On January 20, Barack Obama will be sworn in as the 44th President of the United States of America in front of a record crowd of well-wishers. Between two and four million people, according to some estimates, are preparing to brave the wintry Washington cold to witness the ascension of the first African-American to the highest office in the land.

The euphoria of this inarguably historic moment, however, will no doubt be tempered by the scale of the challenges facing the new president as he enters the Oval Office to start work the following day. Aside from a deepening global recession and the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, President Obama will inherit the seemingly inevitable threat of a nuclear-armed Iran, rising tensions between India and Pakistan and an explosive stalemate between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

Yet buried under the pile of intelligence reports, fiscal projections and stimulus measures awaiting early consideration on the president’s desk will be an innocuously worded invitation to the second global summit on racism to be held in the Swiss city of Geneva this coming April.

For a man like Obama who genuinely embodies the ability of the American people to transcend the past sins of segregation and slavery, a United Nations conference against discrimination and intolerance should represent a unique and timely opportunity to project US influence on the world stage. Furthermore it appears to offer the Obama administration an early chance to live up to the campaign promise to “repair” the nation’s damaged image abroad.

If only.

Instead the Geneva summit is destined to be a repeat of the first ever World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa in September 2001, on the eve of the 9/11 terror attacks and described by the late US Congressman Tom Lantos as “the most sickening and unabashed display of hate for the Jews I had seen since the Nazi period.” Lantos should know; he was a member of the US delegation that travelled with former Secretary of State Colin Powell only to walk out in protest half way through. He was also a Holocaust survivor.

“A UN conference against racism should offer a man like Obama a unique opportunity... If only.”

By Michael Hines
Dear Friends,

Not only is this New Year a new season for the world but it is a season of much change in the world. Many people find change to be frightening because of the “unknown.” We find security in the present simply because we know what the present brings. I personally have always liked change because of the possibility that the “unknown” is actually better than the present!

In fact, God promises that for believers. “All things work together for good for those called according to His purposes” (Romans 8:28). We can rest in this assurance that God is busy at work in all things affecting our lives.

At a dinner recently I spoke with a friend who went through a year-long ordeal that included their home being declared unsafe, and her family having to live in a hotel for eight months. It was a very difficult and traumatic time for them. What she did not know then, but knows now, is that God was already busy building them a new home through a completely unrelated set of circumstances affecting someone at her church. “God was already at work solving our problem,” she told me, “before we even knew that we had the problem.”

I think that in all of the changes taking place in our lives, in our country and in our world today, we need to cast down fear and build up our faith in our loving Father. It is also the time to be attentive to His Spirit that we might learn from Him and be prepared for the days ahead. There is still much work to be done in His Kingdom.

We at the Christian Embassy are doing just this. We are in much prayer these days about the new season that is upon us and the work that needs to be done. We know we must continue and increase our support for Israel, our educational outreaches to churches and our confrontation of hatred such as at the United Nations Durban II conference to be held in Geneva this coming April.

Please stand with us in prayer, and in faith for God’s enabling grace that we may be able to do all that He has called us to do.

Wishing you God’s richest blessings for 2009.

Susan Michael
Director, ICEJ USA
Taking Stock

The world around us is being shaken. Are we ready to examine the foundations of our lives?

By Jürgen Bühler

The coming year will surely be a year of great challenges. Analysts are predicting a global recession, and that global warming will spark greater natural disasters, while wars and the threat of terrorism will continue to plague every continent. “Widespread gloom” is how the International Herald Tribune described the prospects for 2009.

The Word of God tells us of times when God shakes not only the earth but the heavens as well (Hebrews 12:26). I believe we are in the midst of such a time and more turmoil can be expected. God is not doing this because He likes chaos and destruction, but because He wants to expose faulty foundations. The writer of Hebrews says that such times are sent to remove those things that can be shaken, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Just recently a massive fraud scheme in a major New York investment firm was uncovered which led to astronomical losses in excess of $50 billion dollars. Regulators now confess they ignored the warning signs for years because of the great profits the investment firm promised. It was “fraud fuelled by greed,” one newspaper wrote. It is indeed the love of money which drives much of Western society today and the current financial crisis is hitting exactly this nerve.

It is worth noting that some of the most spiritually impoverished nations in the world today can be found in wealthy Europe. It seems that prosperity, security and a life at ease can become a dangerous narcotic for the soul. We say, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” Yet we do not realize that spiritually we are poor, blind and naked (Revelation 3:17).

The big questions for 2009 are: Will we allow the Spirit of God to challenge us? Are we ready to take stock and examine our foundations? What is the driving force in our lives? Are we more concerned with the things of this world or the eternal things of God? In 2009, should earthly foundations fall, let us set our eyes on that city whose builder and maker is God.

“IT seems that prosperity, security and a life at ease can become a dangerous narcotic for the soul.”

Dr. Jürgen Bühler serves as the ICEJ’s International Director and travels extensively worldwide giving Christians a balanced biblical perspective on the role of the Church in supporting Israel in these days. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife Vesna and their four children.
Destroying Israel with ‘Peace’

ICEJ leadership confronts Europe’s diplomatic elite over the unrelenting hostility directed against the Jewish state

BY DAVID PARSONS

In early November, ICEJ Executive Director, Malcolm Hedding and International Director, Jürgen Bühler, were invited by the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus to participate in a large and prestigious pro-Israel conference in Paris, and were specifically offered the chance to propose new ways to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem, a key impediment to regional peace. The conference was chiefly sponsored by the European Friends of Israel and drew over 400 parliamentarians from both the European Parliament and national assemblies across Europe.

Given all the former presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers that were also in attendance, the fact that the Christian Embassy was the only non-governmental organization to address the gathering drew much attention, and we were well represented by some of our national directors and close supporters from across the continent.

The meetings took a comprehensive look at the Middle East, and Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik gave one of the keynote addresses. Most speakers reflected the consensus among world leaders today in support of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At the final luncheon, the ICEJ was asked by Caucus chairman MK Benny Elon to make presentations on our ministry and on our views regarding the troubled region.

Rev. Hedding stressed that any attempt to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute that does not address the matter of radical Islamic ideology will fail. He recalled the belligerent speech delivered by the late PLO chief Yasser Arafat in a Johannesburg mosque just a few months after he signed the Oslo Accords with Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn.

“Here, he essentially stated that ‘piece by piece, we will destroy Israel with peace,’” noted Hedding, urging the parliamentarians to understand that the Jewish state still faces jihadist plans for its destruction.

Dr. Bühler spoke about the lingering Palestinian refugee problem which the United Nations perpetuates by giving a peculiar refugee status to successive generations of Palestinians. This now means that the Palestinians are demanding the right of return to Israel for over 4 million people, which would eliminate the Jewish state simply by demographic implosion! No other refugee problem in modern times has been given this same self-perpetuating status, stated Bühler, who also proposed an increase in European funding to resettle the refugees in their host countries.

Following the polite diplomatic tone of previous speakers, the ‘straight talk’ by Hedding and Bühler left a dramatic and lasting impact on the audience.

Remembering Anne Frank

ICEJ Music Director Chuck King pays parting tribute to a book that inspired his life-long love for Israel

By Malcolm Hedding

The story of Anne Frank has gripped much of the world because it documents the journey of a young adult through the horrors of the Holocaust in her own words. It is a personal testimony to the fears, emotions, feelings, thoughts and sorrows of an individual whose world was closed in by evil and finally death. This is a story that has now rightly been immortalized, and it serves as a warning to future generations that will live ‘distant’ from the horrors of Nazism.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the publication of her famous diary the Jerusalem English Speaking Theatre (JEST) in December produced the Pulitzer Prize winning play “The Diary of Anne Frank.”

The decision to stage this work came about when JEST invited ICEJ music director Chuck King, who had collaborated with the theatre company in past productions, to direct a play of his choice before ending his twelve year stint in Israel.

Rather than selecting a musical, as they expected, Chuck wanted to recreate the setting of Anne Frank’s diary, which had touched him deeply when he first read it way back in seventh grade.

As director, Chuck worked with thirteen year-old newcomer Avigayeel Kollek in the title role. Bearing an uncanny resemblance to the iconic figure of Anne Frank, Avi is the granddaughter of Jerusalem’s beloved mayor, the late Teddy Kollek, while her father Amos is a New York-based film director.

Though it was her acting debut, it seemed to come naturally to Avi, as attested by Hanna Pick Goslar, the closest surviving childhood friend of Anne Frank who now lives in Jerusalem and was invited to attend the premiere.

“She was very impressive,” said Mrs. Pick. “She looked like Anne. She was full of life like Anne. But her performance was so good, it also brought back mixed memories for me…”

Her personal link to the diary’s author brought the events that unfolded in Amsterdam and beyond into the present and made the production all the more powerful.

This tribute to Anne Frank constituted a fitting conclusion to Chuck King’s remarkable ministry amongst us. His final contribution to Israel and the ICEJ was a reminder of the historical evil that has stalked the Jewish people until this day – a fitting reminder to the reason why we bless Israel and a testimony to Chuck’s faithfulness.

Stage Reflections

Susanna Kokkonen, who heads up the ICEJ’s partnership with the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum reflects on her role in the Jerusalem stage production of Anne Frank.

“I had the privilege of playing the role of Miep Gies, a Dutch woman, who helped the family during their years in hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. The real Miep still lives in Holland, and in 1972 was recognized together with her husband Jan for their courageous acts by Yad Vashem. I cannot stop thinking about her.

“After one of the performances, several Israeli children came to me asking ‘Miep, how did you find the Diary?’ I felt like my heart would break.

“Emotionally speaking the play is hard not just because it is such a tragic story, but because the moments of humor allow you to hope that the story will somehow have a happy ending. And so, knowing what happened to the family, I am tempted to quote Anne Frank again: ‘A person, who has courage and faith never dies in misery.’

“Anne Frank wanted to become famous and she did. By so doing she gave voice to all those, who like her, lost their lives. Personally I feel today more than ever that it is not a duty but an honor for me to be among those, who keep her memory alive.”

Dr. Susanna Kokkonen is Director of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem: www.icejusa.org/yadvashem
Searching for a Savior

The election of Barack Obama proves that we all want a messiah. We just don’t want give up our rebellion against God.

By Malcolm Hedding

The liberal left constantly attacks the evangelical Christian world on religious issues. The barrage never stops and they pursue it on the notion that they by contrast are rational, balanced and not fundamental.

All this changed when Barack Obama arrived on the scene. Suddenly their enthusiasm for his presidential aspirations turned quickly into a religious fervor of a type that one will not see in an evangelical gathering. His Democratic Conference organizers read this “heated fervor” and turned their conference facility into a Greek temple so that he could take his place amongst the pantheon!

Who can forget the scenes of adulation characterized by screaming, tears, outstretched arms and mass hysteria. Some people in these vast crowds even claimed to have been healed as they listened to Obama. This was no doubt psycho somatic!

The media has also entered this arena as they have printed stories and editorials speaking of Obama in messianic terms. He will save the world and to be honest he claimed that he would! The French Foreign Minister recently called him the President of the world as have other politicians. Everywhere he is being spoken of as a savior, messiah and deliverer but is this true and what does all this say about the world in which we live?

First of all it says that the irreligious world is more desperate and void of answers than they are about to let on. Their constant attack against the evangelical world is thus in reality hypocritical and a commentary on their own notion of hopelessness. They don’t have the answers and thus resist those who demonstrate a peace that says that they do.

How else does one understand the vicious attacks against Alaska Governor Sarah Palin? She was mocked for belonging to the Assemblies of God, for being a women of prayer, for opposing abortion and for asserting God’s sovereignty over the affairs of nations. The British-based Sky Television network actually showed a video of her being prayed for by her Pastor and stated that this made her controversial!

Secondly it demonstrates the age old problem of humanity. That is, we want a savior without the responsibility of a changed life. The biblical notion of the fall and thus of sin is scoffed at today. The world is looking for a messiah who will deliver it and justify it, while at the same time, allowing it to be in rebellion against a biblical standard of righteousness.

And thirdly it is a commentary on how far so called Western nations have departed from the Judeo-Christian values that made them great and civilized their societies. We have turned our backs in the western world on our own foundations, history and culture. These have produced the soul of nations and thus guaranteed our culture of life and freedom. A body without a soul is dead and thus a people that forget God will in the end devalue human life.

To be sure Barack Obama is no savior, messiah or deliverer and he will not change the world. He is just a man and I think that he knows this full well. As President elect of a great nation he needs our prayers and we do hope that he will lead his nation into better days. Above all he does represent a nation that has the capacity to change and thus, by his election, has the capacity to forever put to rest the charge of racism against it.

We therefore recognize the sovereign hand of the God in his election. The God of the Bible is in control of all things! And in this we rejoice because He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Rev. Malcolm Hedding serves as the ICEJ Executive Director in Jerusalem.
If you would like to find out more about Malcolm’s US Speaking schedule go to: www.icejusa.org/events.
To organize an ICEJ event at your local church or prayer group call: (615) 895-9830.
Discerning the TIMES 2009

An ICEJ Seminar Series Featuring:
Rev. Malcolm Hedding, Susan Michael
Rev. Frank Amedia, Rev. Larry Booth

Cooper City, FL
Saturday January 24
Cooper City Church of God
9191 Stirling Road
Cooper City, FL 33328

Satellite Beach, FL
Saturday January 31
Our Father’s House
535 Cassia Blvd
Satellite Beach, FL 32937

Israel Awakening Celebration & Concert
“Awake O Israel, for out of Zion comes your Deliverer”
Saturday January 24 - 7:00pm
with Paul Wilbur
Cooper City Church of God 9191 Stirling Road Cooper City, FL 33328

Space is limited. Register early at: www.icejusa.org/events or by calling: (615) 895-8930

Teaching tour 2009

Rev. Malcolm Hedding

Cooper City, FL: Sunday Jan. 25th
Naples, FL: Wednesday, Jan. 28th
Port Charlotte, FL: Thursday Jan. 29th
Melbourne, FL: Friday Jan. 30th
Satellite Beach, FL: Sunday Feb. 1st (am)
Melbourne, FL: Sunday Feb. 1st (eve)

More Info at: www.icejusa.org
Now the same state actors that singled Israel out for condemnation as an apartheid state at Durban while whitewashing the Arab-instigated genocide against the black Muslims and Christians of Sudan, have raised the stakes even higher for the so-called Durban Review Conference in Geneva. These include Libya, chair of the UN’s Human Rights Council that is running the get-together and vice-chairs Cuba and Iran. On the table is a proposal to further vilify Jewish right to self-determination and end the “foreign occupation” of Jerusalem. What’s more the Durban II draft documents call for new rules on defamation of Islam “in private life” – a direct assault on Western freedom of expression - and condemnation of discriminatory “counter-terrorism” measures that, according to the organizers, are fuelling “Islamophobia.”

The Bush administration has seen this coming, taking a strong stance against the summit from the beginning, refusing to participate in the preliminary sessions and voting against the entire UN budget based upon its objection to the allocation of US funds to the Durban process. Even Hillary Clinton, who as Obama’s Secretary of State would have a crucial role in determining the US response, is on the record back in February 2008 supporting the Bush policy of boycotting the conference unless “current efforts to rein in the forces of hatred fail.”

All this presents a keen dilemma for President Obama who, after all, defeated Clinton for the Democratic nomination on a platform of working constructively with international organizations like the UN, and upgrading US diplomatic outreach to friend and foe alike. The odds may be stacked against American interests in Geneva, but what does it say about the new administration if it not even willing to show up?

One thing is certain, the ICEJ will be there. Led by a coalition of our Swiss, German and Austrian branches, European Christians will be protesting the summit on the streets of Geneva, raising our voices against the brazen hatred and anti-Semitism that now masquerades on the world stage as a debate on racism and tolerance.

What’s more, we’re launching a campaign here in the United States to coincide with the January 20th Inaugural, to remind our new president, Barack Obama, of his responsibility to stand up for truth and boycott Durban II.

Details of how you or your church can get involved will be available in next month’s edition of Word from Jerusalem and online at: www.icejusa.org/durban2

Michael Hines serves as the ICEJ’s US Media Director in Murfreesboro, TN.
If you would like him to speak to your church or prayer group about the Durban II initiative, please call us on: (615) 895-9830.