



Dear Partners in Ministry, Members, and Friends of the Eastern Synod,

Grace and peace to you.

I am writing to you today with an urgent and heavy heart following a recent, deeply sobering video call with Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). As long-standing partners in the global body of Christ, we have walked alongside the ELCJHL through many seasons. Today, however, they are facing an unprecedented, multi-layered crisis that threatens the very survival of their vital ministries, and they have reached out to us directly, asking us to be a beacon of hope for them.

Years of systemic regional instability, severely compounded by the long-term disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing settler violence in the West Bank and the devastating impact of the ongoing war on Gaza, have pushed the Palestinian economy to a near-total collapse. For more than two years, the Palestinian Authority has been unable to pay regular salaries to its employees due to withheld tax revenues. Coupled with an absolute halt in tourism and skyrocketing unemployment, families in the West Bank and Jerusalem are struggling to survive.

For the church, this humanitarian crisis has manifested in a critical operational deficit. Church properties are seeing a total non-payment of rent by struggling tenants, and parents are completely unable to pay school tuition. To make matters worse, recent severe fluctuations in currency exchange rates—specifically a dramatic devaluation of the US Dollar and Euro against the Israeli Shekel—have inflicted crushing financial losses on the ELCJHL's operating cash flow.

The situation has now reached a breaking point: Bishop Haddad shared that the church is at imminent risk of being unable to pay basic salaries to its pastors, staff, and teachers for June, July, and August. Without immediate intervention, they face the devastating prospect of closing their schools.

Having visited these schools personally, I can tell you that they are far more than just educational institutions. They are a sanctuary. In an environment filled with trauma and settler violence, these classrooms are the single safest place available to these children. It is where they find stability, where they are surrounded by their friends and teachers, and where they can experience a tangible sense of normalcy and peace. To lose these schools would be a catastrophic loss for the children of Palestine, stripping away their safest refuge and their primary source of hope in a profoundly unstable world.

The ELCJHL is doing everything in its power to respond faithfully, cutting expenditures to the bone and working hard on long-term sustainability measures like building their endowment fund. But long-term solutions cannot solve an immediate payroll emergency. They need approximately \$350,000 to \$400,000 USD to sustain core operations through the end of 2026.

In response to this urgent plea, the Eastern Synod has launched the ELCJHL Hope Appeal. We have committed to releasing \$20,000 from our own funds to serve as an immediate matching pool to mobilize your generosity.

DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR MATCHING OPPORTUNITY

Every dollar you give will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$20,000 between now and June 30. Whether you can give \$50, \$25, or \$500, your impact will be instantly doubled to keep teachers in classrooms and sanctuaries open.

Bishop Haddad has explicitly asked us to be 'hope for him' and for the people of the Holy Land. I know that the Eastern Synod understands the deep, interconnected reality of our faith. We are called to bear one another's burdens. Let us stand together to ensure that these children have their classrooms, their friends, and their teachers.

Please pray for the ELCJHL, for Bishop Haddad, and for a lasting, just peace in the Holy Land. And, if you are able, please give generously today.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Carla Blakley".

Bishop Carla Blakley

Eastern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Double your impact today.

Donate before June 30 at www.easternsynod.org