



## FROM THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF ADELAIDE

### **The peace of Christmas**

A child is born in a cattle shed in a Palestinian village and the first official response is to send in the troops.

Others had come. There were some shepherds who were inspired by a vision to come in from the hillsides and seek out the child. But they were of little consequence in the world of their time.

The first real attention came as a result of the political rumour mill. A new heir to the throne they said. Foreign leaders were already on their way to pledge allegiance, they said.

In the political turbulence of first century Palestine these were rumours that required attention. The attention came in the form of a detachment of troops with orders to take the necessary action. St Matthew tells us there was massacre.

The world into which the young Mary bore her Son was a deeply disturbed and frightening place. There was an occupied country, with the hard discipline of Rome enforced ruthlessly. The king was an easily threatened despot not averse to killing every child in a village if he thought he could smell a threat.

This story is as contemporary as today's newspaper.

As we shop for Christmas, the carols remind us of the familiar words about "peace on Earth, goodwill towards all". But the nightly news will speak of Afghanistan or Iraq, Gaza or Zimbabwe.

Those who hold great military power have always painted themselves as defenders of peace. Their opponents have always painted themselves as liberators of the people. They have come and gone and they have not brought peace.

It is in the child in the manger that we see most fully God's response to human might and the weapons of war. A child is utterly defenceless. There is no need to put armed drones into the air to search and destroy a child. We can put aside our AK47s and open our closed fists. We can be delivered from the curse of escalation and reprisal. There is another way:

*"For to us a child is born. To us a son is given. The government shall be upon his shoulder".*

God's way to peace is through a vulnerable child. May this peace touch you this Christmas.

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Enquiries

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