

Pastors Make Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

In recent weeks, more than 50 pastors associated with traditionally African-American denominations traveled with Christians United for Israel (CUFI) to the Holy Land. The two trips were part of a series during the winter of 2012-2013 in which CUFI is taking more than 180 Christian clergy from a variety of denominations to Israel.

"There is no feeling or experience quite like visiting Israel. Here you walk where Jesus walked, you meet the people who have made the desert bloom, and you leave with an even greater understanding of why we must stand with the State of Israel," said Pastor Michael Stevens, CUFI's African American outreach coordinator.

Trip participants visited holy sites, met with leading Middle East experts, and saw firsthand what daily life is like surrounded by extremism and unrest.

Stops on the trip included the Sea of Galilee, Golgotha, the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, a visit with Israeli soldiers serving along the Jewish state's border with Lebanon, and a briefing by Khaled Abu Toameh, the Palestinian Affairs correspondent for *The Jerusalem Post*.

"I stood with Israel for many reasons before, but after visiting and personally interacting with the people of that great nation, I have a newfound love and affinity for Israel and its people. I stand with Israel like never before," Detroit-based Pastor Marlin Reid said upon his return.

"I will never forget what I saw, felt and learned during this trip to Israel. I believe it is imperative that, as Christians, we stand with the Jewish people and the Jewish state in their struggle for peace and security," said Iman

Edwards, Elder Pastor at the Emmanuel Church of God in Christ in Katy, Tex.

In an effort to further foster interreligious dialogue, participants also visited Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC), which helped underwrite the trip.

"We are honored to host pastors traveling to Israel with CUFI. Such trips foster the Jewish-Christian dialogue and equip these leaders with the tools and knowledge to engage their communities in support of Israel," Riskin said. "CJCUC is absolutely committed to advancing the dialogue between our two faith communities and continuing to build a relationship founded on mutual trust and respect."

Christians United for Israel is the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States and one of the leading Christian grassroots movements in the world. CUFI spans all fifty states and reaches millions with its message. Each year CUFI holds hundreds of pro-Israel events in cities around the country. And each July, thousands of pro-Israel Christians gather in Washington, D.C. to participate in the CUFI Washington Summit and make their voices heard in support of Israel and the Jewish people.

CUFI's mission is to provide a national association through which every pro-Israel church, parachurch organization, ministry or individual in America can speak and act with one voice in support of Israel.