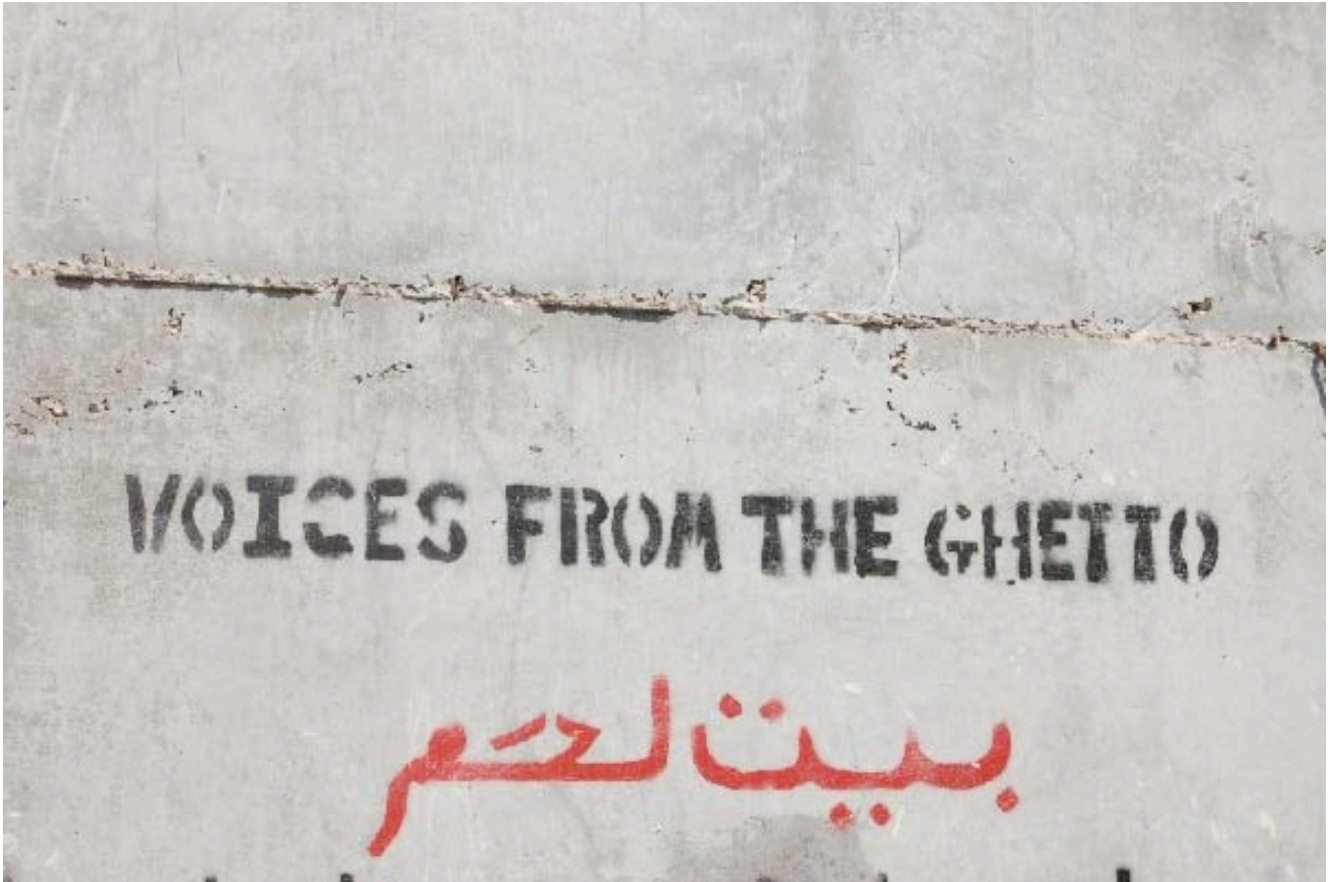


Bethlehem Pack 2008



Graffiti on the separation wall

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Introduction

This pack has been produced by the Amos Trust as a resource to assist with the planning of services and carol concerts for Advent and Christmas, in the hope that these events will reflect the reality of life in present day Bethlehem.

This pack includes:

- Advent prayers to go with the lighting of candles
- Prayers – some specifically on Bethlehem, as well as general prayers for justice, peace, and even hope in a situation that is looking hopeless.
- Poems and meditations.
- Christmas song lyrics (how to obtain the music/recordings)
- Alternative Christmas Carol lyrics – for use in more informal carol events
- Suggestions for practical action

There are also a range of recent photos of Bethlehem and the surrounding wall, which can be provided as jpegs for use in services – contact info@amostrust.org

In some services maybe just one prayer will be suitable, in others a campaigning action might be appropriate. Whatever you do keep Bethlehem on the agenda at Christmas - not in a romantic way, but by raising awareness of the reality of the suffering in a land once known as holy.

Thanks to Chris Rose, Wendy Ross-Barker, Stephen Leah, Ramani Leathard and Deborah Maccoby for their contributions to the alternative carols and prayers.

Garth Hewitt
Director Amos Trust
Hon. Canon, St Georges Cathedral, Jerusalem

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ADVENT PRAYERS

Prayers and thoughts for the Sundays of Advent about the land of the Holy One and the struggling 'little town' of Bethlehem. (Suitable for the time of candle lighting.)

First Sunday of Advent

A prayer for Bethlehem

In this time of Advent may we remember the people of Bethlehem, especially our Christian sisters and brothers.

From this little town the Prince of Peace came,
but today they know no peace.

Imprisoned by a wall, with land taken,
being economically strangled, many have fled.

Yet the church longs to continue its witness here as it has done through the centuries.

As we light our Advent candle today and we start preparing for our journey towards
Christmas

May we not forget Bethlehem - and also continue to pray for all the suffering communities of
the Holy Land.

Garth Hewitt

Second Sunday of Advent

A prayer for justice and peace in the land of the Holy One:

Living Lord, ignite in us a passion for justice
And a yearning to right all wrong.

Strengthen us to work for peace
In the land we call Holy:

For peace among Jew, Christian and Muslim
For reconciliation between communities
For harmony between faiths.

Inspire us to act with the urgency of your quickening fire,
For blessed are the peacemakers
They shall be called the children of God.

Ramani Leathard, Christian Aid and Amos trustee

Third Sunday of Advent

A prayer about the wall of separation in a land once called Holy:

Living God, in Jesus you broke down the wall of division.
We see other walls that divide in our world,
Like the separation wall that cuts into the heart of Palestine,
Imprisoning a whole community –
Cutting them off from one another, from their work, from hospitals,
From education and from places of worship.

God of liberation strengthen them in their struggle,
May hope be born again from the Prince of Peace's birthplace in Bethlehem
And throughout this land once called holy.

May Palestinians find justice at last,
So Palestine and Israel can both live in peace -
Both live securely - both live in freedom
Without walls, without checkpoints, closures and curfews.
May we realise the great message of hope that all are chosen or none,
We're all in this together -
One God, one community, one hope, one future.

*Garth Hewitt
from 'Making Holy Dreams come True' (SPCK)*

Fourth Sunday of Advent

A thought from a Bethlehem Christian for hope and light in the Holy Land

Despite the difficulties in our lives, we will rejoice at the birth of Christ at Christmas. Taking our inspiration from the story in the Bible of Herod's massacre and the flight to Egypt of the Holy Family.

The inspiration comes from knowing that despite being born into those dark days, amid the harsh Roman occupation, and despite the fear that must have gone with the family as they escaped to another country, Jesus did return and was able to spread his ministry of peace and love.

We are living in a similar situation over 2000 years later, behind the apartheid Wall and under the harsh occupation by the Israelis, and many Palestinians are escaping to other countries. But we are persevering and will celebrate Christmas with the message of hope and deliverance that Christ has planted in our hearts.

We pray that through the miraculous birth of Christ we will see the Wall go and change into a bridge of understanding between the two peoples living here.

Our prayer is that through mutuality, inclusivity, and reciprocity, the road to reconciliation will conquer all kinds of fears, paranoia, and injustices and the Holy Land will once again be the source of hope and light.

*Zoughbi Zoughbi,
Director of Wi'am Conflict Resolution Centre, Bethlehem*

BETHLEHEM TODAY

Behind the Wall: Christian Voices Speak

These words are from Christians living in Bethlehem today or elsewhere in the Holy Land. One could be used in place of a reading in a Carol service or read in a sermon slot.

The Christmas Story in Bethlehem Palestine - Mitri Raheb

It is sad that the Christmas story has become a moral-less tale of three huts and three camels and three magi and so it is very romanticised. It is about Santa and it is about the tree and it is about this and about that. While nothing of this is actually mentioned in the Christmas story. So all of this was made up basically.

Because the Christmas story is a story about a very concrete town with very concrete people with very concrete issues and problems and the Christmas story is about a child who is a refugee.

He is a refugee in Bethlehem; he is a refugee in Egypt.

The Christmas story is about Herod who is killing children fearing that children are challenging his empire.

The Christmas story is about good tidings brought to shepherds who are outcasts.

So in that sense I think that Christmas nowadays is everything else but about Christmas. It is more about business and marketing than really about the real issue.

Dr. Mitri Raheb, Pastor of Lutheran Christmas Church Bethlehem

Bethlehem is going down - Zoughbi Zoughbi

"Bethlehem is going down, so we need compassionate listening because in hearing there is healing.

We need prayers and exchange visits as the Palestinians are being collectively punished for their democratic choice. Our hope is in you - we see God in your faces, in your prayers, in your words. I shiver with hope when you come.

In Bethlehem, we are hostages to fear and paranoia. Less than 0.05 per cent get permits for travel; consequently there is no freedom of movement and therefore no freedom of religion.

Displacement of anger is increasing domestic violence and 90 per cent of children are showing signs of trauma. There are many psychological problems and not enough psychiatrists.

Over 500 families have left Bethlehem in the last 5 years (i.e. 3,000 people) and Israeli fundamentalists are creating more and more settlements. We live in a pressure cooker, which is a recipe to make you leave if you can. In the long run the Israelis want the land without the people.

Rachel's Tomb has been surrounded. There were over eighty shops nearby most of which have now closed. The wall is squeezing everywhere and land is being taken.

We do not get post in Bethlehem, or if we do it is severely interfered with. For instance, we had some Disney videos sent from the States for the children - they did not arrive for months; when they did arrive, only the boxes came and the videos were taken out. When we asked the reason, they said it was 'for security'.

Israel worships the new Golden Cow of security, meanwhile the ethnic cleansing of a people is going on, and so in Bethlehem we will end up a museum.

We call for the world, especially the Christian world to recognise its collective responsibility for Bethlehem and what is happening to the West Bank and Gaza.

We want you to help us maximise our prophetic voice and we call for positive investment in Palestine - invest in relationships and faith.

We are passing through the Via Dolorosa. I believe in resurrection and hope, my family have lived here for over four hundred years, so I hope my kids will be able to live peacefully and enjoy their lives and have a safe haven they can call home. I hope the wall will collapse and there will be no more judgement on the basis of colour, gender or race.

We live in a demoralised society... how can we transform the garbage of anger into the flower of compassion? "

Zoughbi Zoughbi - Director of Wi'am Conflict Resolution Centre, Bethlehem

Where to find the baby Jesus today - Alex Awad

People in every generation have to decide which side to take.

At the first Christmas, there were the Herods and there were the people who were waiting for the coming of the Lord, the righteous people, the humble people.

Today Christians need to come to Bethlehem and they need to decide whether to be on the side of the new Herods, the new Pilates, the new Pharaohs, or whether they are going to be on the side of Christ.

To be on the side of Christ is to be on the side of the oppressed in Bethlehem.

Today, the best place to see the Baby Jesus is to go to a refugee camp rather than the Nativity Church.

That is where you see the reality of what is happening on the ground; you see real life, and not just tourist attractions.

So I would say look at things in a Christ-like perspective to see the reality of Bethlehem and stand with the child of Bethlehem and do not stand with Herod.

By our silence, we are accepting the status quo which is devastating to the people of Bethlehem, devastating to the chance of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. What is happening in Palestine has its ripples all over the world.

So if we want peace in the world, which is the Christmas message, then we need to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering in Bethlehem.'

Alex Awad - Dean of Students at Bethlehem Bible College.

The calling of Christmas - Fuad Dagher

Christmas is the business of God becoming flesh - God becoming real – touchable - visible to people.

For God's sake, make your Christian calling become flesh, touchable, felt, in terms of your relationship with your brothers and sisters in this part of the world. For me that is Christmas.

Christmas is allowing your words and your Christian call and your Christian stand, your Christian prophetic voice to become real.

So take your place, and see your role, in all of this and support the church in this part of the world. It may be far away from you physically but you cannot ignore your role spiritually, because if we believe in the one body of Christ, it is your responsibility as much as it is my responsibility.

If Christmas is not this commitment then I think we are fooling ourselves, making it a nice little play on a stage for kids and that is it. It stops there. It has no ongoing relevance.

So make your Christian calling become flesh.

Fuad Dagher - Vicar of St.Paul's Shefa'Amr, Galilee

I wish you would remember us - Bishara Awad

At Christmas I would like to convey hope to the churches and to wish them a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I want you to sing these beautiful carols and to lift yourselves and your souls up to the Lord, but at the same time I wish that you would remember us, the 'living stones' who are here. We are in Bethlehem, and we are your brothers and sisters.

We would love to celebrate together this coming Christmas, and to know that you really care about us, and that you care about the church here in this land and that you care enough to see that the church will continue to exist in the land where it all started.

Bishara Awad - President of Bethlehem Bible College



PRAYERS

Prayer for Peace in the Wounded Places

Vulnerable and Wounded God -
We pray for peace in the wounded places of our world.
Some have problems so great that we are tempted to despair
And feel they can never be solved.

But may we never lose hope.
We are the community of resurrection
So lift our spirits - renew our vision
And particularly give us strength
To support the peacemakers in those places
That are suffering

May we be those who refuse to walk by on the other side -
And be those who build links of love and support.
Vulnerable and Wounded God
We pray for peace in the wounded places of our world.
And hope becomes a reality.

*Garth Hewitt
From 'Making Holy Dreams Come True', (SPCK)*

Making Holy Dreams Come True - (A Christmas prayer for Bethlehem)

What have they done to the "Little Town"?
Imprisoned it in a concrete wall
Bethlehem - once a holy city
Trapped inside a ghetto wall.
Here where angels sang of peace
Where love and hope were born anew
Once surrounded by a heavenly host
Now surrounded by a concrete view.

Yet people crushed and hidden away
Still celebrate on Christmas Eve
Lighting candles for the child -
They still remember - still believe.
So light a candle this Holy Night
For Bethlehem and Beit Sahour
And for all the people caught inside
That cold and grey prison wall
Longing for a world of peace
Where all are treated equally
Where all can recognise their worth

Where all can live with dignity -
Where all can join hands with neighbours
Whether Muslim, Christian, Jew
And find a way to live together
Making Holy dreams come true.

*Garth Hewitt
From 'Making Holy Dreams Come True', (SPCK)*

Light in Darkness

Light of Christ, enter into the darkness of oppression and humiliation
With your warming glow....
Fragile and vulnerable, as when you came new-born in a manger.

Light of Christ, enter into the darkness of indifference and ignorance
With your startling brilliance....
Bold and challenging, as when you confront injustice
With the powerful weakness of self-giving love.

*Wendy Ross-Barker
Advent 2002*

Prayer for Christmas Eve

O God – Christmas Eve is such a wonderful time
Lights and laughter
Excitement and expectation
Candles and carols
Family and friends
Food and fun
And we try to stop to pray –
Or read a Christmas poem of John Betjeman
And I'm always moved as we come to those words
'And is it true? And is it true . . .
The maker of the stars and sea
Become a child on earth for me?'
As he asserts that if this is so 'nothing can compare with this truth'
And I find it hard to carry on because there is nothing more to say
Because it reveals that you are the God
With such a precious love for humanity –
So we must cherish human rights
You are the God of humility – made visible in the ordinary person
In the everyday ordinariness of life
You are the God of the forgotten and insignificant – and therefore there is hope for all and we
too are shown how to live

And you are the God of Bethlehem today –

You would chose it again precisely because the world thinks it is
Insignificant and its people are of no value
So the angels would sing again to say 'here God is at home'
And the wise would be surprised again saying – 'here God is at home'
And shepherds, and carpenters making olive wood gifts,
And tour guides with no work, and drivers of coaches for pilgrims,
And innkeepers and all the community – women, children and men –
Crushed, humiliated, invaded and imprisoned
Can stand up tall with confidence and proclaim 'here God is at home'
Because you have shown your character in Bethlehem –
You affirmed humanity in Bethlehem . . . and still do today
And that is the message of Christmas Eve.

Garth Hewitt
From 'Making Holy Dreams Come True', (SPCK)

More Holy Dreams

God our friend and companion -
Each faith has a longing to follow you - to find the holy.
Each faith has some words close to the golden rule
That Jesus gave us -
'Do unto others as you would have them do to you'.
Each faith tries to deal with ego
So we learn to walk the humble road
And become better neighbours.

We have a dream - rooted in the scriptures
That mountains will be brought low and valleys lifted up -
That mountains of injustice, human rights abuse and oppression
Will be brought low so that a society of justice, humanity and caring
Will become a reality.
That instead of increasing the divisions and bitterness
We will see walls come down and neighbourliness increase
That hope will rise and peace will come
So arms sales fall and resources are shared
So all will see every human as equal
And treasure each one as made in the image of God
Then Holy dreams will become true
And hope becomes a reality.

Garth Hewitt
From 'Making Holy Dreams Come True', (SPCK)



The separation wall

MEDITATIONS AND POEMS

Not so, this Christmas

Did shepherds once guard sheep
On hills near Bethlehem,
Fearing only wild animals?

Not so this Christmas -
When the danger that lurks in the hills is a camouflaged tank.

And were those shepherds made fearful
By bright lights which turned out to be angels
And a loud noise which became
A heavenly song to the glory of God?

Not so this Christmas -
When the sound of the sky is the roar of helicopter gunships,
The light, the bursting rocket.

Did shepherds once walk freely
From those hills down to the town
Where folk slept soundly - apart from that group in the stable?

Not so this Christmas -
When the route is blocked by checkpoints
And a towering concrete wall,
And citizens, walled in, fear for themselves and for their children.

Is that family still there - poor, vulnerable?
Mother, father and the child
Who will know the suffering and sorrow and death,
Yet through it all, bring hope.

People of God, go afresh to Bethlehem
In the light of reality.
Occupied then - occupied now
Innocents slaughtered then - and now.

Go and see the child who will grow
To be the man who cries for justice,
who dies to bring new life.

He invites us to follow him.

© *Wendy Ross-Barker*
November 2003

Children of God

Child of God, you came to Bethlehem,
Born into poverty and vulnerable
In a city under occupation....
You came -
And innocent children were slaughtered
At the command of a king
Who saw you as a threat to his security.

Children of God, living in Bethlehem,
Forced into poverty and vulnerable
In a city under occupation....
He comes -
Where innocents are slaughtered
In the interest of security....
Sharing the pain

© *Wendy Ross-Barker*
Advent 2002

Palestinian Psalm 23

This poem takes Psalm 23 as its inspiration, and was written as a celebration of the work of the International Solidarity Movement, Christian Peacemaker Teams and other Peace Observers who accompany and protect Palestinians in their homeland from illegal settlers and foreign soldiers.

The Lord is our Peace Observer,
We shall be protected.

He comes with us as we harvest in our fields.
He stays with us to report any violence against us
His presence guarantees our safety.

He escorts our children to and from school
For they are the future, our treasure.

Even though we walk in the shadow
Of the illegal Apartheid Wall
We will fear no violence, for you are with us.

Your pen and your email, they defend us
You report the truth to the world.
You give us hope, despite the presence of the occupiers.
You show that our lives are important, that people do care

I pray that freedom and peace may soon be ours,
All the days of our lives
And we shall dwell in the Holy Land forever.

Stephen Leah 2007

Where is that Light that Shines in the Darkness?

Is it hidden behind a 25ft high separation wall?
Is it trapped without a travel permit?
Is it labelled a fundamentalist, a terrorist?
Or is it weeping over Abraham's children?

Where is that light that shines in the darkness?

Is it hidden behind a wall of indifference?
Is it trapped behind self-interest and greed?
Is it labelled a victim, of famine, natural disasters and war?
Or is it crying out for justice, truth and compassion?

Where is that light that shines in the darkness?

Is it hidden by a mothers arms?

Is it trapped - a refugee, a displaced person?

Is it labelled as the illegitimate child of a teenage mother?

Or does it come creeping into our midst?

Where is that light that shines in the darkness?

Is it hidden by the lens I see through?

Is it trapped by my self-image?

Is it labelled by my prejudice and mistrust?

Or is it slowly coming into view.

Chris Rose, Amos Trust

Did Rachel Laugh?

(Written on the annexation of Rachel's Tomb)

Did Rachel giggle as Jacob, a stranger, rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well for her?

Did she laugh at her sister's substitution on her wedding day, or did she, as I suspect, find that distinctly unfunny?

Did she laugh behind Jacob's back when God renamed him Israel, or was she too bitter about her infertile state, or too resigned to his 'struggles with God' to care? Were there tears of joy at the birth of Joseph and did the proud parents laugh together at his first attempts to walk?

And what of Israel's tears at Rachel's death, as he gave thanks for another new son yet lost the woman he had loved? Did his tears water the ground as he buried Rachel outside Bethlehem on the Pilgrims road, a covenant reminder on the journey between the Patriarchs graves and Jerusalem, the future City of God?

Yet in death Rachel weeps and refuses comfort, weeping for the innocent slaughtered in Bethlehem.

Rachel do you still weep and find no comfort? Do you still weep for the end of innocence? Do you weep for Bethlehem's children whose future is denied them? Do you weep as their childhood is eroded – as they witness their land being confiscated, their livelihoods uprooted and their families dispersed. Do you weep for Bethlehem's Palestinian children?

But why should you cry for them? It was Esau, Jacob's brother, who married Ishmael's daughter. Jacob chose you to be the mother of the children of Israel. Your grave is

Judaism's third most holy site. It is a shrine for a million visitors a year and a place where infertile Jewish women come and weep, beseeching you to intervene with God.

Has there been so much pain that you cannot find it in your heart to care for the Palestinians? Have the centuries of anti-Semitism and persecution been too much to bear? Have you become as hard and cold as the concrete Separation wall that cuts you off from Bethlehem's residents?

Rachel, 'the ewe', do you rest more easily now that you can no longer see the shepherds fields where angels pronounced 'Peace and goodwill to all people'? Do you, like some English village, delight in the new by pass road that ensures that your visitors are only Israel's descendants, those who come to honour you?

Or do you miss the travellers on the pilgrims' road, those who journey from Hebron to Jerusalem? Do you miss familiar Arab faces passing by your tomb on the way up to Jerusalem as they have each year since the first Pentecost? Do you miss the Palestinian graves and homes, which have been your companions for centuries? Do you recognise that their DNA profile is closer to yours than many scattered through the Diaspora?

But if you cannot cry for the Palestinians then weep for Israel's children. As peace slips from them, beneath the clatter of armoured vehicles and helicopter's blades, and the explosions of home made rockets.

Weep, that the dream of the return has been marred by fear and distrust. Weep, that power has once again overtaken compassion. That vengeance has triumphed over humanity. Weep as their leaders follow their namesake and grasp more and more of God's blessing – the gift of the land.

Weep because the wall that surrounds you will not bring peace, weep for the future generations who will have to act as wardens, jealously guarding God's blessing. And weep with those women who come to you begging for God's blessing in them. Begging to feel new life, yet fear that their blessing may all too soon be tragically taken away, in an endless cycle of violence.

Rachel weep! Until all recognise that you have cried enough.

Chris Rose - Amos Trust



The gate at Bethlehem

SONGS

Songs to use as meditations

They've Cancelled Christmas (The Wall Must Fall)

They've cancelled Christmas in Bethlehem
They've cancelled peace in Bethlehem
In a land once known as holy the gun is in control
They've cancelled Christmas in Bethlehem

They've cancelled freedom in Bethlehem
They've cancelled hope in Bethlehem
They've locked the little town behind a ghetto wall
They've cancelled Christmas in Bethlehem

Though angels are singing – they're trapped behind the wall
Yet angels keep singing down in Beit Sahour
And if our Christmas songs and prayers are not to be in vain
We must pull down that prison wall that's strangling Bethlehem

The wall must fall – the wall must fall
If peace on earth is to come
The Wall must fall

They've cancelled wise men in Bethlehem
They've cancelled shepherds in Bethlehem
They've stopped the wise men at the checkpoint and the shepherds can't leave home
They're under curfew in Bethlehem

Though angels are singing – they're trapped behind the wall
Yet angels keep singing down in Beit Sahour
And if our Christmas songs and prayers are not to be in vain
We must pull down that prison wall that's strangling Bethlehem

The wall must fall – the wall must fall
If peace on earth is to come
The Wall must fall

They've cancelled Christmas in Bethlehem

Garth Hewitt
Available for download from www.amostrust.org/downloads

Hidden From View

Hidden from view – hidden from view
Every dream – broken in two
The little town's a prison – the wall keeps them in
Bury my heart at Bethlehem
Where everybody's hidden from view
Forgotten and hidden from view

Hidden from view – hidden from view
Hollowed eyes betrayed and confused
The land has been stolen – so have the trees
So has the water – so has the peace
Even Christmas is hidden from view
Everyone's hidden from view

Hidden from view – hidden from view
Your children will ask you, "What did you do
When they made a ghetto of Bethlehem?
Did you keep silent when the soldiers came
When they built the wall of shame
Were you just hidden from view?"

Hidden from view – hidden from view
Voices from the ghetto – calling to you
Herod is back in control again
Children are suffering in Bethlehem
Where everyone's hidden from view
Forgotten and hidden from view

Hidden from view – hidden from view
Every dream – broken in two
The little town's a prison – the wall keeps them in
Bury my heart at Bethlehem
Where everybody's hidden from view
Forgotten and hidden from view

Garth Hewitt

Both "They've Cancelled Christmas (The Wall Must Fall)" and "Hidden From View" are available on Garth's album Bethlehem, Palestine which is available from www.amosttrust.org/shop.

The following songs use traditional hymn tunes.

Advent and Christmas

O sad and troubled Bethlehem,
We hear your longing cry
For peace and justice to be born
And cruel oppression die.
How deep your need for that great gift
Of love in human form.
Let Christ in you be seen again
And hearts by hope made warm.

While morning stars and evening stars
Shine out in your dark sky,
Despair now stalks your troubled streets
Where innocents still die.
And Jesus, child of Mary,
Whose love will never cease,
Feels even now your pain and fear,
Longs with you for your peace.

Amazingly and lovingly
Jesus, the child, has come
And, brought to birth through human pain,
Makes broken hearts his home.

He comes to comfort all who weep,
To challenge every wrong
And, living with the weak and poor,
Becomes their hope, their song.

© Wendy Ross-Barker (2001)
Tune - Forest Green

Christian People Raise your Voices

Christian people, raise your voices,
Tell of Bethlehem today,
Suffering while the churches rejoice,
Fearful, where the peace-child lay.

When you share the Christmas story
Let the truth of it be heard.
Look beyond the tinsel glory;
Listen for the Living Word.

Hear him in his people's weeping
Feel their longing and despair.
Threat of harm disturbs their sleeping,
Wake, God's people, be aware!

© Wendy Ross-Barker (2004)
Tune – Stuttgart



Graffiti on the separation wall

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS CAROLS

The following "alternative" carols have been created to reflect the current situation in Bethlehem, the impact of the Wall and the isolation of the people.

O Come All Ye Faithful

O Come All Ye Faithful
Those who care for justice,
O Look ye, O look ye at Bethlehem.

Come and behold it,
Under occupation.
O come let's not ignore it,
O come let's not ignore it,
O come let's not ignore it -
Tell the world.

Sing all ye people,
Sing in indignation,
Be with the citizens of Bethlehem.

Sing out for justice,
Freedom from oppression.
O come let's not ignore it,
O come let's not ignore it,
O come let's not ignore it -
Tell the world.

O come all ye faithful
Those who care for justice,
O Look ye, O look ye at Bethlehem.

*Deborah Maccoby
Just Peace UK 2002*

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O Little Town of Bethlehem
Imprisoned you now lie.
Above thy deep and silent grief,
Surveillance drones now fly.
And through thy old streets standeth,
A huge illegal Wall.

The hopes and dreams that peace will come
Are dashed in this year's fall.

O morning stars together,
Look down upon this crime.
The people sing to God the King
But justice, who can find?
Yes, Christ was born of Mary,
God's love remains supreme.
But mortals sleep as children weep,
Their pain is never seen.

How silently, how silently,
The world and Church protests.
As checkpoints grow and towns confined,
As settlers steal and rest.
No ear may hear the outcry,
As Israel's Wall is built.
While meek souls muse, Apartheid rules -
We speak or share in guilt.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Give strength to us, we pray.
Cast out our fears and open eyes.
O give us voice today!
We stand against injustice,
The Occupation must end.
May justice rule our Lord's birthplace,
May now Christ's peace descend.

Stephen Leah 2007

At the army checkpoint

The following is a version of "In the bleak mid winter", reflecting on the practice of the occupation of holding expectant mothers at checkpoints on their way to hospital.

At the army checkpoint,
Queues had stood for hours.
Cars stood still in gridlock
Alongside watchtowers.
Guards barked out their orders
Under hot sunshine.
At the army checkpoint
In Palestine.

Amongst all the traffic,

On a car's backseat,
A woman lay in labour,
Midwives she must meet.
At the army checkpoint
A layby place sufficed;
A precious little baby;
A mother's special child.

Businessmen and tradesmen,
May have gathered there.
Dust and noise and car fumes
Filled the noonday air.
But in this mother's anguish
Doctors were denied;
Soldiers stopped their travel
And the precious boy; he died.

What should my response be
Weak though I am?
If I were a statesman
I would bring a plan
If I were more famous
I'd do all I dare.
Yet what I can I'll promise,
I'll show that I care.

Stephen Leah 2007

TAKING ACTION

Here are some practical ways that churches and individuals can get involved in supporting people in Palestine:

Supporting Wi'am's Christmas campaign

For many families in Bethlehem Christmas is no longer a time of celebration but despair.

At this time of It is hard to for families to celebrate when parents see little hope for the future, when there is no money for presents and when the New Year brings school bills that they will not be able to pay.

Amos supports our partner Wi'am's annual Christmas appeal. They will be holding a community Christmas celebration, with theatre, music, games during which they hope to give up to 1,500 children a gift toward their education. They will also be supporting the elderly.



Selling olive wood carvings

Due to decreased tourism and the wall, craftsmen in Bethlehem are no longer able to make a living from their work carving olive wood.

Please contact Amos Trust for information on running an olivewood stall in your church or community, supporting the people of Bethlehem directly by selling this beautiful hand-carved olive wood. Contact info@amostrust.org for more information.

Selling Zaytoun olive oil

Zaytoun works to find a market place for Palestinian produce in the UK, supporting farmers. More information about becoming a Zaytoun representative, selling olive oil and soaps can be found at www.zaytoun.org

Divestment

By encouraging those who have their money invested in companies that are benefiting from the occupation and the wall, such as Caterpillar. At present the Church of England still has shares in Caterpillar. Please contact The Inter Faith Group for Morally Responsible Investment (IMRI) if you would like further details on divestment – IMRI, All Hallows on the Wall, 83 London Wall London EC2M 5ND.



Tawfiq Salsaa in his workshop

Pilgrimage

Most important of all come and visit the 'living stones'. Amos has an annual pilgrimage each June. For further information contact Amos Trust:

Amos Trust
All Hallows on the Wall
83 London Wall
London EC2M 5ND

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Charity no: 29259

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