

2024-2025 Update from ELCJHL Task Force

Our purpose is to support the companion relationship that the Southeast Michigan Synod shares with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

The task force meets monthly in person at Mother of the Savior Lutheran Church in Dearborn as well as via zoom in the winter months. Our work and goals are to:

Educate (*Speakers, programs, & gatherings to raise awareness in Synod & ELCA*)

Accompany (*Companion congregations, sustained relationships, connecting with “Living STONES” on visits to the Holy Land*)

Advocate (*Churchwide Assembly, Advocacy Days, communication with legislators & elected officials*)

Respond (*to harassment, discrimination, persecution of minority groups*)

Support (*ELCJHL, Palestinian-made goods, local events & gatherings, SUMUD, Churches for Middle East Peace*)

Promote (*trips to the Holy Land, visits to the US for Palestinian youth and adults, local events*)

Pray (*for our siblings in the Holy Land, for an end to violence, for a just and lasting peace*)

Our meetings over the past 12 months have included work on providing ELCA advocacy links and the task force’s contact information on the synod website. We’ve committed to partnering with Mother of the Savior (our synod’s only Arabic-speaking congregation, located at Christ Episcopal in Dearborn) by connecting regularly with Father Halim Shakuir, and promoting their events. We have members who are working regularly to schedule meetings with state legislators and our Bishop in order to discuss concerns over the war in Gaza and encourage support of a ceasefire.

Our ongoing commitment to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land has resulted in new relationships with SUMUD (formerly Peace Not Walls) and its leaders. We’ve promoted their Advent and Lenten offerings of video series and bible studies for individuals and groups, as well as other resources and events. We encourage people to connect with them on social media and at <https://www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/sumud>.

Task force members have developed relationships with and provide updates from a broad spectrum of faith-based and secular organizations who support our

Palestinian siblings, including: Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), Global Refuge, Samaritas, Opportunity Palestine, ELCA Advocacy, Michigan United, Not Another Bomb, Christians for a Free Palestine, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (ALAMEH), US Lutheran Palestine-Israel Justice Network (USLPIJN), as well as area clergy and interfaith groups.

We've participated in and promoted many events including: Resistance through Existence with Pr Khader El-Yateem of the ELCA, Ilan Pape presentation, The People's Conference on Palestine, Christ in the Rubble events, Father Chacour visit, Peter Beinart presentations, United Lutheran Seminary online event with ELCJHL pastors, Rami Khouri book tour, SEMI Synod Justice Summit, *No Other Land* film screening.

Ongoing Projects over the past 12 months include:

- Implementing the Synod Assembly Resolution from May 2024: securing meetings with state legislators; encouraging congregations to support the ELCJHL, Opportunity Palestine, and Augusta Victoria Hospital; sharing ELCA SUMUD resources with Synod
- Proposing a resolution to the Synod Council for an end to the Occupation, restoration of Gaza, and justice for Palestinians and Israelis.
- Drafting a resolution for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly

As a result of discussions during the task force meetings, a subgroup was formed to address congregational engagement in SEMI Synod. Stay tuned for more information on how members of the task force can come to you to help support advocacy, awareness, and accompaniment of the ELCJHL and what is currently happening in Palestine and Israel.

If interested in participating in or learning more about the ELCJHL Task Force, please contact the coordinator, Pastor Amy Cooley Higgs at pastoramy@hopeon12.com.

Report Submitted by Amy Cooley Higgs on 4/01/2025..