



Statement on COVID-19 in Jerusalem/West Bank

Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar

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*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Greetings from Jerusalem, the city of the Resurrection, and the land where hope was born to all of us.

As Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), today I want to update you on the situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank, related to COVID-19.

As of this writing, following the recommendation of the Palestinian Authority, all of our ELCJHL Sunday worship services are cancelled in the West Bank for four weeks. Our schools are also closed for the same time period. Students will be provided with online lessons to continue their education during this time.

Our ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission Volunteers will continue to partner with the ELCJHL from Jerusalem, where they will stay safely with our YAGM coordinators, Pastors Meghan and Gabi Aelabouni.

Augusta Victoria Hospital is open for service, but is running on reduced staff, as our workers from the West Bank are denied entry to Jerusalem at this time.

The ELCJHL offices in Jerusalem are operating with only three people on staff, again because of travel restrictions between the West Bank and Jerusalem. We thank you for your patience as we attend to our work with reduced staff.

At this time, we understand that local hotels have cancelled all upcoming reservations. This includes our Lutheran guesthouses.

We ask for your prayers as we seek to make the best health decisions for our congregations, schools, and communities.

We also pray for all of you, in your own contexts, as you seek to do the same.

*O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*

*(From Evangelical Lutheran Worship)*