



from Garth...

In the Storms of Life

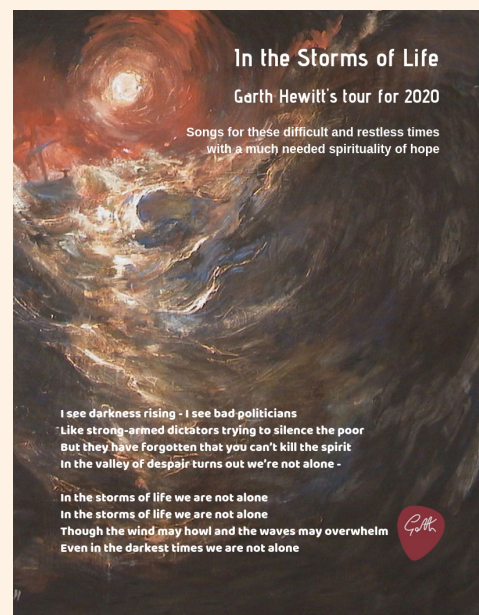
Some of you have spotted a lack of newsletters recently! It's been a busy autumn and I kept planning a newsletter, but somehow I never got there. So, apologies - this is the October/November/December newsletter!

And what a roller coaster of three months it's been here in the UK with our election. What will it mean for so many in the UK, and in our relationships with other countries - not least what will it mean for Palestine?

In the New Year I have some concerts coming up with the theme "In the storms of life". This is a song, written earlier this year, looking round the world - with the lyrics:

**In the storms of life we are not alone
In the storms of life we are not alone
Though the wind may howl and the waves may overwhelm
Even in the darkest times we are not alone**

**I see darkness rising - I see bad politicians
Like strong-armed dictators trying to silence the poor
But they have forgotten that you can't kill the spirit
In the valley of despair turns out we're not alone.**



Click the image for details of Garth's concerts

I hope the concerts will be moments of hope, challenge and motivation.

Making Holy Dreams Come True



*click the image to see the video
Making Holy Dreams Come True*

But meanwhile it's Christmas and time for a Christmas song from the new album.

This song is a prayer about Bethlehem called **Making Holy Dreams Come True**

Music by Canon Ed Pruen

Back to Bethlehem



Garth with Jeff Halper and Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom

In October Gill and I went back to Bethlehem with longtime friends and Amos supporters Sue and Simon Plater. It was a wonderful time. They were starting to put the Christmas tree up in Manger Square - thousands of pilgrims were in Bethlehem. There wasn't a free bed to be had, apparently. It seems like that happened once before!



Gill and I stayed at Banksy's Walled Off Hotel, which is a great place to visit if you are in Bethlehem. Banksy even has the t-shirt "The hotel with the worst view in the world," because it is so close to the separation wall.

While there one of our first trips was to East Jerusalem where we met up with two remarkable Jewish peacemakers, Jeff Halper and Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom. **It was a special time - two people who have dedicated their lives to working for justice for the Palestinian community. We were moved and inspired by them, as we have been over the years – two prophetic Jews who make their views visible by their actions.**

Amos Walkers

Our trip coincided with the Amos Trust Walk of the West Bank. For their last evening the walkers came to the Walled Off Hotel- around 37 of them (!) including Chris Rose, Director of **Amos Trust**, and Elias Deis, Director of **The Holy Land Trust**. It was great to meet with them and hear stories of what they had done, and who they had met - and I did an informal concert with them. They turned out to be very good singers!

The single launch at the Walled Off

So I was pleased that nine of them came back the next night when I was launching the 12" single My Name Is Palestine. The hotel room was jammed with friends, mainly from the Bethlehem area, like Rifat Kassis of **Kairos Palestine**, Nidal Abu Zuluf of the YMCA in Beit Sahour, Mitri and Nadjwa Raheb of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Zoughbi and Elaine Zoughbi from **Wi'am Conflict Resolution Centre** with their family, Mazin and Jessie Qumsiyeh – Mazin is founder and director of the **Palestine Museum of Natural History**, and the Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability. Also there was friend and guide Marwan Farajeh with his wife Fidaa. Rabbi Jeremy came along with his partner and even brought his mother too! And of course the Manager of the hotel was there, our good friend Wisam Salsaa with his wife Rasha and all the staff. There were so many, I'm sure I have left some names out, but it was wonderful to have so many friends there. Not least Bishar on sound!



Suleiman Mansour

Many of you will have heard me talk about why and how I wrote **My Name Is Palestine** - I was inspired by a painting in the Gallery at the Walled Off Hotel, by **Suleiman Mansour**, a truly remarkable artist. I was thrilled that he could come along to the launch with his wife Haneen, as I hadn't met him before. He is a warm and inspiring person.

The ongoing pain of occupation in Palestine

1 Gaza - There was a sad press release the other day from Reuters *December 12th 2019* "Israel bars Gaza's Christians from visiting Bethlehem and Jerusalem at Christmas." It goes on, "Christians in the Gaza Strip will not be allowed to visit holy cities such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem to celebrate Christmas this year... Israel tightly restricts movements out of the Gaza Strip. Gaza has only around 1000 Christians, most of them Greek Orthodox or Greek Melkite... Gisha, an Israeli rights group, said the ban points 'to the intensifying of access restrictions between the two parts of the Palestinian territory' calling it 'a deepening of Israel's separation policy.' Christian leaders condemned the move. 'Other people around the world are allowed to travel to Bethlehem. We think Gaza's Christians should have that right too,' said Wadie Abu Nassar, an advisor to local church leaders."

2 Bethlehem - All is not well in Bethlehem also, as the occupation tightens. A good friend who works with a peace and reconciliation organisation sent this message: "More collective punishment tomorrow, Sunday, no electricity - Israel to cut electricity supply in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jericho, for three hours, from 2pm until 5pm. Down with the occupation!"

3 Jerusalem - Meanwhile the Palestinian Archbishop of Jerusalem's Greek Orthodox Church, Atallah Hanna, was hospitalized from poison gas, after Israeli occupation forces threw gas canisters into his church in Jerusalem. He suffered temporary paralysis, but is now in stable condition.

Earlier this year the Archbishop had said that "everything Palestinian in Jerusalem is targeted by the Israeli occupation."

The Archbishop, who is also the Head of the Sebastia Diocese of the Greek Orthodox Church, said earlier that 'The occupation in Jerusalem is treating us as if

we are guests and foreigners in our own city. This is the embodiment of apartheid policies and practices against our people, in Jerusalem specifically, and in Palestine more generally.'

He added: "Christians must defend Palestine - we will remain in Jerusalem, defending our religious sites and endowments. We reject the policies of the occupation. We will not surrender."

A call from Palestinian Christians

This is a crucial time to be committed to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement which is a non-violent way to respond to the Israeli occupation and oppression.

The Palestinian Christians and Churches call for this in the Kairos Document.

They say "The Kairos document is the word of Christian Palestinians to the world about what is happening in Palestine.

We proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love.

We demand that all people, political leaders and decision-makers put pressure on Israel and take legal measures in order to oblige its government to end its oppression and disregard for international law.

We hold a clear position that non-violent resistance to this injustice is a right and duty for all Palestinians, including Christians.

We support Palestinian civil society organizations, international NGOs and religious institutions that call on individuals, companies and states to engage in boycotts, divestment and sanctions against the Israeli occupation.

"Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives there, all the pains and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of the Palestinian Church and the service of all her institutions."

Christmas is an important time to hear their call and to talk about it in our churches and to pray for them. As we sing our carols let's remember the Holy Land and pray for justice, hope and equality for all.



Generous God of mercy and love
We commend to you
The people of the Holy Land;
Bring peace with justice,
Dignity, equality and hope for all
May we see an end to occupation
And people being mistreated;
Bring another miracle to the Holy Land

May we play our part by raising our voices,
Campaigning,
And always carrying hope in our hearts
For the day of freedom to come,
For the wall to fall,
And for peace on earth to become a reality -
Starting in the birthplace of the Prince of Peace

Silent Night

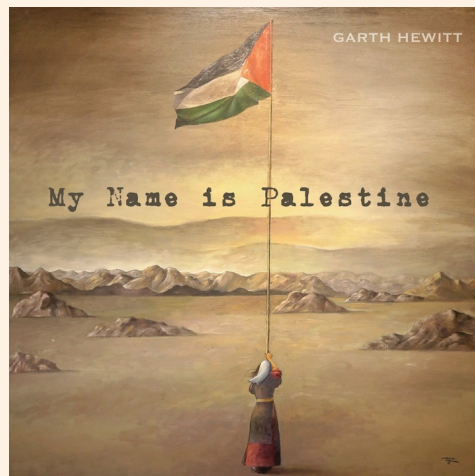
Click [here](#) for a little clip Gill took during my concert at Emmanuel Methodist Church, Eastbourne, a few weeks ago – a fun evening when I was supported by Dave Perry on guitar, Claire Tabraham, Melanie Churchyard and Cole Moreton on backing vocals, and David Churchyard on piano.

I love this little clip – there's something about Silent Night that lasts and lasts – this comes with my Christmas greetings and warm hopes for 2020.

A Prayer at Christmas 2019

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



To purchase one of the remaining limited edition My Name Is Palestine 12" vinyl singles, [click here](#)

or to buy the 11 track CD of the same name, [click here](#)

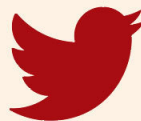


Save the date: Friday 14th February 2020, 10am - 4pm - A Quiet Day for Activists

If you're within reach of the Moretonhampstead, Devon, area watch this space for details of venue - you can register your interest by emailing isobel@amostrust.org



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