatre downtown.
- Amman was destroyed by several earthquakes and left derelict until the late 19th century, when it was resettled by Circassians – the first of many waves of incoming migrants and refugees.

...Mass at the Latin Cathedral.



- We joined local Roman Catholics for the Maundy Thursday Mass and our clergy were able to participate.
- The congregation was very large and some of the group went into the Parish Room to watch by video link (with a much better view of the proceedings!).

Day 3: Fuheis Good Friday walk...



- Stations of the Cross mosaics are incorporated into the buildings throughout the town.
- Latin Patriarch Fuad Twal came from Jerusalem to lead the procession, which ends at the cemetery high on the hill.



...Burial Vespers at the Syrian Orth.



- This long evening liturgy commemorates the events after the Crucifixion, and was accompanied by a choir and the local scout band, and included many hymns of lamentation (praise); preparation of the altar with linen cloths, for Christ's body; decoration of an Epitaphion (often an embroidered cloth but in this case a small coffin) with flowers; carrying the Epitaphion in a solemn procession; its reception at the altar by the priest acting as Joseph of Arimathea; installation of the linen-wrapped 'body' in a tomb; breaking candles, symbolising the Light of Christ going out of the world; and distribution of small bottles of vinegar and flowers.

Day 4: Northwards...



- We paused on route to admire the garden centres and visit a milk processing plant.
- We bought buttermilk to share with everyone at our next stop.....

...Anjara...



- Anjara is associated with the OT story of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11) and with a tradition that Jesus stayed in a cave with Mary and the disciples in the course of his ministry around the Decapolis region.
- The Religious Family of the Incarnate Word, a religious order of priests and nuns, began their work in Anjara in 2004. Fr Simon showed us the orphanage for 34 children, and the physiotherapy clinic.



...Our Lady of the Mountain...



- The Community compound includes a shrine to Our Lady of the Mountain. In 2010 a statue of the Virgin Mary was noticed to blink tears of blood, which were verified in a local hospital as human blood.
- The shrine chapel has been decorated with four icon panels by the British iconographer Ian Knowles (founder of the Bethlehem Icon School).
- There are around 1,000 Christians (5% of the population) and the Community works to integrate the different faith groups through various means, including afterschool arts and music activities.
- <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/anjara-a-place-of-refuge-for-both-christians-and-muslims>

... Jerash (Gerasa) ...



- The vast site of this Decapolis city includes 22 churches, a cathedral, 2 theatres, a hippodrome, monasteries, 2 temples, an enormous forum and streets of shops.
- There are some Bronze age remains, but most are Graeco-Roman and Umayyad.
- The theatres are regularly used, and we enjoyed some live music.

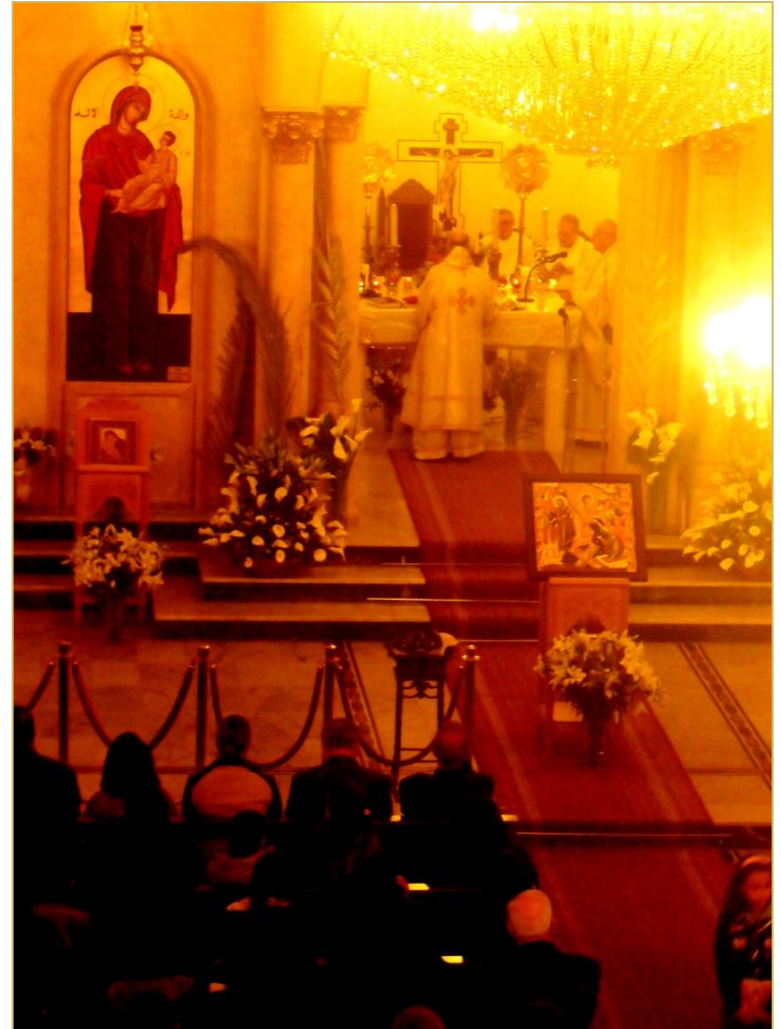
... Sts Cosmos and Damianos ...



- This church is one of a complex of 3 sharing an atrium, and constructed around 530AD.
- Cosmos and Damianos were physicians martyred by the Romans, described as 'unmercenary' because they gave their services free to the poor.
- The extensive, finely detailed mosaics depict animals and humans; one section is thought to commemorate the churchwarden Theodorus and his wife Giogia.

... Easter Vigil with the Melkites.

- Through pouring rain to the Melkite cathedral for a long service (3½ hours).
- In a darkened church, the faithful received the resurrection light from the priest and heard the good news of Christ's triumph, before celebrating the liturgy and receiving Holy Communion – with clergy of our group assisting.
- At the end of the service we each received a dyed egg, symbolising the new life of the Resurrection.



Day 5: Easter Day in Zerqa...

- Anglican parish communion in the industrial city of Zerqa,
- Meeting the vicar Khalil Freij and his wife Rana, and members of the congregation.
- There were no parish facilities, so the priest's house is used for meetings and activities, and Fr Khalil and his family live in Amman. Fr Khalil cares for two churches.



...Mar Yussef...



- The RC community at Mar Yussef run schools and workshops, and currently care for a number of Iraqi refugee families.
- Fr Hana explained the process of registering for refugee status and the type of assistance offered.
- The compound also includes a church and shrine to Our Lady Queen of Peace, in gratitude for protection during the Gulf War.

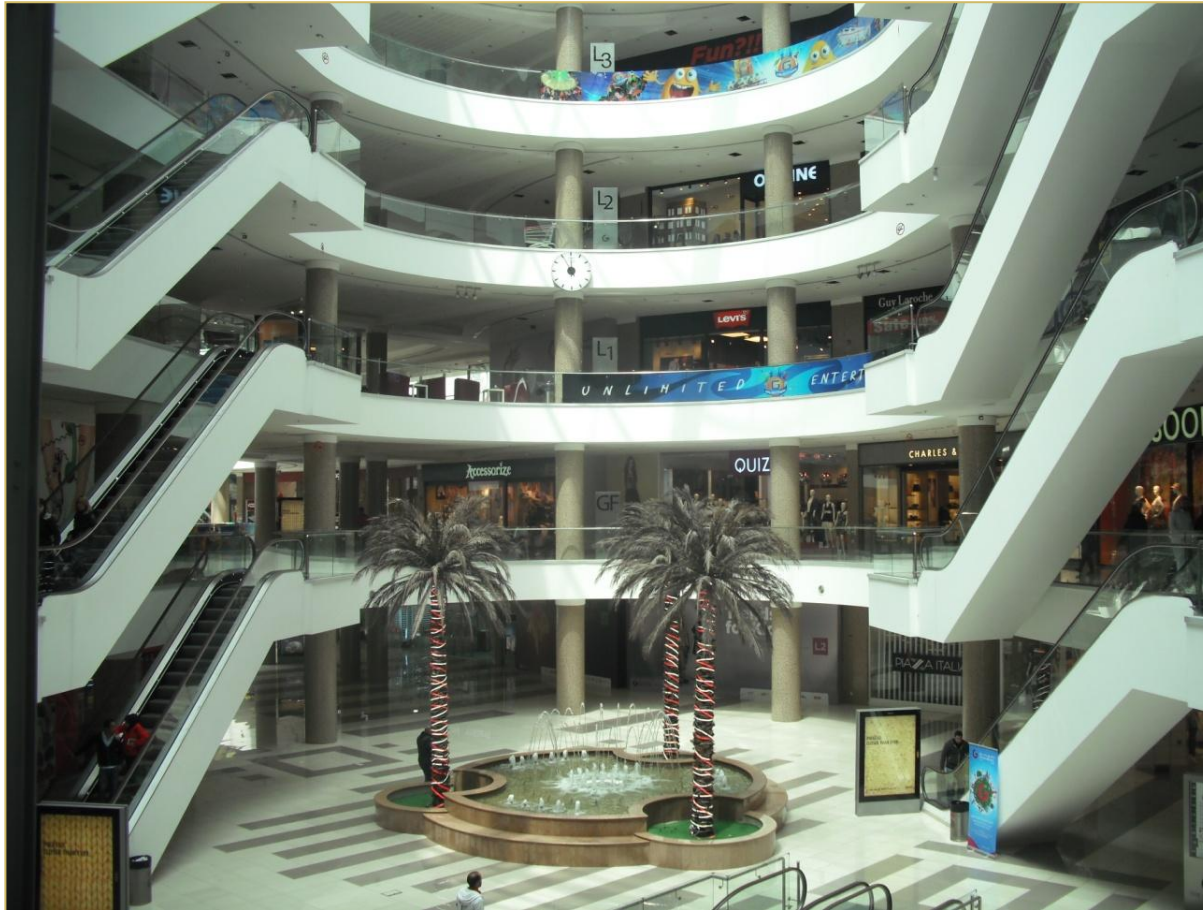
... Lunch.



- The Iraqi refugee families invited us to lunch, and shared their experiences. This little girl was only ten days old when her family fled.
- In Zerqa there are around 7000 Iraqi refugees who are mostly Christian, and 10000 Syrian refugees, who are predominantly Muslim.
- Mar Yusef encourages the families to participate in the life of the community, including halving with building work and planting olive trees.



Day 6: shopping....



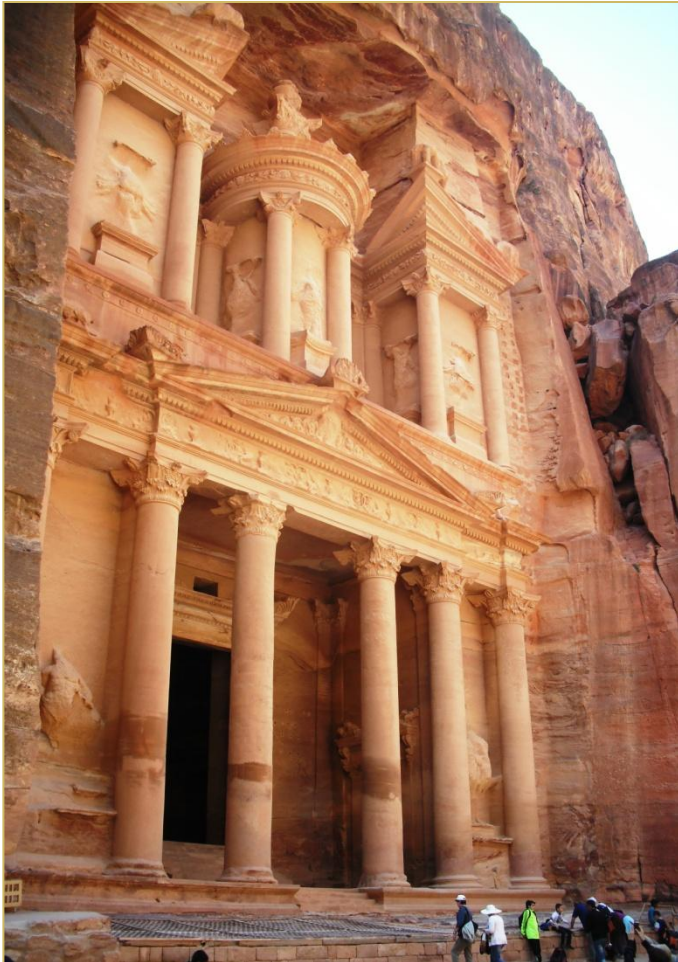
- Some free time in the morning – a chance to go downtown for souvenirs, or to visit the local mall (a ‘Monument to Globalisation’) for coffee and to look round some familiar franchises (with vastly inflated prices).

...and meetings.



- Through the week we met with a number of people involved in community projects and refugee relief, including Fr Bernard Arputhasamy SJ, country director of the Jesuit Refugee Service.
- During the afternoon and evening we met representatives from Christian organisations for free-ranging conversations about the development of Jordanian society, interfaith and interdenominational relations, and current political concerns.
- The speakers included: George J Hazou, Middle East Council of Churches (Dept of Services for Palestinian Refugees) and George Miseki, our agent, a deacon in the Syrian Orthodox Church, and also Chris Jordan of the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Day 7: Petra



- An early start for those not leaving Jordan – south to the stunning Nabatean city of Petra.
- Time to walk in through the Siq (we took donkey carriages back at the end of the day).
- Our hotel overlooked the mountains – impossible to spot the city.

Day 8: Kerak family visit ...

- Abuna Fadi Halasa is a married Gk Orthodox priest who lives in Kerak with his wife and family.
- We enjoyed traditional hospitality, trying out various herb teas (including rosemary) as well as Arabic coffee, and enthusiastically tucking into home-made ma'moul pastries (small semolina sweetmeats stuffed with dates and walnuts, symbolising the sponge and crown of thorns) while Abouna Fadi entertained with stories about the local area and the friendly relationships between local Christians and Muslims.
- We met Abouna Fadi's son, who is studying medicine in Athens.



... and Kerak Crusader fortress.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerak_Castle



- ❑ Located in the mountains of Moab, Kerak is one of the largest and most important Crusader fortresses in the Levant, built to control Bedouin herders as well as the trade routes from Damascus to Egypt and Mecca.
- ❑ Saladin besieged Kerak twice, finally capturing it in 1189. It was enlarged under the Mamluks, and it played an important role in the Ottoman period, due to its strategic location on the crossroads between Arabia, Egypt and Greater Syria.
- ❑ It is a notable example of Crusader architecture, a mixture of west European, Byzantine, and Arab designs, and the Lower Court is now an archaeological museum.

Day 9: Umm Qais (Gadara)...

- On a clear day, the Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights are visible from Umm Qais, but we were under a haze, following a sandstorm.
- A large site, with perimeter walls of 3km, with much still to be excavated, built of contrasting black basalt and light sandstone.
- The ruins of this once splendid city of the Decapolis include baths, two theatres, a hippodrome, colonnaded streets, Romans aqueducts, a temple, a basilica, and much more.
- An important city by 3rd century BC, aka Antiochia Semiramis or Seleucia, sometime a bishopric, and finally destroyed by an earthquake c. 747 AD.



...Pella...



- Continuously occupied since Neolithic times, an extensive site with Bronze Age and Iron Age temples and administrative buildings; also a Canaanite temple, city wall and other structures, dating back to 3400BC.
- One of the Decapolis cities, and the site of one of the earliest churches; a refuge for Jerusalem Christians fleeing the Jewish–Roman wars in the 1st century AD.
- Byzantine troops and Muslim invading forces fought here in 635 AD.
- Destroyed by the earthquake of 749AD (which also destroyed Scythopolis (Beit She'an), Tiberias, Capernaum and Hippos).

...Ajlun.

- This Islamic period fortress was built by the Ayyubid Izz al-Din Usama, nephew of Saladin, in the 12th century and enlarged by the Mamluks in the 13th.
- It was built on the remains of a monastery and guarded three wadis (intermittently dry valleys) descending to the Jordan valley.
- It proved an effective defence against the Crusaders and allied Bedouin tribes.
- Destroyed by earthquakes in 1839 and 1927, now carefully displayed as a key example of Islamic military architecture.



Future pilgrimages

- If you have enjoyed these slides and would like to join Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust on a future visit to Jordan, Sinai, etc, or to Jerusalem for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (usually the last week of January) please contact josimister@yahoo.co.uk, or visit the website www.livingstonesonline.org.uk.

- The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust pilgrimages aim to:
 - ▣ Encounter Christian communities
 - ▣ Understand the context in which they exercise their faith
 - ▣ Encourage by our presence and interest
 - ▣ Reflect and pray
 - ▣ Witness by sharing what we have experienced

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust is:

- An ecumenical charity with the primary aim of advancing education about Christianity in the Holy Land and countries around, by:
 - ▣ raising awareness in Britain and elsewhere, educating and informing the public concerning Christians in the Holy Land, through our website, lectures, newsletter and a yearbook of academic theological articles;
 - ▣ promoting contacts between Christians (and others) in Britain and in the Holy Land;
 - ▣ cooperating with other charities and groups with similar aims, by sharing activities and information.
- The Michael Prior Memorial Fund (in memory of our founder) provides bursaries and scholarships for Palestinian post-graduate students and also supports lecture tours and an annual Memorial lecture.