

MAY Trip to Iraq

Dear Friends of SWIC,

As reflected daily in the international media, this is a crucial and fragile time for Christians in Iraq, particularly in the Nineveh Plains in the north where many of our friends are. Daesh (ISIS) has been completely pushed out of Qaraqosh, and the fight for the old city of Mosul is fierce, but progressing.

Militarily Daesh's days in Iraq are numbered. The question on everyone's heart, minds and lips is: "What happens now?"

Helping to answer that question is part of the reason Stand With Iraqi Christians exists. From the beginning our mission has been to stand and walk with the beleaguered Christians of Iraq not just in the present crisis, but into their uncertain future. In some ways, we were literally created for this moment. We are an organization fundamentally about building relationships and infrastructure to provide friendship and material support as Iraq's Christians who, hand-in-hand with their Muslim, Kurd, and Yazidi neighbors, are seeking to build a new peaceful and prosperous Iraq after years of misrule, war and devastation. We need them every bit as much as they need us, and so we move forward together in love, hope and trust.

On May 19th I leave for Baghdad to visit our dear friend Fr. Faiz at St. George's Church. I can't wait to see Faiz and bear witness to the extraordinary things God through him and that community are doing, including an interfaith pre-school and a clinic that are renowned locally and sought after and supported by Christians and Muslims.

I will then fly with Faiz to Erbil to join Quint and others to spend time with our friends and deliver the collection we have gathered to our partners there. We will go to Ashti and other IDP centers to get an update and participate in programs SWIC is helping to fund. We will provide small business grants to a group of Christians who are being vetted prior to our arrival, and finally, we will also travel out onto the Nineveh Plains and the devastated city of Qaraqosh. This is where we will be witnesses to the work already being done by the Christian communities there to refurbish homes, churches, and businesses in order to find ways to begin assisting families, currently living in Erbil, to return home.

I know this seems at times a big undertaking, and that is why it is so wonderful to know we are never alone. We are surrounded and uplifted by an astonishing number of friends, both established and new ones, both here and in Iraq. And, most importantly, we are always guided in every aspect of our work by the Holy Spirit's call to be peace-makers and justice-seekers, and to be those who show up

wherever human beings and communities are in distress. We were made for this work, and it is God's gift to us as we learn how to love and grow in God's grace in relationship with-and service to-others.

Please pray for us daily, and know that you are part of something life-giving and hopeful in a part of the world that needs our love and faith, and whose love and faith we need just as badly in return.

Peace and blessings,
Fr. Chris

PS: Generous donors have offered to match contributions that come in between now and May 15. Now is the time to click the donation button and help us maximize this wonderful opportunity. The May 19th trip to Iraq is almost upon us! Thank you in advance for your support for Iraqi Christians.

MATCHING DONATION

Quint's Reflection on Relationships with Iraqi Christians

What does it mean, to me, as I travel and volunteer with Christians so far from my home? Here are two quotes which speak loudly to why I travel to Iraq on mission.

"For it is in giving that we receive the most "
St. Francis of Assisi

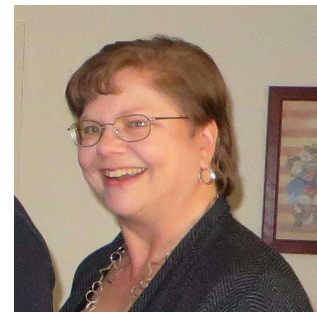
"One of the most important important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone "
Shannon L . Adler

Executive Director

Deborah Bressoud Parker

"I am giving you these commands that you may love one another." John 15:17

Right after Easter I watched the faces of Iraqi Christians as they worshiped in a rubble-filled church in a part of Iraq recently liberated from ISIS. I saw the faces of faithful people with enormous challenges ahead, The title of the 3 minute video is "Iraqi Christians Endure Amid Fighting, Persecution." This video link is on our [Facebook page](#), and well worth watching. The courage it takes, to face the evil that is ISIS, is clearly apparent. I also could not help but contrast their Palm Sunday experience with my own. As the journalist said, there is so much we take for granted.



Even with all my research, I still can't imagine what Fr. Chris will see in the faces that he encounters on his upcoming trip in May. The Iraqi endure, offer us friendship, and share their hope in God. Not wishful thinking, but a deep belief that God is present even in the midst of the destruction. It is humbling to have these Christians consider us friends. As I write this others here, in the US, have generously offered to match donations made between today and Fr. Chris' May trip.

These funds will support what Fr. Chris is doing both in the next few weeks...and planning for the future...to walk in friendship with those who have lost so much. He is

working on projects that include activities for children and their Christian teachers, repairing or rebuilding homes or places of worship, and with others he is exploring ways to seed new small business ventures. There is hope in this vision of the future where the Iraqi families can grow in financial independence, too.

We all have a part in this relationship building. I've been asked "***what can we really do to make a difference?***" A lot. We can pray, we can share the videos to raise awareness about the persecutions of Christians, we can volunteer, and we can donate. Learn more about all these opportunities by visiting the [Stand with Iraqi Christians \(SWIC\)](http://standwithiraqichristians.org) web site.

<http://standwithiraqichristians.org>

Upcoming Events

Follow Fr. Chris on social media during his upcoming trip to visit Christians in Iraq
[5/19/17 through 6/1/17](#)

Bring the story to your organization or church with a screening of the Film
[WHERE IS OUR PLACE?](#)

Contact Deb Parker, Executive Director (execdirswic@gmail.com), to arrange for your own screening event or to [contribute](#). Be part of the movement to Stand with Iraqi Christians.

Learn More and Join Us!

- Web site: <http://standwithiraqichristians.org>
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/standwithiraqichristians
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/StandWIraqiXns>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/standwiraqixns>

Stand With Iraqi Christians is a ministry founded by St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Radnor, PA. We are a group of dedicated volunteers who are doing what we can to help Christians at risk in Iraq, and we need your help! If you are interested in volunteering with SWIC, on a one-time, or regular basis, contact Deb Parker, SWIC Executive Director, [here](#).

[Donate](#)

STAY CONNECTED



