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# ELCJHL Newsletter

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## Congratulations Graduates!

Students from the four Lutheran Schools and the LWF Vocational Training Center celebrated graduation this month.

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# Bishop's Corner: "Why do we have hope?"

*"Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles." (Isaiah 40:31)*

"Why do you still have hope?" This is one of the questions I am asked most often when speaking with churches and partners around the world. Sometimes the question is phrased differently: How is your hope sustained? What gives you hope?

To be honest, I have never found the question easy to answer. Not because hope is absent, but because the question itself often carries assumptions about what hope means. Many people understand hope as optimism or as the expectation that circumstances will improve. Yet when Christians speak about hope, we are speaking about something much deeper than optimism. We are speaking about God's presence, God's promises, and God's kingdom.

When I reflect on these questions, I often return to the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength." The biblical understanding of waiting is not passive. It is not sitting still until conditions improve. Those who wait for the Lord are also those who renew, build, dream, work, and live. They are strengthened precisely so that they can continue their journey. Waiting and renewal belong together. Trust and action belong together.

This is the hope of the Kingdom of God—the hope of the "already" and the "not yet." We already experience God's presence among us, yet we continue to long and labor for the fullness of God's reign. The Kingdom is already breaking into our world, yet we continue to pray, "Your Kingdom come." Christian hope is not an escape from reality. Rather, it is a commitment to live faithfully within reality while trusting God's promises. God has made us partners in God's mission. Therefore, hope is not merely something we possess; it is something we practice. Every act of service, every effort toward justice, every word of reconciliation, and every choice for life becomes an expression of hope. We do not wait alone, nor do we labor alone. God is with us and invites us to participate in the work of God's Kingdom.

When people ask me where I see hope today, my answer is often very simple: I see hope in our people. I see hope in young people who continue to dream despite war, occupation, restrictions, economic hardship, and uncertainty. I see hope when I attend graduation celebrations and witness students planning for a future that many would tell them not to expect. I see hope in congregations that continue to gather for worship, in teachers who continue to teach, in families who continue to nurture life, and in communities that continue to care for one another despite immense challenges.

These realities do not erase suffering. Hope does not deny pain, injustice, war, or oppression. Hope sees them clearly and truthfully. Yet hope refuses to grant them the final word. Those who wait for the Lord continue to walk even when the road is difficult. They continue to build even when the future is uncertain. They continue to dream even when disappointment is near. Their strength comes not from optimism but from God's abiding presence. Ultimately, our hope is not simply that circumstances will improve. Our hope is the Lord himself—the God who comes to dwell among humanity, the God who remains faithful in every season, and the God who continues to call us toward life.

Therefore, we rise on wings like eagles—not to escape the world, but to see beyond the darkness. We return to the ground renewed for the work before us: building, serving, teaching, accompanying, and witnessing to God's Kingdom. For Christian hope is not the denial of reality. It is the conviction that God has not abandoned the world and has not abandoned us. The Kingdom is already among us, and its fullness is yet to come. Therefore, even in difficult days, we continue to live, to dream, and to hope.

As the season of Easter comes to a close, our congregations marked Ascension Day and Pentecost this month.



*"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."*  
Acts 2:2-4

# Congregations



JERUSALEM



BETHLEHEM

11 youth from Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem were Confirmed this month. Congratulations to these amazing young people. You are the future of the church!



AMMAN



RAMALLAH



BEIT SAHOUR



BEIT JALA

Congratulations Rev. Dr. Fursan Zu'mot!  
Pastor Fursan received his Doctor of Divinity this month from United Lutheran Seminary.

DAR AL KALIMA



TALITHA KUMI



# Education

**Congratulations to the Lutheran Schools Class of 2026!**

SCHOOL OF HOPE

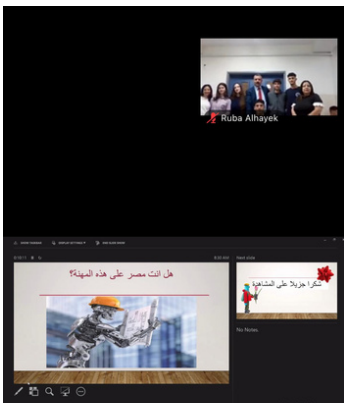


ELS BEIT SAHOUR



## VIRTUAL CAREER COUNSELING DAY

Each year the ELCJHL Education Office organizes a "School to Career" counseling program for 10th grade students. Usually all three schools gather at the School of Hope in Ramallah, but due to the security situation the sessions were held on Zoom this year.



ما هو الإرشاد المهني

- بعد الإرشاد المهني عملية تربوية وتوجيهية تهدف بشكل أساسي إلى مساعدة الطالب على استكشاف ذاته، من خلال فهم موهبه وقدراته وقيمه الشخصية.
- ولا يقتصر دور الإرشاد على التوجيه فقط، بل يمتد لتزويد الطالب بالمعلومات الدقيقة حول المسارات الأكاديمية واحتياجات سوق العمل، مما يساعده القدرة على اتخاذ قرارات مهنية واعية ومسئولة تضمن له مستقبلًا مليئًا بالإبداع والنجاح.

## SPORTS DAY

Dar al Kalima hosted the Lutheran Schools in May for the Annual Sports Day. Students competed in football, table tennis and chess. We are proud of our students for their hard work, sportsmanship, and healthy competitive spirit!





# Diaconal Ministry

## Deaf Ministry Finishes Food Preservation Course

This month the Diaconal Ministry wrapped up the specialized training course in food preservation for the Deaf Ministry under the supervision of trainer Mona Matar. Held in partnership with Palingual and Our Authentic Heritage Association, the course is part of ongoing efforts to empower our deaf group and enhance their practical and life skills.

Over five sessions, participants learned different ways to prepare and preserve homemade food in a healthy and safe manner. Practical training included making different types of pickles, preparing jam, preserving white cheese, making ghee, and crafting traditional soap using simple and readily available, local ingredients. Given the challenging economic conditions and rising cost of living, this course aimed to equip people with practical skills that can help them save money as well as preserve their cultural heritage. It also emphasized the importance of learning how to preserve food for extended periods outside of refrigeration, fostering self-reliance and making the most of available household resources. The course also encouraged participants to consider small home-based projects that could provide additional income for themselves and their families.

## Feeding our Neighbors in Troubled Times

Throughout May the Diaconal Ministry continued to serve our community through medical and food aid, including the Hot Meals program. This month efforts were made to increase the number of meals served in order to reach as many people as possible, especially as the economic situation continues to deteriorate.



## EEC Distributes Reusable Lunch Boxes and Water Bottles to Four Schools



The Environmental Education Center distributed hundreds of reusable lunch boxes and water bottles to students in four schools in Bethlehem Governorate this month. This new initiative was carried out in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) as part of the “Eco-Friendly Schools” project, which aims to reduce plastic use and promote environmentally responsible practices among students.

The distribution tour began at Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour, where students from the environmental club presented the school’s environmental initiatives and the positive changes that have been made to the school through the project!

# Environmental

## Spring Competition Begins

The EEC launched its annual Spring Competition this month under the title “Homeland of Colors” at the garden of EEC in Beit Jala, with the participation of students from eight schools across Bethlehem Governorate.

The competition included painting, photography, and creative writing activities all centered around the theme, giving students the opportunity to express their connection to Palestine and its natural beauty through art and literature and promoting the use of art as a tool for expressing environmental and national issues.

## Environmental Volunteer Initiative at ELS Beit Sahour

Students from the environmental club at the EEC and the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour participated in an environmental volunteer activity focused on the school and surrounding area.

Students cleaned nearby streets, painted sidewalks, repainted a pedestrian crossing to improve road safety, and treated tree trunks with limewash to protect them from pests and sun damage. Students worked in teams under the supervision of the school’s environmental club coordinator, showing strong cooperation and community spirit.

