

Fall 2022

Notes from Jerusalem

The newsletter of Gabi and Meghan Aelabouni, ELCA missionaries in Jerusalem



Photo: Centuries-old pilgrim graffiti on the door of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem

Gratitude

Fall 2022 finds us beginning our fourth year of service as ELCA missionaries in Jerusalem. Gabi is serving as the ELCA Area Desk Director for the Middle East and North Africa, and Meghan is the ELCA Theologian in Residence for the Middle East/North Africa desk. We continue to be deeply blessed by our work with local and regional church partners, ELCA colleagues, neighbors and friends here in Palestine/Israel. We would love to welcome you here to the Holy Land!



Back to School

The Aelabouni kids on their first day of eighth, fifth, and second grades! Ethan (13) loves English and rugby; Natalie (10) enjoys history and musical theater, and Luke (7) is making strides in reading and swimming. The kids love spending time with school friends from Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Palestine, and all over the world.

Upcoming...

This fall, Gabi will be traveling to Jordan and Egypt for meetings with ministry partners. Meghan will offer a Bible Study for the Women of the ELCA/Grand Canyon Synod fall gathering, and is working with Peace Not Walls to develop the 2022 Advent devotional, soon available [here](#). Gabi and Meghan both participated in YAGM orientation and are planning a visit for 18 newly-elected ELCA bishops in Jan. 2023!



Photo Captions:

Above: Gabi and Meghan speak at Spirit of Grace (Beaverton, OR) as part of the Oregon Synod's Jerusalem Week, a series of events including Sunday worship and a Wednesday workshop at Spirit of Grace, evening vespers at Beautiful Savior (Vancouver, WA), and a Zoom Bible study. **Right:** "Hey, you guys!" Visiting iconic Haystack Rock in Cannon Beach, OR. **Below:** Pastor Munther Isaac speaks at the Peace Not Walls network gathering at the Becoming Conference in Chicago.



SUMMER HOME ASSIGNMENT

In July and August, we experienced our first home assignment as missionaries, spending time in Colorado, Oregon, Washington, and Illinois. We were able to reconnect with family and to share more about our work with congregations in the Rocky Mountain Synod, Oregon Synod, and Southwest Washington Synod. Gabi attended the ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (ALAMEH) assembly, bringing greetings from Bishop Azar and the ELCJHL. We also attended the ELCA Becoming Conference for all Global Mission and Service and Justice staff, and helped to host Rev. Munther Isaac (of the ELCJHL), Project Amal (of Jordan), and Pam Groder (of StARS in Egypt) as guest presenters. Meanwhile, Ethan and Natalie enjoyed their first-ever Lutheran Outdoor Ministries experience by spending a week at Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp.



Looking ahead: Our next scheduled home assignment will be in summer 2024. We'll be looking for synods and congregations interested in hosting us for worship, workshops, Bible studies, and other events to help share more about the ELCA's partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Ministry News: YAGM restarts, ELCJHL plans for women's ordination



Hello and Goodbye

This summer has been a season of transition for the ELCA's missionary team in Jerusalem. In May, we welcomed the Revs. Adam and Jordan Miller-Stubbendick as the new Country Coordinators for the Jerusalem-West Bank program of Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM). Adam, Jordan, and their two young sons Julian and Ari were installed as YAGM Coordinators in September. In June, we celebrated the Rev. Carrie Ballenger's eight years of faithful service as the pastor to the English-speaking congregation at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem. Pastor Carrie has begun a new call serving as pastor of University Lutheran (Cambridge, MA). Pastor Adam Miller-Stubbendick is currently serving as Redeemer's interim pastor, until the end of January 2023. In September, we and the ELCJHL rejoiced to receive seven new YAGM volunteers as part of the restart of the YAGM program. Holly Beck, Harper Bolz-Weber, Sophie Caesar, Katie Euscher, Cetera Jacobs, Britta Koenen, and Sophia Warnberg will live with host families and serve in the ELCJHL's schools and other ministries.

Photo: YAGM installation, Sept. 25, Jerusalem

Historic First!

On Sunday, January 22, 2023, the ELCJHL (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land) will make history by ordaining Ms. Sally Azar as the first Palestinian Lutheran woman to serve as a pastor in the ELCJHL... and in the whole Middle East/North Africa region! Sally grew up in the ELCJHL (her father is Bishop Azar) and prepared for ministry in Lebanon and in Germany. She is fluent in Arabic, English, and German and has experience serving on the Lutheran World Federation Council. Following her ordination, Pastor Sally will serve in a team call with Meghan as pastors of the Redeemer English-speaking congregation in Jerusalem.

Thanks and Connections



VIRTUAL VISITS AND HOLY LAND TOUR GROUPS

We've been privileged to virtually visit a number of congregations this year, including Our Savior (Vero Beach, FL) and Trinity (Ft. Collins, CO), and to meet in person with visiting ELCA groups from Tennessee, Montana, Minnesota, Colorado, and more. Please contact us if you would like to set up a virtual visit for your congregation, OR if you or someone you know is planning a Holy Land trip!

THANK YOU TO OUR GRACIOUS HOSTS!

Our heartfelt thanks to the synods and congregations who hosted us for visits this summer: to the Oregon Synod (Bp. Laurie Larson-Caesar and Holy Land team) and Rocky Mountain Synod (Bp. Jim Gonias, Pr. Pam Challis, and Pr. Diana Linden-Johnson); to Pr. Teri Hermsmeyer, Pr. Julie Brooks, and Holy Shepherd (Lakewood, CO); Pr. Paula Stecker and Christ the King (Colorado Springs, CO); Pr. Robyn Hartwig and Spirit of Grace (Beaverton, OR); Pr. Jean Devoll-Donaldson and Beautiful Savior (Vancouver, WA); Pr. Heidi Torgerson and Grace (LaGrange, IL). Special thanks to Trinity Lutheran (Ft. Collins, CO) for sponsoring Ethan and Natalie at Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp, helping these missionary kids to encounter God's love in the Rocky Mountains!

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To contribute to our ministry: Online: visit elca.org/missionarygiving and choose our names from the drop-down menu under "Designation." By check: make payable to "ELCA Global Mission" with "Aelabouni GCS2060" in the memo line. Give through your synod office or mail your check to: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF OUR MINISTRY!