

THE HOLY LAND CHRISTIANS ARE GOING TO BE OUR GUESTS
HEAR THEIR STORY AND SEE THEIR BEAUTIFUL OLIVE WOOD CRAFTS

On September 7, 2025, during all services, we will be hearing about the Christians of the Holy Land. In the assembly room, we will have on display hand made olive wood religious articles from Bethlehem. There will be an opportunity to purchase these items while you are at church on Sunday. These carvings include olive wood Nativity sets, crosses, Christmas ornaments, candle holders, angels and many other religious crafts. The carvings are made by Christian families from Bethlehem who rely on the income from sales for their daily bread.

More than 70% of the Christian Community in the Holy Land depend upon tourism as their only source of income. For decades those Christians have been enduring many hardships as tourism in Bethlehem has plummeted. Other sources of income have been sharply restricted due to the ongoing conflict, the wars, the 12 yard wall built around Bethlehem, and COVID-19 pandemic. The ongoing war - twenty two months to date - has deterred tourism in the Holy Land. This has made it very difficult for the Christian families to find their daily bread and forced them to immigrate and flee their homeland since they lost their source of income. The Christian population of the Holy Land was 30% in the last century, today it is less than 1%. If it continues like this, in a few years we will find no Christians in the land of Christ. This lack of Christian presence could cause tragic consequences to our faith and holy sites. Please consider supporting our Christian brothers and sisters currently living in Bethlehem, where Christ was born, by making a purchase.

A Christian family from Bethlehem will be telling us the story of the Christians of the Holy Land and they will be presenting these carvings on Sunday, September 7th. It is never too late to help. All proceeds go to support Christian families from Bethlehem.

Let us carefully tend to our roots, Christian children of God in the Holy Land.

And let us pray together for peace in the land where our Savior once walked to tell the world the good news of salvation.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dr. George Ghanem

Holy Land Christian Solidarity Cooperative

<https://hlscsc.org/collections/all>

Forms of payment taken: cash, check, and credit/debit cards

Olive Wood

How We Acquire the Wood

The olive wood carving craft was brought to Bethlehem by the Franciscans in the 14th Century. Saint Francis is said to have introduced the first nativity olive wood creche in his hometown of Assisi.

All the olive wood figurines and art that we produce are hand carved from the trimmings (pruning) of the olive trees, which is an essential process for growing healthier trees and generating environmental stability. This process means that no tree is destroyed or chopped down.

After the olive tree is trimmed, its branches are kept inside dark places for a long period of time. Dark places are ideal to dry the olive wood because the temperature of the place stays the same year round and there is no moisture or humidity. This allows the wood to dry without splitting or cracking, which is ideal for carving.

Fun Fact: You can estimate the age of a particular piece by examining its grain. Very old trees have a dark grain while younger trees exhibit a lighter color. The dark lines inside the olive wood trunk also tell how old the tree is. The more lines the wood has, the older the tree. The dark grain inside the trunk of the olive tree is called the heart of the wood or the jewels, and they are what artistic olive wood carvers and their customers look for.

The olive trees of the Holy Land are also called the 'Roman' trees. They get this name because they have been living in the Holy Land and bearing fruits since the time of the Romans and Jesus.

Their wood is dense and durable, with a distinctive red pigment in its grain. All carvings made of this hard wood have a varying pattern, making every piece extraordinarily unique. It is very difficult to match the grain of two pieces since the pattern is completely hidden in the heart of the wood. The artistically smooth and elegant grain of the olive wood renders it one of the most beautiful in the world, allowing us to create carvings that will easily last a lifetime and be enjoyed by generations to come.

Once carved, the wood is sanded and coated with a special varnish to protect it and highlight the texture of the grain. There is no need for oiling or further treatment of any kind since the olive oil inside the wood is naturally protecting it from corrosion. As the wood ages, it will become darker and even more beautiful. Cleaning the wooden art pieces can be done with only a lightly wet cloth and no further materials.

