



amos trust

Bethlehem Pack 2015

Joy To The World





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You can find our new [Children's Resources](#) for Palestine on our website.



introduction

Today the 'Little Town of Bethlehem' lies behind an eight metre high concrete separation wall, built by the Israeli occupation forces.

If Jesus was born today in Bethlehem, the Wise Men would spend several hours queueing to enter the town. The shepherds, despite being residents of Bethlehem, would struggle to graze their sheep as their land, annexed by the building of the Separation Wall and inaccessible because of a lack of freedom to travel and restrictions on trade, make it impossible for them to earn a living.

Over the last months as tension and violence has risen across Israel and Palestine, people remain unaware of the desperation and oppression that fuels this. For peace to come to Palestine and Israel, we must speak out about the injustices faced by Palestinians and support them with our prayers, both at Christmas and throughout the year. The Bethlehem Pack has been put together to help individuals and churches talk about the current situation at carol services and Christmas events.

We have included a wide range of materials for churches coming to this issue for the first time as well as those who already have an awareness of the situation. This pack contains facts about the current situation, prayers and reflections using the words of people living in Bethlehem, all suitable to be read out loud.

There are suggestions of ways you and your church can support the people living in Bethlehem and across Palestine: perhaps by using some of the family and children's activities [which are available on our website](#) or using a couple of the prayers on [page 9](#) in your service.

You might like to support our Christmas Appeal for the children of Palestine [on page 5](#) or use the 'Ten Simple Steps to promote a Just Peace' [which you can find on our website](#).



facts about bethlehem today

Here are some facts about the situation in Bethlehem today.

Today Bethlehem is surrounded by an eight metre high separation wall with military watch towers. It was built by the Israeli occupation forces. The International Court of Justice in The Hague has stated that the wall goes against international law and should come down. No-one can enter Bethlehem from Jerusalem without going through a military checkpoint.

Muslim and Christian Palestinians make up the population of Bethlehem. They have been living together peacefully in Bethlehem for generations and many can trace their ancestry back to the earliest Christian community. However none of these residents have the right to move freely. They require a permit from the Israeli authorities to go through the Separation Wall, which has cut people off from their shops and their land. It has made busy roads into dead ends and one in four people are now unemployed.

Trees, especially olive trees, are very important in Palestinian culture. Each autumn as the olive harvest approaches olive trees owned by Palestinian farmers are burnt or chopped down by small groups of highly aggressive Israeli settlers. Since 1994, almost 60,000 trees have been destroyed.

In the Bethlehem area alone, there are 19 illegal Israeli settlements taking Palestinian land from local families and choking Palestinian communities. If Jesus was born today in Bethlehem, much of the surrounding shepherds' fields would have been confiscated for illegal Israeli settlements.

87% of Bethlehem's land has been taken by Israeli occupation enforced restrictions. This means that people are forced to live in cramped conditions. In some places the separation wall is built so close to buildings that the windows are blocked and daylight can't get in.



amos christmas appeal 2015

An appeal for the Children of Palestine.

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

This Christmas our thoughts turn to the Holy Land as we remember all the children of Palestine affected by the occupation.

JOY TO THE WORLD

THIS CHRISTMAS AS WE BUY GIFTS FOR OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, NIECES AND NEPHEWS, PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A GIFT TO THE CHILDREN OF PALESTINE.

- £10 provides vital medicines for children (like Nadia) suffering from anaemia or provides nutritional educational sessions for their parents
- £30 provides two physiotherapy sessions for a child to help them recover from injuries (like those sustained by Mohammed) in the conflict
- £50 provides a course of six psychosocial sessions helping children (like Lian) deal with trauma
- a regular gift to Amos Palestine allows our partners to increase their work with those living under occupation on the West Bank and in Gaza.

To donate to this year’s Christmas appeal, [please visit our website](#) or send a cheque made payable to ‘Amos Trust’ (please put ‘2015 Christmas Appeal’ on the back of the cheque) to:

**AMOS TRUST, ST CLEMENT’S, 1 ST CLEMENT’S COURT,
LONDON EC4N 7HB**

Thank you for your support.



Three stories of Palestinian children in Gaza who will benefit from Amos' Christmas appeal.

NADIA'S STORY

Nadia is 4, like many children in Gaza she has suffered from severe malnourishment and anaemia as a result of the blockade and food insecurity. If not corrected early this can lead to reduced IQ, decreased resilience to infection, shorter life expectancy and a high likelihood of developing rickets leading to long term disability.

Anaemia is easily treated with iron supplements but these cannot be brought through the blockade as iron is coated in glycerine and therefore seen as a threat. Nadia's mother now attends the NECC nutritional program learning to provide healthy and affordable food for her children.

When Nadia was found to be anaemic the NECC provided her with treatment. Nadia is no longer anaemic and is now thriving.

MOHAMMED'S STORY

Mohammed is 12. Water supply for Palestinians is characterised by water shortages influenced by the occupation. In Gaza the aquifers are polluted by salt and nitrate from wastewater infiltration and fertilisers and are no longer drinkable.

Mohammed's mother asked him to go and fetch water from a water tanker when he was hit by shrapnel on the left side of his head. Post surgery Mohammed was left hemiplegic. Al Ahli Hospital performed his life saving surgery and supported him post operatively with physiotherapy rehabilitation. He is now starting to get some movement in his right side.

Mohammed's mother explained that he is particularly precious as he is her only surviving son; his 2 brothers were both killed in the last war.

**LIAN'S STORY**

Lian is 4, during the war last summer Lian's home was exposed to regular tank shelling' whilst she and her family were inside. Lian saw people lying dead and injured outside her home. Her family were forced to move to the UNRWA school shelter. As a result of this trauma Lian suffered transient muteness and was struggling to communicate with others.

Lian's family sought help from Amos Trust partner NECC who provide psychosocial support. Upon arrival she refused to talk, was extremely withdrawn and frightened, crying and refusing to join in.

After several sessions with the Hadeel counsellor using art therapy and play therapy she is starting to join in more and even take on leadership roles in some games. Her teacher has also noticed a marked improvement.

candles and christmas cards for 2015

LIGHT A CANDLE FROM BETHLEHEM THIS CHRISTMAS

Darkness cannot drive out darkness;
only light can do that. Hate cannot drive
out hate; only love can do that.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

This Christmas why not light a beeswax candle from Bethlehem as you remember the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. As you light your Bethlehem candle you may like to use one of the prayers from this pack ([please see page 9](#)). Candles cost £5 for a pack of 20 and can be [purchased from our website](#).



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Send our 'Joy To The World' Christmas cards – based around a Banksy image from Gaza, to encourage people to think about Palestine this Christmas. [Please visit our website to buy your cards.](#)

visit palestine and tell your story

The best way to really understand what's going on, on the ground in Palestine is to visit. We have trips for all people.

- you can run the [Bethlehem Marathon](#) on April 1st 2016
- you can join an [Alternative Pilgrimage](#) to see the sites and meet the people
- you can come to the [Bet Lahem Live Festival](#) and volunteer for our summer volunteer programme in August 2016
- or join our brand new [Taste of Palestine](#) culinary tour in October 2016

amos bethlehem carol service

On Tuesday 1st December we are holding our annual Amos Bethlehem Carol service at St James's, Piccadilly in London.

This captures something of life today in Bethlehem, has a range of music, poetry and readings produced specifically for it and features the Vox Holloway Choir and special guest vocalist Beth Rowley.

It's a great way to start the Christmas period and a great thing to invite people to. It also ends with mulled wine and mince pies. [Please visit our website](#) for further details.



prayers, poems and reflections

MARY, THE MAGNIFICAT, JESUS AND JUSTICE

This reflection is ideal for using in a small group during Advent.
Read aloud these three Bible Passages:

– **LUKE 1: 46 – 56**

Mary's Song or The Magnificat

– **MATTHEW 5: 1–12**

The Beatitudes

– **LUKE 4: 16-21**

Here Jesus reads from Isaiah 61: 1-2

Ask people to listen to the reflection and see what idea, line or word strikes them the most. Allow time at the end for people to share this and discuss what they have heard.

If Jesus had a manifesto then it is perhaps a combination of the passage from Isaiah 61 that he is said to have read out at the synagogue in Nazareth and his teaching on the low mountain in Galilee known as the Beatitudes.

Both are speeches of poetic imagination as he proclaims the coming 'basilea', the mysterious future he talked about constantly, often translated as "the kingdom of God".

We listen to his teaching and hear resonances not only of the Hebrew prophets but of his mother Mary who, from what we can glean from the Scriptures, was courageous, steadfast and able to see such a new future.

When she realised she was to carry the child of God, she said yes. When Jesus himself was not interested after the wine ran out at Cana, she said "do whatever he tells you". She could see what the new future might be, the new economy of abundance, justice, generosity, peace.



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

But perhaps the most striking and impassioned aspect of Mary is found in the words given to her by Luke in his gospel. Based on the song of Hannah when she found herself carrying her child Samuel, the Magnificat sings this new future into being; the new future that began in Bethlehem.

It calls for a spirit ready to rejoice at God's presence; it speaks of justice as if it were already here; God has exalted the humble and meek and the rich have been sent empty away.

In proclaiming his vision of a world set free from oppression and tyranny, Jesus is echoing words sung by Mary before he was born. He was the son of God but it's obvious he was his mother's son too.

REV'D CANON LUCY WINKETT

CHAIR OF AMOS TRUSTEES & VICAR OF ST JAMES'S CHURCH, PICCADILLY



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

A PRAYER FOR WORLD WEEK OF PRAYER FOR PALESTINE 2015

God-with-us, you sit down in our midst. Nothing can separate us from your love – not towering concrete walls or the deep darkness between searchlights; not distance from friends or despair in our hearts that the world's wrongs cannot be changed. You are with our brothers crowded at the checkpoint, with our sisters witnessing for peace: you sit down in our midst.

Born into poverty to displace people living under occupation, you shared our human lives, and we know that your love can never be contained by the walls of separation. You sit down in our midst, God-with-us.
Amen.

JAN SUTCH PICKARD

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
TRUSTEE, AMOS TRUST



A PRAYER FOR BETHLEHEM THIS CHRISTMAS

We pray for Bethlehem this Christmas.
May the town where the Prince of Peace was born know
peace this Christmas.

May mothers in the refugee camps not weep for their
children as Rachel wept, but see a future for them free
from fear and oppression.

May the people of Bethlehem experience the good news
the angels promised and hope be rekindled in a community
that sees so few signs of hope.

May the leaders of Israel and Palestine know that their
fates are intertwined and pursue the difficult steps toward
a just peace.

And may we be resolute in our support of all those who seek
to bring peace, justice and reconciliation in a land we long to
call Holy.

CHRIS ROSE
DIRECTOR, AMOS TRUST



YOUNG LIVES MATTER

In October 2015 a fresh wave of unrest broke out on the West Bank amidst growing concern from the local Muslim communities that Jewish groups would be allowed to pray on Haram el Sharif – Temple Mount.

A child coming home from school was shot in the chest and killed by Israeli defence force soldiers in Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem. It was claimed that he was throwing stones at the military encampment around Rachel's tomb. Amos Trust's partner Al-Rouad is based in Aida camp. They try to teach children beautiful non-violent resistance, so that children will not die like this.

I was in Nicaragua when I heard the news and I thought of them, of the young people in the camp whom I have visited many times and how anyone could justify the death of another young life.

YOUNG LIVES MATTER

A child shot in the chest – coming home from school.
 A school with windows boarded over to stop Israeli military snipers firing in.
 Kids throwing rocks at watch towers
 Hoping to hurl them over the Wall and land them in the neighbouring army compound.
 The chase from soldiers
 Tear gas shells bouncing down the road
 Ducking into doorways sling in hand
 Rubber coated bullets cracking into plaster
 A daily game
 Of futile resistance
 That this day has turned to murder.



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

Another martyr
Another legitimate killing
Justified by rules of engagement
Or another child
Shot dead going home from school.

Another mother weeping for her lost son
In the shadow of Rachel's tomb
where she too weeps for her lost children.
There is no comfort for this death
There is no comfort in Bethlehem today.

He was a refugee for 50 years before his birth
A life lived under occupation
A life in a camp surrounded by a Wall
Built to stop him from going home.
A child who never tasted freedom
Or breathed the winds of peace
A child who will never again
Gaze at the stars above Bethlehem
And dream of the promise they once held

CHRIS ROSE
DIRECTOR, AMOS TRUST
01.12.15



COMING TO BETHLEHEM

**“Banksy? You want tour of Banksy
Come, I show you everything.
Come, come, come
Not Banksy? What’s wrong with Banksy?
Nativity church, maybe manger square, field of shepherds?
Come
My taxi is here
Come.”**

Arrival in Bethlehem
Walking through the checkpoint
Waiting in line at the turnstiles, with people returning
from work.
Going in through the door in the Separation Wall
Then down the caged in slope to:
Young men selling Arabic coffee,
Bar b q’ed corn, green almonds, chickpeas
And a large flat tray of kanapfe.
Taxis wedged in with their drivers calling out
Offering to take people home
Or show tourists Bethlehem’s sites.

And like so many before me I think of Mary and Joseph
walking this road.
Coming down from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on the
Hebron road.
Arriving at Rachel’s tomb, knowing that they were now
approaching Bethlehem
Did old women sit outside the Tomb selling charms and
trinkets?
Were soldiers checking papers, seeing who was on the road?
Did graffiti denounce the (Roman) occupation, mocking
imperial rule, and puppet rulers desire for wealth and status?



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

Coming to Bethlehem to be counted,
So that the occupiers taxes could be levied
Searching for a place to start their family
The hunt for work in a town over running with craftsmen
Always longing to go home, yet knowing this was impossible.

And their excitement and expectation
That the promises given so long ago
Were about to be fulfilled?
“A ruler to come from Bethlehem.
To lead a government of peace, justice and right living.”

And today as I drive through Bethlehem
Past the refugee camps,
The UNWRA schools
Military watch towers
Memorials to martyrs and those imprisoned
Built over fields
And empty shops

I long for the day
When International promises, made too long ago,
will be fulfilled.
When Palestinians will know a government of peace
and justice,
When they be free to live where they choose to live, to return
to their homes and to visit families trapped in Gaza
When Bethlehem’s economy will boom and its population
thrive
And on that day I will walk from Manger Square to
Rachel’s Tomb and a Palestinian taxi driver will yell

**“Al Quds? Olives Mountain
Holy Sepulchre
My taxi is here.**



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

**Come come, come, come
Maybe Nazareth, Tel Aviv
Gaza City
Come I have all the time you need
I take you
Come, come”**

**CHRIS ROSE
DIRECTOR, AMOS TRUST**

01.12.15

Today Rachel's Tomb is cut off from Bethlehem by the 25ft high concrete Separation Wall. Palestinian Taxi drivers living on the West Bank cannot drive to Jerusalem, inside Israel and there are two Walls to traverse before you could get to Gaza.

NEVER UNDERSTAND – A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION ON GAZA

The hopes of a political resolution are once more smouldering and growing cold.
The promises of aid to rebuild the ashes of Gaza have proved as worthless as the sand on the shore at Beach Camp.
Independent reports and calls for international justice have once again been denounced as ‘politically inexpedient’.
New Year celebrations will be overshadowed by the commemoration of many deaths.

The Christmas story reminds us that the promises of politicians and the latest round of peace talks are not where hope is found.
These are the flashlights which dazzle us,
Not the slow burn that glows in the darkest places.



The slow realisation
 That lies will become transparent,
 That violence will not lead to peace,
 That human dignity always exerts itself,
 That beauty appears amidst the wreckage,
 That our protests are not in vain,
 That hope is found in the birth of a child –
 in an occupied village
 The miraculous daily promise of new life.

WORDS BY CHRIS ROSE
DIRECTOR, AMOS TRUST

OH RASCAL CHILDREN OF GAZA
BY GAZAN POET KHALED JUMA

Oh rascal children of Gaza.
 You who constantly disturbed me
 with your screams under my window.
 You who filled every morning
 with rush and chaos.
 You who broke my vase and
 stole the lonely flower on my balcony.
 Come back, and scream as you want
 and break all the vases.
 Steal all the flowers.
 Come back...
 Just come back...

Rafah-born author and poet Khaled Juma wrote this heart-breaking tribute to the children of the Gaza Strip amidst the missiles striking his hometown.

[Please click here](#) to visit Khaled's illustrated poem online.



FROM THE HEART OF BETHLEHEM

O God, from the heart of Bethlehem
 From the heart of occupied land
 You have sent a message
 To shake the world

Thank you for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem
 That gives so many clues as to your character
 In the birth of this child we discover a spirituality
 Of hope, peace, justice
 Thank you that a child born in simplicity
 Amongst a poor community
 Speaks of the values of the way of peace

Thank you that you are a God of the poor
 The marginalised
 Those for whom there is no room
 And that's why this is a way of life and a theology
 That gives such hope
 Because no one is forgotten

May we hear the call
 And live out the lifestyle
 That helps to build a community
 That reflects this alternative way
 Of a loving God
 A community of justice
 that asserts simplicity,
 Humility
 And the worth of every human being

Thank you that you are a humble, generous God
 Who stopped to show us the way of love
 In Bethlehem.

**WORDS BY GARTH HEWITT
 FOUNDER, AMOS TRUST**



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

voices from palestine

Here are some words from Palestinian Christians. These statements are intended to be read aloud as part of a service, perhaps leading into prayers for peace.

You may also like to share our light-hearted 'Happy Christmas From Bethlehem' film with your congregation.



**A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM VERA BABOUN,
MAYOR OF BETHLEHEM**

It is difficult to write a message of hope while living under a state of disparity and despair.

Being born and raised in Palestine, the land which yearns for peace and justice, I live the realities of my Palestinian nation; realities of hegemonic occupation, systematic land confiscation, brutal wars, and apartheid walls. A national saga that my ancestors lived, we live, and our grandchildren will seemingly live.

Bethlehem is besieged with settlements and a horrendous wall that does not only wall in the city, but its spirit, its Faithful, and probably the message of peace itself. Our youth are leaving to seek a better life outside their walled city, our elders are still living the dream of peace and justice, and pilgrims come to pray in its Holy Grotto. Do they pray for Bethlehem itself?

I live a life that oscillates between reassurance and anxiety, tranquility and panic, gain and loss, and hope and despair. I wondered whether to be hopeful, desperate, hopefully desperate, or desperately hopeful. As a faithful, I have had to lead my life as a woman, a mother and a mayor with adamant hope and resilience. Hope that stems from the intrinsic and holy message of my city; Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is a city that is open for all who respect and appreciate Bethlehem and its message. When peace was ordained to the world through the birth of our Lord in Bethlehem, it was not ordained for 'Bethlehemiters' only, but for everyone. It is a grace that we need to cherish and preserve. True peace can never prevail in the world as long as the city of peace does not live in peace.



But we remain hopeful that the star of Bethlehem will be forever sparkling, its bells ringing, and its faithful singing Glory to the Lord, Glory to justice, hope, love, and Peace.

VERA BABOUN
MAYOR OF BETHLEHEM

SAMI AWAD IS THE DIRECTOR OF AMOS TRUST'S PARTNER, THE HOLY LAND TRUST, A CHRISTIAN PEACE ORGANISATION. THE HOLY LAND TRUST PROMOTES NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE AND PEACEFUL PROTEST, AND IS BASED IN BETHLEHEM.



Greetings to you this Christmas season from the Little Town of Bethlehem. This 'Little Town', the place where the Prince of Peace was born continues to face daily hardships. Just this year alone, in the surrounding beautiful villages, hundreds, if not thousands of olive trees were burned by illegal Israeli settlers for absolutely no reason but to humiliate and damage the source of livelihood for hundreds of Palestinian families.

Land theft for the building of the illegal separation wall and expanding illegal settlements is worse than ever before. No matter where you stand in Bethlehem, you can see the effects of the cold grip of this brutal and humiliating occupation.

It is important for us here in Bethlehem to know that other Christians around the world agree that this occupation has to end. It is encouraging for us to know that people have realised that you can stand up for the human rights of the Palestinians without compromising the rights of Israelis to also live in peace.

You do not have to pick a side. I invite you this Christmas season to continue praying for peace for both communities that live in what we all call the Holy Land.



I remind you this Christmas season of the story of the Magi who came to Bethlehem in response to King Herod's request to go and find out what is happening there.

Once they came, saw, met, and worshipped with those who lived in this town, their lives were transformed fully and they could not go back the way they came.

They did not declare war on King Herod or demand that he was overthrown; they simply chose a different path, a path that honoured the true message and spirit of the Prince of Peace.

A message of peace on earth and goodwill to all, both Israelis and Palestinians.

SAMI AWAD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HOLY LAND TRUST

**A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM SUHAILA TARAZI
DIRECTOR OF THE AL AHLI ARAB HOSPITAL, GAZA**



From the small churches of the Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholics in Gaza, and from the only Christian hospital, Ahli Arab Hospital, we send you Christmas greetings.

This time, should be one of peace and good will to all people, but sadly, this does not happen. To celebrate Christmas, the Israeli Defense Force allows Christians from Gaza to cross through the siege walls, into Israel and to go on to Bethlehem.

It is a hard journey and an expensive one, but an important pilgrimage for all Christians. Permits are given to Christians at Christmas and at Easter, but families often cannot travel together and young men between 16 and 40 years of age are forbidden permission to travel from Gaza and into Israel.



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They were homeless on arrival and in need of medical help as the arrival of their first baby was imminent.

Jesus was born of Mary, of the House of David, a Palestinian by birth, and Jewish by heritage.

In Gaza today, there are 100,000 Palestinians homeless too. In the last war of 2014 their homes were destroyed or damaged. They are still living under harsh conditions and face yet another cold, wet winter in substandard conditions.

Gaza remains under tight Israeli siege, its people captive with no freedom of movement, in or out. Most lack the basic necessities of life and are in need of adequate food, fuel, electricity and medical care. Construction material is needed to repair damaged houses and this is not available.

Yet we continue to pray for peace and justice and that this Christmas maybe a time of blessing for all.

SUHAILA TARAZI

DIRECTOR OF THE AL AHLI ARAB HOSPITAL, GAZA

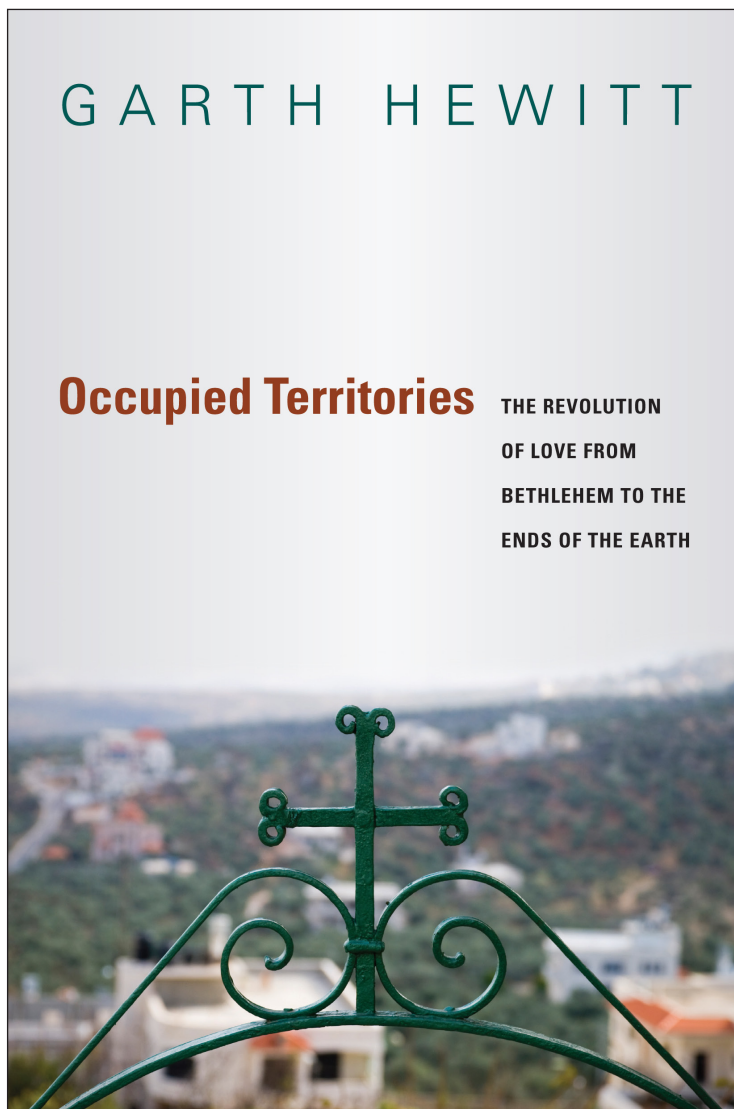


books and films

BOOKS

Garth's new book 'Occupied Territories: The Revolution of Love from Bethlehem to the Ends of the Earth' is ideal reading for the Advent and Christmas season. It reflects the spirituality, the theology and the action that underpins and motivates Amos.

It has both the prophetic challenge and the hope that is at the heart of Amos. [The book is available to purchase from our website.](#)





FILMS

Short films are such an effective way to communicate to people the situation people face in Palestine today.

Amos has created a series of new films for people to use – including a special Christmas message from Bethlehem. All our films are available on Vimeo and are free to download and share.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

A fabulous 5 minute film about what Christmas would be like in modern Bethlehem with interviews with local shepherds, midwives and shop-keepers. Ideal to show in a service or small group. The film was made by St Pauls Church in Auckland, New Zealand with help from our partners, Holy Land Trust. To please click here to watch the film.

Bethlehem: Hidden from View

This 17 minute documentary made by Amos Trust features interviews with Christian Palestinians living in Bethlehem and is ideal for use in small groups. To watch the two minute promo, please click here.

A copy of the DVD is available to buy from our website.



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

kairos palestine

Christmas Message 2015

LET THIS BE A SPECIAL ADVENT

AMOS TRUST IS ONE OF THE FOUNDING PARTNERS OF KAIROS BRITAIN. IT HAS BEEN A BUSY YEAR AS WE SEEK TO PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS. THIS YEAR LET US CONSIDER PLACES AROUND THE WORLD WHERE REAL HOPE FOR REAL PEACE CONTINUES TO DWINDLE.

In Palestine, the Apartheid Wall and illegal settlements limit our mobility, deny us access to our natural resources, and strangulate our economy. Wherever one looks, be it the prolonged and inhuman siege in Gaza, the isolation of East Jerusalem and the fragmentation of the West Bank, the fabric of Palestinian society is being torn to shreds.

Fear grows in the shadow of Israeli settler violence that has increased most dramatically per month. Settlers, accountable to no one and acting in total impunity, have set a blaze churches, mosques, and most recently, a house with its family inside, burning to death eighteen month old baby Ali Dawabsha and his father Saad Dwabsha. The mother Riham, also succumbed to her wounds in early September.

This prolonged occupation contorts the great human values born in the cradle of our Abrahamic faiths. Arguments about divine election and misinterpretation of the Holy Book are summoned to deny Palestinians their God-given rights and to justify policies of dispossession and expulsion. “They say: ‘Peace, peace’ when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14)

Our challenge must be to implement a course of action that can change the dehumanizing realities of our lives as Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims. If the arc of the moral universe does indeed bend towards justice, then let us continue pursuing a just peace with courage and confidence.



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

Palestinian resilience in the face of a prolonged occupation is a clear message that our humanity stands tall and a better future is possible. We are thankful for the growing international solidarity and efforts for justice in Palestine, and we hope those efforts will continue to push the international community to act in ways that bring melding and moderation rather than polarization and extremism to the Middle East.

Collectively we can make incredible change and turn the tide towards real peace. Together, we can make this Advent a time of reflection and action. Let us stand firm, truthful and righteous and we shall be amply blessed and rewarded.

HIND KHOURY
GENERAL SECRETARY, KAIROS PALESTINE

kairos britain: time to act for palestine

This year has been a busy one for the Kairos Britain team, as we seek to inform, inspire, and engage the UK churches in the struggle for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

Our network has grown to nearly 600 members, and most significantly, 28 Kairos Community groups that are raising awareness in their own communities and churches, and campaigning for an end to the occupation.

Our solidarity to our Palestinian brothers and sisters has been critical in this last year. They have endured a devastating war in Gaza, a tightening of the occupation in the West Bank, and now the reprisals that resisting that occupation will bring: each and every person considered a suspect, and a threat.



BETHLEHEM PACK 2015

Peace seems such an elusive concept but still we hear from them a message of love not hate: ‘we do not want to be enemies’.

This Christmas as we hold them in our thoughts and prayers we ask you to join us in campaigning, giving, praying and speaking truth to the world. The occupation must end: for the sake of all Israelis and Palestinians, who all deserve their freedom and dignity.

Please join us if you haven’t done so already, and be part of this movement for change – [please visit kairosbritain.org.uk](http://kairosbritain.org.uk)

With blessings,

CHARLOTTE MARSHALL
ADVOCACY WORKER, KAIROS BRITAIN