

# ALTErnativity

**Bethlehem  
2005**

Bethlehem is the focus of the Christmas story yet we tend to have a false picture of the town. We are bombarded by sentimental images - star lit skies, twinkling lights in the windows in an exotic landscape and a serene mother dressed in blue, smiling at her new-born baby. The reality was different then and is different now and at ALTErnativity we find ourselves asking why people find it so hard to take on board.

Partly it is because of the traditions which have grown up around the story. **Our favourite hymns mask the truth or, by their language, deflect us both from the mystery and the reality; Our Christmas cards continue the sentimental theme.**



How do we begin to look at the reality there to day whilst still remembering it as the place of Jesus' birth and all that that means for us?

We hope that this leaflet will give some ideas for you to incorporate into your worship and into your Advent celebrations.

**Why not sing these new words to an old hymn?**

## Oh broken town of Bethlehem

Oh broken town of Bethlehem  
Your people long for peace,  
But curfews, raids and closure barricades  
Have brought them to their knees  
Yet still they strive for justice  
And still they make their stand  
Their hopes and fears still echo down the years  
Come, heal this holy land.

Oh holy child of Bethlehem,  
A royal refugee,  
Your place of birth is now a hell on earth  
Through our complicity.  
The innocents still suffer,  
Their backs against the wall.  
We see the curse, the violence and worse  
And choose to ignore it all.

Oh holy streets of Bethlehem  
Deserted and destroyed  
The frightened faces fill the sacred places  
Pilgrims once enjoyed.  
Yet in the midst of darkness  
A hopeful beacon shines:  
The future lies in humble sacrifice  
And not in guns and mines.

Oh holy star of Bethlehem  
Help us to watch and pray.  
With love and light illuminate the night  
Reveal the Kingdom's day.  
Lord, dare us to be angels  
Your awesome truth to tell.  
It must be heard:  
You are the final word,  
Our Lord, Emmanuel.

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Dedicated to Nader Abu Amsha and the staff of East Jerusalem YMCA, Beit Sahour (Shepherd's Field) near Bethlehem.

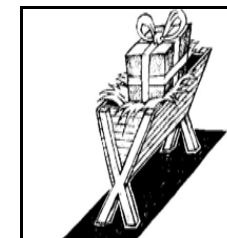


## **... Or celebrate with food from Bethlehem?**

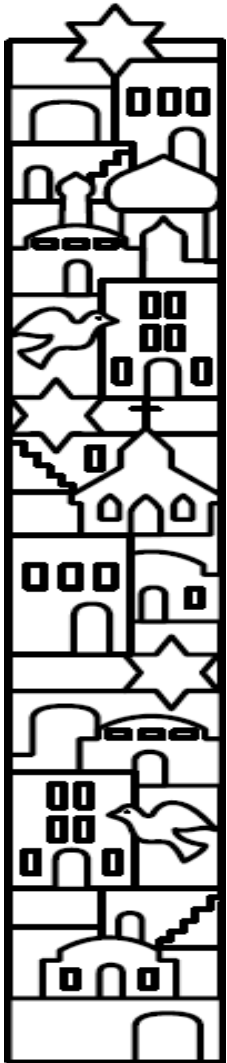
Buy some pitta bread and hummus ,  
fill a bowl with olives or make this  
Baba Ganoush for a dip.  
It's easy to make and it is delicious.

1 aubergine  
½ cup of tahini paste  
¼ cup of lemon juice  
2 cloves of garlic crushed  
½ tsp salt  
Bake the aubergine until the skin  
crackles. Scrap out pulp and mix it  
with the other ingredients.

Read the bible story again, sense the  
pain of story as well as the joy.  
Remember the people still living there  
in your prayers.



...Or give everyone in the church a prayer card?  
Make your own from the image and text below.



We pray for peace,  
where there is no peace,  
Where words are not enough  
To heal the hurt  
To erase the memories  
And bring back the dead.  
We pray for peace,  
where there is no peace,  
Where too few words are spoken  
To quell anxiety  
To demonstrate love  
To bring reassurance.  
We pray for peace,  
where there is no peace,  
Where too many words are spoken  
To scorn and deride  
To spread prejudice and hatred  
To ridicule and belittle.  
We pray for the peace that comes  
When individuals put down  
their guns and stones  
When neighbours forget that  
they are enemies  
And when communities welcome  
the strangers within their gates  
We pray for the peace of Jerusalem  
the peace of the land we call Holy.

*Helen Garton  
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### ... Or buy an Olive Tree?

Since 2000, ½ million olive trees have  
been uprooted or destroyed;  
Buy someone an olive tree for Christmas  
or their birthday.

Cost £15.00 per tree

Contact 0141 221 7475

Cheques payable to Christian Aid

### ...Or read about Bethlehem today?

#### Bethlehem divided by separation barrier

The Israeli government has revealed its plans for  
the route of the separation barrier it is building  
around Jerusalem. It will divide Bethlehem and  
construction is due for completion by the end of the  
year. Christian Aid's Palestinian and Israeli  
partners say the route will jeopardise peace talks.

The Israeli government says the barrier is for  
security reasons. Israel has an absolute right to  
defend its citizens from attack; but the route of the  
barrier – snaking deep into the West Bank will  
mean lands claimed by Palestinians will lie on the  
Israeli side of the barrier.

The barrier has reduced Palestinian access to land  
and restricted their freedom of movement - two of  
the underlying causes of Palestinian poverty.

As a result, livelihoods are being destroyed and  
people's access to schools and healthcare denied.

Harassment at checkpoints has become a daily  
occurrence and can cause deep humiliation and  
resentment.

[www.bethlehemnews.com](http://www.bethlehemnews.com)  
[www.bethlehem.org](http://www.bethlehem.org)  
[www.palestinemonitor.org](http://www.palestinemonitor.org)  
[www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)



### ...Or get your Christmas gifts from Hadeel?



#### Palcrafts / hadeel

Fair Trade Shop for Palestinian  
Crafts

*Quality handcrafts –  
Directly imported from the West Bank, Gaza  
and Lebanon.*

**Shop open Tues – Sat. 10.30 – 4.  
Stalls for events and mail order.  
See website or email.**

**St. George's West Church Centre  
58 Shandwick Place  
Edinburgh EH2 4RT  
0131 225 1922**

**Palcrafts@fish.co.uk www.hadeel.org**

**World Mission Church of Scotland**  
121 George Street EH2 4YN [www.world-mission.org](http://www.world-mission.org)

**ALTERNativity 759A Argyle Street Glasgow G3 8DS**  
[www.alternativity.org.uk](http://www.alternativity.org.uk)