**Connor Pilgrimage 2013 – Day 1 by the Very Rev John Mann**

Bright and early the pilgrims gathered at George Best City Airport for a flight to Heathrow and onward to Tel Aviv.  The anticipation was high and the Bishop [the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor] arrived at 6am to see us off.

The first day is all about travelling and getting to know one another, particularly as the 20 members of the Diocesan group are joined by 10 members of a group from First Presbyterian Church in Larne and their minister Colin McClure. We are gelling as a group already and looking forward to walking in the steps of Jesus over the next ten days.

Sadly we are one person down, with Diocesan Reader Bob Fryer, who is unwell and unable to come, left at home.  I hope you are feeling a bit better today Bob!  Bob has been several times to the Holy Land with me and is well known in the Newtownabbey parishes and elsewhere.  We shall miss him and I know just how much he will miss this trip.

Settling in to the Golden Walls Hotel in Palestinian East Jerusalem we prepare for the first full day tomorrow [Wednesday], looking out on the walls of the old city with Psalm 122 in our minds.  We read it as we approached the City.  'Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem'.  Yes, we shall, and for the many places in this world that we remember prayerfully each day.

Like everyone at home we remember the people affected by the catastrophic typhoon in the Philippines.  Day by day as we call to mind the things of 2,000 years ago, we will also relate them to the world today.

Tomorrow morning we shall be standing on the top of the Mount of Olives at 8am!  What a prospect - but that is for tomorrow - I will tell you more about it then.