

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



الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية  
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة

**Christmas Message 2022**  
**Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land**

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and Merry Christmas from the land of Jesus' birth.

As Palestinian Christians, we take pride in our history as the local church in the land of Jesus. But this Christmas, I am also thinking about our future. I am thinking about what the angels said to the shepherds on that first Christmas: *This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.*

The sign of Christmas is a child. This is very important. In the Bible, the signs of God tell us who God is, and help us to understand our own identity as children of God. And at Christmas, the sign of the Gospel is a new baby. What does this mean?

The sign of our Christian faith is new birth, new life. With a child at the center, Christmas brings generations together in the family of God. The sign of the child reminds us that our faith shows in how we care for the most vulnerable, including our oldest and our youngest members. Our faith shows in the world we are making for our children and their children.

Here in Palestine, we are heartbroken by the suffering of our children: children who are arrested and detained, children who are beaten and killed by the occupation. Children who struggle to eat and struggle to find hope for the future. But at the same time, in this suffering, we find our purpose and calling as the church. We are called by God to care for the children in our communities as though every one of them was the Christ child himself. We work to make sure our children are fed, go to school, learn the beauty of our culture, learn to play and to find joy in life and love in their families, so that they can grow up to help build the future.

This Christmas, I pray that we all remember the sign of the child. May we cherish and care for the children around us, so that our children learn not to hate or to fear others, but to love and have courage. May God give us the strength to

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continue working for justice and peace on the earth, so that the world we give to the next generation is a better one. And may we know that we are God's beloved children, and share this love with hope and compassion: here in the Holy Land, and everywhere.

Merry Christmas to you all from the Holy Land, and God bless you.

In Christ,

+ Azar

Bishop Sani-Ibrahim Azar  
Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land