

## A sister from Lebanon (14)

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*Middle East Peace Initiative 2006 touring.*

In November 2006, our pastor Reverend Kevin Thompson asked me to go to Lebanon together with a Jordanian ambassador of peace Ms. Wafa to assist the American clergymen who's visiting in a tour to the Middle East. I was delighted to go back to Lebanon this time to work side by side with religious figures and church leaders.

I remember when our flight stopped by Chicago and few passengers came aboard, one African pastor sat few seats in front of me and right away starts talking to the Middle Eastern man who's sitting beside him. I could hear the conversation very clearly. After he introduced himself he begins describing why he is going to Lebanon. Do you know Reverend Moon, the pastor asked the man. He is a good man. He is trying to bring people from all nationalities and religion to work together for peace. Did you hear about Reverend Moon before? He is sending me with many of my colleagues to help your country in finding peace through dialogue and good relations.

I was listening to the conversation and feeling at awe. I flew so many times in the past and I never had the courage to talk about my faith so direct and with such authority. Listening to this pastor helped me to understand that there are no boundaries for the people of faith. They can go any place and talk to any

person in the name of God without any fear or any concept what the people will think about them.

In the other hand, accompanying Wafa taught me also a good lesson. I learned that if you ever travel with a Middle Eastern woman, you will never get hungry. She brought with her apples and bananas, few sandwiches, some vegetables that she picked from her own garden and even boiled eggs. I was even wondering if she brought the lentil soup with her as she was telling me how tasty the way she makes it. And as we waited for almost 7 hours in the airport to catch up our next flight to Beirut, I was so thankful for all the food that she brought. We had a feast and we shared not only a meal but a good friendship all the way to Lebanon and beyond.

As we arrived to our hotel in Beirut, we were greeted by Thomas and Hermine Schellen and we joined few ministers who already came.

The plan was to be divided four to five groups and to visit different regions in Lebanon where we meet religious figures and educators and explain what the clergy in America as well in other countries are trying to do to contribute in building a lasting peace through dialogue, interfaith and intercultural relations.

I was lucky to accompany a minister and his wife and to see how as a couple they could share with the people they met about their faith in God and their ministry as husband and wife not only as individuals. Bringing God to your family is much more needed than bringing him to your heart and worship him by yourself.

Also I had the opportunity to get together with Dr. Yang and Dr. Michael Jenkins as well Reverend Jesse Edwards. It was a very rich experience to participate in a pilgrimage for peace and walk side by side with the men of peace.

In those five days, I couldn't visit my parents as we were leaving in the morning and coming back in the evening. The ministers went to the south as well to the north of Lebanon. They tried to reach out to all the different denominations in Lebanon and build connections and friendship.

As I said good bye to Wafa who went to Jordan to visit her family there, and I headed to the airport with few of the ministers, something unusual happened. There was a huge crowd and so many people standing by that we had a difficult time to pass them. So the ministers start rushing up to catch their plane and somehow I couldn't make it to the gate so I missed the plane. For the first time, I miss my flight. I was frustrated and overwhelmed. I took a taxi and I went back home. My parents were surprised to see me as I told them I couldn't visit them this time. I stayed two extra days to get my next flight to the U.S. this time. I didn't go anywhere other than enjoying two full days with my mom and dad. Eating a delicious homemade food and playing cards with my father.

As I said good bye on my way to the airport, I looked up to the balcony where my parents were standing and waving and tears start running on my face without control. For the first time I felt that it could be the last time that I will see them.

Sure enough, within few months, my father passed away. I was glad that I missed my flight and I had the opportunity to play with him few deck of cards.

To be continued.