

# EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN JORDAN AND THE HOLY LAND



*Volume 6 Issue 2*

*February 2026  
Newsletter*



## *A Message to Our Partners*

On the last day of February, the United States and Israel conducted joint strikes in Iran, engulfing the region once more in war. People throughout the Holy Land and beyond are living with deep uncertainty and fear as to what the future holds.

We ask you to stand with the ELCJHL in prayer and solidarity in the face of this escalating violence. As Bishop Imad Haddad said in his message to partners this week, “Let your prayers be joined with courageous and concrete action. Stand publicly with those who are afflicted. Advocate persistently for a just peace that safeguards the dignity and security of all people. Challenge policy makers whose narratives make endless war appear inevitable.”

You can read Bishop Haddad’s full message [here](#).

## *The ELCJHL Begins Lent*

Our six congregations have entered the season of Lent, a time of fasting and reflection. At the same time, our Muslim neighbors are celebrating the month of Ramadan. We enter these days of spiritual renewal in prayer for safety and peace for all in the Holy Land.



# BISHOP'S CORNER

## *A Journey to Quench the Soul's Thirst: A Lenten Message from Bishop Imad*

As I walk through the streets of Jerusalem on my way to the office, I often navigate a landscape of contradictory emotions: joy and anger, fear and hope, love and resentment. In this city we cherish and suffer at the same time. Some people smile and greet; others look with contempt or even spit in gestures of hate. My daily journey to and from the Church of the Redeemer confronts me with the question life persistently places before us: How can we love our neighbor – whoever that neighbor may be – as ourselves?

In John 10:39-40, we read that Jesus withdrew again to the place “where John had been baptizing earlier.” He went back to the spring. He returned to the beginning.

Lent calls us to do the same. For those of us living in the Holy Land, where faith is ancient but daily life is heavy, this call is not abstract. Lent invites us back to the living waters of our baptism, where our union with Christ first took root. Without returning to that first promise, we risk trying to live the Christian life with a thirsty and exhausted soul. Renewal begins not with striving harder, but with returning deeper. “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27). This is not merely spiritual language. It is a way of walking through checkpoints, tensions, and wounded encounters without surrendering our humanity.

Martin Luther expressed this mystery clearly: “Christ has taken upon himself what is ours and has given to us what is his.” Because Christ has given himself to us so completely, we are freed, and commanded, to love the neighbor before us: the neighbor who smiles and the neighbor who turns away; the neighbor who welcomes and the neighbor who wounds. This love is not naïve. It is costly discipleship. It is baptism lived in public. Lent exposes our temptation to love only those who are easy to love and calls us back to the spring, until Christ’s mercy runs deeper than our resentment. “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters...” (Isaiah 55:1). May this holy season lead us back to the spring and forward in courageous, costly love.

## Meetings with Partners

This month Bishop Imad met with several local and international partners. He welcomed visits from WCC general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay and Ambassador Tarja Kangaskorte of the Finnish Representative Office in Ramallah to discuss the challenges faced by Christians in the Holy Land. He also met with local associations from Jerusalem.

## Visit to Germany

Bishop Imad visited Germany this month to meet with partners there. While in Germany, he attended the Annual Festivities for Jerusalemverein. He also met with Bishop Stablein, Presiding Bishop Kristina Kuhnbaum-Schmidt, Bishop Frank Kopania, Bishop Ralf Meister, and Church President Dr. Christiane Tietz.





## CONGREGATIONS

In February all six of our congregations began the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday services were held in Beit Jala, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Ramallah to mark the beginning of this time of reflection as we prepare for Christ's death and resurrection. Our congregations in Jerusalem and the Bethlehem area will mark Lent, Holy Week, and Easter by the Western Liturgical Calendar, while those in Ramallah and Amman will join their neighboring churches in celebrating based on the Eastern calendar.



The Arabic-speaking congregation of the church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem and Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem held special services and receptions to celebrate Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad this month. In Amman, congregates revived the tradition of celebrating the Baptism of our Lord with a joint service at the Bethany Beyond the Jordan Baptismal Site with our Anglican Siblings.



## YOUTH

The ELCJHL Youth Ministry held a special gathering for Valentine's Day. Pastor Ashraf shared a prayer about love, reminding all that love is not just something we talk about, but something we show through kindness, patience, and caring for one another every day. After the discussion, youth enjoyed fellowship and games as a group. The gathering was a great chance to for youth to connect, have fun, and remember the importance of loving others through Christ's example and grace.





# EDUCATION

## *DrumFit Workshop for Teachers*

Caring for the psychosocial and emotional well-being of staff is a priority for the ELCJHL. To support this commitment, the Educational Director Mrs. Eva Azar organized DrumFit workshops for staff across the three schools lead by Mr. Adham Abu Eid.

These sessions provided an opportunity for colleagues to come together, connect with one another, laugh, and simply enjoy their time in a fun and engaging environment. Through rhythm, movement, and shared energy, staff members strengthened relationships, reduced stress, and experienced the joy of community beyond their daily responsibilities.

## Child Safety Workshops

This month, Evangelical Lutheran Schools Director of Education Eva Azar organized three Child Safety Guidelines workshops for the Lutheran Schools. Presented by Dr. Lana Zoughbi, these sessions focused on strengthening awareness, reinforcing best practices, and ensuring that every member of our school staff is fully informed and aligned with child safety standards and responsibilities.

The workshops provided practical guidance, clear protocols, and meaningful discussions to help ensure that our learning environments remain safe, supportive, and protective for all students. Together, we continue to build a culture where child safety is everyone's responsibility.





# GENDER JUSTICE

## *Workshop in Ramallah*

The ELCJHL Gender Justice Ministry held a second workshop in Ramallah to discuss the forthcoming research study about the impacts of the war on Gaza, particularly on women and children.

The workshop was opened with remarks by University President Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shaer, Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad, and Palestinian Minister of Women's Affairs Mrs. Mona Al-Khalili. All three speakers emphasized the importance of gender justice and efforts like this to protect vulnerable groups in society during times of war and conflict. The draft study was then presented by Judge Scarlet Bishara of the ELCJHL Ecclesiastical Court and Judge Somoud Damiri of the Sharia Court.



This study was developed with the support of the Sawasya Programme, as part of ongoing efforts to enhance access to justice and strengthen evidence-based knowledge. See our previous post for more details on the content of the paper. Thank you to all who joined for this important presentation and discussion around the gaps women and girls face in accessing justice and how we can create more equitable and inclusive legal systems.

# Judges Training on Women and Children's Rights

This month the Lutheran Ecclesiastical Court judges completed a two-day training workshop on international human rights conventions, with a focus on strengthening the protection of women and children within court procedures and decisions.

These sessions, organized by the ELCJHL Gender Justice Ministry in collaboration with the Palestinian Judicial Institute and with the support of the Sawasya Program, aimed to enhance judges' legal knowledge and equip them with practical tools to handle family cases with a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach. Certificates were distributed to the judges who completed a series of specialized trainings held over the past few months designed to strengthen the judge's expertise and the church's justice system.





# ENVIRONMENTAL

## *“My City is Clean and Beautiful” Campaign*

The Environmental Education Center of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, in cooperation with the Beit Sahour Municipality and the city’s schools including the Evangelical Lutheran School, the Greek Catholic Patriarchate School, the Latin Patriarchate School, and the Orthodox Shepherds’ School launched a new campaign last week titled “My City is Clean and Beautiful.”

The volunteer activity was attended by the Mayor of Beit Sahour, Dr. Elias Iseed, along with teachers, students, and club leaders from the environmental clubs of participating schools. Participants were divided into groups to weed the roundabouts, clean the surrounding areas, and plant flowers to enhance the city’s appearance at the Souq Al-sha’ab Roundabout, Al-Mukhtar Roundabout, and Shepherds Field Roundabout near the I Love Beit Sahour sign.

## *Dar al Kalima Greenhouse Revitalization*

The EEC worked with the Environmental Club of Dar al Kalima Lutheran School in Bethlehem to revitalize the school greenhouse this month as part of efforts to promote sustainable agriculture and hands-on learning within schools, and to raise students’ awareness of the importance of food security and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. As part of the project the greenhouse and soil were prepared and a variety of seedlings were planted, including lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, and thyme. The students prepared the planting beds, conditioned the soil, and planted the seedlings together.

# Burqin Trail

The EEC participated in organizing the first Burqin Trail near Jenin, in partnership with the alumni of Burqin schools, Burqin Sports Club, parents’ councils, and with the participation of members of the environmental forum at Palestine Technical University. The new trail is the first trail organized by community institutions in the town to introduce younger generations to its history and nature. The initiative aims to connect the past with the present, revive the spirit of volunteerism, and raise awareness about the environment and biodiversity among youth.

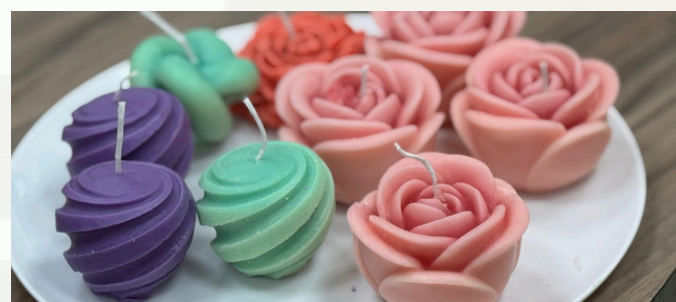




# DIACONAL MINISTRY

## *Cooking for a Cure Program*

The Diaconal Ministry implemented their pioneer “Cooking to Cure” cooking therapy program over the last few months. Over six meetings from November to February, the program worked with women struggling with life difficulties and challenges and focused on developing new techniques for mindfulness through new cooking skills. The course was implemented in partnership with Psychologist Jumana Kaplanian and Chef Muna Khroufeh, and focused on the goals of clarity, creativity, accomplishment, and connection. We thank our partners from FELM for supporting our families and women through this program.



## *Candle Making*

Deaf Ministry members continued their candle-making project, focusing on candles for upcoming holidays.

## *Meeting with Bishop Imad*

The Diaconal Ministry team met with Bishop Imad Haddad to discuss the work of the Diaconal Ministry and how to best organize workflow.

## *School Social Workers Meeting*

Monthly meetings with local school social workers began for the semester this month with the psychologist Rafiq Saed, who led a workshop with the theme “Self Control for Self Development.”

