

Our annual epistle

CHRISTMAS 2009

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Greetings from Christine Ledger and Geoff Alves

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THE YEAR WE VISITED CHRIST'S BIRTHPLACE

BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem reminds us that hope is and can be born in the most unexpected places, the strangest of times and in unforgettable ways. The town took on a deeper meaning for us this year for, in September, we had the privilege of walking its streets, sitting in its churches and visiting a refugee camp there. Our visit to the Middle East and our other travels and adventures of 2009 are well documented on our website so we won't go into a lot of detail here. You can read all about them on www.geoffandchris.com.

POTTED VERSION

For those of you who like the potted version: Eighteen months away, mainly in Edinburgh, came to an end in May when we returned to Canberra. Our good friend, Graham, who housesat for us all that time transmogrified into a part-time boarder. He and Caroline will move into their own house in the New Year and we will miss him. Chris, under Geoff's tutelage, is sharpening her editing skills. She copy edited one book for Barton Books and is Reviews Editor for *St Mark's Review*. Next semester she'll do some teaching for the CSU School of Theology as well, in between her increasingly obsessional bird-watching.



The main square of Bethlehem



The key over the gate to the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem symbolises the hope of Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes



Permanent Christmas baubles adorn the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

Bethlehem



Beau, our neighbour's cat



The Thurra River meets the sea at Point Hicks



Our new bicycle



Taking it easy in retirement

BEAU

Our neighbour Jenny's cat, Beau, has recruited us onto his staff and comes and goes at will through Jerry's old cat flap.

BICYCLE

Our new second car is a bicycle and has a distinctly Dutch influence as we were reconverted to this sensible form of transport while housesitting in the Netherlands.

RETIREMENT

Geoff is in full retirement, but still does the occasional design and layout jobs for friends, despite himself. He is as curious as ever, in both senses of that word, and Google is his busy research assistant.

CAMPING

We have now been married ten years and celebrated by going camping in a national park at Point Hicks in East Gippsland to prove we are still fit enough to do so.

TRAVEL

We have proclaimed 2010 the year of the train and have Europe, the Trans-Siberian Railway, China and the Ghan (Darwin–Adelaide) in our sights.

KEEP IN TOUCH

We thoroughly enjoy keeping in touch with you all. Alas, much of it is from afar. We hope our path might cross with yours this year. Please come and visit for a cuppa or a stay.

Wishing you a Christmas of enduring peace and new hope in surprising and wonderful ways.

—Chris and Geoff