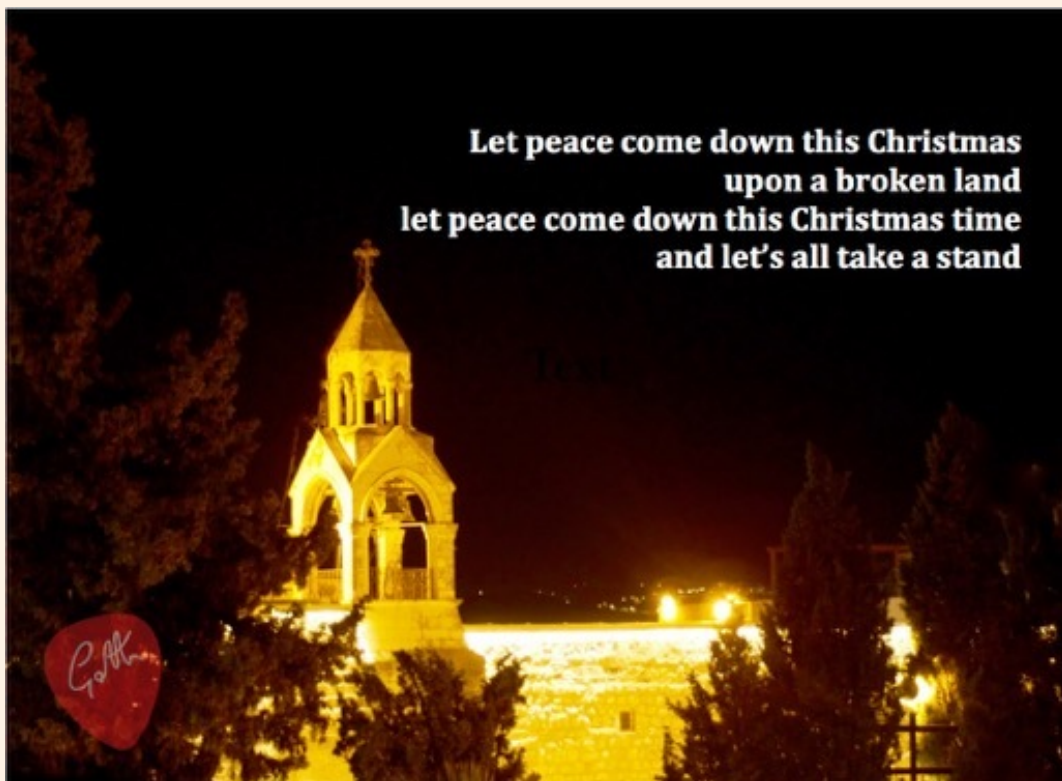




from Garth...



So here we are at the end of an unusual year

with a lot of questions in our minds that will be with us as we enter 2017. The level of violence around the world, and the misuse of armaments, not least by our country, is leaving a sad legacy.



When I think about what the future might look like under Trump, I find that I keep returning to the words of Martin Luther King, **I have a dream**.

The words that Trump used in his campaign are full of bitterness, hatred and abuse of the other; when we look at the cabinet that he is appointing it seems to be people who reflect this attitude. And so I go back to **I have a dream**, where the prophet of America called the people to a way of equality - he gave them a holy vision of what it could look like.

It wouldn't need walls; it would need friendship.

It would not be a society with a giant division between rich and poor - it would be a community - a sharing community.

Let's feast our minds on these things as in our prayers we pray for the future - including for our own country where again there has been bitterness and division; where the impact of austerity is causing so much pain not only in people's jobs but also in the NHS and in the prison system.

I visited a friend in prison this year - a prison run by a private company; they had laid off 200 staff when they took over the prison - consequently they didn't even have enough prison officers to staff the concert that I had been booked for. It seems to me very worrying when people try to make money out of a prison, exploiting a situation where people are at their lowest ebb.

The Child of Christmas

So where is the way of hope - I come back to the chorus of my song **The Child of Christmas** -

I believe in the way of peace,
I believe in the way of Jesus,
And in the values God has shown us,
Born anew in the child of Christmas.

I believe in the child of Christmas.

A prayer for this Christmas

Oh God, these are difficult times -

we pray for a renewed vision of your humble way,
your way of justice and hope for all;
We pray that we might have a deep vision
of the Prince of Peace,
and the way of the Prince of Peace.

May our churches become centres
that not only have a dream of justice for all
but live out the values of this dream
in the communities in which we live.

Give us renewed joy this Christmas -
and then a renewed commitment to action -
to have an encounter with the God whose name is mercy,
the God who is humble and generous.

In the name of God,
the Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life.



Garth Hewitt

Garth sang his song Peace at Christmas, the title track of **his Christmas album**, in June in Palestine - overlooking the Shepherds' Fields in Beit Sahour, Bethlehem - **you can see this on youtube here**



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find out more about the double album of songs from the Holy Land here



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