

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



**الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة**

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. Psalm 57:1-2

Dear partners in ministry,

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you to share the news of a terrible tragedy in Lebanon. On the evening of August 4, two explosions in the port area of downtown Beirut created widespread destruction, injury and death. As you have likely seen on international news reports, the second explosion leveled the area around the port, tossing cars and blowing out buildings. The toll in human lives is yet to be known, but as of this writing, more than 100 people are dead, more than 4,000 injured, and hundreds more are still missing. The official cause of these explosions has not been confirmed, but it may have been an accident due to a fire in the vicinity of buildings containing highly explosive substances.

Although there is no institutional Lutheran presence in Lebanon, we are in partnership with a number of Christian ministries in Beirut, including the Evangelical National Church of Beirut, the All Saints Anglican Church Beirut, the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches, and the Near East School of Theology, a seminary which a number of our ELCJHL pastors have attended. As of now, we do not know of any casualties in these communities, but some of their buildings sustained significant damage. And, of course, the nation of Lebanon has been greatly struggling in recent weeks with the economic and health effects of Covid-19, and with political turmoil. In addition to the loss of life, the infrastructure of Beirut has been significantly affected, including damage to hospitals and to the port area itself, which handles imports of necessary basics such as wheat.

I share this to give you a sense of the extent of this crisis, which is still developing, and to ask you to join me in prayers for our partners in ministry in Beirut and for the Lebanese people. **This coming Sunday, August 9, our worship services in all of the ELCJHL congregations will pray for the victims of the Lebanon disaster, and we will hold a special offering to raise funds to support our partner churches in Lebanon as they serve their communities affected by this tragedy.** We pray that you will join us in answering the call to serve our neighbors.

In Christ,

Bishop Sani-Ibrahim Azar

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