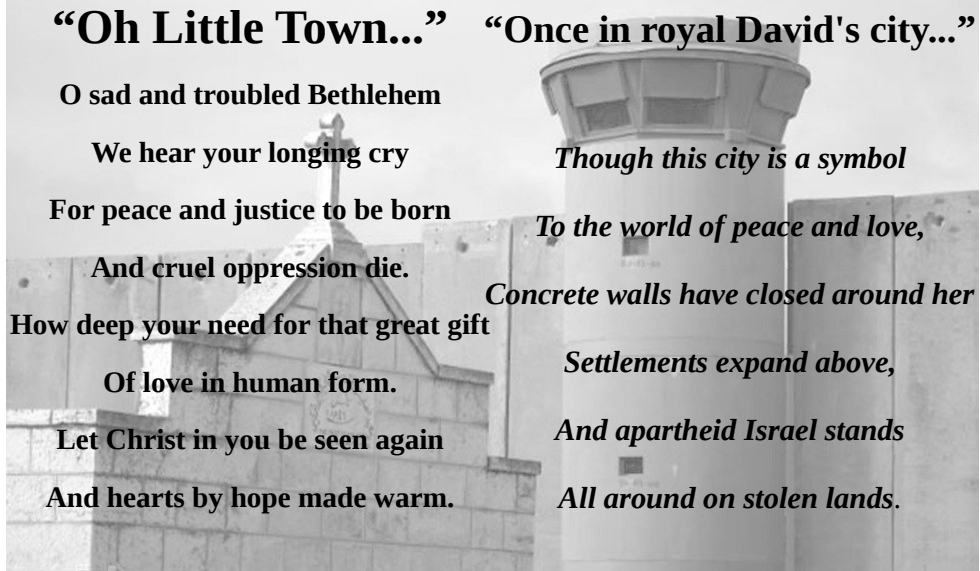


Bethlehem Today



“Oh Little Town...” “Once in royal David's city...”

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.

Though this city is a symbol

To the world of peace and love,

Concrete walls have closed around her

Settlements expand above,

And apartheid Israel stands

All around on stolen lands.

These words describe the present reality of “the little town of Bethlehem”, surrounded by a 9 metre high concrete wall and watchtowers which imprison its population, cutting them off and barring them from their capital city, Jerusalem, just 6 miles up the road. They are also cut off by expanding illegal Israeli settlements bringing in thousands of Jewish-only immigrants and depriving the ancient city of more than 80% of its agricultural and urban land. The reality of Bethlehem today, as in the rest of Palestine, is not the romanticised sleepy place of our Christmas carols, but a strangulated and devastated town where both Christians and Moslems struggle together to live under the cruel military occupation imposed by Israel. Meanwhile the rest of the world looks on but does nothing effective to halt the oppression.

The occupation deprives Palestinians of their rights and condemns both peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, to a distortion of their humanity.

The people of Bethlehem and the rest of Palestine and the wider Holy Land need a Just Peace and ask you and your church to help them achieve that.
www.kairosbritain.org.uk

The appeal of Palestinian Christians to the churches of the world is overleaf...

For more information about Bethlehem: www.openbethlehem.org

A plea from the Holy Land this Christmas time, from the Kairos movement of Christian Palestinians

“We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country under Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope.

The reality on the ground is one of Israeli occupation: the dehumanising effects of the Separation Wall, of Israeli settlements that ravage our land, humiliation at checkpoints, restrictions on religious liberty, and the suffering of Jerusalem where homes are being expropriated and demolished.”

Our plea to the world:

“We declare that the occupation is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives Palestinians of their basic human rights.

The mission of the church is prophetic, to speak the word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events. Our option in the face of Israeli occupation is to resist. But it is resistance with love as its logic.

Our message is to the Muslim and the Jew.

Our question to the churches is: “Are you able to help us get our freedom back?” Have you realised that this is the only way you can help two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?

We call on you to take a position of truth with regard to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land. We see boycott (of Israeli goods) and divestment (from Israeli companies or companies that do business with Israel) as non-violent tools for justice, peace and security for all.

Our word to the international community is to stop the double standards and insist on international resolutions regarding the Palestinian problem.”

*We pray not for Arab or Jew, for Palestinian or Israeli,
But we pray for ourselves
That we may not divide them in our prayers
But keep them together in our hearts.*

For more information about Kairos Palestine email: info@kairospalestine.ps
about Kairos in the UK: www.friendsofsabeel.org.uk or www.kairosbritain.org.uk
about local campaigning: <http://liverpoolfriendsofpalestine.co.uk>