



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

PO Box 14076, Muristan Road • Jerusalem, Israel 91140 • +972-2-626-6800

Media Kit

Photos: Ben Gray/ELCJHL

MEDIA CONTACT:

Adrainne Gray, Communications Coordinator

agray@elcjh.org

Phone: +972-2-626-6861

The Rev. S. Ibrahim Azar New Bishop-Elect ELCJHL Synod Elects Other Officers



The Rev. S. Ibrahim Azar, Ben Gray/ELCJHL

Jerusalem, 14 January 2017 – Gathered in Beit Jala, Palestine, the Synod of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) elected The Rev. Ibrahim Azar, pastor of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem, as bishop-elect of the church.

In a democratic election, 38 voting members of the ELCJHL voted for Rev. Azar, the only candidate on the ballot, as the bishop-elect. The ELCJHL synod emerged following the vote.

During the synodical meeting, the members also elected The Rev. Samer N. Azar, pastor of The Evangelical Lutheran Good Shepherd Church, Jordan, as president of the synod, Mr. Anton Nassar, member of The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church Bethlehem as deputy president, and Ms. Muna Tannous, member of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope Ramallah as secretary. The synod also elected a church council which is composed of The Right Rev. Dr. Bishop Munib Younan, synod president Rev. Azar, Mr. Ghessan Kasabrah, of Jerusalem, Mr. Adel Khader of Bethlehem, Mr. Rifat Qassis, and Mr. Issa Muraibe. All church council officials will serve a 5-year term.

“I am very happy that the unity of the church has been maintained. I will continue my capacity as the bishop of the church to keep the unity that is a living witness for our church and for others,” Bishop Younan said.

Bishop-elect Azar was born June 22, 1961. Rev. Azar is a product of The Evangelical Lutheran Schools in Palestine, graduating from The Evangelical Lutheran School of Bethlehem in 1979. Rev. Azar earned his theology degree from Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany in 1987. He was ordained in 1988.

Rev. Azar is married to Nahla Elias Azar, and has three daughters, Sally, Sama and Jihan Azar.

Bishop Younan was consecrated Bishop of the ELCJHL in 1998 and is the third Palestinian bishop of the ELCJHL which was founded by Germans and had been previously led by German clergy.

Among his duties, Bishop Younan governs six Palestinian Lutheran churches and four schools developed for Palestinian children. He launched and built the church and pilgrimage center at the baptismal site on the Jordan River and oversees several other congregational and global developmental programs.

In 2010, Bishop Younan was elected president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition represented in 98 countries.

The ELCJHL is one of the LWF member churches, serving approximately 3,000 local members.

Included in this kit:

1. Q&A
2. Link to high resolution gallery of photos
3. History of the ELCJHL

About the ELCJHL

Though Palestinian Christians have been in Jerusalem since the first Pentecost, the roots of the ELCJHL are in the mid-19th century when German and English missionaries came to teach and minister to the local people. Today, we have six congregations in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Amman, Jordan, and Beyond Bethany, Jordan. The churches in Amman and Ramallah are comprised largely of families of refugees who fled their homes at the time of the tragic wars that followed the formation of Israel. We also operate four schools and four education programs.

#1 Q&A

Is Bishop-elect Azar going to succeed Bishop Younan? If so when and how?

Rev. Azar will succeed Bishop Younan at the appropriate time. At this time, The Right Rev. Dr. Bishop Munib Younan remains in our most high office at the Lutheran Church in Jerusalem. During an extensive period of preparation for Rev. Azar, Bishop Younan will continue leadership.

Is the Bishop-elect going to be ordained? When and by whom?

Rev. Azar will be installed and consecrated to the church office of Bishop after a period of transition. Bishop Younan will be a part of that ceremonial rite.

Is Bishop Younan leaving because of age or for other reasons?

Yes, Bishop Younan has gone beyond the ELCJHL Constitution age limit for our Bishops. The constitution states that, Bishops should retire after the age of 65. In 2014, the ELCJHL Synod asked Bishop Younan to remain for two years beyond his 65 years of age. Bishop Younan is now 67 years old.

Is he going to stay in Jerusalem?

Absolutely! He will continue to be involved in ecumenism work around the region and globally from this location. Bishop Younan and the church will not cease to enrich and welcome interfaith dialogue.

What are the roles and prerogatives of the Synod of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land?

The Synod exists to maintain the Christian presence in the Middle East through an Evangelical expression for those who seek it; by working toward justice and education through Christ's message of hope and reconciliation.

Are there any other relevant aspects to tell to people whom are not aware of internal procedures of Lutheran Church?

It is important that the world understand that Rev. Azar is acting as Coadjutor Bishop until the official installation which will be determined at a later date.

#2 History of ELCJHL

The ELCJHL traces its origin to the middle of the 19th century when German and English Evangelical Christians came to Palestine to support the Christian minority in the area through diaconal and mission work. Their activities were many and were channeled through a variety of organizations and institutions.

The initial phase of the Lutheran mission efforts began in 1841 when a joint British Anglican and Prussian Evangelical bishopric was established in Jerusalem. In 1851 Theodor Fliedner, of Kaiserswerth, was invited to bring four deaconesses to the Holy Land to begin a hospital. Four years later, a school for girls, Talitha Kumi, was begun. This was the first school to offer girls a proper education.

In 1860 Johann Ludwig Schneller founded the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem. His work among homeless boys had its origin in a civil war in Syria, at that time a province of the Turkish regime. Some 30,000 Christians lost their lives in that war and many children became orphans. (Eventually that work was moved to the Bekka Valley of Lebanon and was administered by the Lutheran World Federation.)

The Anglicans and Lutherans worked together as one body until 1886 when the Prussian Lutherans went their own way, partly due to political and theological differences in Europe between Prussia and England. The German Lutherans focused their efforts on social work and education at a time when the British Anglicans were emphasizing conversion. Today the ELCJHL continues this call to witness through education and health care for Palestinians regardless of faith and provides for the spiritual needs of the Arab Lutheran community.

The original aim of these Protestant mission efforts in the Holy Land was not to create a new church in the area, but to serve the poor and provide a proper education for Christians. Only later the former pupils of the Lutheran Schools helped to establish the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Many of these members became refugees at the time the State of Israel was created.

Until 1947 the Lutheran Church was a mission church under the spiritual leadership of a Propst appointed by the Evangelical Church in Germany. On 7 May 1959, at a time when what is now the West Bank was part of Jordan, the ELCJHL was officially recognized as an autonomous religious community with a royal decree from King Hussein. Thus it was officially called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan though in practice it is known simply as the Evangelical Lutheran Church

(ELCJ). The ELCJ Synod met on Jan. 14, 2005, and unanimously decided to add “and the Holy Land” to the name, so that the name more accurately reflects the full scope of the ministry of the Lutheran church that is serving in Jordan, Palestine and Israel.

During the 1970s the ELCJHL began to make its way toward independence as Lutherans world wide focused on “church to church” relationships rather than “church to mission field” relationships. In 1979 the German Propst transferred spiritual leadership to the first Palestinian Bishop, the Rev. Dr. Daoud Haddad, who had been vicar of the Jerusalem congregation for more than 30 years. The Synod of the ELCJHL had elected him as the first Arab Lutheran bishop in the whole of the Middle East.

#3 High Resolution Photo Gallery

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3bbfxx4kcdz0q6e/AABT__lmyFFL_dSmfhbCWbiwa?dl=0

Photo credit: Ben Gray/ELCJHL

###