



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN JORDAN AND THE HOLY LAND



In This Issue:

Our congregations mark Ash Wednesday as Lent begins. ELCJHL Youth held a special worship with an LWF Youth delegation, and congregations and schools celebrated Women's Month. The EEC hosted students for the Spring Competition, ELCJHL Ministry Directors traveled abroad, and Bishop Azar traveled to Germany to meet with partners.

We Pray

As our church marks Lent and our Muslim neighbors celebrate Ramadan, we pray for our community during this time of fasting. Our thoughts are with our siblings in Gaza and the West Bank who are without food and shelter and are facing an uncertain future. As airstrikes, invasions, and displacements resume in Gaza, we pray for a permanent ceasefire and a just peace.





CONGREGATIONS



World Day of Prayer

ELCJHL women led services for the World Day of Prayer in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Amman, this month. The World Day of Prayer liturgy this year was prepared by women in the Cook Islands, and Christians around the world came together to pray for the Cook Islands and the whole Christian community.

Women's Month

Congregations in Bethlehem, Amman, Beit Jala, Jerusalem, and Ramallah held Women's Day and Mother's Day Celebrations. Several of the Women's Committees collaborated with the Gender Justice Ministry to plan the events. We honor and uplift the wisdom, strength, and sumud that women bring to our church, society, and world. We pray for justice for women everywhere.



Ash Wednesday

Our congregations in Beit Sahour, Beit Jala, and Amman marked Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent with services for the interment of ashes. During this season of fasting, our congregations are holding Lent services each Sunday, special Lent Bible Studies, and fasting meals. Many congregants will fast from meat, sweets, or other luxuries until Easter.





YOUTH



Prayer Service and Youth Night

Youth from several congregations met in Beit Sahour for a special Youth Lent service. The service was led by Pastor Sally, Pastor Rodny, and Pastor Munther, with Youth leading readings and prayers. After the service, Lutheran World Federation Youth Director Savanna Sullivan met with Lutheran Youth in Beit Sahour for a discussion about faith, the role of young people in the church, and opportunities with the LWF.



LWF Intergenerational Justice Policy

This month the ELCJHL and Pastor Rodny Said hosted the LWF Intergenerational Justice Policy Task Force for their first in-person meeting in Amman, Jordan. This task force, made up of representatives from each LWF region, got to know each other and the ELCJHL, and discussed the theology of Intergenerational Justice, principles related to the topic, and other details that will be included in the official policy.





EDUCATION



Peace Mediators Graduate at SOH

This week a new class of students graduated from the Peace Mediation Program at the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah. Every year, each of the Lutheran schools prepares a group of elementary students to be Peace Mediators through a year-long program that teaches productive conflict resolution skills and strategies. These students will be mediators among their peers at recess and during the school day. Congratulations to our new Peace Mediators!

Mother's Day

ELCJHL Schools held special programs, crafts, and activities in honor of Mother's Day.



Leadership Students visit the Elderly

Students from the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour Leadership Group visited elderly community members at the Antonian Charitable Society Club Center in Bethlehem. The students joined them for games, served dinner, led songs and dances, and shared gifts. The activity was supported by our partners at FELM.



International Women's Day

In honor of International Women's Day, the ELCJHL Education Office organized an activity to honor the incredible women who make our educational work possible. Education Director Eva Azar led flower-arranging programs for the Lutheran Schools, including Al Mahaba Nursery and Pre-School. We are thankful to our partners at FELM for supporting this activity.





ENVIRONMENTAL



Sustainable Schools Project Begins in Beit Sahour

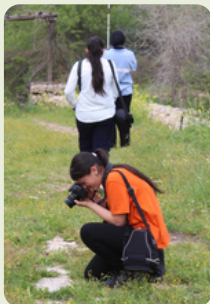
The Environmental Education Center, in partnership with the Beit Sahour Municipality, launched the “Amal” waste-free, sustainable and environmentally friendly schools project in four schools in Beit Sahour, including the Evangelical Lutheran School.

The program, based on the “Waste-Free Schools” initiative launched by Bishop Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar in fall 2019, aims to help schools limit plastic use, promote healthy cafeterias, and produce fertilizer through compost.

Spring Competition Day at the Environmental Education Center



This month 75 students from nine local schools, including Dar al Kalima, ELS Beit Sahour, and Talitha Kumi, came together at the EEC for the Annual Spring Competition. These students split into groups to either draw, take photographs, or write about this year's theme: Land of Beauty and Biodiversity. Winners from each of these categories will be chosen and announced at the end of the school year!



EEC Delegation Visits USA



This month a delegation from the Environmental Education Center including Director Simon Awad and ELCJHL Youth Nardine Nassar and Saleem Musallam travelled to the United States for a speaking tour where they discussed the work of the ELCJHL and the EEC in connecting Palestinians to their land and combating the environmental damage caused by the Israeli occupation.



GENDER JUSTICE



Gender Justice at the United Nations

Gender Justice Ministry Director Ranan Issa and ELCJHL Pastor Rev. Sally Azar traveled to New York for the 69th Commission on the Status of Women Conference at the United Nations. While there, both women spoke at events with faith partners from around the world.

Ranan spoke at the session “The Rise of ‘Family Values’ & Strategies for Rights-Based Family Law Reform,” about the ELCJHL’s advocacy initiatives toward improving Gender Justice in Family and Personal Status Laws in Palestine.

She also co-moderated an event entitled “Transforming Taboos: How to Change a Social Norm,” highlighting the role faith-based actors play in promoting Gender Justice through the transformation of social norms.

Rev. Sally spoke at an event entitled “Empowering Change: Advancing Women’s Role in Peace and Security,” highlighting her work as a Palestinian woman to promote gender justice, peace, and security and uplifting women as crucial agents for positive change.



Sawasya Agreement Signing

Bishop Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar signed the partnership agreement officially beginning the project with Sawasya Programme Palestine designed to enhance the work of the ELCJHL’s Ecclesiastical Court through specialized training for judges and legal staff and supporting the development of legal research and advocacy materials.



DIAKONIA



Kerk in Actie Visit

This month the ELCJHL received a visit from our partner organization Kerk in Actie from the Netherlands. They were joined by a small group from a Dutch TV program who spent some time filming the ministries of the Diaconal Ministry. Our guests conducted an interview with Diaconal Ministry Director Rana Zeidan about her work and filmed one of our March Hot Meals distribution days. Kerk in Actie has been a partner of the Diaconal Ministry for several years, and we were excited to host them. Keep an eye out for when the Dutch TV episode airs!

Deaf Ministry

The ELCJHL Deaf Ministry met at the Diaconal Center in Beit Jala this month for lunch and candle making. The Diaconal Ministry team also prepared some psychological relief activities for them including painting as a means of self-expression. We were happy to have our Kerk in Actie partners and the Dutch TV crew join this activity as well.





BISHOP'S CORNER

Iftar with King Abdullah of Jordan

In honor of the month of Ramadan, Bishop Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar attended a special Iftar meal hosted by His Majesty King Abdullah II for Muslim and Christian religious leaders at Al Husseinia Palace in Jordan.

Greetings with Bishop Twal

Bishop Azar and Pastor Imad Haddad of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Amman met with Bishop Dr. Iyad Twal to offer congratulations on his installation as Auxiliary Bishop for Jordan for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.



Augusta Victoria Ramadan Meal

Bishop Azar joined the staff of the Lutheran World Federation's Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem for their annual Ramadan meal and celebration.

Reformed Church Visit to Jerusalem

Bishop Azar and Propst Lenz welcomed a visit from Dr. Susanne Bei der Wieden, President of the Reformed Church in Germany, and met in his office to discuss the current situation for the church.



Berlin Mission Visits



At the beginning of March Bishop Azar traveled to Germany for the 172nd Annual Conference of Berlin Mission's Jerusalem Association with the theme: "Evangelical Education in Palestine - Perspectives in Times of Crisis." He was joined by ELCJHL Education Director Eva Azar and Talitha Kumi Headmasters Birgir Reese and Laura Bishara. During the event they spoke about the realities Palestinian Christians are facing in our ministries after a year and a half of war. At the end of the month, Bishop Azar returned for the retirement celebration of Berlin Mission Director Rev. Dr. Christof Theilmann and attended other partner meetings in Hamburg.