



The Rev Mary Kells reflects on the shore of the Sea of Galilee

Incredible diversity of worship in Jerusalem

ONE of the highlights for the Rev Mary Kells was going to the site where it is thought Jesus died and was buried.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was built on top of these two holy sites. Visitors can reach under an altar to touch the rock thought to be Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified - and view first century tombs.

The church is shared between Christians of different denominations, including Greek

Orthodox, Armenian and Roman Catholic. Different groups worship at different times.

“Going there early on a Sunday morning and seeing the diversity of worship was incredible,” said Mary, who is curate at Elson and Bridgemarky.

“It has made me more aware of the different ways in which we worship God.

“It’s my second pilgrimage to the Holy Land, so there wasn’t quite the same ‘wow’ factor. But it has made me feel more

connected with Christians around the world and made me want to pray for them.

“Being in the cell below the High Priest Caiaphas’s house, where Jesus may have been held, really resonated. The bishop’s prayers were magnificent and deepened everything.

“It’s been great to get to know other curates better too. Much of this visit has changed how we see Bible stories and will give us fresh images of what it’s like that are closer to the reality.”

he would die there. It makes his sacrifice seem even greater.

“It showed us that we also have to follow Jesus from the comfortable, safe places to the uncomfortable, gritty places - that we shouldn’t be afraid of getting involved and helping those who are hurting and need compassion.”

The Rev Chris Richardson, curate at Alverstoke, was also impressed with his first trip to the Holy Land.

“It provides an extra dimension to Bible stories to be able to see where Jesus walked, where he died, and where he rose again,” he said. “I’ve been reading these stories since I was a child. But it really puts flesh on the bones to get an idea of the geography of places like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee.

“We walked what is called the Way of the Cross in the old walled city of Jerusalem. It’s these lanes along which Jesus carried his own cross,

before he was crucified outside the city. Seeing how narrow and how busy those streets are now was really interesting. To walk in his footsteps was highly emotional, because he means so much to me.”

And the Rev Samantha Martell, curate at the Bridge parishes in Droxford, Meonstoke, Exton and Corhampton, agreed. She said: “The Bible had felt a bit flat before, now it feels like a proper relief map. These experiences have brought it into three dimensions.

“Beforehand I couldn’t quite see why God wanted me to be here. I couldn’t see how it would benefit my faith and ministry. Oh, how wrong I was!”

To see more photos from the curates’ pilgrimage, read a day-by-day account of their visit, and to watch video reflections by the bishop and individual curates, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/holyland.



A shepherd tending sheep and goats in a replica first-century village in Nazareth



The Rev Chris Richardson on board the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee

Recalling the Holocaust

REMEMBERING the Holocaust had a big impact on the Rev Steve Dent. The Lee-on-Solent curate and his colleagues spent a morning exploring Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which is Israel’s official memorial to the six million Jews killed during the Second World War.

It chronicles those events and also includes a Hall of Names, an ongoing project to collect the identity and some information about every single victim.

“It was very clear that the Nazis deliberately stripped those people of their identities,” said Steve. “Yad Vashem seeks to restore those identities to the victims of the Holocaust by aiming to name all of those who died. One aspect that occurred to me was that these people never lost their identity with God. He always knew each of them.

“The Sunday service at St George’s Anglican Cathedral also had an impact. Their liturgy talks about Jesus being ‘born in Bethlehem and dying here



The Revs Steve Dent (left) and Chris Richardson in the River Jordan

in Jerusalem’ - within yards of where we were sitting.

“I also prayed at the Western Wall, alongside Jewish brothers and sisters. It is a holy site for them, and I felt God’s presence there too.”