New Doors

About two years ago, we received a prophetic word that ten new branches would be opened for the Christian Embassy in the Arab/Islamic world. This incredible promise has started to come to pass before our eyes, as two ex-Muslims who today are pro-Israel Christian pastors were present in Prague to represent their countries. One of these brothers will also represent us in six other Muslim nations. So new doors are opening for the ICEJ in lands previously closed to our ministry. How delightful it was to listen to the Arabic language in songs and prayers in a gathering of ICEJ leaders.

New national directors and spokespersons were also commissioned for India, Thailand, Uganda and Italy. It is a new day and new doors are opening in many other countries not mentioned here. We can see everywhere a new interest, new possibilities and new signs of growth that will enlarge our ministry to bless Israel in greater measure. These are exciting times!

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem • Comforting Israel, Educating the Church

Embracing the Call
ICEJ National Directors Carry Fresh Vision from Prague

The annual gathering of the international network of ICEJ national directors took place in May in the beautiful city of Prague, hosted by the Czech Branch of the ICEJ. The four-day conference drew 90 representatives from 35 out the Christian Embassy’s 70 established national branches worldwide.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is a broad and unique expression of the worldwide body of Christ towards the Jewish people. This ministry reaches all continents of the world. Every year our national directors come together for an annual conference to hear from the Lord, to be strengthened in our vision, to sharpen our swords for the good of God’s chosen people, and to be encouraged in our calling.

Fresh Winds

Fresh winds of the Holy Spirit were blowing as the national directors and representatives gathered under the new leadership of ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Juergen Buehler and myself, as International Director, to receive teaching and prophetic encouragement concerning the modern-day restoration of Israel and her hope-filled future, as well as the ministry of ICEJ. From the start, the gathering experienced a strong presence of the Lord and a spirit of prayer in our times of worship, preaching and group discussion. And the Lord clearly spoke!

A Message of Hope

Dr. Buehler and other speakers brought a clear word that we must bear a message of hope even as troubled times envelope the earth. Many prophetic teachers today focus on the dark days ahead and project doom-and-gloom on Israel as well. But we were powerfully reminded that a glorious future awaits Israel and the Church, even though tough times do lie ahead. The Bible is clear that Israel is being gathered not for annihilation, but for redemption in her Messiah!

By Juha Ketola
ICEJ International Director

New Doors

About two years ago, we received a prophetic word that ten new branches would be opened for the Christian Embassy in the Arab/Islamic world. This incredible promise has started to come to pass before our eyes, as two ex-Muslims who today are pro-Israel Christian pastors were present in Prague to represent their countries. One of these brothers will also represent us in six other Muslim nations. So new doors are opening for the ICEJ in lands previously closed to our ministry. How delightful it was to listen to the Arabic language in songs and prayers in a gathering of ICEJ leaders. New national directors and spokespersons were also commissioned for India, Thailand, Uganda and Italy. It is a new day and new doors are opening in many other countries not mentioned here. We can see everywhere a new interest, new possibilities and new signs of growth that will enlarge our ministry to bless Israel in greater measure. These are exciting times!

>> continued on Page 3
The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ is a non-denominational faith ministry, supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends across the globe. We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by using the enclosed response slip to make your donation to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.

Director’s Letter

Dear friends,

Israel’s modern-day restoration is a global message of hope for every nation on our planet, because it affirms God’s covenant faithfulness to both the Church and to Israel. It also is a powerful reminder to expect the soon return of our King.

In May, we gathered in Prague for our annual National Directors conference. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is blessed with a growing network of active branches in 70 nations. Our new International Director, Rev. Juha Ketola, arrived in Jerusalem in May to begin overseeing this dynamic family of ICEJ representatives worldwide. God truly blessed us during our time in the Czech Republic with a strong sense of unity and expectation for what God will do in future with our ministry. The unmistakable presence of God during these days freshly empowered us all to bring a message of hope and restoration to Israel and to the nations.

Some of our new directors and representatives who were commissioned during this conference are former Muslims who have found love and truth in Jesus and today stand firmly with Israel. We all were very excited to hear their reports about the new move of God in the Arab/Muslim world. For safety reasons we cannot give details on what they shared at the conference, but please pray for our new leaders in Muslim countries. Other new national directors are profiled in this newsletter.

Everyone also was blessed to meet Jani Salokangas, the new Director for our Young Adults outreach. This ministry, which was formerly known as “Grafted”, is now being expanded under the new name “Arise”. This beautifully summarizes what we would like this ministry to accomplish: that a young generation of Christians will arise to take their place standing alongside Israel. Please pray for this important outreach. It not only represents the future of the ICEJ, but the youth are already a critical voice within our ministry.

Finally, I want to thank all those who stand with us in prayer and financial support. As you read this issue, please prayerfully consider how you can partner alongside us in this great work of God.

May the Lord bless you out of Zion!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director

Word From Jerusalem

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Dr. Jürgen Bühler
INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR: Juha Ketola
EDITORIAL/GRAPHIC ARTIST: David Parsons/Peter Ecenroad
ADMINISTRATION: David van der Walt, Wim van der Zande
CONTRIBUTORS: James Cheatham, Stephan Vorster, Shavei Israel
PHOTOGRAPHY: AP, ICEJ Staff, Wiki-Pedia

Support our ministry online at: www.icej.org
EMBRACING THE CALL  WORD FROM JERUSALEM

Arise
The new director of our Young Adults program, Jani Salokangas, presented his vision to reach out to the younger generation on Israel’s behalf. The youth are part of the body of Christ and if we leave them out of our ministry efforts it would actually be the same as dividing the body. He also brought it to a personal level by asking the question: What if you as a parent had never told your own children about God’s will and plans concerning Israel? He then unveiled the new name “Arise” for the ICEJ’s Next Generation ministry, formerly known as Grafted. A new Internet magazine by the same name will be issued four times per year, the first one to come out in June. Several national directors immediately invited Jani to visit the youth in their respective countries and our Next Generation outreach is going forward with great anticipation.

The Unique Mandate of the ICEJ
Our guiding mandate is to comfort the Jewish people, the nation of Israel and all its citizens (Isaiah 40:1-2). We defend Israel in her righteous cause to live as a nation in peace and security in her ancient homeland. We have a high-profile presence in Israel based out of our head office in Jerusalem. Through its various practical projects and colourful expressions, our ministry is demonstrating the unconditional love and concern shared by Christians worldwide for the people of the Promised Land. We are in Israel to love, to bless and to stand with the chosen people of God. For this very same reason, our national branches have been established worldwide. We have a unique character and calling among other Christian ministries and have been faithfully carrying it out for more than 30 years. This we will continue to do.

Our Prophetic Call to the Church
Our call is also from Jerusalem outward to the nations. We remind churches among the nations of their debt and responsibilities towards the Jewish people. We share about God’s purposes for Israel and the Church’s mandate from God to bless her, pray for her and stand with her (Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 122; Romans 9-11). We also are a prophetic voice to the body of Christ concerning the promised restoration of Israel in these last days.

The Coming Judgement
The nations will be judged uprightly. One measuring stick which God will use to judge the nations will be how they have related to Jerusalem, to the land of Israel and to the Jewish people (Zechariah 12, Joel 3, Matthew 25). Thus, it remains essential to assess what kind of relationship our respective nations have with Israel. Being aware that the revealed will of God dictates that we not take part in the dividing of Jerusalem or the land of Israel can save our nations from harm and instead bring a wonderful blessing. We can be instrumental in turning people in the right direction by shedding light on God’s sure promises concerning Israel and the nations.

A Message to All
Our message then, is as well suited for kings, presidents and prime ministers, as it is for church leaders. The Bible affirms that God will save Israel (Deuteronomy 32, Ezekiel 36). And the Bible affirms that God guides the nations of the earth and does so through their leaders – either to a blessing or to a curse (Psalm 67:4, 2 Kings 23:21-26, Proverbs 14:34). God’s eyes not only see individuals, but collectively families and cities and nations (Exodus 12, Leviticus 16, Acts 16:31, Matthew 11:21-24, Genesis 12:1-3, Deuteronomy 32:8, Acts 17:26). It is the national leadership of a nation that determines how that nation relates to the other nations of the world – and particularly to Israel! The Lord has called us to reach out and speak into the lives of these leaders – both secular and spiritual!

A Two-Edged Sword
We, as a ministry in the nations, share the burden of both God’s plan for Israel and the message of salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ! With the world moving towards darker days, we are showing them the glorious salvation in Jesus and the shining light of God’s faithfulness towards Israel. This is not our choice, but His. Our message in the nations can wake up and stir the people. At the end of the day, it is all about Jesus (Luke 24:25-27, 44-49, Acts 1:6-8, Rev. 19:10)!

Rev. Juha Ketola serves as the ICEJ International Director in Jerusalem
New Faces of the ICEJ

The ICEJ’s annual gathering of national directors in Prague last month drew a wide representation of our global ministry, including quite a few new faces. New branch directors from India, Italy and Thailand told the conference of how they came to love Israel and got involved with the Christian Embassy, while our veteran national director in Bolivia gave a remarkable testimony of God’s faithfulness.

In 2007, Pastor Krisada joined a tour of holy sites in Israel and also came to the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem for the first time. There, he had an encounter with the Lord concerning modern Israel’s place in God’s plans. Ever since, he has been teaching against Replacement theology, translating books about Israel’s restoration into his native Thai language, and organising tours to the Feast. Over recent years the churches have opened up to his message on comforting Israel and his Feast tours are growing rapidly. Three years ago he had four Feast pilgrims, then 30, and last year over 100 Thai pilgrims joined his Feast tour.

Pastor Krisada Chusakulthanachai
ICEJ THAILAND

Pastor Krisada has a great burden for his nation of Thailand, as 90% of the population is Buddhist and only 0.2% are Christians. He once saw a documentary on the mighty move of God taking place in Uganda and felt a boldness to believe the same could happen in his country. So he has been busy planting churches throughout Thailand over the past ten years.

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Pastor Antonio Rozzini
ICEJ ITALY

Antonio Rozzini has been a pastor, church planter and youth ministry coordinator for the Assemblies of God in Italy since 1993. He currently oversees a congregation of more than 300 members in the city of Bergamo, near Milan, while also working as a high school teacher.

Three years ago, Tony was challenged by a dear Finnish saint visiting his church concerning his lack of a clear stand on Israel. So he decided to visit Israel in 2009 and came away “hooked”. His personal study of the books of Romans and Revelations also opened his eyes to the importance of Israel’s restoration.

Pastor Tony is now trying to get the growing Evangelical body in Italy to realise their spiritual debt to the Jewish people. He became connected to the ICEJ through our UK national director, Pastor David Elms, and now he is eagerly planning conferences and concerts in Italy to build support for Israel. This will include performances by Italy’s best pianist playing music written by Jews in Nazi concentration camps.

“I am honestly humbled to serve the people of God, and have been very blessed since starting the ICEJ branch in Italy”, he told the national directors conference in Prague.
In keeping with the instructions of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, they hold a meeting every Friday night to teach about Israel and pray for the Jewish people and nation. The Shabbat gatherings also take up a weekly collection for the ministry of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. This has enabled Pastor Alberto to bring offerings to the Feast of over $50,000 in recent years, even though Bolivia is the poorest country in South America.

Pastor Alberto noted that since he began this practice, his ministry has exploded. His church is growing, God has been moving in healings and salvations, many in his congregation are prospering, and other churches in his network are reporting similar blessings from on high.

In Prague, Pastor Alberto also shared about a unique initiative he started some five years ago on behalf of Israel which is now observed in dozens of churches he is affiliated with. In keeping with the instructions of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, they hold a meeting every Friday night to teach about Israel and pray for the Jewish people and nation. The Shabbat gatherings also take up a weekly collection for the ministry of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. This has enabled Pastor Alberto to bring offerings to the Feast of over $50,000 in recent years, even though Bolivia is the poorest country in South America.

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“Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession...”

- Psalm 2:8
The ICEJ’s Grafted Young Adults ministry will now operate under the name “Arise”, led by Jani Salokangas from Finland. Jani, his wife and two children have relocated to Jerusalem and are excited about this new phase in their lives. Jani believes that the call of God over his life as well as his international background have given him what it takes to further develop this key facet of our global ministry.

Jani Salokangas was born in Uruguay in 1983 into a Finnish missionary family. He lived for 12 years in Spanish-speaking countries of South America. Jani completed a degree as a graphic designer and married his wife Laura in 2004. They both earned degrees in international business administration in 2007. Their personal calling into ministry then led them to Tanzania, in east Africa, for two years of service with the largest Nordic missionary organization, Fida International of the Finnish Pentecostal Churches. They focused on assisting over 1,400 handicapped children from very poor families and on helping young adults break the chains of poverty. After returning to Finland, they actively served their home church by launching new outreach programs, including the RUSH program which has touched over 20,000 non-Christian young people through sports.

PRAYER CAMPAIGN

Please note that our monthly day for prayer and fasting is being moved to the first Wednesday of every month, meaning the next global day of prayer and fasting will be Wednesday, 6 June 2012.

The Word of God is clear in its teachings about prayer. God is longing for us to have fellowship with Him. Sometimes we pray only once and it is done. Sometimes we pray many times the same prayer, and then it is done.

Our prayers for the restoration of Israel belong to this latter category. God has called on every generation to intercede until it is fully done. This calling is found in Isaiah 62:6-7, where we are urged to give Him no rest in our prayers for Jerusalem’s redemption. An essential part of this restoration process is the Ingathering of the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth.

In His word, God clearly promises that He will bring back “all the families of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:1). One of those “families” is the Bnei Menashe tribe in north-east India.

Over recent decades, some 1,700 Bnei Menashe (sons of Manasseh) have already made aliyah to Israel. Another 7,200 are still eagerly waiting to come home as soon as the Israeli government approves their entry. The first 50 families (over 250 people) are hoping to fly here by August on a flight to be sponsored by the Christian Embassy.

Please join us in praying for final government approval and for all the preparations to be made in order to bring the Bnei Menashe to Israel!
Salvaging Young Lives

By Estera Wieja

In pursuing our calling to comfort the Jewish people, we are especially concerned about the many troubled youth in Israel. The younger generation are the future of this nation and it is heartbreaking to see so many of them confronted by daunting challenges that dim their prospects in life. Through various partnerships, ICEJ AID is reaching out to Israeli youths-at-risk in hopes of giving them a fair chance to succeed.

Vickie (name changed) was born to a drug-addicted mother and barely knew her father. At the age of six, she was placed in a home for foster children while her mother was put in a rehabilitation center. Although her mother wanted to maintain a relationship with Vickie, health problems prevented her from visiting the home regularly. It took Vickie time to adjust to the reality that this was her home.

At the beginning of this year, Vickie learned that her mother had died. Still only 14 years old, she took the news very hard. She was afraid to go to the funeral, which was attended almost solely by social workers and staff from the children’s home. This highlighted just how alone Vickie is in the world. She felt hopeless.

She is just one out of 95 orphaned or abused children living at a foster home in northern Israel supported by the ICEJ. Each of these individuals, have their own tragic stories of hard knocks and unfair setbacks so early in life. We are sponsoring programs for them which are aimed at developing their character, identifying their skills, and strengthening their resolve to overcome any obstacle.

The children at the foster home have all suffered from parental neglect and many have also experienced sexual abuse. They all lack close family to turn to for support.

At the home, they are cared for by a dedicated team of professionals who help them gradually adapt to their new environment and reach their potential. They are integrated into local schools where their progress is monitored closely. They also get to enjoy fun activities such as horseback riding, karate, theatre, electronics, flying model airplanes, physical exercises, music and much more.

Currently, the youth share tiny rooms in old, dilapidated caravans which are unsuitable. The orphanage is in urgent need of a better solution for the children, and is looking to purchase prefabricated cottages to replace the old caravans. Quite simply, our donations will give these deserving young people a happier environment within which to hope and dream.

“We view this housing project as of utmost importance to the well-being of our young people and count you as essential partners,” the manager of the home said when ICEJ AID recently committed the needed funds. “Together we can assistance these children in becoming secure and confident young adults who respect themselves and those around them.”

Please join us as we give these and other young Israelis a new start in life.

Help support ICEJ AID:
www.icej.org/aid
Good Deeds in Beit Shean

By Estera Wieja

On the first day of spring the ICEJ team in Jerusalem took part in a hands-on project to bless the nation of Israel. The annual Good Deeds Day in the city of Beit Shean was a wonderful opportunity for our staff to join the citizens in their work to better their lives.

Beit Shean has a significant number of Ethiopian immigrants and the city is still struggling for unity among its residents. But the citizens are motivated to restore the beauty that once marked the ancient city, and they hope to see their home town revived and improved once again.

Wearing the city’s “Doing Good” t-shirts to identify with the mission of the Good Deeds Day, we traveled north of Jerusalem to Beit Shean to do some practical work in the neighborhoods of this fairly small city in the Galilee. As we got to work, the local youth instantly got intrigued. They grabbed some tools and started preparing the walls of city buildings to paint them. After a few minutes of joyous interaction, our staff from all around the world together with the local Ethiopian teenagers were fully engaged and quickly moving from one task to another.

The ICEJ has been supporting a number of important endeavours in the city of Beit Shean and has a strong relationship with the city officials. We also had an opportunity to visit one of the three kindergartens for children with special needs that the ICEJ sponsors. The centers are old and small with outdated equipment and outdoor play areas that don’t have proper play equipment. ICEJ Aid continues to help the centers meet these needs.

Join us in “Doing Good” and support our work in Israel. Your gift to ICEJ Aid will make a real difference in the lives of Israelis like those in Beit Shean.

Estera Wieja serves as a staff writer for the ICEJ Media team in Jerusalem
The Real Root of the Christian Exodus

By David Parsons

With his recent segment for *60 Minutes*, CBS News reporter Bob Simon has once again stoked the perennial debate over why so many native Palestinian Christians have been leaving the Holy Land in recent decades. Sadly, he addressed this important issue with a very superficial brand of journalism.

The report relied mainly on one local Palestinian cleric – notorious Israel-basher Rev. Mitri Raheb – to single out the “Israeli occupation” as the scapegoat for this Christian flight. There was no need to dig deeper, since Simon knew the report was sure to be a sensation from the moment Israeli ambassador Dr. Michael Oren caught wind of the production and tried to intervene with his bosses at CBS News.

If Bob Simon had truly wanted to know why Arab Christians have been fleeing in droves from Palestinian areas, he should have asked those émigrés now living in such distant places as Toronto, Sydney and Santiago – because that is where the majority of Palestinian Christians now reside.

The disturbing truth is that more than 60% of the Arab Christians born in Palestinian areas over the past several generations now live abroad. Yet the same holds true for Lebanese Christians, as a similar 60% of their beleaguered community now live in foreign lands.

Indeed, there has been a widening Christian exodus from all the surrounding Arab countries, with Iraq’s ancient Assyrian Christian community collapsing from 1.5 million to as few as 250,000 since the Second Gulf War commenced in 2003. The Coptic Church in Egypt is also losing tens of thousands of parishioners in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Islamic militancy, as noted by Ambassador Oren, and the Palestinian Christians are no exception to this trend. The lone exception, in fact, happens to be the state of Israel, the only place in the entire region where the Arab Christian community are growing and are afforded their democratic rights.

Still, some Palestinian clerics insist that Muslims and Christians would co-exist in perfect harmony if not for the Jews and their settlements. That, sadly, is a living portrait of a people in denial. How else to explain that Palestinian Christian flight from the Holy Land predates the “occupation” by decades?

For instance, the last British census in 1948 recorded 29,000 Arab Christians living in Jerusalem, while the first Israeli census in eastern Jerusalem in 1967 found only 11,000. That means two-thirds of the Arab Christian population had fled during the 19 years of the *Jordanian occupation* of east Jerusalem.

The real root of the current exodus actually lies in the historic interplay between Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Middle East ever since the Islamic conquests began in the seventh century. The region’s Christians and Jews became *dhimmis* – suppressed minorities living under Muslim dominance. They could keep their faith but had to accept second-class status. To survive, both communities adopted a code of silence which dictated that they never challenge the system nor say anything bad about Islam in public.

This system of *dhimmitude* basically held until modern times. The Crusades may have brought temporary relief for some Christians, but only terror for the Jews.

When Ottoman rule over the Middle East began to wane, the dynamic finally began to change. The Great Powers of Europe
moved into the region to provide protection for various imperilled Christian denominations. Western missionaries also brought with them schools, hospitals and other modern institutions. With their better education and job skills, Arab Christians became more mobile and many began to migrate to the West to escape the prison of Islam. Thus the modern-day Christian exodus began.

Meanwhile, the Zionist movement arose with a dream of restoring Jewish sovereignty back in their ancient homeland. Israel’s re-emergence in 1948 challenged the system of Muslim dominance over Christians and Jews, an achievement the Arab world has never truly accepted.

For many Christians in the Middle East, the rebirth of Israel actually stands as a beacon of freedom from Muslim tyranny. But for Palestinian Christians, the conflict that seeks to destroy the Jewish state has been too close for comfort. They are powerless to end it and struggling to survive.

Thus many Palestinian Christian leaders have taken to patriotically waving the flag of Palestinian nationalism higher than even their Muslim neighbours, in the hope such loyalty to the cause will safeguard their flocks. They rail against the Israeli occupation and the settlements as the reason for their dwindling presence. The checkpoints and security barrier may create hardships for them, but it is not the core reason why proud Christian families who have weathered many turbulent centuries here are now pulling up roots.

We must all understand that they are employing an ancient survival mechanism ingrained through centuries of Muslim oppression. Unable to name the real culprit, Palestinian Christians often deflect Muslim anger away from themselves by directing it at the Jews. Meantime, Ambassador Oren is giving voice to the things they cannot say.

Parsons is media director for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem; www.icej.org
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