

# Two Easters

IN THE HOLY LAND



Sunday, Apr 14

## Western Palm Sunday

Carrying palm branches and raising Hosannas, we marched down the Mount of Olives. Pictured above on the left is a view of the old city of Jerusalem from half way down the Mount.

Sunday, Apr 21

## Western Easter

My cohort and I led hymns and participated, albeit rather sleepily, in the sunrise Eastern morning service on the Mount of Olives. Pictured above and on the right is the steeple of Augusta Victoria.

Sunday, Apr 28

## Orthodox Easter

Easter (round 2) was an absolute party replete with parades, church services, community celebrations, and family gatherings. My host mother's family came to visit and we shared a lovely meal together.



## MA'AMOUL

This is a traditional Arab sweet typically served during an eid or holiday. The ladies in my host community and I made around 4 kilos for the members of our church in preparation for Easter. It's a small cookie filled with dates or pistachios.

The Lutheran Church in Palestine may be a small community, but it is a bustling one. Christians in the city of Ramallah, just north of Jerusalem, enjoy rituals very similar to our own during Easter. In fact, things are so similar that I was able to predict an uptick in church attendance during the week of Easter. I remember all the years back home in which I would see families return to church to celebrate the momentous liturgical event together. I have had several discussions with my host dad about the church and its history in the community. We've discussed the fact that many of our church members are not originally from this community. That they are formerly refugees from around the West Bank and greater Israel/Palestine. So, as the Easter season is a time for remembering Christ's ascension from the dead, it is the perfect time to consider what this means to a community of people whose faith has been continually tested yet has persisted.

Tolerance, respect, coexistence, and hospitality are all virtues that I have come to more fully understand as a minority for the first time. In a predominantly Muslim community, it has been a joy to see all the ways in which Christian traditions and ways of life have been observed and respected. It was an absolute pleasure to witness the Easter parade in Ramallah. It happened in the old city which is also the major Christian neighborhood on the Saturday before Orthodox Easter. I stationed myself just in front of a hotdog restaurant (the only restaurant I know of devoted entirely to hotdogs) called It Waits. And, coincidentally, I waited there for several minutes as the procession made its way in my direction. The Eternal Fire from Jerusalem, scout drumlines, and representatives from are churches moved along the rout as locals and internationals looked on. I was overjoyed to participate in such an occasion.

## Learn Arabic

Ramadan Karim - رمضان كريم

Blessed Ramadan

Kul seni w-inte saalem - كل سني و إنت سالم

Happy holidays

Almasih Qam - المسيح قام

Christ is risen

Haqana Qam - حقا قام

He is risen indeed

Awsana - أوصنا

Hosanna



*My view of the Easter parade from the It Waits hotdog restaurant in Ramallah. Hundreds of people were crowding the streets as we all celebrated together.*

## Palm Sunday

As the son of two Lutheran pastors, or a double pk as they say, I have celebrated many Palm Sundays throughout my life in the Church. I have seen both Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar countless times and lain numerous palm branches on the floor of our church. But I have never celebrated the event quite like I did a few weeks ago in Jerusalem. It was a wonder to behold the hundreds of people from all over the world marching down the mountain.

PICTURED: *The Palm Sunday procession on the Mount of Olives*



### But what's happening now?

#### RAMADAN

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar lasts for either 29 or 30 days. The length of the month is based on the sight of the crescent moon.

Ramadan is recognized by Muslims all over the world as a month of fasting to honor the first revelation of the Quran by the prophet Muhammad. In Palestine, faithful Muslims typically break their fast around 7 p.m. or after the sunset. The first meal after the fast is referred to as Iftar while the pre-fast meal before sunrise is called Suhoor.

### DATES

According to tradition, Muhammad broke the fast with three dates. Thus, the first food that is consumed to break the fast is often a date.

### On a personal note...

I would like to thank you all for supporting me throughout the years with your kind words, thoughts, and prayers. I have had a life changing and faith strengthening experience this year and I want you all to know that you helped make it possible. It's not going to be easy to say goodbye to my people here, but I look forward to coming home to you very soon!

If you would like more stories and pictures from me, please feel free to visit my blog at [www.eliinpalestine.com](http://www.eliinpalestine.com)