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Communications

July 6, 2016

Spring Trip to Greece and Turkey Brings New Perspective to Biblical Texts

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Providing opportunities that stretch the mind, stir the heart, and prepare students for the practice of ministry in the local church is a key goal of the Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity. Through a unique trip to Greece and Turkey recently, more than 20 divinity students explored a variety of ancient sites in order to enhance their understanding of biblical texts.

This year's Greece/Turkey trip featured visits to Istanbul, five of the churches of Revelation, the Island of Patmos, Corinth, Athens, Delphi, Berea, Thessalonica, and Phillipi. Dr. Robert Canoy is the dean for the GWU School of Divinity, and he served as the leader and key facilitator of the trip. He believes experiencing the lands of the Bible firsthand offers divinity students a tangible association to spiritual truths.

“Encountering biblical stories in as near to their original geographic contexts as possible opens up the world of the Bible in ways that reading the story alone often does not,” Canoy reflected. “Our goal is not to leave the text in the world of the original audiences, but to transition that world to our own—which really is very similar in many ways despite our different cultures.”

Scott Hagaman is pastor of First Baptist Church in Marion, N.C., and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree through the GWU School of Divinity. He previously participated in a similar trip to Israel, and hoped this opportunity would allow him to experience even more in-depth learning.

“Seeing so many ancient sites helped me better understand the vast influence of the Roman Empire with its cities and connecting roads, which became strategic for the spread of the Gospel,” Hagaman reported. “Not only did the trip enhance my understanding of the historical background of the New Testament, but I appreciated the devotional nature as we traveled to biblical sites, hearing professors teach along the way.”



Ruins in Athens, Greece

In addition to Canoy, Dr. Jim McConnell, GWU Assistant Professor of New Testament Interpretation, and Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, GWU Professor of Economics, also traveled with the group. Divinity school alumna April Hoelke Simpson and current Divinity school student Mariah Richardson helped prepare information on visits to Phillipi and Crete/Corinth, respectively.

Canoy said he was also reminded of some important individual and corporate truths. “My takeaway this year was how our own stories interconnect with the biblical story, and that our personal frame of mind and spirit always significantly influences our capacity to ‘hear’ what God is saying to us,” he offered. “In many ways, I was reminded that, similar to worship experiences, we get out of them what we put into them. This year’s group was eager to learn and to be renewed in their journey both as students and believers. All of these cooperative efforts made this trip especially meaningful.”

Other unique GWU School of Divinity learning opportunities included cultural immersion trips to Latin America and Cuba. To learn more about the trip to Latin America, led by Dr. Terry Casino, click [here](#). For information on GWU’s visit to Cuba, led by Dr. Hebert Palomino, click [here](#).

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them not only for professional success but for lives marked by empathy, compassion and a commitment to service on the broadest scale.



Prayer Wall at House of Mary in Ephesus



The Blue Mosque – Istanbul



Ancient ruins at Laodicea



Students sitting at Mars Hill



Paul's prison in Phillipi



Area outside of Paul's prison in Phillipi



The Temple of Artemis
in Sardis



The Library of Celsus in
Ephesus