



*Church of the Multiplication, Tabgha, by the Sea of Galilee*

I often talk about the Holy Land in terms of the “**Fifth Gospel**” - I am quoting St Jerome when I do this. He not only described the Holy Land as the fifth gospel but also said it gives a better understanding of the four other gospels. When I use the phrase “fifth gospel” I am thinking not just of the land, but also the people of

the land. Through the years on our pilgrimages through **Amos Trust** we have been meeting and learning from the “living stones” - by this we mean the Palestinian Christian community, and also peacemakers from the Jewish and Muslim communities - and they all enrich our trips.

I’ve been thinking about pilgrimage, because in Palestine just now and for the Palestinians inside Israel the situation is so difficult. Christian schools are losing a lot of their funding inside Israel; there has recently been a demonstration by Christians about this, they have been asking for equality with Jewish religious schools - because the Israeli government covers the cost of those entirely, despite the fact that they don’t adhere to the curriculum from the Ministry of Education or accept their supervision, whilst the Christian schools do.

**"A real pilgrimage..."**

There has also recently been the burning, by Jewish extremists, of the church in Tabgha, the church called the Church of the Multiplication, where there is the famous mosaic of the loaves and fishes (I believe the mosaic survived the burning).

The pressure on Palestinians inside Israel is growing, while of course the impact of occupation and siege on the Palestinian communities of the West Bank and Gaza gets worse and worse. All these things make it very difficult to come simply on a quiet pilgrimage that ignores what's happening to the local communities - but strangely this teaches us something important - that **a real pilgrimage in the footsteps of Jesus doesn't take us away from the suffering of humanity, it actually brings us closer.** And so when we come back from the Holy Land we have walked where Jesus walked, we have read the Bible in situations where its story takes place, but we have encountered values that go against the values of God's community or kingdom - and so we come back not just warmed in our hearts but sharper in our minds to campaign for our fellow human beings.

Lutheran Pastor from Bethlehem Mitri Raheb talks about pilgrim groups "running where Jesus walked" - a very amusing comment as you can literally see pilgrimages rushing from place to place, people getting quite exhausted, not even sure where they are sometimes. And in some cases they haven't met any local members of the community and certainly not any local Christians.

**So next summer I am linking up once again with Wisam Salsaa, the guide Gill and I have worked with through the many years we have been taking pilgrimages there, and we will be doing a trip in June called "The 5th Gospel Alternative Pilgrimage," and through songs, prayers, and simple liturgies we will have quiet moments and amble where Jesus walked, and pause to be still.**

And of course we will also meet the living stones and consider what community means in this time of the church's year that we call Trinity. There will be concerts in some of the churches and opportunities to meet with the local people and hear from them.



for more information about Amos Trust's 5th Gospel Alternative Pilgrimage,  
led by Garth and Gill, or to register your interest, [click here](#)

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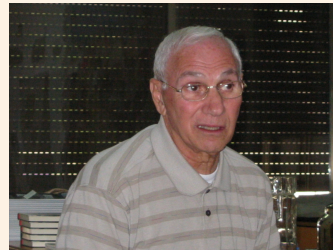
## Songs from the 5th Gospel



I have a forthcoming double compilation album called 'Songs from the 5th Gospel - songs of pilgrimage and justice for the Holy Land' - this will put together not only songs of protest and awareness-raising that I have written about the situation of Palestine and Israel, but also songs that resonate with some of the places that we will visit on pilgrimage - and they will hopefully allow the 5th Gospel to communicate to us. I will be putting this album together with Kevin Duncan of [GingerDog Records](#), to be released soon.

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A few words from Naim Ateek, who has often inspired us on our visits to Jerusalem - he spoke just recently of his sadness when the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the USA failed to take a stand to support boycott, divestment and sanctions - or as Naim put it, "failed to take a stand for justice." He says "From the perspective of the victims of injustice, their silence on our conflict is perceived as betrayal. The Bishops in essence took a stand to support the status quo. They refused to see or were unwilling to respond to the dire situation on the ground."



"We as Palestinians are daily humiliated by the Israeli forces; our human rights are violated daily; our homes are demolished daily by bulldozers manufactured in the US; our olive trees are uprooted on a daily basis; our land is confiscated and turned over into illegal settlements daily; our young people languish in Israeli jails with no legal charges or due process for months on end; our teenagers are taken from their beds in the middle of the night and imprisoned by the Israeli army on an average of two a night; and the Israeli government continues its daily violations of international law while the nations of the world remain silent. Is this not a Kairos moment for the church to speak a prophetic word of justice?"

With those words of Naim in our mind, let's pray this prayer for the land once known as 'holy', for the community of the 5th Gospel.

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God of justice and compassion  
Hear the cries of your wounded  
people

Hear the cries of those imprisoned  
in a land once called 'holy'

May we be part of the community  
That raises our voices

And challenges our governments  
To speak up for those who get  
ignored

We pray for justice to come  
Because peace cannot come  
without justice

And yet when there is justice we know  
that both Palestinians and Israelis  
will find freedom and hope



In the sadness of a deeply wounded Middle East  
We pray that the plight of the victims of injustice  
will not be forgotten any longer  
by the governments of the world  
nor by the church leaders of the world

May we hear the call of this kairos moment  
to walk with the values of Jesus  
and to campaign and pray  
that peace with justice  
will become a reality.

And when we travel there as pilgrims  
may we be renewed by our encounter with the '5th Gospel'  
that opens our eyes to the values of your kingdom  
and to those who are suffering and being ignored.

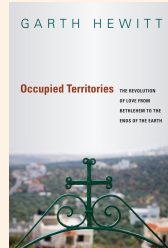
*Colin Hewitt*

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Last year Garth took a group to visit Alrowwad Cultural and Theatre Society which is in Aida refugee camp inside Bethlehem, and while there he sang his song 'Beautiful Resistance' which was inspired by their work. Alrowwad filmed him and put the video on youtube [here](#)

You can find 'Beautiful Resistance' on Garth's recent album '[Something for the Soul](#)'

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