



# elcjhle-pistle

News from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Salaam and grace to you from Jerusalem, City of Peace

March-April 2009

## Living Witness – Creative Diakonia

### ELCJHL prepares for anniversary commemorations

“Living Witness – Creative Diakonia” is the theme for the upcoming ELCJHL anniversary celebration. As well as its own 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the synod will observe the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arabic bishopric and 170 years of evangelical mission in Palestine.

Festivities kick off May 16 at the campus of the Lutheran school and church in Beit Sahour. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. there will be a variety of activities. ELCJHL school children will present dabka dancing, singing and drama performances. Items made at the schools, such as candles and ceramics, will be for sale. A book fair will feature books by church pastors and laypeople. There will be children’s games and snacks available.

The celebration moves to the International Center of Bethlehem at 4 p.m., where there will be interviews about the church’s past, present and vision for the future.

Among other plans for commemorating the anniversary are:

- a special worship service the afternoon of May 17 at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan will preach in Arabic, with an English translation provided on paper. The service is open to everyone. Invitations are also being extended to the heads of all Christian churches in Jerusalem. ELCJHL staff will seek permits for church members outside Jerusalem who wish to attend. The celebration coincides with the church’s



The ELCJHL Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Beit Jala celebrated its 125th anniversary last October. The congregation is pictured here in 1883, the year it was formed.

annual meeting of its international partners, the Coordination Committee for Cooperation, better known as COCOP, who will also be in attendance. A small reception and an exhibition will follow.

- a special commemorative edition of *Kanisatuk*, the ELCJHL’s quarterly Arabic magazine. The issue will include articles about the church’s theology and witness, its ecumenical and interreligious

work, its social work and mission and biographies of past personnel. Pastors and lay people alike are writing the articles, which will be in Arabic. It is hoped that it will be translated into other languages at a later time.

- an exhibition on the church’s

history, which will include items such as photos, books and magazines. The plan is to open the exhibition at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer on May 17. Inger Jonasson, ICB art coordinator, is heading up the project. ✘

#### Inside:

- Waste into fertilizer at the EEC
- Students explore vocation
- U.S. rabbis visit ELCJHL
- ELCJHL delegation in Sweden
- Women’s desk staff added

#### Calendar:

- March 10: Purim
- April 8-16 Seder
- April 12: Easter (Western)
- April 18: Organ recital, Redeemer
- April 19: Easter (Orthodox)
- May 8 & 9: Reem Banna concerts
- May 10-15: COCOP
- May 16-17: ELCJHL 50th anniversary
- May 30: Choir concert, Redeemer

### Anniversary schedule of events

#### Saturday, May 16:

**2-4 p.m. Lutheran Church and School of Beit Sahour**  
Festival featuring entertainment, food, book fair and games

**4 p.m. International Center of Bethlehem**  
Interviews on the ELCJHL’s past, present and future

#### Sunday, May 17:

**3 p.m. Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Jerusalem**  
Worship service, Bishop Munib Younan preacher

**After service Reception and ELCJHL history exhibit**



## Students make fertilizer from food waste at EEC

by Kendra Kintzi

The Environmental Education Center implemented a unique new composting program with multiple schools throughout the Bethlehem area to enable these schools to more efficiently manage the wastes they produce and to demonstrate a sustainable, educational model of reuse and conservation.

Using these new compost facilities, students will be able to turn food waste, used paper and other natural material into valuable organic

fertilizer.

Mr. Odeh, a representative from the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, worked with the EEC to deliver a three-part series to students covering the theoretical and practical aspects of creating compost.

Through lectures the students learned about the importance of compost, how it can help reduce waste and create better agriculture, and how they can play a key role in improving their school environments. In hands-on demonstrations, students helped

set up the compost bins and gained the necessary tools to teach other students as well as their families and friends about composting.

The EEC conducted the project with environmental club students from the schools of the ELCJHL, numerous other private schools, UNRWA (refugee camp) schools and local government schools. Many of these clubs already have paper-recycling and glass-reuse centers in place, so the addition of composting facilities will cre-

ate a complete waste management system. The fertilizer produced from the compost will be used to fortify school gardens and green areas, which the students can then enjoy.

The simple process of creating organic fertilizer from useless scraps has been around for centuries, and may just be one of the most important ways to move forward into a sustainable future. Requiring very little space and labor, compost provides an excellent way to turn yesterday's lunch into an enjoyable garden.

As with all of the educational programs of the EEC, this new project is designed to empower Palestinian youth to engage with their environment and model strategies that can be widely adopted in the greater community.

*Kendra Kintzi is a volunteer at the EEC through the ELCA's "Young Adults in Global Mission" program. She is a member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Santa Maria, Calif.*

*ELCJHL students are turning food waste, paper and other natural material into fertilizer with the help of the EEC.*

**STUDENTS FROM Dar al-Kalima School in Bethlehem presented their third concert of the season on Jan. 29, 2009. Students from third grade and up sang songs and played a variety of instruments at the concert, which was held at the International Center of Bethlehem.**



## Awad represents ELCJHL at Interfaith Climate Summit in Sweden

Many of the world's religions gathered to discuss the world's climate at a conference in Sweden last November. Among participants was Simon Awad, executive director of the Environmental Education Center of Beit Jala. Around 1,000 delegates attended the Interfaith Climate Summit in Uppsala, Sweden, held Nov. 28-29, 2008.

At the invitation of the Archbishop of Sweden Anders Wejryd, the conference gathered individuals from faith-based organizations around the world to build new ways to integrate environmental concerns into religious discussions, and to address the pressing need for action on climate change through the vibrant diversity of the world's religions. Faith leaders came together to sign the Interfaith Climate Manifesto, declaring that "From religious traditions with different approaches to religious life, we come together at this time in human history to assure the world of what we have in common. We all share the responsibility of being conscious caretak-

ers of our home, planet Earth."

The conference included pioneering seminars on ecumenical approaches to the environment, the latest scientific discoveries, the effects of climate on different peoples around the world and much more. The message of the conference was one of creative response, resilience and cooperation, underscoring a vital belief that "The world religions are a source of empowerment for change in lifestyles and patterns of consumption. Religious faith remains a powerful force for good among a considerable number of the human family."

Awad attended the ground-breaking conference at the request of ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan as a demonstration of the church's commitment to environmental education and interfaith dialogue in working toward globally sustainable solutions to environmental issues.

The manifesto signed by 30 religious leaders is available in English at <http://tiny.cc/DvTgP>

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## Dar al Kalima hosts tennis tournament, parents day

ELCJHL students recently gathered for a little friendly competition. A table tennis tournament was held at Dar al Kalima School in Bethlehem on March 13. Afterwards, director of education Dr. Charlie Haddad, Dar Al Kalima principal Naila Kharroub and Christmas Lutheran Church pastor Dr. Rev. Mitri Raheb handed out trophies – shields, cups and medals – to tournament winners. They thanked the students for their participation and urged them to keep up their sportsmanship.

The following day, parents of Dar al Kali-

ma's first through 11th grade students were invited to the school. "Parents Day" gives them the opportunity to meet with teachers to

check on the academic progress and conduct of their children.

On Feb. 14, Dar al Kalima's student council threw a Valentine's Day

party for students in grades 7-12. The young people had a good time dancing, singing and spending time together in the school hall. ✕



**GOOD SPORTS** – Students, teachers and others gathered for a photo after a table tennis tournament at Dar al-Kalima Lutheran School in Bethlehem.

## Students explore vocation; future leadership to be trained

by Sylvia Countess

The tenth graders in the Lutheran schools are concluding this month a long-term research project on career choices. It was initiated by ELCJHL Director of Education Dr. Charlie Haddad to help students make realistic vocational goals based on their interests, aptitudes and the market needs in a challenged economy. Activities incorporated personal interest and aptitude surveys, practical guidance in future career choices, field experience, interviews, visits, hosting guest speakers at schools and Internet research. The project will soon conclude with student presentations to their peers, parents and other guests.

The team of educators at each school included the principal, school social worker and selected faculty across the curriculum. Students, teachers and parents

who participated evaluated the first year's activities and made suggestions for improvements for next year. Students were asked to explain how the project helped them to learn not only about possible future careers but also about themselves. Parents and students commented favorably upon the value of the project, which promoted a cross-curricular and student-centered approach to education, a hallmark of the ELCJHL'S educational ministry.

Students are not the only members of the school community planning for future careers. A new leadership training program to begin this year, organized and monitored by Dr. Haddad and sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Norwegian Church Aid, will prepare a group of potential leaders for the Lutheran schools.

The program, to be implemented by an American educational agency, "Infinite Excellence," will begin in June 2009 and be completed in phases through special modules by June 2011. Participants will partake in the program through online distance learning, on site face-to-face workshops and individual coaching. The plan is to prepare a total of 18 candidates as future administrators and subject coordinators for curriculum and instruction in eight different subjects for all Lutheran schools.

Another summer project will benefit both students and teachers when another American volunteer will offer special English instruction and workshops for teachers. In July, Julie Galle, a teacher of English for speakers of other languages in the Washington, D.C., area and a Ph. D. candidate at George Mason Uni-

versity, will offer classes to students in Grades 6-9 and two workshops for teachers based on a program outline she is developing with Sister Sylvia Countess. While teachers of English will study with her methods to improve writing skills, she will also lead a workshop on classroom management in English. Dr. Haddad became acquainted with Ms. Galle at the 2009 TESOL conference in D.C. where he was a keynote speaker.

The teachers and administrators of the schools and educational programs of the ELCJHL look forward to the opportunity to learn and share in such programs and appreciate greatly the generosity of our supporters and volunteers.

Sylvia Countess, ELCJHL assistant to the Director of Education, is a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

*ELCJHL 10th graders considered their interests and aptitudes as well as market needs during a recent long-term research project on careers.*

*Some members of the ELCJHL faculty will soon take part in a training leadership program. English teachers will be offered workshops on writing skills and classroom management.*

## 170 years of ministry Pastor visits church's long- time partner in Germany

*Jerusalemsverein brought the Lutheran witness to the Holy Land early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

When ELCJHL Pastor Ibrahim Azar visited Germany in February, he was taking part in a 170-year-old relationship. Azar, pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, attended the annual mission festival of Jerusalemsverein, the organization that brought the Lutheran witness to the Holy Land early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Nearly two centuries later, the organization is still supporting Christians in the region through their participation in Berliner Missionswerk, an association of mission organizations in Germany that provide financial and other support to Christian projects around the world.

"These meetings are important to remain in contact with our partners in Germany, that they have exact information about the Christians and the political situation and the church work and the schools," he said.

Azar, who did his university and seminary studies in Germany,

was an active participant in the Feb. 20-23 celebration. In addition to fulfilling his duties as a Jerusalemsverein board member, he gave one of three lectures. Viola Raheb, sister of ELCJHL Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, spoke on the Christian diaspora. Dr. Georg Dürr, principal of ELCJHL Talitha Kumi School in Beit Jala, spoke on the work of the school.

Azar's lecture included three sections: spiritual life in congregations, schools and leadership development in the ELCJHL.

He emphasized positive developments in the church during the year, such as the ordination of two pastors and the gift of land at the baptism site in Jordan. He also talked about the need to encourage Christians to stay in the Holy Land, especially after the recent Israeli bombardment of Gaza.

"People get more insecure," he said.

ELCJHL schools, he reported, are making progress on fulfilling long-range strategic



**LIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS - EAPPI volunteers watch quietly as a new team is welcomed into service on Feb. 18 at Redeemer Luth. Church.**

*Azar told the German organization about many recent positive developments in the ELCJHL, such as the ordination of two pastors and property at the baptism site in Jordan.*

*The ELCJHL's Finnish partner, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, celebrated its 150th anniversary in January.*

## Finnish Kuopio Diocese is new partner with ELCJHL, FELM

In an effort to "express and promote their common witness, service and solidarity," the ELCJHL has entered into a new agreement with two Finnish partners. The trio includes the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, with which the ELCJHL has a long relationship. The new partner is the Kuopio Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The ELCJHL previously partnered with the Lapua Diocese.

"We hope this will really be important, for this accompaniment will strengthen our relations with the whole church in Finland," ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan said, noting that the Kuopio bishop, Wille Riekkinen, is active in justice efforts.

In its own words, the agreement is founded on "mutual respect, reciprocity, equality and solidarity." Its goal is to "encourage the churches and their

plans. He talked about the many partnerships ELCJHL schools have in Europe and the United States. He also discussed how exchanges of students and teachers "give a new vision" to those involved.

Finally, he talked about the ELCJHL's leadership development efforts.

"It is now the time to educate church members ... (to take) a lead-

ing role in the youth work and women's work," he said.

ELCJHL leadership has identified training the next generation of leaders as one of its top priorities.

In other festival events, about 500 people attended a worship service the morning of Feb. 22, with Bishop Dr. Johannes Friedrich preaching and Azar assisting. ✕

individual members to engage in closer fellowship with one another in order that they ... might grow in partnership." It is an "expression of mutual support and encouragement" in fulfilling the mission of witness and service.

The agreement calls for specific cooperation:

- increased interaction and communication
- theological exchanges
- experimentation with new methods of cooperation
- and financial support of the ELCJHL.

The new agreement was signed during one of Bishop Younan's recent trips to Finland, on Feb. 17, and will remain in effect until 2013.

Yunan was also in Finland in January for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FELM, where he delivered a speech in commemoration of the event. ✕

## Heal the whole world

### ELCJHL pastor, delegation participate in Swedish diocese conference

As God sowed his word in us, we are to sow seeds of justice, hope and love for the healing of the whole world. This was the message ELCJHL Rev. Imad Haddad preached recently at the international conference of the Church of Sweden's Luleå diocese.

Traveling to Sweden along with Haddad, pastor of the Lutheran Church of Beit Sahour, were Maha Khamis Abu Ghannam, manager of "The Cave" Arts and Crafts Center at the International Center in

Bethlehem; Inger Jonasson, ICB art coordinator; and Rev. Kjell Jonasson, ELCJHL assistant for Ecumenical Affairs and International Relations.

In keeping with the Swedish church's larger theme of "Heal the whole world," the Feb. 14-16, 2009, conference took place in the coastal town of Haparanda, Sweden.

In addition to preaching at the Sunday workshop service, Haddad, along with Kjell Jonasson, participated in a panel discussion that addressed the question of whether the church is building or breaking walls. Haddad said he spoke about the importance of preaching life when the world is preaching death (that is, hatred and war).

"It (is) much easier to tell people to build walls than to tell people to build bridges," he said.

Haddad and Jonasson also teamed up to lead a seminar on the situation of Christians in the Middle East. Haddad used his own biography as a Palestinian, Arab, Christian and evangelical Lutheran to frame the discussion. He used pictures and words to describe the ELCJHL and the political, economic and demographic issues that Christians face here.

### Swedish church, ELCJHL call for Sweden to aid in pursuit of peace

In the wake of the bombardment of Gaza and in light of Sweden's upcoming European Union presidency, the Church of Sweden is calling on its government to take an active role in seeking peace in the Holy Land.

The church's Archbishop Anders Wejryd and ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan made this request in a joint



**WINTER WONDERLAND** enjoying the crisp weather in Sweden are, from left, Inger Jonasson, Rev. Imad Haddad and Maha Khamis Abu Ghannam.

He used examples of ELCJHL ministry in reconciliation, interfaith dialogue, education and the like to convey a sense of hope.

Haddad said he was pleased with the outcome of the seminar, which was offered twice to a total of about 45 people. Giving a different picture of Palestine than is available in the media "was my main purpose," he said, adding, "and they got something Christian as well."

While he wanted to make clear the realities of life here, that was not the sum total of his message.

"We have the opportunity to keep on crying and cursing the situation, or we can go on working with people and giving them hope," he said. You can't escape being "political" when discussing the Middle East, but you also need to communicate how we live and preach through the situation, he said.

One thing that impressed Haddad in his first trip to Sweden is that "we are part of the creation and we have a message to convey to people. It's not only a message that's only far up there, but down to earth with issues of life," he said. For this reason, "We can't separate church from society. We need to have this prophetic voice in society," he said. ✕

*"It (is) much easier to tell people to build walls than to tell people to build bridges."*

– Imad Haddad

statement issued in February.

Calling conditions in Gaza "incomprehensible," the statement says that Swedish taxpayers have offered funds for rebuilding Gaza for a third time. But such aid is just a "band-aid on bleeding wounds" if the primary causes of the conflict are not addressed; thus, an end to the occupation is "an

absolute prerequisite," it says.

The church leaders issued their statement after Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt presented that country's parliament a declaration stating that peace between Israel and Palestine will be a top agenda item for his government this year.

The declaration came after a representative

of the Church of Sweden visited Gaza in the wake of Israel's recent bombing campaign there.

Sweden will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union in July through December of 2009.

You can read the statement <http://www.elcjhl.org/CommonStatementWithSweden.doc>. ✕

*Church of Sweden leaders hope their country will use their European Union presidency to promote a just peace in the Middle East.*

Bishop Munib Younan (center of photo at right) joined Christian and Muslim leaders at a press conference on Feb. 26, 2009, denouncing an Israeli TV program that insulted Jesus, his mother Mary and the prophet Mohammad. The Lutheran magazine reported in its April 2009 that Lior Shlien, the comedian responsible for the offenses, sent a letter of apology.



*“Christians must stay where they are and continue to witness.”*

– Bishop Younan

## Extremism is greatest threat, Younan tells Norwegian delegation

For all their differences, Arabs and Israelis agree on the importance of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Bishop Munib Younan told the Christian Council of Norway their presence in Jerusalem was “very essential” to encourage local Christians to maintain their presence. The group of about a dozen Norwegian church leaders met with Younan on Feb. 5, asking about extremism and prospects for peace.

Led by Church of Norway bishop Ole Christian Kvarme, Oslo diocese, and council general secretary Ornulf Steen, the CCN has had a relationship with the ELCJHL since the 1990s.

Younan told them that it is not persecution or censorship but extremism among the three Abrahamic faiths that poses a threat to Christians here.

He told the group of his recent visit with His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan, in which the king told the bishop, “Christians must stay where they are and continue to witness.” It was, after all, Christians who convinced Jewish and Muslim leaders to enter into dialogue, Younan said, referring to the Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land in Jerusalem.

Younan told the visitors about the council’s efforts to monitor derogatory speech and to accurately educate their congregations about one another. They also discuss the prospects for a shared Jerusalem.

Younan also spoke about the ELCJHL’s priorities of strengthening evangelical spirituality, providing “womb to tomb” education and training a new gen-

eration of leaders for the church.

He said the main social problems facing the church include mixed marriages, property rights, the occupation and the anti-mission law movement.

He said the church remains committed to non-violence but cannot be quiet about injustice. While both Israeli and Palestinian societies seem to be moving to the right politically, Younan said the church must continue to promote moderate initiatives such as the two-state solution, a shared Jerusalem, the discontinuation of settlement growth, equitable sharing of resources and the right of return for refugees.

“We cannot sleep until politicians agree – we must continue interfaith dialogue,” he said. ✕

## Younan attends LWF executive meeting

ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan attended the latest Lutheran World Federation executive committee meeting, held Feb. 20-22, in Geneva, Switzerland. Among agenda items was preparation for the October election of a new general secretary. The executive committee is also involved in the LWF “renewal process,” which the LWF website describes as “develop(ing) ways to organize the common life and work of the Lutheran communion so that all churches and related organizations of mission and diakonia take responsibility for these functions.” As LWF vice president for the Asia region, Younan is one of five vice presidents who sit on the LWF executive committee.

## Gaza update: Bishops enter on 3rd attempt; WCC issues statement

*Three local bishops were among a delegation of people to visit Gaza in March, visiting churches and other Christian humanitarian projects.*

After three attempts in five weeks, three area bishops were finally allowed to enter Gaza to visit churches and humanitarian projects. Anglican Bishop Rt. Rev. Suheil Dawani, ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan and Greek Catholic Archbishop Elias Chacour made

their pastoral visit to Gaza on March 10.

Earlier, bishops Dawani and Younan

were the only two of a delegation of five bishops denied entry at the Erez Crossing between

Israel and Gaza on Feb. 4. Later, the three bishops applied for permission to enter Gaza on Feb. 24 but were denied for undisclosed reasons.

The ELCJHL’s press release on the bishops’ visit is available at <http://www.elcjl.org/3-10-09 Gaza.doc>.

### WCC statement on Gaza War

The World Council of Churches decried the loss of human life and called for greater church engagement in joint efforts for peace in its Feb. 20, 2009, statement on the Gaza war. You can read the statement in full at <http://tiny.cc/ZnD2h>.

# U.S. rabbis visit ELCJHL, discuss interfaith conditions

Which is worse? On one hand, religious groups peacefully co-exist but are ignorant of one another. On the other, they desecrate each other's symbols and harass their adherents.

Neither is acceptable, according to Christian and Jewish faith leaders who spoke to a group of U.S. rabbis visiting the ELCJHL Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in February.

ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan was in his late teens when he first met a Jew. When he first began dialoguing with Jews, "We were

really surprised of our ignorance," he said.

Armenian Orthodox Archbishop Aris Shirvian said that orthodox Jews spat on the ground in front of him when he attended a reception for Jerusalem's newly elected mayor. It is "this spirit of intolerance that we and you have to fight," Shirvian told his audience of some 40 rabbis. Leading the group was Dr. Ron Kronish, a rabbi himself and director of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel. Kronish and Younan are co-leaders of Jonah Group, ICCI's

Christian-Jewish dialogue group. Younan called this group, the only one of its kind in Israel-Palestine, a "miracle."

"We (Palestinians) think we are the only ones who have pain," he said. "We succeeded because we started to understand the pain of the other." Younan went on to say that his people "must understand the deep trauma of the Jewish people from the holocaust." Jews must likewise understand the trauma of the occupation, he said, adding that the two are not equivalent.

Shirvian said Armenians have lived in Israel-Palestine for 1,700 years and so have seen many occupiers come and go. He personally witnessed pre-1967 Jerusalem, which was psychologically and physically divided. The greater the barriers, "the more animosity will continue to prevail between the two sides," he said.

He hopes that brotherly relations between its residents will prevent the city from being divided again. All believers should have the right to visit their holy places, he said. ✖

*It is "this spirit of intolerance that we and you have to fight."*  
— Aris Shirvian

## Rabbi with deep Lutheran, interfaith ties visits ELCJHL

With the growth of interfaith dialogue, it's not unusual to find a Jewish rabbi familiar with Lutheranism. But Rabbi Amy Perlin knows the church's liturgical seasons and colors – thanks to worshipping in a Lutheran sanctuary for nine years.

Perlin, senior rabbi at Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station, Virginia, U.S.A., was with a group of U.S. rabbis who recently met with ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan to hear about the church's Christian-Jewish dialogue efforts. There, Perlin eagerly shared her story of how her congregation was "born" in a Lutheran church.



**Bishop Munib Younan and Rabbi Amy Perlin**

The congregation formed with three families in 1986 but lacked a sanctuary. So they contacted The Lutheran Church

of the Abiding Presence, in Burke, Va., to inquire about renting their facilities. For the next nine years, B'nai Shalom worshipped in the Lutheran church, which, Perlin said, helped Abiding Presence fund a building addition. When B'nai Shalom's sanctuary underwent refurbishing in 2005 and more recently needed repairs after a pipe burst, the congregation returned to their Lutheran home.

Now, after their days of worshipping separately in the same sanctuary, the congregations have joint Thanksgiving services. When the service is at the church, Perlin preaches, and vice versa.

But the friendship goes deeper than shared facilities. When Perlin was hospitalized, the Lutheran pastor, Thomas Bailey, was her "pastor of choice," she said, "much to the confusion of all the nurses!" Calling him a "dear friend and role model," Perlin said she was privileged to be the only non-Lutheran to speak at Bailey's retirement dinner last year.

Perlin said she had long thought the relationship was divinely ordained in order for her congregation to be born. But then Bailey and his wife, Carol, lost their son David in 2006. Perlin "stood with them in prayer at his bedside." She concluded, "That's why God brought us together."

B'nai Shalom's interfaith relationships extend to other Lutheran churches and look likely to continue. "Blessings abound in dialogue and friendship," Perlin said. ✖

*When Perlin was hospitalized, a Lutheran clergyman was her "pastor of choice."*

*You can learn more about Rabbi Amy Perlin's congregation at [www.tbs-online.org](http://www.tbs-online.org).*

### Bishop welcomes granddaughter

Katharina Nazeek Khoury was born on Friday, Feb. 20, 2009, at 8:25 am. She is the daughter of Anna Younan Khoury and Nazeek Khoury



and granddaughter of Suad and Bishop Munib Younan.

## Younan attends meetings, visits leaders in Lebanon in March

ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan spent March 5-9 in Lebanon attending meetings and, at the invitation of Pastor George Kopfi, preaching in the Anglican All Saints Church. He met with a number of church dignitaries and Christian leaders including:

- Metropolitan Elias Audi of the Greek Orthodox Church for the Archdiocese of Beirut;
- Catholicos Aram I, catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church;
- Near East School of Theology President Dr. Mary Mikhael;
- Haigazian University President Dr. Paul Haidostian;
- Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) General Secretary Rosangela Jarjour and her husband, Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, the former general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches;
- and MECC General Secretary Dr. Guirgis Ibrahim Saleh.

Younan chaired a meeting of the executive committee of FMEEC, which will hold an assembly in Beirut next year.

The FMEEC is an association of mainline evangelical churches of the Middle East. The fellowship exists to strengthen, unite and train Protestant churches in their mission and ministry.

*Bishop Younan is president of the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches.*

## Women's desk facilitator hired

There is a new face in the ELCJHL office these days. She is Bassima Jaraiseh, who joined the staff on March 17 as facilitator of the women's desk. Although new to the Jerusalem office, she is familiar to members of the Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah, where she has attended church since her baptism and had served as the leader of the women's group. The part-time position was created to elevate the women's desk from a voluntary to a professional level, Bishop Younan said.



**Bassima Jaraiseh**

“It's to empower women's work, women in the church, spirituality,” Jaraiseh said. She is supported in her work by a committee of about nine people, which has established an ambitious agenda. It includes promoting evangelical identity, Bible study and self-empowerment, as well as discussing meeting planning and women's duties and responsibilities as equal members of church and society. You can contact Jaraiseh at [womendes@elcjl.org](mailto:womendes@elcjl.org).

Watch the newsletter for further information about Jaraiseh and her work. ✕

document, The Amman Call, acknowledges the “violence, humiliation and despair” endured by Christian, Muslim and Jew alike and calls churches to “heal and to bring all sides to reconciliation.” Read it at <http://tiny.cc/GHWQI>.

## Ecumenical forum works to mobilize world churches for Middle East peace

Members of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum met at the International Center of Bethlehem on Feb. 12. In its efforts to mobilize churches around the world for peace with justice in the Middle East, the World Council of Churches launched the PIEF at a 2007 peace

conference in Amman, Jordan. The international, inter-church advocacy initiative was formed to “catalyze and co-ordinate” new and existing church advocacy for peace and “(end) the illegal occupation in accordance with UN resolutions.” The forum is intended to

be a grassroots movement of Christians to strengthen their presence in the Holy Land. The forum's founding

document, The Amman Call, acknowledges the “violence, humiliation and despair” endured by Christian, Muslim

and Jew alike and calls churches to “heal and to bring all sides to reconciliation.” Read it at <http://tiny.cc/GHWQI>.

## Good Shepherd hosts cultural, fitness and other events

Al Khei-me-h (The Tent), the ecumenical community center that is a ministry of the ELCJHL Church of the Good Shepherd in Amman, Jordan, has been the location for several events and activities recently.

Among its recent activities, the center:

- hosted Jordanian poet Sliman al Mashinin, who read selections from his works to an audience of about 25

people.

- welcomed 19 women to aerobics sessions during January. Since women of all religions are welcomed, the thrice-weekly sessions provide Muslim and Christian women the opportunity to exercise, socialize and exchange views. This, says Good Shepherd Pastor Samer Azar, illustrates the interfaith harmony that exists in Jordan.
- presented a perfor-

## Church of Hope spotlights its women

The women of the Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah were in the spotlight in March. On Friday, March 20, the night before Mother's Day in Palestine, mothers of the congregation were treated to a special evening of food, flowers, music and dancing. The following Sunday the women were responsible for the church service, taking charge of everything, from liturgy to the sermon. Church member David Tannous said of the service, “Our ladies did a very nice job, as they always do.”

In other business, the congregation is making preparations for renovating the church's front vestibule. Plans include replacing windows as well as interior and exterior doors beginning some time after Easter.

Tannous also reported that the congregation has appreciated the work of vicar Ashraf Tannous, who has handled various parish duties during the nine months during which the church has been without a pastor.

mance by the Lebanese drama group, “Just for Kids,” in February, co-sponsored by the Jordan Bible Society.

- hosted a lecture about interfaith dialogue by Muslim scholar Dr. Odatallah Mani' Al Qa-issi. Dialogue, he said, is about discussing common values, joint

challenges and societal issues – not debating dogma. The aim should be to promote the value of individuals regardless of religion, in order to promote mutual respect and see God in the other. Appreciating the truth claims and status of other believers creates “channels of co-

operation” that enhance justice toward God's people and all creation.

Al Khei-me-h sponsors lectures on topics such as politics, religion and civic life.

The congregation also treated its children to a carnival party, in cooperation with the Amman German congregation.