



New Years greetings to you and yours...

On behalf of our Sumud community, we wish you a New Years season of reflection, peacemaking, and hope.

In this final quarter of the year, ELCA MENA Desk's Sumud continued to make important connections and build a sound foundation for ministry ahead. It has been such a pleasure to connect with some of you and get to know the amazing peace building work you are already doing in your own communities.



ELCA Bishops Solidarity Delegation with ELCJHL Bishop Imad Haddad and Pastor Ashraf Tannous in the ELCJHL's "Church of the Reformation" in Beit Jala.

Bishop Solidarity Delegation—January 2026

We thank God for the ELCA MENA Desk Bishops Delegation's Solidarity Visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). This visit held immense meaning, and our Presiding Bishop Curry was able to join our eleven Bishops and five ELCA Churchwide leaders for important time in relationship and accompaniment with our siblings in the ELCJHL. It was an honor to have the National Bishop of the ELCIC, Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, and ELCIC Bishop Carla Blakey, along with us on this visit. These conversations with Bishop Imad of the ELCJHL, Bishop Emeritus Azar of the ELCJHL, pastors in the ELCJHL, the Director of Education and principals of the ELCJHL schools, the EEC, Tent of Nations, and other ELCA partners including Anar and Augusta Victoria Hospital offered our ELCA delegation the chance to listen and learn from the lived experience of our siblings who live, worship, and show us what steadfastness means under Israeli occupation. It was a special privilege for the delegation to attend and participate in the Celebration of Ministry for Bishop Emeritus Azar and the Consecration of Bishop Imad Haddad. Many thanks to our ELCJHL siblings for their hospitality. Now that we have come and seen, we will "go and tell".

Photo thanks to Brett Nelson (ELCA).

ELCA Lenten Devotional Series Now Available

BODY OF CHRIST



ELCA Sumud 2026
Lent Devotional
Series

[Access Lenten Resources Here](#)

In ELCA Sumud's 2026 Lenten series, "Body of Christ", we are invited to reflect on Paul's proclamation that "we who are many are one body in Christ" (1 Corinthians 12). In the body of Christ, no member can be dismissed or deemed expendable. This series lifts

up especially Palestinian Christians as an inseparable and equal part of the Body of Christ, whose witness and oppression demand our attention and solidarity. Through prayer, scripture, and devotionals, we will explore how each member of Christ's body has distinct gifts and responsibilities, yet is bound together in mutual care, accountability, and love. ELCA Sumud was honored to accompany the 2026 Bishops Solidarity delegation, and throughout this series you will hear reflections from ELCA Bishops on their experience in accompaniment, conversation, and relationship with our partners and siblings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. In a time of profound injustice and violence in Palestine, this series calls the church to repentance from indifference, to listening across borders, and to faithful action, trusting that when one part of the body suffers, all suffer together. God calls upon the whole body of Christ to work together for justice, dignity, and peace.



ELCA MENA Desk Solidarity Delegation from Latin America and Churchwide Colleagues at the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour

ELCA MENA Desk facilitates Solidarity trip to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land from ELCA partners in Latin America.

In November 2025, Desk Director Rev. Gabi Aelabouni of the ELCA Middle East North Africa (MENA) Desk facilitated a visit of thirteen bishops and pastors from Latin American ELCA Church Partners

led by Paulina Dasse, ELCA senior director for companion engagement and global personnel, and Rev. Jaime Dubon, director of the ELCA Latin American and Caribbean Desk, to visit and accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). The purpose of this solidarity visit was to familiarize the delegation with the ELCA's long-standing partnerships and sponsored programs in the region as well as strategize on ways to amplify and centralize the Palestinian Christian struggle for justice. The delegation heard from ELCJHL Bishop-Emeritus Azar, Bishop-elect Imad Haddad, ELCJHL pastors, ELCJHL education leaders, and visited each of the ELCJHL ministries. This was an important step in building relationship with our siblings in Christ in Latin America, as well as continuing our relationship of accompaniment with the ELCJHL.



Screenshot from Webinar 1 of the "Get to Know the ELCJHL" Series with Bishop-Emeritus Dr. Azar, Rev. Rodney Said, and Rev. Sally Azar.

[Access Webinars Here](#)

"Get to Know the ELCJHL" Webinar Series Recordings Available

In November of 2025, ELCA Sumud had the honor of hosting four webinars which featured our siblings in Christ in the ELCJHL. We heard from Bishop-Emeritus Dr. Azar, current ELCA Bishop Dr. Imad, ELCJHL pastors Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, Rev. Ashraf Tannous, Rev. Rodney Said, Rev. Sally Azar, ELCJHL Education Director Mrs. Eva Azar, ELCJHL Principals Rev. Tony Nassar, Mrs.

Shireen Awad, and Mr. Fuad Louay, as well as ELCJHL Gender Justice Director Ranan Issa, ELCJHL Environmental Executive Director Simon Awad, and ELCJHL Diaconal Ministry Deacon Rana Zeidan. These webinar recordings offer a great introductory resource to use in Bible Studies, small groups, or other discussion-based settings. We encourage you to use this resource!



Sumud members near their table at the Southeastern Synod Convocation, October 2025

Southeastern Synod Convocation Sumud Visit

Sumud Program Director Maddi Froiland had the honor of speaking at the Southeastern Fall Synod Convocation last fall. This was a great way to connect with the Sumud community of the Southeastern Synod, as well as build awareness. Special thanks to Bishop Strickland for his generous hospitality. Are you interested in having a member of the MENA team speak virtually or in-person at a synod event? Contact sumud@elca.org.



Ordination of Rev. Adham Al-Araj, December 2025 in the Pacifica Synod.

Arab and Middle East Ministries Desk: Ordination of Rev. Adham Al-Araj

We give God thanks for good news from the Arab and Middle East Ministries Desk and the Arab and Middle East Heritage (ALAMEH) community: Rev. Adham Al-Araj has been ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Rev. Al-Araj, born and raised in Bethlehem, Palestine, graduated from North Park Theological Seminary and did his Lutheran year at Wartburg. He has also studied at the Bethlehem Bible College. Rev. Adham is starting a new Arabic-speaking ministry in San Diego, California, which he has named “Bethlehem Arabic Lutheran Church”, after his hometown. He was ordained by Bishop Dave Nagler, and Rev. Khader El-Yateem (Executive Director, ELCA Service and Justice) preached the sermon. Rev. Khader Khalilia (Director, ELCA Arab and Middle East Ministries) and Rev. Gabi Aelabouni (Director, Middle East/North Africa Desk) had roles in the service as well.





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