

## A Blessing On Both Your Houses

*This advent blessing was written to explore the relationship and animosity between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah as a lens through which to understand some of the modern day tensions of divided communities. It was written only a week or so after the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and so the intercessions which followed this consisted of photographs of the Berlin Wall, the Belfast Peace Lines and the Israel West Bank Barrier built to separate Israeli and Palestinian communities, projected to U2's song, "Peace on Earth".*

*It goes without saying that whereas Shakespeare has Mercutio saying the words "A plague on both your houses" (from the play Romeo and Juliet) here we want to offer a blessing on both feuding houses in the hope that peace may be forged.*

May the blessing of the Advent God  
Who fulfils the promise to Israel  
As a woman in little-known Nazareth  
Prepares for the birth of a baby  
Go with us as we long for peace.

May the blessing of the Advent God  
Who fulfils the promise to Judah  
As the conflict-torn town of Bethlehem  
Prepares to offer hospitality to the Christ-child  
Go with us as we prepare to welcome others.

May the blessing of the Advent God  
Who fulfils the promise to us  
Each time a candle is lit as a sign of hope  
And strangers are welcomed as friends  
Go with us as we seek to light candles of hope in our community.

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