

# Come to Bethlehem and See

*Christmas Card 2007*

I've been traveling to Israel/Palestine annually since 2002. Recently I spent 6 months living & volunteering in Bethlehem & her surrounding villages. These photographs are scenes of daily life over the past 5 years in Bethlehem. During that period of time, Israel built Separation Walls throughout the West Bank. One portion of their Wall almost completely encircles Bethlehem & has become a central & controlling aspect of her life.

The photographs here weren't altered, since my purpose was to document what ordinary observers (even pilgrims or tourists) would see in Bethlehem & her agricultural land. Like the medieval monks who used details of their own environment in the manuscripts they illuminated, I wanted to portray the Incarnation as continual and specific. Bethlehem then was an occupied land, oppressed through a regime of terror. Bethlehem today is no different, although the occupying power has changed over the millennia.

For these photos I used a Canon Sure Shot (basic 35mm with zoom lens) camera & Kodak 200 & 400 ASA film, cropping the developed images with Adobe PhotoShop, then printing on an HP color inkjet printer. The background water-coloring is gouache, on Fabbriano Uno cold-press paper, with uncial lettering in india ink & highlighting in metallic gold ink.

Beginning with the photo in the upper left corner, you'll see:

1. the door of the Church of the Nativity; Bethlehem – October, 2003
2. 2 Palestinian Authority tourist police outside Nativity Church; Bethlehem – November, 2004
3. donkey loaded for work; Nahalin (a village outside Bethlehem) – November, 2006
4. young men dancing a wedding *dabke*; Al'Walajeh (a village outside Bethlehem) – February, 2007
5. view of the Separation Wall & watchtower, from a house in Aida Refugee Camp; Bethlehem – December, 2005
6. boy on the outskirts of a non-violent demonstration on land confiscated (grapevines, olive, lemon & almond trees uprooted) for the Separation Wall; Umm Salamoneh (means Solomon's mother; a village outside Bethlehem) – January, 2007
7. 2 sheep eating olive branches; Nahalin – November, 2006
8. 2 young women in Manger Square; Bethlehem – October, 2003
9. the door of a house built by UNRWA (circa 1967, but still used today) in Aida Refugee Camp; Bethlehem – December, 2005