



*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?” —Psalm 22:1*

Dear church,

As Lutherans, we are accustomed to holding tension between two truths. Thus the ELCA denounces the egregious acts of Hamas, acts that have led to unspeakable loss of life and hope. At the same time the ELCA denounces the indiscriminate retaliation of Israel against the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim.

For the past week we have borne witness to the horrors of the escalating crisis between Israel and Hamas. We also watch a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza as Israel blocks food, water, fuel and medical supplies and as airstrikes continue to cause unbearable civilian casualties ahead of a just-announced ground assault. We see Israelis and families around the world in the agonizing wait for word about the fate of loved ones killed or taken hostage by Hamas. We are in anguish, grieving and praying for all people who are living in trauma, fear and uncertainty.

Among us are Palestinian Lutherans who are fearful for their families, their communities and their homeland. In our communities we have Jewish and Muslim neighbors, who are also facing the horrors of this crisis and its impact on their loved ones.

It is difficult to find words that suffice in the complexity of this moment, and in the web of relationships that bind us together, as church, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and our interreligious partners. Yet God has called us to be a people who stand with others amid suffering.

We must also call a thing a thing. The power exerted against all Palestinian people — through the occupation, the expansion of settlements and the escalating violence — must be called out as a root cause of what we are witnessing. We are committed to our long-standing accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

The God who liberates us calls us to be a liberating witness. May it be so.

In Christ,



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

Things you can do:

- Find updated resources and statements from the ELCA [here](#).
- Join our partner Churches for Middle East Peace for prayer every Wednesday from 12:30 to 1 p.m. Eastern time. Register [here](#).
- Call your lawmakers today through the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and urge them to take action to deescalate the conflict and uphold unrestricted humanitarian aid to Gaza. Find your member of Congress at [govtrak](#).
- Support Lutheran Disaster Response [here](#).

*You may notice that we sometimes publicize statements and other information from organizations of which we are members. We will never share information that did not go through our internal vetting process, so you should feel free to share such information on behalf of your church.*