



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Lent 2022

Dear brothers in Christ,

We begin our Lenten journey this year with fervent prayers for you and for the Christians whose presence in the Holy Land is under constant threat.

We received your painful letter in Advent, describing the rise in assaults against Christian leaders, communities and churches by radical groups in recent years. We recognize that these attacks are intended to inflict not only physical injury but also despair. We also recognize that, compounded by the injustices of the occupation, they represent a systemic attempt to drive Christians from the very cradle of our faith. We hear, and share in, your anguish.

We join you in affirming the commitments of the government of Israel to “uphold a safe and secure home for Christians in the Holy Land and to preserve the Christian community as an integral part of the tapestry of the local community.” In this Lenten season, as Christians throughout the world turn their thoughts to the Holy Land and to the ministry, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, we give thanks for your presence as the local expression of our global church in the place where our faith was born. Your vital ministry as “living stones” of the church in the Holy Land is a witness of the gospel to your members and neighbors, to Christians throughout the region and to us — your siblings in Christ in the United States.

Your Advent appeal underscores the need for the government of Israel to ensure that local officials and law enforcement agencies fully uphold religious freedom in Jerusalem’s Christian quarter and elsewhere in the Holy Land. We support your urgent call for dialogue with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian leaders to deal with the immediate challenges presented by radical groups and to envision and create a special Christian cultural and heritage zone that safeguards the Christian presence in Old City Jerusalem. Such dialogue will lead to greater understanding and, God willing, to solutions that ensure a vibrant future for all.

In 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul reflects on the experience of the emerging Christian movement: “We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see — we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (6:8b-10). These words also reflect the experience of the body of Christ in the Holy Land today. As we journey with you toward the cross, we share your distress over the perilous situation of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. We are with you in these darkest days, assured that Jesus Christ, who has promised to walk with us, has defeated death once and for all.

In Christ,
The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian
Director and Legate
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church