

Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

(Acts 9:31)

Lutherans in the Holy Land

Mid-1800s German Lutherans arrived to build schools and orphanages, with some Palestinian Christians (whose ancestors date back to the time of Jesus) beginning to identify as Lutheran.

1898 Redeemer Lutheran Church was built in Jerusalem's Old City.

1910 Augusta Victoria was built on the Mount of Olives as a hostel for German pilgrims. For decades it has been a Lutheran World Federation hospital. <https://avh.org/>

1947 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (<https://www.elcjl.org/home>) became a recognized independent denomination with Palestinian-born bishops and pastors. Along with the ELCA, it is a member of the Lutheran World Federation.

2000 Millennial celebration was held in Bethlehem, led by the ELCJHL with invited guests from the ELCA.

Recent decades: many pilgrimage visits by ELCA staff, bishops, synods, congregations, and individuals; ELCJHL speakers at Churchwide Assembly and elsewhere

Related websites to explore

Tent of Nations: read the history in "about us" <https://tentofnations.com/>

Dar Al-Kalima Lutheran School: <https://www.facebook.com/daralkalima>

Dar Al-Kalima University: <https://www.daralkalima.edu.ps/en>

20th/21st Century Palestine and Israel Political Timeline

See "The Israel Palestine Conflict: a Brief, Simple History" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnIU>

Post-World War I 450-year Muslim Ottoman Turkish Empire dismantled; Britain and France given mandate control over much of the territory, including historical Palestine, the **British Balfour Declaration** inviting Jews to immigrate, rise of Zionism and tensions between Arabs and Jews

1947-49 UN partitioning plan, leading to war, more land for the new Israeli state, armistice

May 14, 1948 Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel: at least 750,000 Palestinians permanently displaced from homes and villages (the *Nabka*, Arabic for "catastrophe"); **Arab-Israeli War of 1948:** Five Arab nations invaded territory in the former Palestinian mandate immediately afterward

1964 Arab League created Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); Yasser Arafat leader in 1970

1967 Six Day War led to occupation of East Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, and Sinai;

UN Security Council resolution 242: Israel's right "to live within secure and recognized boundaries" and call for Israel to withdraw from "territories occupied in the recent conflict."

1978 Camp David Peace Treaty: return of Sinai to Egypt and part of Golan to Syria; diplomatic relations for Egypt and Israel

1982 June, Israel invasion of southern Lebanon; Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacred by Israel's Christian Phalangist allies; PLO leaders relocate in Tunisia, then to Gaza in 1994

1987 first Palestinian Intifada ("uprising"); Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza formed the **Hamas movement** (with support of Benjamin Netanyahu as a counter to the PLO)

1992 Yitzhak Rabin Labor government pledged to halt settlement expansion and began secret talks with PLO

1993 Declaration of Principles/Oslo Accords (land for peace plan) signed by Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat
Palestinian Authority established over Gaza, Jericho; Peace Treaty with Jordan

1994 Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians praying at the Cave of the Patriarchs shrine in Hebron

1994-present Israeli West Bank and Jerusalem **settlement expansion**
(illegitimate under international law, with 700,000 settlers by December 2023)

1995 Rabin assassinated by Jewish extremist to derail the peace process and return of land to Palestinians

2000 talks between Barak and Arafat broke down; **second Intifada began** (partly in response to the provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif/ Temple Mount led by Ariel Sharon, who became Prime Minister in 2001)

2002 Israel began erecting separation barrier and checkpoints, constraining movement for Palestinians

2002 In a June Rose Garden speech, President George H. W. Bush voiced strong support for the prospect of an independent Palestinian state <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbushstatesolution.htm>

2005 Mahmoud Abbas elected to succeed Arafat (died Nov 2004); Israel withdrew settlements from Gaza, but maintains controls over airspace, ports, and border crossings

2006 Palestinian parliamentary election put Hamas in power (the most recent election by Palestinians)

2007 Hamas took control of Gaza from Fatah by force; **US-hosted Annapolis Conference with PLO, Israel, and the U.S. accepting the "two-state solution" as basis for future talks** (which so far have failed)

2008-9 Israel's Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza (January 2009 ELCA bishops visited the region)

2012 UN upgraded Palestinian representation to that of a non-member observer state

2017 U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, angering the Arab world and some Western allies; **Hamas accepted 1967 borders** for a Palestinian state without recognizing state of Israel

2019 U.S. under Trump declared that it no longer considered Israeli settlements on the West Bank to be illegal

2022 Benjamin Netanyahu began sixth term as Prime Minister

2024 U.S. President Biden reaffirmed 50-year position that settlements are "illegitimate" under international law

2023-25 Hamas Oct 7 attack and subsequent Israeli war on Gaza

2025 Second Trump administration begins to undermine U.S. support for Palestinian liberation

*[prepared by the ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod Working Group
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