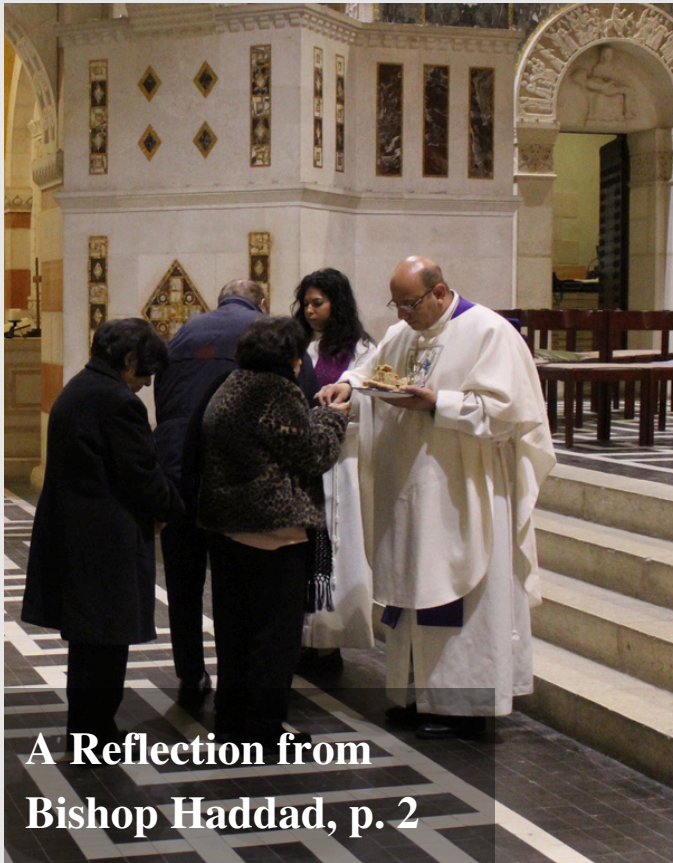


NEWSLETTER



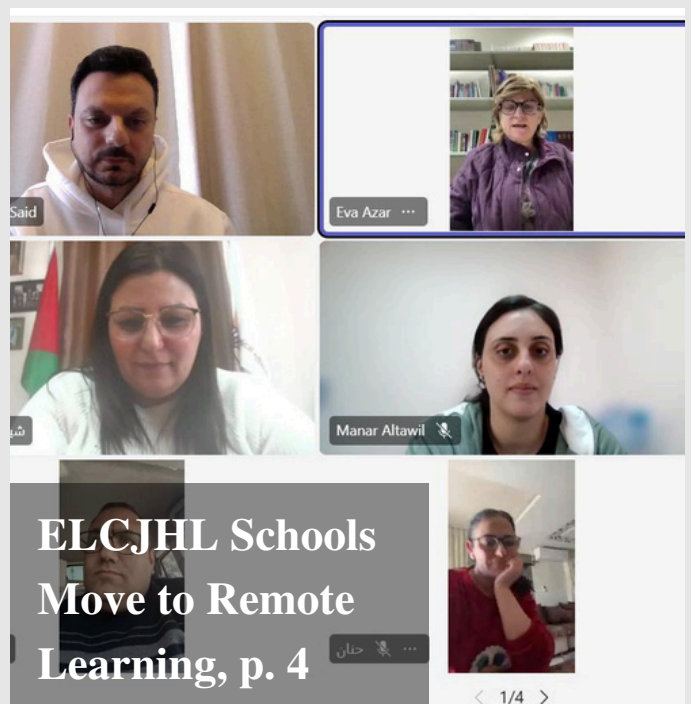
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BISHOP'S CORNER

PERPLEXED BUT NOT CRUSHED: A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP IMAD HADDAD

In a time when everything seems to fall apart, when fear becomes a constant companion, and injustice leaves its mark on everyday life, it is even more necessary to be grounded in what does not collapse: faith, hope, and love.

Our ELCJHL cannot continue its ministry to the people of the Holy Land and beyond unless we remain rooted in this living foundation. Even in times of war, when we find ourselves perplexed, we must not surrender to the cultures of death that surround us. For it is precisely in such heavy days that we are reminded of a God-given calling: we are still able to choose. We choose life in the face of death. We choose hope amid despair. We choose to remain a church that walks alongside its people through living witness and active diakonia.

As we walk the reality of the Via Dolorosa in our own time, we do not walk without direction. We walk toward Easter. For Easter is not only a day we remember, it is the light that draws us forward. It is the promise that sends us out, and the truth to which we return again and again. In the resurrection of Christ, life has overcome death. This victory is ours. It has been entrusted to us, planted within us through the waters of baptism and nourished in the Eucharist, the feast of life. Therefore, even when we are perplexed, we are not crushed. We remain a people of Easter sent to witness for life in a world overshadowed by death.



The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem met this month to discuss Holy Week and Easter celebrations amid the war.

CONGREGATIONS



CONGREGATIONS CELEBRATE WESTERN PALM SUNDAY



Our congregations in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala marked Palm Sunday on the last Sunday of March. In Ramallah and Amman, they will celebrate next week according to the Eastern calendar. Despite the atmosphere of uncertainty and fear that hangs over the celebrations this year, we still go forward to Holy Week trusting in the hope of the resurrection.



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

March 21st is Palestinian and Jordanian Mother's Day. We give thanks for the mothers in our lives and in our community, and we uplift their wisdom, strength, resilience, and love. Our congregations honored mothers during their services on Mother's Day and with activities during the week.

EDUCATION

ELCJHL SCHOOLS MOVE TO REMOTE LEARNING



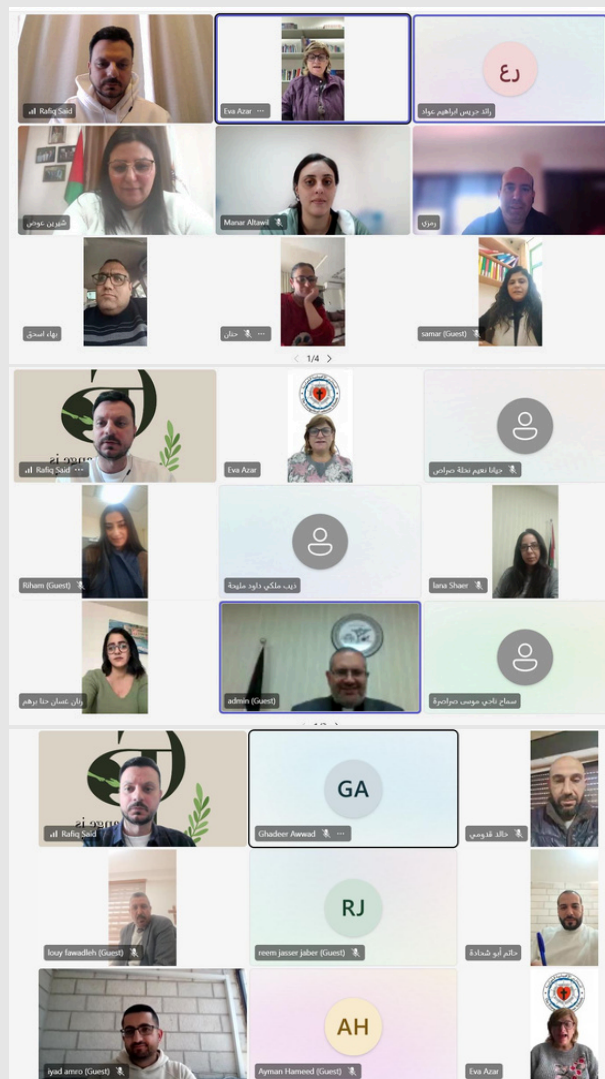
At the outset of the war, all ELCJHL schools moved lessons online for the safety of students and staff. Since the shift to online teaching, the ELCJHL Educational Director and school principals have held regular virtual meetings focused on planning, preparation, and reviewing educational programs. These meetings aim to coordinate efforts between the schools, address challenges, and implement strategies that ensure the highest quality of education possible to support the schools. We give thanks for our dedicated teachers and staff during this time.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SESSIONS

The Education Ministry organized a series of online psychosocial relief sessions for teachers from the ELCJHL schools, in partnership with Social Counselor Rafiq Saeed from the organization Change is Possible.

These workshops, titled "Strengthening Students' Psychological Resilience by Supporting Teachers' Psychological Well-being," focused on how a teacher's emotional state affects classroom climate and student resilience in times of difficulty. Palestinian teachers bear a heavy burden of supporting the emotional and psycho-social health of students while living through incredibly challenging circumstances themselves. These sessions helped teachers develop skills for building supportive teacher-student relationships based on trust, teaching students healthy coping strategies, creating a psychologically safe classroom environment, and prioritizing their own self-care and emotional regulation.

Meetings were held with teachers, administrators, and social counselors from all three ELCJHL schools. In providing this opportunity for teachers, we also hope to strengthen the mental health of our students.



DIAKONIA



EMERGENCY WAR RELIEF

Times of crisis deeply impact our work in the Diaconal Ministry. Since the war began, we have increased our assistance to many in our community who are without income and are struggling to afford basic essentials. We have welcomed more people to our weekly Hot Meals distribution with a focus on vegetarian meals, as many in the community are fasting for Lent. Only two days after the war broke out, the Diaconal Ministry team gathered in a spirit of prayer to prepare a warm, healthy meal for 100 community members in Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour.



We also worked to stock the Diaconal Center with essential First Aid supplies to increase our emergency preparedness.

EASTER ACTIVITIES

Due to the war, we had to cancel our planned Easter activities for children at the center. Instead, we prepared Easter gifts and activity materials for each congregation to use during their Sunday School activities.



ENVIRONMENTAL

40 YEARS OF SERVICE, WITNESS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This year marks a significant milestone, as the Environmental Education Center (ELCJHL EEC) celebrates its 40th anniversary. Founded in 1986 as the Involvement and Awareness Program, the EEC has grown into a leading institution for environmental awareness, education, advocacy, and community engagement. For four decades, it has worked tirelessly to promote care for creation, climate justice, ecological sustainability, and environmental protection. We are so proud of our Environmental Ministry.



PALESTINIAN ENVIRONMENT DAY

On March 5, the EEC commemorated Palestinian Environment Day, a national occasion originally initiated by the EEC. To mark the day, the EEC shared an awareness statement with schools and distributed it online to students, highlighting the importance of environmental protection and introducing young people to the EEC's mission and work.

GREENING PALESTINE CAMPAIGN

Continuing its annual tradition, the EEC distributed thousands of trees to schools, students, teachers, farmers, and families throughout March. This initiative encourages planting as a means of raising environmental awareness, strengthening food security, and contributing to the greening of Palestine.



GENDER JUSTICE

WOMEN'S MONTH

March is International Women's Month. We give thanks for the women of our church, society, and world, and uplift their strength, wisdom, and leadership. This year especially we pray for all women afflicted by war, violence, displacement, fear, and grief. We lift up our prayers for justice and peace for Palestinian women and all women of the world.



MOTHER'S DAY EVENT IN JORDAN

The Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church Women's Committee, in cooperation with the ELCJHL Gender Justice Ministry, organized an activity in celebration of Mother's Day. Women participated in the service through readings, reflections, and hymns, in an atmosphere that expressed appreciation for the role of women and mothers in the church and society. We extend our sincere thanks to all the women for their unlimited dedication, to the Women's Committee in Jordan, and to everyone who contributed to organizing and making this special gathering a success.

Due to the war, we were not able to gather women from the Palestinian congregations for a large event as we usually do, but we are grateful to our congregations for lifting up the importance of women and mothers in their own churches.

