Advent 1: Become an Insomniac
Mark 13:24-37

“Be aware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come...Therefore, keep awake---for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he suddenly comes.’ (Mark 13: 33 and 37)

Jesus calls us again to stay awake, to keep watch, for he is always coming and in danger. This is our most important task as disciples---to stay awake and be watchful. We are called to watch for conformity between our words and our deeds, to honor the divine in each other, to seek it and protect it. We are also called to watch for the ways that Jesus’ coming can be thwarted, obscured, or denied and to do something about it.

As I think back over my time as an Ecumenical Accompanier, I realize this too was what I was called to do---to stay awake and be watchful. We are called to watch for conformity between our words and our deeds, to honor the divine in each other, to seek it and protect it. We are also called to watch for the ways that Jesus’ coming can be thwarted, obscured, or denied and to do something about it.

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By the time we arrived at 3:30 AM, there were already a few hundred huddled together against the cold waiting for the gate to open at 4:00 so they might get to work by 6:30 or 7:00. The 8-mile distance between Bethlehem and Jerusalem could take up to two hours.

Besides counting and sending our reports to the United Nations, we also monitored the Jerusalem side of the checkpoint to make sure the metal detectors were operating and keep track of the flow of people waiting or passing. I spent many a cold morning on this side nodding or saying Maraban (Welcome) or Sabah el Kheer (Good Morning). Often I sat under or near a poster that pictured Jesus at Gethsemane. It was an advertisement calling us to “Come and Feel the Glory.” One morning I jotted down the following poem. It speaks to this call to wake up.

Prayer
Human One, advent our lives. Help us keep awake, alert, uneasy, and alive. In these dark and uncertain times, help us to greet the dawn and each other as if all were you. Help us keep faith with your purpose for a new world based on just relationships. Let it begin with us. Amen.

To learn more about Bethlehem visit these websites:
www.openbethlehem.org
http://littletownofbethlehem.org/ for information about documentary Little Town of Bethlehem
To learn more about the wall and checkpoints visit:
www.B'tselem.org or www.amnestyinternational.org

Contact Rev. Loren McGrail for preaching, speaking, and teaching on eye-witness experience in Palestine and Israel. Her email is lorenmcgrail@gmail.com or blog http://agarmentofdestiny.blogspot.com/