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Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



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Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad is the 5th Bishop of the ELCJHL



Consecration Service Held in Jerusalem

On January 11, 2026, Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad was Consecrated as Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. The day began with a procession from Jaffa Gate to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, led by the Talitha Kumi and Beit Sahour Lutheran Scout Troops.

The service was held at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem and was attended by over 500 people. Dozens of local and international bishops, pastors, and other church partners participated in the liturgy.

We give thanks for Bishop Imad's ministry and we thank our siblings in Christ around the world who joined us in person, online, or in prayer for this sacred moment in the life of the church,



Bishop's Corner

Meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II

Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad, Bishop Emeritus Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar, Bishop Emeritus Dr. Munib Younan, and a delegation of partner bishops from international Lutheran Churches were honored to be welcomed by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, who offered his congratulations to Bishop Imad on his installation, and reaffirmed his support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and beyond.



Meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas

Bishop Haddad and Bishops Emeritus Azar and Younan also met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. President Abbas congratulated Bishop Haddad and wished him success in leading the church. He also emphasized his full support for preserving the authentic Christian presence in Palestine and affirmed that Palestinian Christians are an integral part of the Palestinian people.



Honoring Bishop Azar

In January, bishops, pastors, officials, faith partners, and hundreds of siblings in Christ from the Holy Land and around the world gathered to honor Bishop Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar and give thanks to God for his eight years of ministry as the 4th Bishop of the ELCJHL and for his decades of service in the church.



We are so grateful to all those from near and far who came to Talitha Kumi School in Beit Jala to join in prayer and fellowship celebrate and honor Bishop Azar's faithful work in the service of God, the church, and the community.

As a church, we offer our gratitude to Bishop Azar for his guidance and leadership and congratulate him on his retirement.

Christmas Greetings

This month delegations from the ELCJHL exchanged Christmas Greetings with our siblings from the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchates. At the Armenian Patriarchate, the assembled Bishops and Heads of Churches offered congratulations to Bishop Haddad on his recent installation.



Congregations

Welcome Services for Bishop Imad

In January our congregations at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Amman, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah, the Church of the Reformation in Beit Jala, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour held special worship services and receptions to officially welcome Bishop Haddad as the 5th Bishop of the ELCJHL. We were honored to be joined in these services by local and international church partners and officials.

Pastor Christy Lohr Sapp Installed

This month Rev. Dr. Christy Lohr Sapp was officially installed as Pastor of the English-speaking Congregation of the Church of the Redeemer, where she will serve alongside Pastor Sally Azar. We were happy to have our ELCA partners Bishop Dr. Meghan Aelabouni of the Rocky Mountain Synod, Global Mission MENA Desk Director Rev. Gabi Aelabouni, and MENA Regional Associate Shadin Nassar participate in the service. We give thanks for Pastor Christy's ministry here!



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Each year in January we celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This special week brings together Christians of all creeds to honor our shared beliefs as followers of Jesus Christ. In the Holy Land, the week of prayer was held from January 24th to February 1st. The theme for the week was, "There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling" from Ephesians 4:4.

A service was held at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem on Monday, January 26th, as part of the schedule for the week. We were joined by many of our Christian siblings from Jerusalem and beyond to acknowledge our faith that transcends cultural and national boundaries, uniting us in our shared call to serve God's people throughout the earth.

New Year's Worship

Our congregations welcomed the New Year with special worship services. We join together in prayer that 2026 will be a year of true peace in the Holy Land throughout the world.

Education

Students Participate in PaLMUN

This month 40 students from the four Lutheran schools participated in the PaLMUN Conference under the theme "Documenting the Truth."

Our students participated in several committees, including the General Assembly, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNESCO, WHO, UNDP, UN Women, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Human Rights Council (HRC), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Security Council, ICJ, International Criminal Court (ICC - Non-UN Body), Arab League, and a Crisis Committee (Non-UN Body).

Several students received awards for their outstanding participation. We are very proud of our students and their dedication to human rights.



Children's Dreams Exhibit Opens in Sweden

The "Children's Dreams" art exhibition, featuring art from students of the Lutheran Schools in Palestine, is currently on display at one of our partner churches in the Church of Sweden's Diocese of Strängnäs. This exhibition was organized by the ELCJHL Education Ministry in collaboration with the Diocese of Strängnäs. A performance from a local children's choir opened the exhibition, and many visitors have come to see the art and shared how touched they are by the thoughts and dreams expressed in the children's work.

We are so proud of our students who shared this beautiful representation of their dreams, and we thank our partners at the Church of Sweden for their participation in this special project.

Theater Program Begins

In January a new theater program began for students at Dar al Kalima Lutheran School and the Evangelical Lutheran School of Beit Sahour. The weekly program will be led by ELCA staffer Paul Sapp.

Diakonia

Meetings with Partner Delegations

In January the Diaconal Ministry team met with several international delegations visiting for the consecration of Bishop Haddad. Deacon Rana Zeidan presented the work of the Diaconal Ministry during Christmas and their role in this important season as Christians living in the Holy Land focusing on spiritual care and renewal. They also discussed challenges that come during the beginning of the year such as the renewal of medical insurance for many families in need, supporting families with funds for electricity and heaters in this cold weather, and providing extra food.

The team met with delegations from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Church of Finland and Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Kerk in Actie, and Berlin MissionWorks.



Environmental

Environmental Teacher's Forum in Jericho

The EEC organized a two-day Environmental Teacher's Forum in Jericho, bringing together teachers and staff to focus on stress management, self-care, and environmental education practices. Teachers shared initiatives such as greenhouse planting, waste sorting, and student awareness campaigns, showcasing practical applications of environmental concepts.

EEC Welcomes Visitors

In January the EEC hosted a delegation of 22 bishops from the Lutheran Church of America. During their visit, they received a comprehensive overview of the center's activities, caring for creation ecological and climate justice including educational programs, bird protection efforts, and environmental awareness initiatives.

In addition, the EEC welcomed a group of visitors from the ELCA and United Lutheran Seminary who toured the facilities, including the Biblical Garden, and learned about the EEC's role in education, caring for creation, and promoting ecological and climate justice.

Beit Fajjar Green, Palestinian Tree Day

The EEC joined the "Beit Fajjar Green" initiative, organized by the Municipality of Beit Fajjar to celebrate Palestinian Tree Day. The event brought together local leaders, volunteers, and residents to plant trees across the city, promoting environmental awareness, sustainability, and community engagement.



Gender Justice

Research Paper Development and Workshop

In January the ELCJHL Gender Justice Ministry held a workshop to present the draft of a new research paper prepared by Al Hakimat Council, with the participation of local experts and organizations from Bethlehem.

The research examines how the war on Gaza since October 2023 has led to the collapse of legal and social protection systems, with severe consequences for women and girls, particularly orphaned girls. The paper highlights the sharp rise in orphanhood, the increase in number of unaccompanied and separated children, the rise in early marriage, and the breakdown of judicial and family protection mechanisms due to mass displacement, institutional destruction, and the loss of legal identification documents. It also addresses the increasing number of missing persons and the impact of these realities on the broader community in the Gaza Strip.



Ecclesiastical Court

The Gender Justice Ministry in collaboration with the Ecclesiastical Court is conducting two needs assessments to strengthen the Lutheran Ecclesiastical Court and improve access to justice for litigants. The first assessment focuses on court infrastructure by reviewing the current facilities, identifying gaps related to safety, privacy, accessibility, and suitability for women, children, and persons with disabilities, and developing practical recommendations, cost estimates, and an implementation plan to create a more inclusive and dignified court environment.

The second assessment examines the technical, administrative, and procedural readiness of the court to join the national Mizan II case management system, including mapping workflows, assessing IT infrastructure, identifying risks, and integrating a gender perspective to ensure equitable access and effective digital justice services.