Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love

May 14, 2026

Dear Church,

I send you Easter greetings for the Seventh Sunday of Easter and our celebration of Jerusalem and the Holy Land Sunday. Christ is risen indeed!

Our prayers for and solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) are needed more than ever. Despite the declaration of a ceasefire in October 2025, violence has continued. Hundreds of people in Gaza and the West Bank have been killed or suffered grievous injury. Many have experienced assault against their person, property and freedoms. Palestinian land continues to be seized for additional settlements, which is illegal according to international law.

In Taybeh, the last remaining wholly Christian town in the occupied West Bank, people are facing intimidation and attacks, with the intent of driving them off their land. These actions are also illegal under international law.

The ELCIC stands in solidary with the people of Taybeh and condemns the attacks on Palestinian Christians — their churches, towns and land. We continue to pray for a just peace for all people in the Holy Land.

On March 30, Israel's Knesset passed a law imposing the death penalty for Palestinian detainees. This discriminatory law is worded to apply exclusively to Palestinians sentenced at an Israeli military court's discretion. The military courts responsible for enforcing this law, where only Palestinians are tried, are notorious for disregarding due process. These courts have an approximately 96 percent conviction rate that relies on confession obtained under duress and torture.

The United Nations high commissioner for human rights says the application of this law constitutes a war crime. This further demonstrates the oppression and injustice happening in the West Bank. The ELCIC condemns the imposition of the death penalty for Palestinian detainees.

These concerns echo the commitments affirmed by our church at the 2025 National Convention, when delegates adopted the following motion:

In solidarity with the people of Taybeh, in the Israeli occupied territory of the West Bank of Palestine, the ELCIC decries attacks on Palestinian Christians—their churches, towns, and land. We call on the National Bishop to continue the work of advocacy on behalf of the ELCIC to be in solidarity with our Arab Christian sisters, brothers, and siblings in Holy Land. We call on our National Bishop to continue to pray and advocate for a just peace for all people in the Holy Land and to encourage our partners to join us in the prayers and efforts.

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The ELCIC acknowledges that its buildings and ministries, from coast to coast to coast, are on traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples.

This week I joined with our synod bishops in writing to Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, lifting up these concerns and calling on our Canadian government to apply diplomatic pressure. [You can read the letter here: https://elcic.ca/partnerships/messages-and-statements-from-elcic-national-bishop/]. You may wish to add your concerns to this message by writing to your own MP and/or the Minister.

Our prayers and actions for justice are always intertwined, and so we join in prayer with the people of Taybeh who have said, "Yet we remain steadfast in our shared faith and hope that truth and justice will ultimately prevail."

Please join me in prayer:

> *God of Hope who blesses the peacemakers, we pray for the people of Jerusalem, the Holy Land and the Middle East. Comfort and heal those who grieve and suffer and hurt and fear. End the violence. Transform hearts so that there may be peace. We give you thanks for the witness, service and resilience of Palestinian Christians. Through the power of the resurrection, renew us in courage, faith and love. In Jesus name we pray, amen.*

In Christ Jesus,



The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada