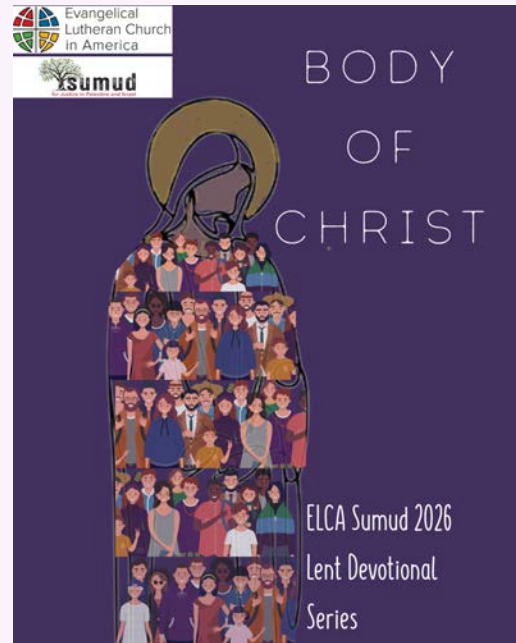


ELCA 2026 LENTEN SERIES: BODY OF CHRIST

Week 1: "Now is the Time"

Passage: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

Bishop Stacie Fidler of the Northern Illinois Synod



Paul looked around at a similar time in the early church and made this proclamation: NOW is the acceptable time.

Even as the church was persecuted, hunted down, hungry, he boldly shouts that NOW is the time. It is a word of hard hope, shouting that our salvation and our call do not come from the realities of the broken world around us. They come from God, from the presence and sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus. The risen Christ empowers all his followers for THIS time and THIS place because their salvation, their healing and hope, are secured.

There is no way that one could look around Palestine and say, "Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!" There are so few acceptable things in the everyday life of a Palestinian Christian. From the moment of rising until sleep, there are few certainties. Will there be water? Electricity? Work? Will checkpoints be open today? Randomly closed? Completely moved? Who do I know who will be unjustly detained? Attacked? Killed?

A life where nothing is reliable day-to-day, moment-to-moment, leaves people without hope.

But hope is one thing our partners in the ELCJHL hold tightly.

Hope that is deeply grounded in the very origins of Christianity, in the land where Jesus walked, in the clarity that Paul proclaimed. Our certainty is in Christ. Our hope is in Christ. Our mission is in Christ.

Our partners in the ELCJHL live that certainty every day amid the chaos and cruelties around them. They are ambassadors for Christ and for the Gospel in their expansive sense of service for all people around them. They live the righteousness and love of God through schools, through daily and deeply loving their neighbors, through trauma care and medical care and community care.

These words of Paul guide our partners in Palestine daily because the ELCJHL know this: that NOW is always the acceptable time to live the kingdom of God. That NOW is always the time to live the righteousness of Christ. That NOW IS the day of salvation.