



“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

October 10, 2023

Dear Bishop Azar,

My heart continues to be heavy as we have learned of the escalation of conflict between Hamas and Israel and the growing number of casualties. We mourn all the lives lost and those who live in fear.

I read your [statement](#) last weekend and wish to assure you that you, our siblings in Christ who continue to bear faithful witness to the gospel, enduring years of living under occupation and violence – and now war, are not lost to us in this horrendous situation.

You lifted up how the conflict is connected to a larger context and history, which is important for our awareness. I share your reminder: “As a church, [the ELCJHL continues] to advocate for non-violence; but we also believe it is crucial to understand the circumstances from which violence emerges. ... It is a symptom of a people deeply wounded by extended and systematic violence and oppression. ... As always, we pray for a peaceful resolution that extends human rights to all. We remember that the peace Jesus offers, that which is based in justice and solidarity with the suffering and oppressed, is at the root of true peace.”

I encourage the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to unite in prayer for the families of innocent civilians whose lives were lost, as well as pray for healing for all the injured, fearful and traumatized.

I pledge our accompaniment and support to you as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and its ministries provide “critical and timely assistance [psychological and otherwise] to those affected by this war.”

We also will advocate to U.S. officials your “appeal to the international community to stand with us in these efforts to address the crisis in Gaza and to urge all involved to uphold the principles of international humanitarian law.”

We pray:

God, our refuge and strength, you have bound us together in a common life. In all our conflicts, help us to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, to listen for your voice amid competing claims, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 76).



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
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