**Bethlehem Prayer**

O Mystery as grand as the universe

O Mighty Force of all creation,

O Power beyond all our power,

You have come to us as an infant.

Vulnerable, fragile, beautiful.

You have come to us

in the midst of poverty,

powerlessness and longing.

Come again, O Promiser of Peace.

Come again, to the city of your birth

mired in fear, oppression and injustice.

Come again, where bullet holes

still pock the walls of Sanctuary.

Come again, where Children dream

of homes they have never seen.

Come again, where a single key

or the number 194 cry out again

of forced journey to Bethlehem.

Be born again in the camps.

Be born again in stables and homes.

Be born again in many cities and languages.

Be born again among nations.

Be born again in places of injustice.

Be born again a promise of hope,

a sign of love and joy to the world.

Be born again in our hearts,

that we too might be called

Makers of peace

and Children of God.

Amen

*The Right Rev. David Giuliano, Moderator of The United Church of Canada*

**Notes:**

Bethlehem is now walled off from Jerusalem and is home to three Palestinian refugee camps.

The “single key” refers to the many Palestinians in Bethlehem who still have keys to homes from which they fled in 1948.

The number 194 appears in many places in Bethlehem, and refers to United Nations Resolution #194 granting Palestinian refugees the “right of return” to their home villages.

The Church of the Nativity is still pocked by Israeli bullets that ended a 42-day siege in 2002 after Palestinian soldiers had taken refuge there.