REPORT TO IFFEC REGARDING THE STUDY TRIP TO GREECE

The study trip to Greece was a rewarding and meaningful experience for all involved. The trip and the amount of involvement from IFFEC constituencies exceeded the expectations of the original planning. In short, the trip was in every respect a success, an enjoyable one for those privileged to take part.

Thirty-five people from nine different countries were in Greece from January 4 to January 11, 2014. These thirty-five included nineteen from North Park Theological Seminary in the United States, six from Sweden, five from Norway, two from China, one from Germany, one from the Czech Republic, one from Slovakia. In addition to the seven countries just mentioned, there was a participant from Colombia, who is a current North Park student, and a participant from Brazil, who is currently studying in Sweden. Among the participants were five faculty members: three from North Park, one from Sweden, and one from Norway.

The group stayed at the Greek Bible Institute in rooms vacated by students for the holidays and took most of its meals there. The location in a suburb of Athens was very good, the facilities were quite adequate, and the food was very good as well.

The schedule was as follows:

Sunday, January 5: Attendance at a Greek Free Church and a visit to the National Museum

Monday, January 6, which was epiphany: Lectures at the Greek Bible Institute by Max Lee and Klyne Snodgrass (North Park faculty) and by Thomas Kazen (Stockholm School of Theology faculty).

There was also a time for a participant from each country to tell about the life of the church in his or her country.

Tuesday, January 7: Visit to the Parthenon, the agora and Stoa in Athens, the Areopagus, and the museum of the Acropolis.

Wednesday, January 8: Visit to Delphi and the museum there

Thursday, January 9: Visit to Epidaurus, the theatre, and to Nafplion for dinner. An additional lecture on biblical texts treating women in ministry was offered (quite late) by Klyne Snodgrass.

Friday, January 10: Visit to Corinth, the museum, Acrocorinth, Cenchreae

Saturday, January 11: Departure

The schedule also included prayers three of the evenings, and these were led by Carol Norén, a faculty person from North Park.

The value of the trip cannot easily be measured. Obviously the academic focus on the Hellenistic background and context of NT writings is significant. Much is gained by being present on site that is not easily gained from reading. Most important were the relations established among the participants. The purpose of IFFEC is mutual encouragement and support of member constituencies, but that cannot be done in the abstract. The bi-annual meetings of IFFEC bring some persons together and establish important friendships, but the study trip brought together people who otherwise would probably never meet. Friendships, awareness, and mutual care were created by the trip, and hopefully they will continue into the future and will enable possibilities. People who did not know each other, some of whom do not live that far apart, were brought together and already were discussing ways of helping each other. IFFEC exists to foster such relations.

Acknowledgement must be made of several people and offices that made this trip both possible and relatively easy to plan. John Kremidas did wonderful work in planning *everything* on the ground in Greece, and he did so in a way that kept the cost quite low. He was with the group throughout the whole time and made significant contributions all along. Sufficient thanks to him—and to the staff of the Greek Bible Institute—is hard to express. Jeannette van Diest and the offices of IFFEC were very helpful in handling the finances, thereby removing a large headache. IFFEC also provided six scholarships that made attendance possible for people from several countries, people who otherwise would not have been able to attend. Certain individuals in the United States provided some additional scholarship money for students from North Park. The business office at North Park also handled collection and transfer of funds for those attending from North Park. Appreciation is hereby expressed to all who made the trip possible.

With regard to the future, IFFEC should consider planning such a trip every three years or so. The benefits seem to be quite large, and the work is not onerous when it is shared as it was for this trip. Greece is an obvious and beneficial site for future trips, but consideration should also be given to a study trip focused on Reformation sites, especially in Germany. A study trip to Israel is another obvious possibility. Such trips to Israel or Germany would in all likelihood be more expensive than the trip to Greece, and it is essential that one or more faculty from member institutions take responsibility for planning and facilitating the trip. Also communication about such trips by IFFEC constituencies is crucial and cannot be left to chance.

Respectfully submitted,

Klyne Snodgrass