

FIRST AND CENTER
Pastor's Blog
March 29, 2018

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
(Psalm 122)



Twenty-three years ago, I stood in the streets of Jerusalem, praying. I'd spent ten days meeting with Palestinians and Jews, hearing about issues of arrests, water rights, olive groves destroyed so illegal Jewish settlements could be built on

Palestinian land, among so many others. I had visited the Gaza Strip, which became my new image of hell, because of the desperate poverty, violence, and pain. I had been a victim of a drive-by purse snatching and lost my wallet, my passport, my money, and identification. For me, this problem was solved with the help of friends and a friendly US Consular official, so I was one of the lucky ones. But, I saw how my Palestinian host was treated at the Israeli Police Station I had to visit to get a report on the robbery, and I felt awful at having put him in that position.

The city is so beautiful, so rich in history and spirit, and so deeply in pain.

Every Holy Week, I pray for the peace of Jerusalem. I remember my Palestinian Christian friends. They will watch tourists from all over the world come to visit the Holy sites, walk the Via Dolorosa, pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. But, most of them will not be able to travel the one or two miles from their homes in the West Bank to visit and pray, because Israeli soldiers will not allow it. I could travel thousands of miles and visit these places, but they could not even walk a few blocks and gain access.

So, this week again, I will pray for the peace of Jerusalem and all who hope that this city, which has seen such wonders amid such agony, might someday be truly a city of peace. In the midst of your Holy Week and Easter observances and celebrations, please spare a moment, and join me.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Pastor