

# AELABOUNIS IN JERUSALEM

The Newsletter of the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) Country Coordinators for Jerusalem and the West Bank

## CORONA SUMMER

This summer, we celebrated our 1-year anniversary of moving to Jerusalem to serve with ELCA Global Mission. Despite the challenges of adjusting to a new country, and then of navigating daily life and ministry in the time of Covid-19, this has been a year of blessings for our whole family. We have found new family adventures and traditions, met new friends and neighbors, and gained new perspectives on the world: this wide and gorgeously diverse, interconnected and fragile, fearful and hopeful planet that God loves so fiercely. We're thankful to be where we are, and we're thankful to you for supporting us and following our journey.



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## YAGM UPDATE

While we won't have a group of YAGM volunteers this coming year, we will spend the year working with our local church partners, evaluating and retooling the YAGM program, and preparing to select and welcome new volunteers in August 2021. YAGM applications will open THIS Nov. 1--please help spread the word! (Learn more [here](#).)

## MINISTRY UPDATES

Thanks to strict lockdown measures in March and April, the number of new Covid cases dwindled in May, allowing many schools and businesses to reopen and permitting indoor worship (with masks and distancing.) Sadly, this reopening was followed by a surge in new cases in June and July. We're not on lockdown, but most churches have resumed online worship. With borders mostly closed to tourism, the resulting toll on the economy has been devastating, especially for the MANY Palestinian small business owners (of hotels and guesthouses, souvenir shops, and the like) whose livelihoods depend on Holy Land visitors. Our partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, is struggling. But it is also actively working to help local families with food boxes and is striving to sustain its K-12 schools. We know that many of you may also be facing precarious economic times; but if you are able, visit [OpportunityPalestine.org](https://OpportunityPalestine.org) to help the church to serve its neighbors in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

The worldwide #blacklivesmatter protests this summer following the U.S. killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor found echoes here in Israel/Palestine. In East Jerusalem, the police killing of an unarmed, autistic Palestinian named Iyad Hallaq drew comparisons with Floyd's death. Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have long felt solidarity with Black and Indigenous people of color in the U.S., hence this tribute to George Floyd on the separation wall in Bethlehem. As ELCA pastors and followers of Jesus, we support justice for all marginalized people. True justice and peace will only come when Black and Palestinian lives matter.







## FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS

We celebrated Luke's 5th birthday in June with a double celebration: one with just the five of us in Jerusalem, and one with his grandparents and cousins in Ailaboun. (Bonus: two birthday cakes!) Luke's best friend Emi from preschool joined him for a backyard wading pool play date, and he has loved assembling his new Legos, riding his new bike with training wheels, and watching "Spiderman: Into the Spideverse" (his current favorite movie.)

## GETTING (AND SWEATING) OUTSIDE

Don't let Ethan's sweatshirt fool you: the summer heat in Israel/Palestine is impressive. Still, we've tried to take advantage of a beautiful local bike path, in addition to plunging ourselves into every body of water we can find! In between, we'll be honest: the air conditioning in our flat is something we thank God for every day.



Other summer activities have included science experiments, challenging puzzles, grilling and eating outside in our yard, and family movie nights.

In school news, Meghan has been working diligently on her dissertation in hopes of completing her Ph.D. in 2021; and later this month our 6th grader, 3rd grader, and Kindergartener will start back to school (in-person or distance learning TBD).



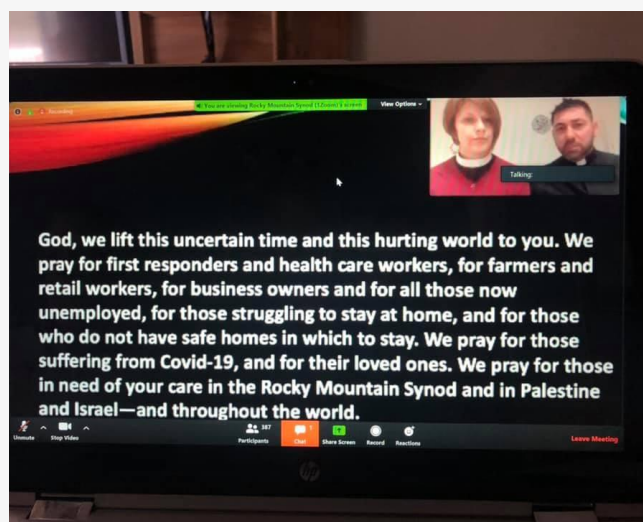
The ordination of ELCJHL pastor, the Rev. Rodny Said, in Jerusalem in June 2020. Rev. Said (4th from left) will serve as pastor to Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah

## THANKS AND CONNECTIONS

We are only able to serve here as missionaries of the ELCA because of your ongoing prayers and support. We are grateful to you! We also ask for your continued help. If you are interested in supporting our ministry, please visit [elca.org/missionarygiving](https://elca.org/missionarygiving) and choose our names or the YACM program from the drop-down menu; or send a check to the address at the bottom of that web page with "Aelabouni GCS2060" in the memo line.

## WE'D LOVE TO (VIRTUALLY) VISIT!

We were honored to join a Peace Not Walls webinar, the Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly, the Southeast Michigan Synod ELCJHL task force, weekend worship and adult forum at Trinity Lutheran (Ft. Collins, CO -- our former call!) and the staff of Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp this summer, all thanks to Zoom! We would love to virtually visit your congregation, staff or small group to preach, lead a forum, or bring greetings from the Holy Land and the ELCJHL. Email us ([meghan.aelabouni@elca.org](mailto:meghan.aelabouni@elca.org) or [gabi.aelabouni@elca.org](mailto:gabi.aelabouni@elca.org)) to arrange a virtual visit!



*For [God] says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!*

- 2 Corinthians 6:2

In these times, we do not know what lies ahead, but we are sustained by the reminder that God is with us. Even in the bleakest moments, "now is the day of salvation!" May this hope comfort and guide us all to live these days in the love that casts out fear, and in compassionate service to our neighbors near and far.