

# Summer Newsletter

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land



## SUMMER IN THE ELCJHL

It has been a busy summer for our congregations and ministries. Congregations celebrated significant milestones as we began the time after Pentecost, Youth Summer Camps and congregational retreats were held, and ELCJHL Pastors attended important partner meetings abroad. Rev. Dr. Imad Haddad was named Bishop-elect of the ELCJHL.

The summer had a challenging start for our community with the outbreak of the Israel/Iran War. We give thanks for a ceasefire, but we continue to mourn the ongoing violence and starvation in Gaza. We lift our prayers for justice.

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# MECC MEETING

In July, Bishop Azar attended the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches in Beirut to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MECC. At the beginning of the meeting, attendees observed a minute of silence and prayed for the victims of the bombing at St. Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Douailah, Damascus. The attendees condemned all forms of violence, regardless of its source, and strongly denounced hate speech, extremism, racism, and the current acts of violence against all of humanity. The attendees also called for an end to the war, aggression, and genocide in Gaza, and condemned attacks by settlers in the West Bank and the restrictions imposed on Palestinians.

## VISIT TO GERMANY

In June Bishop Azar traveled to Germany for the installation of Rev. Dr. Adelheid Ruck-Schröder as president of the Protestant Church of Westphalia.

## HEADS OF CHURCHES IN TAYBEH

Bishop Azar joined other Jerusalem Heads of Churches on a solidarity visit to the Christian village of Taybeh in the West Bank in July after Israeli settlers attacked the village and damaged Holy Sites.

# BISHOP'S CORNER

## PASTOR ASHRAF INSTALLED IN BETHLEHEM

In June Bishop Azar installed Rev. Ashraf Tannous as the Pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. Our prayers are with him in this new role.

## GAZA PRESS CONFERENCE

Bishop Azar attended a press conference by Latin Patriarch Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa and Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III in Jerusalem after their visit to Gaza in July. This visit followed an Israeli strike on the Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza.





## JERUSALEM CONFIRMATION

Five young believers affirmed their Baptisms at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem in a service led by Bishop Azar. We are so proud of these incredible youth and we look forward to their future in the church.

## CONFIRMATION IN AMMAN

This summer we celebrated the confirmation of three young believers from the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd by Bishop Azar. Our prayers go with these young people as they take the next steps in their faith.



# BISHOP CONT.

## PASTOR MUNTHER INSTALLED IN RAMALLAH

We give thanks to God for the installation of Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac by Bishop Azar as the Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah. The congregation also wished Pastor Rodney well in his new call during the service.



# SYNOD

## SYNOD MEETING AND ELECTION

The ELCJHL Synod held an electoral session on June 27 to elect the next Bishop of the ELCJHL. The Synod elected the Rev. Dr. Imad Mousa Dawood Haddad as Bishop-Elect of the ELCJHL. He will succeed His Grace Bishop Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar, who will remain in office until the installation of the Bishop-Elect on January 11, 2026.

The Synod expressed deep gratitude to Bishop Azar for his faithful and impactful years of service and for his spiritual and pastoral leadership, which have left a significant mark on the life of the Church and its members.





## GOOD SHEPHERD OUTING

Women from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Amman explored the Royal Botanical Garden in Pomegranate Hill, and had lunch in Agloun, and visited Debin Abbey.



# CONGREGATIONS

## BEIT SAHOUR AND BETHLEHEM SUNDAY SCHOOL CAMPS

Pastor Ashraf led a summer camp for children from the Bethlehem congregation during the last week in July. The Beit Sahour congregation will begin their summer camp during the first week of August.



## CHRISTMAS LUTHERAN SAYS GOODBYE TO PASTOR MUNTHER

Christmas Lutheran Church held a special Farewell Service for Pastor Munther Isaac after his many years of service in the congregation. Our prayers go with him as he begins his ministry in Ramallah.



## ECUMENICAL MEETING IN RAMALLAH

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope hosted an ecumenical group of church leaders and families from the Christian community in Ramallah. Pastor Munther and the visiting delegation reaffirmed their commitment to an ecumenical partnership and brotherhood of Christians in Ramallah.



## BEIT JALA AND JERUSALEM CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT

The Beit Jala and Jerusalem congregations held a joint Congregational Summer Camp in Jericho. The retreat centered on the theme "Hope and Faith in Troubling Times." Rev. Ines Fischer joined the retreat to give a lecture. We give thanks for this important time for fellowship and relaxation.





# YOUTH SUMMER CAMPS BEGIN

The ELCJHL Youth Ministry hosted summer camps during June and July for Sunday School-aged children, Confirmation students, and teenage youth. Groups traveled to Jericho for several days of games, songs, Bible study, fellowship, and relaxation. These camps were led by ELCJHL Pastors with help from the youth leaders from our congregations.

Our youth have faced two incredibly difficult years. We were grateful to give them time to enjoy childhood while growing in faith. Thanks to everyone who made our camps a success!

## YOUTH



## CROSSROADS

In July some of our ELCJHL Youth participated in the 2025 Crossroads Retreat in Jordan. Crossroads is an annual program that brings together youth from Mozambique, Sweden, and Palestine and Jordan. This year the ELCJHL hosted the retreat in Jordan which included visits to Petra, Wadi Rum, and Jerash and focused on discussion topics chosen by the youth. The youth also toured the Bethany Beyond the Jordan Baptismal Site and spent time at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Amman. We give thanks for this ongoing journey in faith with our global brothers and sisters!





# LEADERSHIP GRADUATIONS

This summer the ELCJHL Education Office held graduation ceremonies from the Leadership Program for students from Dar al Kalima Lutheran School, the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope, and the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour. These students have worked hard over the last three years to gain skills in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, project management, teamwork, time management, confidence, and more. We are so proud of our incredible students!

## AL MAHABA KINDERGARTEN GRADUATION

Students and parents at Al Mahaba Kindergarten in Jerusalem celebrated graduation in June. We will miss our students who are moving on to grade school next year!

## TALITHA KUMI VOCATIONAL CENTER GRADUATION

At the end of June we celebrated the Graduation of the 25<sup>th</sup> Class of the Talitha Kumi Vocational Training and Education Center in Beit Jala .

# EDUCATION





## PROTECTION POLICY TRAINING WORKSHOP

The Gender Justice Ministry and YWCA Palestine organized a workshop under the YW4A programme to learn more about the protection policy of the ELCJHL and how we can better safeguard all beneficiaries, especially women and children. The session brought together ministry directors and representatives from our churches and schools.

## YOUTH LEADING THE CHANGE

The ELCJHL Gender Justice Ministry led a Youth 4 Change session at the conference for teenage ELCJHL youth this month. The session focused on social norms and stereotypes that impact women and men and how change can begin with us. This session was supported in part by Faith2Action and the YW4A program. We are proud of how our youth are working to make positive change in society!

# GENDER JUSTICE





## SUMMER AT THE EEC

The Environmental Education Center welcomed many visitors this summer despite ongoing challenges such as war and road closures. Sixty students from Women of the Sun participated in inspiring discussions and explored the garden's rich biodiversity.. Additionally, forty children visited the EEC, exemplifying the transformative impact of learning and community engagement. The center has proudly nominated outstanding young men and women from the Young Environmental Leadership Group to represent their community at the upcoming international IUCN Congress in Abu Dhabi, as well as delegations to Sweden, Egypt, and Jordan.

## WEST ASIA ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS MEETING

EEC Director Simon Awad participated in a regional meeting with environmental leaders from West Asia, including IUCN President Razan Al Mubarak, to strengthen cross-border collaboration on environmental issues. He later met with His Excellency Muawiya Radaideh, Minister of Environment in Jordan, to discuss the problem of ecocide and the need for enhanced environmental protection across the region. The EEC was proud to be honored by His Excellency Muawiya Radaideh and Her Excellency Razan Mubarak, during a recent visit to Amman. The recognition highlights the center's impactful work in environmental education and its vital role in regional conservation efforts.



# ENVIRONMENTAL

## INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

In June and July many international guests visited EEC: representatives from the Church of Sweden, including the Chair of the International Board of the Church of Sweden, and Maria Walsten. Partners from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America visited the EEC, including Rev. Gabi Alabouni, Sasha Ghosh-Siminoff, Maddi Froiland, and Shadin Nassar. Anna Bitic from the Swedish Consulate also visited EEC. Anna and Maddi are former volunteers for the EEC, and we were glad to welcome them back!



## KESTREL RESCUE

An illegally captured kestrel was recently brought to the Environmental Education Center by the Palestinian police. Now under our care, the bird is receiving the treatment and rehabilitation so it can be released. We extend our gratitude to the Palestinian police for their continued collaboration, particularly in matters concerning the protection of wild birds. We are committed to combating the illegal capture of birds through education, enforcement, and community engagement.



## GRADUATION HONOR

His Beatitude Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III honored EEC Director Simon Awad during the graduation ceremony of the Orthodox Shepherds School in Beit Sahour.





## PSYCHOSOCIAL ACTIVITY FOR ABRAHAM'S TENT

The Diaconal Ministry hosted psychosocial relief activities for the students and teachers of the Abraham's Tent after-school program ahead of summer break. These activities were led by psychologist Jumana Kaplanian and focused on how to help students and teachers improve their mental and emotional health during the current situation. The student's program explored the idea of "safe spaces," and encouraged children to visualize and even create their own safe spaces in their lives. The teacher's program focused on strategies for how Palestinian women can focus on physical, mental, and spiritual well-being while handling the many demands of their lives, exacerbated by the unstable political situation.

## SUMMER AT THE DIACONAL CENTER

This summer, especially during Israel's war with Iran, the Diaconal Ministry focused on expanding the Hot Meals program to feed 85 people every week. This program prioritizes the sick, elderly, and families with children. As many people are facing significant physical and psychological challenges due to the war, the ministry has continued to provide medical aid and psychological relief activities for the community. Director Rana Zeidan shares the quote, "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain." -Vivian Greene

# DIAK ONIA

