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HOPE Outreach needs your help in sharing throughout Canada the excellent ministries that God has raised up in the Holy Land. We need volunteer regional representatives as well as friends who will invite their friends to share in the news, prayer and support. Please send us contact information that your friends and acquaintances have pre-approved.

And please send us e-mail addresses, including your own.

Our e-mail address is:  
[office@hopeoutreach.ca](mailto:office@hopeoutreach.ca)

# Christmas in Bethlehem

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf. – Micah 5:2*

As you might imagine, Christmas in Bethlehem, the city where Jesus was born, is a major event. Some of Bethlehem's Christmas celebrations would be familiar to Canadians – the streets are strung with Christmas lights, there is a Christmas market and Christmas pageants are performed. But other events, which are the most important religiously, are special to Bethlehem and in keeping with the traditions of the Holy Land – multiple services and processions led by many different Christian denominations. Most Christmas processions pass through Manger Square, the plaza outside the Orthodox Basilica of the Nativity, which stands on the traditional site of Jesus' birth. There are also Christmas services held at the Shepherds' Fields.



*Bethlehem's Manger Square*

During the Christmas season, the "little town of Bethlehem" is hustling and bustling with life, energy, decorations, pilgrims and much more. But beyond these festive preparations, where is Jesus in all the economic and nationalistic activities? One local pastor says, "A few days before the 25th of December we have a big celebration in the church and invite people for the Christmas play. On Christmas Eve, we spend time with families and relatives and we have dinner together. Later at about 11 o'clock in the evening, we go to the church to pray with the church members. We sometimes also go out on the streets near the city centre to sing songs and hand out tracts or Bibles. Normally this is not allowed, but because of Christmas we can do this."

In mid-December, Bethlehem Bible College, along with some local churches and ministries, sponsors a special Christmas banquet in Bethlehem. They invite people from the community, including local leaders and Muslim leaders for a good

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# Identity in the Messiah, Jesus

In October, a group of Israeli and Palestinian youths went on a journey to Mount Tabor and Nazareth. This is part of the Holy Land where many biblical events took place. The encounter occurred as there were overlapping holidays in the school calendar for both Israelis and Palestinians – something that is a

Mount Tabor is known in Christian tradition as the site of the Transfiguration of Jesus the Messiah. It is very interesting that this event, focusing on the identity of Jesus as we see in Luke chapter 9, is then related to Jesus sending the 12 disciples to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Because of this, people and leaders like Herod

Jesus, and the price required of those who follow him.

The identity in the Messiah for these young people sometimes comes with the cost of rejection from their home cultures. Coming together is a major source of encouragement for the youth. It also is a declaration to society about their identity through their unity across various boundaries. Many of the youth on the trip are followers of Jesus and face pressure from their respective communities. Being on Mount Tabor encouraged these youths that they can and should hold on to who they are, despite the pressure and rejection from their communities— and who they are includes the expression of unity in the Messiah, as seen during the journey up the mountain.

This encouragement needs to be repeated often, as the messages from the world that question these youth's identity bombard them daily.

Please continue to pray for and support this vital ministry of Musalaha as they work among youth, women and the Christian population of the Holy Land at large!

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**Musalaha is looking for a scriptwriter to help them with a video project that addresses prejudice and discrimination.**



*Musalaha – Reconciliation*

constant challenge for Musalaha, as there are different calendars for the different schools, with different national and religious holidays. They were very happy to have the time to spend together as a group.

They climbed Mount Tabor because climbing together provides an opportunity for the youth to get to know each other better and build relationships while having fun, and also relying on one another.

wondered about the identity of Jesus. Following this, they saw several events through which Jesus communicated who he was. Such events, like the feeding of the five thousand that resulted in Peter confessing that Jesus is the Messiah, were directly related to the focus of Jesus' identity. Also, Jesus' warning to the disciples that he would suffer and be rejected, killed and raised on the third day. So, the transfiguration comes in the context of questioning the identity of



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## *Christmas in Bethlehem from page 1*

meal together. In recent years, approximately one thousand local citizens gather for this banquet. During the event, they sing Christmas songs and share the story of Christmas in a drama or story. This is a season to reach out and use the occasion to minister. Everybody speaks about Christmas, so they have the chance to share openly about Jesus the Christ. This Christmas will be no exception. The banquet speaker will be our own HOPE Outreach of Canada board member, Rev. Nizar Shaheen. Nizar spoke at this banquet a few years ago, and dozens of people registered their desire to follow Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Please be in prayer for Nizar again this Christmas season. He has asked us to pray for provision and a great harvest of souls.

Our Christmas Bethlehem project this year at HOPE Outreach Canada is student scholarships for BBC. We are trusting God for \$20,000 toward this significant need.



# 16-Year-Old Arab and Jewish Teenagers are now Friends

**H**isham (an Arab from Nazareth) and Miriam (a Jew from Jerusalem) are two 16-year-olds living in Israel—and they are friends now. That hasn't come easily since both teenagers grew up in a climate where suspicion and even full-blown hate for the other group had set the tone of their lives. Nevertheless,



Miriam aims high. Now she's engaged in friendships with 'the other side'. "What we experience here is friendship built upon the love of Jesus Christ," she shares. "My prayer is that our generation will lead the way towards full reconciliation between our people."

The two teenagers are a part of a youth camp run by Musalaha. This Christian organization working in Israel and the Palestinian Territories to bring Israelis and Palestinians together, promotes reconciliation as demonstrated in the life and teaching of Jesus. HOPE Outreach has been supporting Musalaha for the past several years.

Despite their different backgrounds, Hisham and Miriam are friends now. Both were raised in believing Christian families and have been attending Musalaha activities throughout their youth. Also during this meeting, they

have been discussing prejudices against each other and trying to overcome them by reading the Bible, singing songs (both in Hebrew and Arabic) and by having sometimes fierce debates about faith and politics.

Why do many peace and reconciliation efforts in Israel and Palestine fail while Musalaha seems to be a success, at least on this scale? "We bring our faith into it. That is the difference," Miriam says. "When Christ is in the center eventually all differences become less important."

Hisham agrees. "Jesus has come to bring peace among the nations," he says. "He told us to love not only our brothers but also our neighbors and even our enemies. His teaching has helped us to really open up towards each other and to overcome the culture we grew up in."

It's both teenagers' experience that Christians in Israel have a lot to learn about peacemaking. Arab Hisham is

mild in his judgement: "Most people on both sides want peace. They just don't know how to achieve it." He notes that he lives in a relatively easygoing part of Israel for an Arab. "For Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, it's more difficult. They are struggling with the conflict every day. It's harder for them to say: 'Yes, we can fix this'. They will be more hardened in their judgement."

Miriam is fiercer when speaking for the Messianic Jewish side. "Yes, in our church we pray for peace. But in practice most people will do nothing to achieve it. They just say: 'Let's wait for Jesus to return'; until then they don't feel they should act on it. I say, if you really want peace, work on it."

Nevertheless, Miriam is excited about the Musalaha encounter. She hopes to bring the cross-cultural friendships she gained during the Musalaha camp back home and build upon them in Israel. "What we have experienced here is reconciliation built upon the love of Jesus Christ. My prayer is that our generation will lead the way to full reconciliation between our people."



# Bethlehem Bible College Update

In September, BBC started a new academic year. The campus has been vibrant with students returning from their summer break. Please keep them in your prayers. Pray that



they will continue to be a light in their world, whether by teaching the Bible, producing high quality media, becoming peace advocates or guiding tourists across the Holy Land.

On September 15, 2016, Bethlehem Bible College initiated its online program in Biblical Studies with 40 Arab students living all around the world... Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Gaza, Hong Kong, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, UK, USA and even Canada. This term, students are enrolled in three courses: Old Testament Survey, New

Testament Survey, and Church History. This is the first university-level program in Biblical Studies offered fully online in Arabic. What makes this program unique is its academic approach combined with focus on personal transformation coming from the Holy Land where the Word of God became flesh and where most of the Bible was written.

Pray that each student will come to a deep understanding of the Scriptures which will result in lives being transformed by the Word of God. Also, pray that this, in turn, will become a blessing for the Arab community worldwide.

Nazareth Evangelical College celebrated their graduation ceremony in September. BBC's choir sang and Botrus Mansour (pictured below) was the commencement speaker.

In October, BBC hosted for the third time the Global Leadership Summit in Bethlehem. More than 150 Palestinian leaders from different ages,

backgrounds and walks of faith attended. President, Dr. Jack Sara said, "We also give thanks to God for allowing us to receive Muslim Palestinians from different parts of the West Bank."



## HOPE Outreach Holy Land Mission Trip For 2017

You are invited to participate in an unforgettable, one-of-a-kind trip to the Holy Land **October 27 – November 11, 2017**. Organized by Hope Outreach worker, Beverley Timgren, a Canadian who has spent her adult life serving in the Middle East, this trip will allow you to interact with local people (Christian, Muslim, Jewish) who are impacting their communities through projects that address issues of peace, justice, and reconciliation, and care for the marginalized. Contact us for more information about this exciting adventure.

*Donate securely through our new website: [www.hopeoutreach.ca](http://www.hopeoutreach.ca). While there you can read more about our ministry to the Holy Land.*

*Be sure to see the excellent photo story **Faces of Bethlehem** on the MEDIA page.*



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