



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Salaam and grace to you from Jerusalem, City of Peace

September 2008

ELCJHL school year begins on a good note

The academic year began with many smiles – as well as a few tears – at ELCJHL schools. Youthful energy was in great supply at the various schools. Several youngsters at one kindergarten were apparently less excited about being in school, tearfully calling out to parents as they left the children in care of the teachers.

Classes started Aug. 23 at the Ramallah Lutheran School of Hope and two days later at Dar Al-Kalima School in Bethlehem;

the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour; Talitha Kumi Lutheran School and the Boys' Boarding Home in Beit Jala; and Al Mahaba Kindergarten in Jerusalem.

According to Director of Education Dr. Charlie D. Haddad, "The beginning for us was quite smooth." All programs were in place and changes communicated to parents, he said.

The new year brought with it several changes, one of which is a new exam strategy, Haddad said. Students will no longer take final exams. Instead, teachers will aim to develop understanding and analytical thinking skills in students, rather than preparing them for a final exam.

The schools are also continuing to develop overall strategies called action plans, from which each teacher develops an individual action plan for presenting his or her subject.



STUDENTS AT Dar Al-Kalima Evangelical Lutheran School, Bethlehem, process back into the building after a morning break.

These plans will help staff "fulfill our true educational philosophy, which emphasizes a holistic and participatory approach to education," Haddad said. Instead of the traditional teacher-centered system, "the student is the center of attention ... and the teacher functions more as a facilitator," he said. With this new system, "this year will be an exceptional year," he said.

There are about 231 staff members at all schools combined. Because of staff turnover, Haddad estimated there are roughly 16 new people on staff in 10 full-time and six part-time positions. Haddad is optimistic about these new teachers.

"This year I think we were the luckiest. We have a very good young group," he said.

Among changes at each of the schools is a construction project in progress at Dar Al-Kalima.

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ELCJHL congratulates new Latin patriarch

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land congratulates the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the installation of a new patriarch, His Beatitude Fouad Twal. ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan participated in the installation of Patriarch

Twal in Jordan as well as in the farewell for the outgoing patriarch, His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, who served 20 years in that post.

"We thank God for the service and life of Patriarch Michael Sabbah. We pray that God may continue to give him health,"

Younan said. "We congratulate Patriarch Fouad Twal. We hope that God will give him strength and health to continue his work."

A native of Madaba, Jordan, His Beatitude Twal is the first Jordanian to be appointed patriarch. He served as coadjutor for Jerusalem since 2005.



Patriarch Fouad Twal

Inside:

- Norwegian companion diocese visits ELCJHL
- 2009 anniversaries
- Intern for Redeemer English congregation
- Preview of Bishop's Academy

Calendar:

- Sept. 1-30 Ramadan
- Sept. 29-Oct. 1 Rosh Hashanah
- Yom Kippur Oct. 8-9
- Sukkot Oct. 14-20



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When complete in March 2009, the addition will include offices, reception area and a teacher's lounge/kitchenette on the ground level. The floor above will include laboratories for chemistry, biology and physics classes as well as a vocational education classroom. Funding made possible extensive maintenance at the school also, he said.

At the School of Hope, plans are in the works to obtain software and hardware for an information and computer technology department. At Beit Sahour, efforts have been made to strengthen its five-year German program so graduates can enter German universities without taking a language exam, Haddad said, which is normally required for non-native speakers of German.

"In all our schools we continue to develop," he said.

Haddad expects enrollment to be about the same or a little lower compared to last year. Some applicants were turned away in order to decrease overcrowding at some facilities. Although the schools "educate everyone," he said, an effort is made to attract Christian students. He is hopeful that number has increased this year. He said ELCJHL schools are unique in being co-educational, so they aim for a 50-50 ratio between boys and girls.

Haddad also spoke of the hurdles the school system faces this year.

"This will be an exceptional year."

– Dr. Charlie Haddad

"It is always good when the schools start on time and we continue to educate and teach the children to live with others and work for justice together."

– Bishop Munib Younan



YOUNGSTERS play with blocks at Al-Mahaba Kindergarten, Jerusalem, while director Margaret Qirry tells visitors about the program.

"We have a huge financial challenge ahead of us," he said. "With the drop in the dollar ... our schools suffer more financial burdens, especially since we collect tuition in dollars, not shekels." The devaluation of the dollar means a 25 to 30 percent drop in revenue. Haddad said they implemented an eight percent increase in the tuition rate, which will cover a fourth to a third of the lost income.

"The church, despite this, continues to subsidize needy and poor families," he said. As many as 50 percent of their students are subsidized "because our policy is to open our schools to all who can and cannot pay," he said.

Haddad invites people to "pray for all the children of the world," all of whom are impacted by conditions in Palestine, which serves as an excuse for extremism, he said.

ELCJHL welcomes six Young Adults in Global Mission from the U.S.A



YAGMs – Six "Young Adults in Global Mission" have arrived from the United States to volunteer in the ELCJHL. They are, from left: (back row) Paul Kacynski, Marta Spangler, Kendra Kintzi; and (front row) Meredith Harber, Nikki Schmidt and Chelsea Mathis.

For the first time, six Young Adults in Global Mission – a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's Global Mission department – have been assigned to Jerusalem and the West Bank. For the next year, they will serve in various ELCJHL school and other ministries.

The ELCA YAGM program provides one-year service opportunities in international settings, giving participants a global perspective on issues facing the church and society.

Bishop's Academy American bishops to visit ELCJHL, Palestine in January 2009

One need not look long in Jerusalem to find someone dressed in clerical garb. But that will be even easier come next January when more than 70 North American Lutheran bishops will arrive for their annual conference. Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and their spouses will spend about nine days in the city, according to Mark Holman, pastor of the English-

speaking congregation of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. In addition to business meetings, participants will visit ministry sites of the ELCJHL. They will meet with local government officials as well as leaders of Jewish, Muslim and Christian congregations.

Leading the delegation is ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson.

Watch for more details in coming newsletters.

Norwegian partner church sends delegation to Palestine

A delegation from the Borg diocese of the Church of Norway, an ELCJHL partner, visited the area this month. In addition to visiting ELCJHL schools and churches, the delegation explored the reality

of the Israeli occupation with visits to the separation barrier, Israeli settlements and a Palestinian refugee camp. The delegation of nearly 100 people was led by Borg's bishop, the Rt. Rev. Helga Haugland.

Mark your calendars ELCJHL to celebrate many anniversaries in 2009

Plans are under way to celebrate a number of milestone anniversaries in the ELCJHL next year.

In May 2009, the church will mark its 50th anniversary. Prior to May 7, 1959, it was a mission church under the spiritual leadership of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

Next year is also the 30th anniversary of the Arabization of the synod, when the German propst transferred spiritual leadership to its first Palestinian Bishop,

the Rt. Rev. Dr. Daoud Haddad.

The ELCJHL will also mark the 170th anniversary of the establishment of a mission in the area. The church also extends its congratulations to the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran church, which celebrates its 150th anniversary next year.

Please remember all those involved in planning commemorative services in your prayers and make plans to attend the special festivities.



REDEEMER CLERGY lit candles of congregants as they recessed from the sanctuary during a peace service held at the church on Aug. 27. Pictured here is ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan. The service is an annual event that rotates among the 13 Jerusalem churches.

Intern joins staff of Redeemer's English-language congregation

If flexibility is a necessary trait for doing ministry in Jerusalem, this former competitive gymnast is in fine shape. Michael Powell began his seminary internship with the English-speaking congregation of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem.

Powell, 26, is in his third year of seminary at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, United States. As an undergraduate, Powell competed in the six men's gymnastics events and has been coaching boys age 5-18 for 10 years.

As intern, Powell



Michael Powell

with assist with preaching and teaching and with ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, under the supervision of Rev. Mark Holman.

"I'm delighted to be working in a place that's so rich and with people who have a wealth of experiences to share," Powell said.

"There's a lot of overlap between coaching and ministry in that you're developing long-term relationships and walking through life with those people, providing guidance and support."

– Michael Powell

New accompaniers sent out to witness the occupation

EAPPI began its mission of accompaniment in 2002. In addition to monitoring and reporting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, accompaniers support acts of non-violent resistance, offer protection through non-violent presence, engage in public policy advocacy and stand in solidarity with the churches and all those struggling against the occupation.

Candlelight symbolized life as one team lit the wicks of another at the handover ceremony of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer on Sept. 3.

“You’re going to pass the light of life from one to another,” Propst Uwe Grabe told the ecumenical accompaniers, a light that is vital in this “torn country, a country in trouble.”

Twenty-five individuals from 10 countries were commissioned to serve in six locations: Bethlehem, Hebron, Jayyous, Tulkarem, Yanoun and Jerusalem. The EAPPI marked another transition in recent days. Dan Richards is now the local coordinator for the program, which is a ministry of the World Council of Churches. Since 2006, the coordinator was Valentina Magguilli.

As an expression of the church’s support of the program, Bishop Munib Younan met with accompaniers, who asked him what message they should convey at home. Work for justice, he said, and promote Palestinian Christianity and witness.

“It’s very important to be a human chain to promote justice in the world,” Younan said. Ecumenical accompaniers witness first-hand the devastating results of the occupation and, once home, tell the stories that create grass-roots support for the oppressed. Accompaniers “feel the fears of Israelis and Palestinians,” he said. “When they feel it, they will see the urgency of justice.”



EAPPI - A departing ecumenical accompanier lights candles for the incoming team at a Sept. 3 ceremony at Redeemer Church, Jerusalem.

The EAPPI seeks to support local and international efforts to end the Israeli occupation and bring a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a just peace, based on international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Learn more about the program at www.eappi.org.

Group witnesses effects of occupation first-hand

ICAHD, which began in 1997, provides non-violent intervention and advocacy in opposition to Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes.

You can read more about the conflict and about ICAHD at their website at www.icahd.org/eng.

Imagine being told you can’t build a home on your property while a neighbor builds on a similar site next door. Imagine having to get up at 4:30 a.m. and spend three hours in a security line to get to work while others simply drive through. Imagine that, despite paying your fair share of taxes, your children go to crumbling, overcrowded schools, while others attend state-of-the-art facilities. You have just imagined yourself as Palestinian, for these are just a few of the indignities they face every day in occupied Palestine.

These realities became apparent on a tour with a representative of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.



This is just one of some 18,000 Palestinian home demolitions that have occurred since 1967, according to the website www.ifamericansknew.org.

litions. Tour guide Sarah M. took participants past Silwan, a Palestinian village now controlled by Israel because of its supposed archeological value. Participants got a close look at Nof Zion (“view of Zion”), an Israeli settlement built illegally on Palestinian land. They experienced the security wall – some of them for

the first time – at the point where it blocks a road that once led to Jericho, effectively cutting off that city from Jerusalem, the heart of its economic and cultural well being.

Marta Spangler, one of the tour participants, said she found it encouraging that at least some Israelis, as illustrated

by Israeli tour guide Sarah, were critical of their country’s anti-Palestinian policies.

Sarah further illustrated the complexity of the situation when asked for her prognosis. She’s not hopeful the problem will be resolved, yet she continues to work for ICAHD “because I remain hopeful,” she said.