



amos  palestine

# all-age christmas activity pack

2016





## **thank you for downloading our all-age christmas activity pack.**

**this christmas as our thoughts turn to the little town of bethlehem this pack will help pupils and congregations, young and old, to think about the realities of life for the people of this troubled land.**

The pack includes 4 activities:

- retelling the nativity;
- rebuilding homes, not walls;
- remembering refugees;
- breaking down barriers.

Each activity can be used in church, with youth groups and in the classroom. You may also like to use some of the following resources:

### **films**

The following Amos films that are available to view and download from Vimeo – please click on the following links:

- [Happy Christmas from Bethlehem](#)
- [Soundslide from Gaza](#)
- [Two weeks is a long time in Palestine](#)
- [Rebuilding home, rebuilding hope](#)

### **readings and reflections**

This Christmas we would like to offer a FREE copy of '[Words of Hope: Thoughts and reflections from Amos Trust](#)', to any church wishing to use the advent liturgy, prayers and reflections from the book in a church service alongside our Christmas Appeal – '[Women of Palestine](#)'.

Please contact [katie@amostrust.org](mailto:katie@amostrust.org) to order resources, for support with planning or for fundraising ideas.





## all-age activity 1: - retelling the nativity

This activity was originally written for use alongside the olive wood nativity set that we used to sell at Amos Trust. Unfortunately this is no longer available but you could use a nativity set with moveable pieces and make some kind of barrier to serve as the wall – or why not get some willing volunteers to act as the nativity pieces?

### christ still comes

**Set up the nativity set with the stable and tree but no wall. Put the Magi on the far side opposite the stable.**

Bethlehem is in the West Bank, part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory which has been under Israeli military rule since 1967. The situation in Bethlehem today is very different from this traditional nativity scene.

### taking down the tree

**Explain how palm trees are seen as a sign of peace and, together with olive trees, are a central symbol of Palestine.**

Side point:

You might wish to make an additional comment that in the Islamic tradition Jesus is born under a palm tree such as the one shown.

The nativity scene is made of olive wood. The carpenters never chop an olive tree down; instead they harvest the boughs from the tree as it grows. This means olive trees can be hundreds or even thousands of years old.



The olive trees on the Mount of Olives date from somewhere close to the time Jesus sat beneath them on the night of his arrest. Olive trees are also symbolic as a national symbol for the Palestinian people, on account of their presence in the land through the years, tended by generations of owners.

One of the tragedies of the current unrest in Palestine and Israel is that olive groves have been dug up, chopped down, or burnt, either to clear the ground for settlements, to build the separation wall or in attacks on local people.

### **Replace the tree with the separation wall.**

The real separation wall is 8 metres high and is more than 700 kilometres long. It combines a concrete wall, wire fences and bypass roads that cut people off. The International Courts of Justice in The Hague have stated that the wall is illegal and should be taken down.

There are gaps in the wall, but it surrounds towns such as Bethlehem, preventing people who live there from moving easily. No-one can enter Bethlehem today without going through a military checkpoint and showing ID, which can take several hours.

The Palestinian residents of Bethlehem, both Christians and Muslims need a permit to come and go from their home town.

### **the magi**

The Magi as you can see are on the other side of the wall. They travelled from the East, probably from Iraq, Iran or one of the other neighbouring countries. Nowadays they would find it difficult to reach Bethlehem as they would first need to pass through the Israeli border crossing on the Jordan River.

### **Discard the Magi.**





## the shepherds

The wall and neighbouring settlements also prevent shepherds in Bethlehem from going to their fields. The Shepherds' Fields just outside Bethlehem we read about in the Bible from the time of David and on the night when Jesus was born are now unrecognisable.

Land has been taken by illegal settlements and shepherds have severely restricted access to their own land. Often they have to obtain permits and go through military checkpoints to get to their land. A handful of shepherds still remain but not enough for our story.

**Remove the Shepherds and the livestock.**

## mary and joseph

Mary and Joseph were Jews. They travelled from Nazareth in what is now northern Israel. They would have gone to Jerusalem and journeyed the six miles to Bethlehem from there.

Now the main entrance of the wall surrounding Bethlehem includes a massive checkpoint like we see at airports and ferry terminals. The Israeli authorities have ruled that Israeli Jews are no longer allowed to enter Bethlehem.

**Remove Mary and Joseph.**

## baby jesus

The infant Jesus is left alone in the manger. Jesus of course grew up, taught, travelled, was crucified, died and rose again. While the Christmas story would be impossible now, the Christian faith says that Jesus still comes to Bethlehem today.

He is there in the people who follow him; he provides a light in the darkness which the darkness cannot understand and can never put out. As those who follow him we are called to break down the walls of division and to let the light of truth and hope shine.





## **all-age activity 2:**

### **- rebuilding homes, not walls**

#### **For this activity you will need:**

- Lego, Jenga blocks or boxes to create a house for the start and end of the activity;
- you will need something to represent olive farmers and soldiers for children to hold (these could be made by the children as part of the activity);
- a piece of paper or a sign representing a demolition order.

**Start with a replica of a house this could be made from Lego, Jenga blocks or cardboard boxes. Give the children roles.**

#### **You will need:**

- olive farmers who own the house;
- soldiers to knock down the house;
- UK volunteers (a larger group) to rebuild the house.

Give the children representing the olive farmers and soldiers something to represent who they are. Ask all the children to sit around the house. Ask them to talk about what their homes mean to them? What do they like about their home?

What job does it do – keeping them safe, dry etc? Ask them what stories they can think of from the bible about a house? You want to tell them a story about a home built by some olive farmers. They built wisely on the land which they owned and their parents had owned and it took them years and years to build.

**Get them to build the home.**





Another group of people, the soldiers, decided that actually they didn't want the house to be built there, they had more power than the olive farmers.

So they sent a letter to say that their house was illegal and would be destroyed. Then they came and destroyed it and gave the olive farmers a few minutes to get out as many of their possessions as they could before their home was destroyed.

**Let the children acting as Israeli's, destroy the house.**

Spend some time reflecting on the following:

- how would you feel if you were an olive farmer?
- can you imagine if that was your home?  
What possessions would you take?
- how would you be able to rebuild it? Remember it has taken years to build and every penny you have saved?
- remember, there is no insurance and no pay out for your loss.
- so if you knew that was happening and felt you could do something about it – would you?

Amos Trust works with people from the UK who raise money to pay for the house and then they volunteer to go over and rebuild the house with the local Palestinians. **You could be one of these people.** We have people aged from 17 – 79 taking part.

Or you could help them by giving some money or raising money to help pay for the house or by thinking of them in your prayers.

**Rebuild the home together.**

We call this '**Rebuilding Home – Rebuilding Hope**', because people who had no hope and felt that no one cared find that not only do people care but also they have a home again.





### But what about the soldiers?

- what do you think they will do?
- will they be as likely to knock it down if lots of people from the UK have helped to rebuild it and care about what happens to it?
- do you think that all those people that have invested their time and money to rebuild it would stand back and see it demolished or do you think they would do everything they could to help protect it?

Amos Trust supporters will be rebuilding a home in 2017. For more details, please visit [amostrust.org/rebuilding-home](http://amostrust.org/rebuilding-home) or contact [katie@amostrust.org](mailto:katie@amostrust.org)

## all-age activity 3: – remembering refugees

### One:

Get the children into groups (preferably with an adult or older child in each group). Ask the children what the word refugee means to them. Encourage them to share what they know about refugees.

For older children you could show them our '[Two weeks is a long time in Palestine](#)' film.

### Two:

- give them a set of the possession cards (as detailed below), plus some blank cards;
- ask the children to look at all the cards – these are examples of their possessions. Explain to them that their family has just been told that they have to leave in 30 minutes and that they can take six items with them;
- what would they take? They can write the names of other things on the card if they like. Do they think their parents







would make the same decisions?

- now tell them they only have 10 minutes to decide what to take and can only take three items – what would they leave behind?
- now tell them they have 1 minute to decide and can only take one item (set a stopwatch for one minute for for this part of the exercise);
- get the children back into groups and chat with them about their choices, how it felt and what they would miss the most if they had to leave their home.

### **Three:**

Ask them what they think they can do for refugee children. If they wish to pray, then we suggest that you cut out suitcase shapes or draw a picture of the things they would take and ask them if they would like to write a prayer on these.

### **Four:**

Finally we suggest that you tell them how Jesus was himself a refugee when he was a child and how he had to flee Bethlehem with his parents and travel down to Egypt.

### **Possession cards:**

Before you start this exercise, print out a set of cards or slips of paper with the following words or pictures on:

pots and pans	food
a change of clothes	pets
photos	a cuddly toy
books	games
a TV	a computer
passport and papers	tools
a bicycle	jewellery
keys	



## activity 4

### - breaking down barriers

#### For this activity you will need:

- giant Jenga bricks or lots of small sets of Jenga for groups to use (or similar);
- a large piece of paper with a brick wall drawn on it and lots of coloured pens.

Build a wall with the bricks and as you are doing this, you can read some of the facts about the wall (see below).

Then ask people to remove a block and to say one thing they would like to see change in the situation facing Palestinians and Israelis.

Afterwards invite people to come and write what they would like to see change about the situation on one of the bricks on the paper wall

#### A few facts

You might like to use this film from [Make Apartheid History](#).

- the barrier consists of concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, groomed sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads, and a buffer zone;
- the barrier's total length (constructed and projected) is approximately 708 km, more than twice the length of the 1949 Armistice ('Green') Line, which separates Israel from the occupied West Bank;
- approximately 62.1% of the barrier is complete, a further 8% is under construction and 29.9% is planned but not yet constructed;
- when completed, some 85%, of the route will run inside the West Bank, rather than along the Green Line, isolating some





- 9.4% of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem;
- 71 of the 150 Israeli settlements in the West Bank and over 85% of the total settler population are located on the 'Israeli' side of the Barrier's route;
  - Palestinians with West Bank ID cards who are granted special permits can only enter East Jerusalem through four of the 14 Barrier checkpoints around the city;
  - around 7,500 Palestinians who reside in areas between the Green Line and the Barrier (Seam Zone), excluding East Jerusalem, require special permits to continue living in their own homes; another 23,000 will be isolated if the barrier is completed as planned;
  - there are about 150 Palestinian communities which have part of their land isolated by the barrier and must obtain 'visitors' permits or perform 'prior coordination' to access this area;
  - access to agricultural land through the barrier is channeled through 80 gates. The majority of these gates only open during the six weeks olive harvest season and usually only for a limited period during the day;
  - during the 2011 olive harvest, about 42% of applications submitted for permits to access areas behind the barrier were rejected citing 'security reasons' or lack of 'connection to the land';
  - despite the presence of the barrier, Israeli sources estimate that some 15,000 Palestinians without the required permits smuggle themselves from the West Bank to look for employment in Israel every day in 2011 (Israeli Government Special Committee);
  - the UN Register of Damage (UNRoD) has to date collected over 26,000 claims for material damage caused by the construction of the Barrier in the northern West Bank.

Source: [muftah.org](http://muftah.org)





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**to support the work of amos trust in  
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look at our women of palestine appeal  
and contact [katie@amostrust.org](mailto:katie@amostrust.org) for  
fundraising ideas.**

**you can also donate to the appeal here or  
by sending cheques to amos trust - please  
write 'women of palestine' on the reverse  
of your cheque.**

**thank you.  
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