



Christmas Message 2025

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:10-12

Salaam, peace be with you. As Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, I send you warm Christmas greetings from the land of the Nativity.

Christians around the world are preparing for one of our most holy days of the year: the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. Here in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, the land of Jesus’s birth, death, and resurrection, our preparations and festivities are underway as well. However, as we get ready for Christmas, we are still mourning the impacts of two years of war.

Christmas can never be canceled; its light can never be dimmed. But for the last two years, Christmas worship and prayers in the Holy Land were kept to people’s homes, churches, and other private spaces, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters under bombardment in Gaza. This year, we will once again light trees in the public squares of our cities and renew many annual traditions. Our scout troops will march through the streets proclaiming the joy of Christ’s birth and the resilience of our community. We will share in the hope of peace and brotherhood that Christmas brings. But as we approach Christmas for the third time since the war in Gaza began, our hearts are still with those who have lost their lives, their families, and their homes.

With our fellow people of the world, we give thanks to God for the ceasefire agreement in Gaza. We hope and trust that this truly signals the end of the war, despite the ongoing ceasefire violations. But we realize that the work of



peacebuilding has just begun. The path to healing and reconciliation will be long. We need time to heal the wounds of our children, youth, and families, so they can look forward to a future instead of looking behind.

In Gaza, tens of thousands are dead, and many more are trapped under rubble, with survivors returning to destroyed houses and neighborhoods full of debris. As the winter rains arrive, our Gazan siblings are sleeping in flooded tents. The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza continues, as do harsh restrictions on Palestinian movement throughout our own land. Instances of violence and settlement expansion in the West Bank and Jerusalem are on the rise. True peace and justice have yet to come.

But even in these difficult circumstances, we find hope in the miracle of the Christmas Story. When we read about Mary and Joseph, journeying from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of the demands of an occupying force, we see a mirror of what many Palestinians experience daily. As we remember the flight to Egypt, we hear of the Holy Family facing displacement under threat of violence, like thousands of our sisters and brothers in Gaza and beyond. We, like the shepherds in the fields of nearby Beit Sahour, take comfort in the angel's message: "Do not be afraid." And above all, we find hope in the birth of our savior. Jesus did not choose to be born as a prince in a comfortable palace in a rich land, but in a humble cave to a people living under the control of empire. The light of hope came into the world here, in our homeland. Immanuel, God with us.

Here in the Holy Land, Palestinian Christians are still here. Our congregants come to church Sunday after Sunday to worship God and pray for the situation to improve. We see our siblings in Gaza who have sheltered in their churches for two years, and we find our spiritual shelter in the church as well. We rely in our faith in Christ's holy justice and everlasting peace to sustain us. Our hope is in our work for the future of our church and our land. Through education, diaconal work, and striving for gender justice and environmental sustainability, we can help build a different future for our people.

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة

Just as the circumstances of Christ's birth remind us that he is always with us, we are steadfast as we remain in this land. And this year, we will once again share the hope that comes from the birth of our savior throughout our community here.

Our public Christmas celebrations this year do not mean we have forgotten or turned our backs on all those still suffering. Rather, we lift up the light that came to the world in Bethlehem as a beacon of hope. Though we come to this Christmas in mourning, our witness to the Christmas message here in the place of Christ's Nativity is not weakened. The message of Christmas, God's light shining out of darkness, cannot be dimmed. Even though it is not easy to celebrate this year under the shadow of what we have been through, the light of Christmas lives in the hearts of our people.