

Georgia Pastors Get Up-Close Look at Israel's Peril

More than 35 Georgia pastors recently visited Israel on a trip led by Christians United for Israel (CUFI).

During the weeklong trip, the group visited a host of religious and historic sites including the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Shrine of the Book, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls).

The pastors had an opportunity to study the Bible with renowned Rabbi Daniel Sperber in Jerusalem's Old City, take part in a meeting with the Jerusalem Post's Palestinian Affairs Correspondent Khaled Abu Toameh, and visit an Israeli military base on the Lebanese-Israeli border. During the visit to the border, the group hand delivered more than 20,000 letters of support from CUFI activists to Israeli soldiers guarding the Jewish State's borders.

According to the trip's leader, CUFI's Atlanta-based associate director Shari Dollinger, standing with Israel is a moral imperative.

"From Palestinian terror to the Iranian nuclear weapons program, Israel faces great dangers, but in spite of the adversity they face, Israel's people are steadfastly committed to building and protecting their small Jewish and democratic nation," Dollinger says. "As Americans committed to seeing human and civil rights protected around the globe, it is incumbent upon us to stand with the people of Israel."

The trip had a profound impact on the group, with many participants describing their time in Israel as life-changing.

One participant, Dave Divine, lead pastor at Douglasville's The Church at Chapelhill, described Israel as "a beautiful

land; a warm, inviting and misunderstood people; a nation facing extreme security issues; a place that brings the Bible to life.”

Another participant, Tony Elrod, lead pastor at Gainesville’s Northside Church, noted, “Traveling to Israel’s borders and seeing that they are truly surrounded by their enemy has helped me to have a greater awareness of the Jewish people and the situation in which they live.”

Andy King, pastor of Christ Chapel in Warner Robins, has continued communicating with an Israeli shopkeeper he met while walking through Jerusalem. During an exchange of emails between the two, King expressed just how deeply moved he was by his conversation with the Israeli merchant.

“Your kindness, patience, knowledge, and open heart and mind communicated hope to this pastor,” he wrote. “I came to Israel neutral and relatively indifferent to the daily challenges and the plight of modern day Israel. I left a friend of Israel who hopes to turn the heart of my congregation toward a love for Jerusalem, Israel and her people.”