



**"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ...
As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened,
and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.
And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."
(Matthew 3: 13-17)**

**March 20th - A Historical Day for the Baptist & Evangelical Church
in Jordan, the Middle East & the World at large:
The Dedication of a Baptism Center at Bethany Beyond Jordan**

Sincere thanks to the global Baptist family especially those who contributed to the success of the March 20th event - the dedication of a Baptism Center in the area of Bethany beyond Jordan. We thank King Abdullah II of Jordan for his initiative, and Prince Ghazi Ben Mohamad for helping make this dream come true. I particularly want to thank Dr. David Coffey, the President of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) for the vital role that he has played in making the Baptism Center possible.

From our part, Lebanese and Jordanian Baptists enjoy a good history of cooperation that the Lord continues to bless. Yet, although we did our part in organizing this event, we need to give credit where it is due. So, again thank you David Coffey and BWA; thanks as well for Tony Peck and the European Baptist Federation (EBF) in which we, Middle Eastern Baptists, are members. We are blessed to be part of this larger global Baptist family. Thanks also to Nabeeh Abbassi, Fawaz Ameish and Jordanian Baptists.

The following pages of our e-newsletter are meant to give you a glimpse of the March 20th event and the celebration of the dedication of the first Baptist and Evangelical Baptism center on the Jordan river. Beautiful touching words were shared by several people including Prince Ghazi who welcomed the delegations highlighting the spirit of coexistence that is prevalent under the current Jordanian leadership. Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Mr. Tony Blair, BWA President Dr. David Coffey, BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, President of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) Rev. Tomas Magda, General Secretary of the EBF Rev. Tony Peck, Dr. Nabeeh Abbassi former President of the Jordanian Baptist Convention, and Rev. Fawaz Ameish the President of the Jordanian Baptist Convention - each spoke of the significance of this event.

Friends I encourage you to start planning a pilgrimage to the Baptism site in Jordan, round the corner from Lebanon. Please be sure to include Lebanon as well - otherwise the trip will not be the same.

Nabil Costa
Executive Director, Lebanese Baptist Society
Middle East Representative, European Baptist Federation



Top photo (From left to right): Rev. Tony Peck - European Baptist Federation General Secretary; Prince Ghazi Ben Mohamad - Special Advisor to King Abdulla II of Jordan; Dr. David Coffey - Baptist World Alliance President; Rt. Tony Blair - Quartet Special Envoy for the Middle East; Neville Callam - Baptist World Alliance General Secretary.



“To those of you being baptised today I say these words. This is a joyful and memorable day in your lives. You will probably say we were the first to be baptised at the new Baptism Centre. You may say, like Jesus I was baptised in the River Jordan. But the most important thing you can say today is, I pledge to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.”

David Coffey, President
Baptist World Alliance



“May the waters of the Jordan extinguish the crippling fires of hopelessness that burn in the hearts of those who have no knowledge of God.”

Neville Callum, General Secretary
Baptist World Alliance

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“The dedication of this Baptism Centre is a historical moment for the Baptist Church. It reflects the spirit of openness, acceptance and interfaith coexistence. Baptism started in this holy place in Jordan, the country that continues, with arms wide open, to receive the persecuted providing them with what is needed...We praise God for the distinguished leadership that He has given this country and which has taught us coexistence strengthening relations between the people of the same nation.”

Dr. Nabeeh Abbassi, Former President
Jordanian Baptist Convention



“Lord, make this Baptism Centre a place of Pilgrimage. As we follow in the steps of Moses, Elisha, Joshua and John the Baptist and recall the faithful witness of Christians through the centuries, may we be inspired and encouraged by their faith

Lord, make this Baptism Centre a place of Commitment. May those who are baptised be faithful followers and may all of us deepen our love and devotion to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Lord, make this Baptism Centre a place of Peace. May pilgrims come here and make their peace with God and then return as peacemakers to a broken world

In the name of Jesus Christ we dedicate this Baptism Centre to the Glory of God.”

David Coffey, President
Baptist World Alliance



**Greetings received by
BWA President Dr. David Coffey
on the occasion of the
Dedication of the Baptism Center**

"...The opening of the Baptism Center on the bank of the Jordan River, so near where John the Baptist baptized our own Savior, is an amazing blessing for all Christians. We applaud King Abdullah's generosity in donating the land and thank everyone one who has worked so hard on its completion. It is our hope that people of all faiths will find this center to be a place of peace and understanding. We hope that Christians will make a special pilgrimage to this holy place and will feel an even deeper connection to our Lord."

Jimmy Carter,
Former President of the United States



"Al salaam a'alaykum,

I want to express my deep joy and gratitude to all of you who has been involved in the planning and building of this Baptism Center. This is an historic day that we have all dreamed of, talked about, and planned for years. I congratulate my dear friend, King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, and also my dear friend, Prince Ghazi Bin Mohammed, for their vision for this site, and for King Abdullah's generosity in making the site possible.

The opening of this authentic site where Jesus (Peace be upon him) was baptized, will be a place of Peace. It is my prayer that all who visit will have a deeper understanding of who Jesus is, what God sent him to do, and will experience the compassion and mercy of God in this place

Although I cannot be with you today, my heart is with you, and I thank all of the world leaders who have graced this site with their presence as we celebrate today. Just as His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI intends to visit the site this May, I also intend to make a pilgrimage to this site in 2010, during my next visit to several Middle Eastern nations.

May God bless all of you this day."

Rick Warren
Saddleback Church
Purpose Driven Network
P.E.A.C.E. Coalition

"We need to be passionate about the Lord's work... We need the spirit of Joshua, Caleb and David... The Lord needs passionate leaders: are you one of them?"

Toma Magda
President
European Baptist Federation

"It took courage and leadership for Jordan to facilitate this site of baptism, here by the ancient river... Don't look inwards, but look outwards. Don't exclude, embrace. Don't argue about your differences, but understand what you share and fulfill a common purpose blessed by God."

Tony Blair
Former British Prime Minister
Founder of the Tony Blair Faith
Foundation

"Since it was founded in Amsterdam 400 years ago the Baptist Church has proclaimed religious liberty for all."

Tony Peck
General Secretary
European Baptist Federation

BAPTIST AND MUSLIM SCHOLARS MEET IN JORDAN



"Baptist World Alliance hails Jordan's initiatives to promote interfaith dialogue" was the title of a news article published last week in the Jordan News Agency - Petra. This was in coverage of meetings held in Jordan on March 19th by the delegation of Baptist leaders - from the Baptist World Alliance, European Baptist Federation, Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Jordanian Baptist Convention and the Lebanese Baptist Society as well as a team of scholars from the University of Oxford (UK), the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary - with Muslim scholars and Journalists, including Sohail Nakhoda, editor-in-chief of Islamica magazine. Discussions focused on BWA's response to "A Common Word" letter that was signed by 138 Muslim scholars and leaders and which calls on Christian leaders to enter into dialogue with Muslims through focusing on areas in common as well as peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims.



Baptist Scholars (from left to right): Paul Fiddes (Chair of BWA Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation) & Nick Wood - both Professors at Oxford University (UK), Martin Acad Director of the Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (Lebanon), and Emad Shehadeh President of the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (Jordan)