



2023 Advent Cycle of Prayer

FOR THE CHURCHES IN THE HOLY LAND
AND THE MIDDLE EAST





Our cover depicts the painting "HOPE" by Palestinian artist Sliman Mansour.

*The white building it portrays is the
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem.*

Preface

“Like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:5)

It is common for the Christian community in Palestine, Israel, and other parts of the Middle East to refer to themselves as “the living stones.” This phrase is meant to convey the fact that these communities trace themselves all the way back to the earliest churches and very first disciples of Jesus in the land in which he lived, and died, and rose again.

The foundation of this spiritual house, which has stood so long in the land of the Holy One, is solid because its stones are built upon Christ, the chief cornerstone. Yet, with the recent conflict in Gaza, Israel, and the whole of occupied Palestine, the ground underneath it has once again been shaken. For many Christians who live elsewhere in the world it is difficult to even imagine the challenges of bearing witness to the hope of the Gospel in the midst of so much devastation and sorrow.

Yet, St. Paul teaches us that the Church is an interconnected and interdependent body. “When one part suffers, every part suffers.” The living stones, therefore, must know and feel that they are not being shaken alone. The Body of Christ sees and feels their pain, sadness, fear, frustration, and loss, and is moved together to compassion, solidarity, and prayer. In prayer, we are joined together across all distances and cry out together to the God who hears and answers.

This cycle of prayer is produced jointly by the Churches Beyond Borders Communion (CBB), which brings together The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and The Episcopal Church (TEC). It features prayers for each day throughout the season of Advent for specific congregations, ministries, and outreach initiatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (EDJ). On the four Sundays of Advent, the prayers are those written personally by the Presiding/National/Primalial bishops of the four churches, focusing on themes of truth, justice, peace, and hope.

This Advent, as we prepare to welcome Christ anew into the ever-present brokenness of our fragile world, we encourage members of our churches to devote themselves, in a special way, to upholding our siblings in faith in this time of trial; the living stones who may be shaken now, but, in Christ, whose faith will not be moved.

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Presiding Bishop Michael Curry (TEC)

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Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton (ELCA)

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National Bishop Susan Johnson (ELCIC)

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Archbishop Linda Nicholls (ACC)



Sunday Dec. 3 – Advent 1

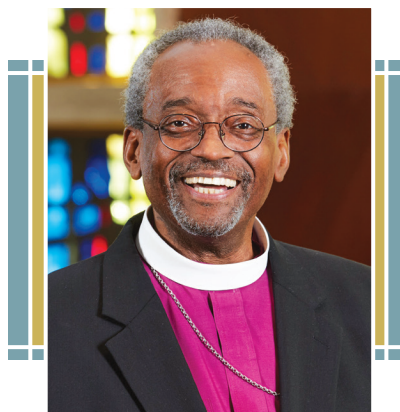
Presiding Bishop Michael Curry: A Prayer for Truth

“Lead me in your truth and teach me.” (Psalm 25:5)

God of truth, in his last days, in Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth gave his friends a new commandment: “As I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). He showed them that the way of love is God’s way of life. Hear now our prayers for our brothers and sisters of Israel and Palestine. Help us all to hear the painful truths of our past, and to learn ways to live now as your children.

We pray, O God, for all those in the land of the Holy One who mourn the loss of loved ones, and find themselves living in the shadow of death. We pray, O God, for all those who seek peace and stability in the midst of horrific violence. We pray, O God, for all those who struggle to find hope when despair seems to be overwhelming. We pray, O God, for all those who feel alone and forsaken, and yearn for basic compassion and kindness. We pray, O God, for all who pursue avenues of understanding, only to find divisions and divisiveness at every turn.

God of truth, “work through our struggle and confusion,” through the suffering of all your children, the weeping and wounds of war, and the pain of the past hurts of our history. Help us to find the path of peace by living in love that seeks the good and well-being of the others as well as ourselves. By your Spirit help us to join hands with you and with each other until the night that surrounds us is transformed into the dream that you intend for us and for all creation. This we pray in the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, the Prince of Peace. *Amen.*



Presiding Bishop Michael Curry
The Episcopal Church



Monday Dec. 4

We pray for Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar (ELCJHL) and Archbishop Hosam Naoum (EDJ), that God would give them grace, wisdom, and strength as they seek to serve the churches, ministries, and communities in their care amid tremendous challenges and pressure.

Tuesday Dec. 5

We pray for all the pastors, priests, and other ministers of the ECJHL and EDJ who are doing all they can to bear witness to the love and hope of Jesus in circumstances that are so profoundly painful and complex.

Wednesday Dec. 6

We pray for the wider Christian community in the Holy Land and across the Middle East; the people who are the living stones of the church in the land where Jesus lived and walked; our siblings in the one Body of Christ.

Thursday Dec. 7

We pray for the Church of the Redeemer, St. George's Cathedral, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, in Jerusalem; for all those who work and worship in these sacred places, and the ministry that flows from them to the surrounding community.

Friday Dec. 8

We pray for Dar Al Kalima Lutheran School, The Evangelical Lutheran School of Beit Sahour, Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, St George's School, and St George's College; for teachers, staff, and students in this unsettled and anxious time.

Saturday Dec. 9

We pray for Augusta Victoria Hospital, Al Ahli Hospital, Gaza, St. Luke's Hospital, Nablus, St. Andrew's Diabetes Clinic, Ramallah, and the Penman Clinic, Zababdeh; for those who care for others under significant duress, and all those are sick, injured, or in any other kinds of need.

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Sunday Dec. 10 – Advent 2

National Bishop Susan Johnson: A Prayer for Justice

*“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
(Amos 5:24)*

Loving God, we turn to you seeking not judgement, but justice.

May your justice rain down on Israel and Palestine. May the captives be released, the wounded healed, the dead mourned, the bombs silenced, the soldiers returned home. May there be a just and lasting peace where both Palestinians and Israelis live in safety in their own homes. May there be a just and sustainable two-state solution. May your just peace reign in every heart, home, and land.

We pray in the name of the Holy One, the Prince of Peace. *Amen.*



National Bishop Susan Johnson
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada



Monday Dec. 11

We pray for the Church of the Reformation, Beit Jala, St. Andrew's Church, Ramallah, St. Peter's Church, Birzeit, St. Philip's Church, Nablus, Good Shepherd Church, Rafidia, and St. Matthew's Church, Zababdeh; for their inspirational witness and faithful service to Christ from generation to generation.

Tuesday Dec. 12

We pray for Talitha Kumi School, Beit Jala, Arab Evangelical Episcopal School, Ramallah, Episcopal Technological & Vocational Training Center, Ramallah, and The Christian National Kindergarten, Nablus; for those whose work and studies have been disrupted, and the impact this has on families and communities.

Wednesday Dec. 13

We pray for Jofeh Community Rehab Center, Jordan, Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, Salt, Jordan, and St. Luke's Rehab Center, Beit Mery, Lebanon; for people who are in need of healing in body and spirit, and those who give of themselves to provide such places.

Thursday Dec. 14

We pray for Christmas Lutheran Church, Bethlehem, Emmanuel Church, Ramleh, St. Peter's Church, Jaffa, Holy Family Church, Reineh, Christ Church, Nazareth, St John's and St Luke's Haifa, and St. Paul's Church, Shefa'amr; that they continue to show forth as signs of the Gospel and its power to transform and reconcile all things.

Friday Dec. 15

We pray for Al Mahamba Nursery and Preschool on the Mount of Olives, Christ School, Nazareth, St. John's School, Haifa, and Holy Family Kindergarten, Raineih; for the gift of children, and for their safety, growth, and wellbeing.

Saturday Dec. 16

We pray for the Elderly Home and Community Center, Birzeit, Palestine, and the Elderly People's Home, Ashrafieh, Jordan; for the wisdom of elders and those who care for them..

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Sunday Dec. 17 – Advent 3

Archbishop Linda Nicholls: A Prayer for Peace

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” (Psalm 122:6)

God of peace, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem: “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...” (Matthew 23:37). We too lament as we see the pain and sorrow of the peoples of the land of the Holy One.

We lament with those grieving the death of loved ones—women, men, children, husbands, wives, and grandparents. We lament the hatred and anger that spills over in indiscriminate violence. We lament the legacy of trauma that will live in hearts and souls for years to come. We lament the inability of human beings to seek and find the paths of peace or to recognize a shared humanity and shared desires for safety, security, and a home in which to flourish.

God of peace, give courage to those who show your love and compassion and to all who stand with Jesus seeking the paths of peace and bring the peace that passes understanding into the midst of this conflict. *Amen.*



Archbishop Linda Nicholls
Anglican Church of Canada



Monday Dec. 18

We pray for The Evangelical Lutheran Church, Beit Sahour, Church of Hope, Ramallah, St. Saviour Church, Acre, Church of Our Savior, Kufr-Yasif, and Christ the King, Tarshiha; for the grace to help them to persevere in faith as lights who are not overcome by the shadows.

Tuesday Dec. 19

We pray for the Environmental Education Centre of the ELCJHL, The School of Hope, Ramallah, Ahliyyah & Mutran School, The Theodor Schneller School, Marka, The Bishop's Kindergarten, Al-Husun, The Arab Episcopal School, Irbid, and Saviour Arab Evangelical School, Zarka; for encouragement from God when so much seems uncertain, and for peace that passes understanding.

Wednesday Dec. 20

We pray for Bethany Beyond the Jordan Baptismal Site, Church of the Good Shepherd, Amman, Redeemer Church, Amman, St. Paul's Church, Ashrafiyeh, Theodore Schneller Chapel, Marka, St. Luke's Church, Marka, Savior Church, Zarka, The Good Shepherd Church, Salt, The Virgin Mary Episcopal Church, Irbid, St. John's the Baptist Church, Husun, St. Peter's & St. Paul's Church, Aqaba, All Saints' Episcopal Church, Beirut, Lebanon, and All Saints' Episcopal Church, Damascus, Syria; for the comfort of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News in word and deed.

Thursday Dec. 21

We pray for Muslim and Jewish people in the Holy Land, for those of other faiths, and for all people of goodwill; for places of prayer, worship, and service to those in need; for all who love and serve God, their neighbours, and the common good.

Friday Dec. 22

We pray for those in positions of governing authority, whose words, decisions, and actions impact on the lives of millions; that true justice might guide them.

Saturday Dec. 23

We pray with a moment of silence for all who have been killed and wounded through the recent and ongoing violence, and for all those who mourn.

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Sunday Dec. 24 – Advent 4

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: A Prayer for Healing

Gracious God, we feel helpless in the face of war. As we witness the devastation in Israel and Palestine, we feel it here, too. Help us to accompany all who suffer, to be your healing balm in this wounded world.

Almighty God, only you bring healing. When we feel helpless, help us to feel your presence. When we feel despair, restore our confidence in you alone. Teach us again to turn weapons into tools for harvesting your abundance. Remind us that true healing comes only in the presence of your truth, your justice, and your peace.

Heal us, O Lord, so that we might be your healing presence now and always. *Amen.*



Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



An Advent Cycle of Prayer for Churches in the Holy Land and The Middle East ~ 2023