

Garden Tomb Newsletter: January 2017

And so a new year begins!

As we look back on 2016 at the Garden Tomb there is so much to give thanks for. We have seen lives changed, visitor numbers increasing, staff married; and the faithfulness of God demonstrated in so many ways. A few of the highlights reported over the last year include:

January report: 20 Chinese visitors from one group became Christians during their tour.

February report: improvements to a number of meeting areas provide additional seating for groups to celebrate communion after their tours, including a meeting venue for groups of 350+ people.

March report: one of the visitors to the garden wrote: *"I was so very impressed with the grounds and the people there.... What a peaceful place! I was so emotional inside the tomb, and I was left alone with Him for the amount of time I needed. Thank you for the understanding and respect. God continue to bless you for keeping this place holy and sacred"*.

April report: 2,700 people attended the Easter Sunday Celebration. The Olive Grove was completed, providing a quiet area for people to sit and reflect on the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.



The new Olive Grove in the centre of the garden



Jewish and Arab believers celebrate the resurrection

May report: about 300 local believers from Israel and The West Bank attended the Arabic Evangelical Easter Service at the Garden Tomb on Sunday 30th April. Jews joined their Arab brothers and sisters to celebrate the Messiah's resurrection together.

June report: we announced the launch of the Garden Tomb 24/7 Prayer Network; and reported on the Nablus Road Open Days which saw 1,700 local people, mostly Muslims, visit the Garden Tomb for tours of the garden and explanations of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

August report: lives transformed - *"From individual visitors, to 30 out of a group of 50 people from Cambodia, we have seen the power of God at work in the lives of many visitors to the garden"*.

October report: the Feast of Tabernacles - *"we welcomed 1,600 visitors to the garden for what has become the biggest annual celebration at the Garden Tomb, next to the Easter Sunrise service. Many nations were represented including China, Indonesia, Singapore, USA; and countries from South America, Europe and Africa. The highlight was a communion service led by a Christian Palestinian Pastor and a Messianic Pastor."*

November and December: after a relatively quiet first 10 months of the year, the last 2 months saw a big jump in visitor numbers, with about 58,000 people coming to the garden. This was an increase of about 30% compared with 2015. Is this a sign of things to come? We don't know, but we hear rumours that numbers of visitors from China and South East Asia in particular are expected to continue increasing through 2017.

Renovation work was completed on the small and large chapels, and we now have 8 meeting areas where groups can gather, even in wet weather.



The Large Chapel



The Deck meeting area

Volunteer team: our international team on site at the beginning of January includes **Catarina Sherman** (Sweden), **Brian and Lynette Nibbe** (Romania), **Joan Liu** (Taiwan), **Juergen and Dawn Kleinloh** (Germany), and **Fong and Sok Ching Pang** (Singapore – returning home on 4th January). They will be joined by **Ron and Cindy Youde** (USA) on 4th January, **Stan and Molly Doland** (USA) on 20th January, and **Dwain and Cindy Camp** (USA) on 30th January.

Prayer Pointers:

- **The Garden Tomb Shop:** this is a significant project, and we ask you to pray that:
 - planning permission is granted quickly
 - all necessary resources will be provided
 - the end result will be honouring to the Lord, and a blessing both to the ministry of the Garden Tomb and to all who visit.
- **Relations with the Waqf:** there continue to be concerns regarding the new boundary wall between ourselves and the Muslim cemetery. Inspections of the wall by an independent engineer will continue through 2017. It is likely that sometime during 2017 the wall will be completed, though this is by no means a certainty. We are thankful that so far there is no evidence of the wall becoming unsafe, and we pray that this will remain so. Pray that we are able to build good relations with our Muslim neighbours.
- **Skull Hill gardens:** please continue to pray that the Municipality will follow through with their intension to clear the rubbish from the garden below Skull Hill viewing platform, and secure the site, so that we can re-establish the gardens. This land is not owned by us, but is clearly visible from Skull Hill viewing platform.
- **Visitor numbers:** we give thanks for near record numbers of visitors in November. This surge continued through December and we welcomed about 20,000 visitors to the garden in the last 4 weeks of the year. The last 2 months have seen a 25% - 30% increase in visitor numbers compared with the same period last year.
- **Looking ahead:** it is too early to be certain, but we are hearing from some tour companies and tour guides that numbers of visitors from China, South East Asia and South America are set to rise sharply in 2017. Join us in praying that we are able to meet this opportunity by recruiting volunteers able to make known the 'Good News of Jesus' in the languages of these nations.

And finally: could I ask you to consider joining with us in praying for the ministry of the Garden Tomb. One of the ways you can do this is by going to the Garden Tomb website – www.gardentomb.com – and clicking on the PRAYER icon, which you will see on the right hand side of the web page, near the top of the page. Click this button and you will go to the Prayer Page where you can find more information about how to join our 24/7 Prayer Network. You can sign up by following the instructions one step at a time. This should be straight forward, but please email me at stephen@gardentomb.com if you encounter any problems registering.

Once registered, you will be able to choose one or more 15 minute prayer slots a week. Every week you will then receive an email reminder of your prayer slot, along with an update on prayer needs and praise points.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”.*

Please join us in praying that the lives of many thousands of people will be transformed this year as they visit the Garden Tomb and hear the Good News of Jesus the Messiah.

Blessings from Jerusalem!
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