Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men! Luke 2:14
Over recent weeks, we have seen a new wave of rioting and violence erupting once more here in Israel. Most of the rioters are young Arabs who have been fed a militant nationalist and Islamic agenda from their youth. It is ironic that the nation which has invested much in building hospitals, universities, and other infrastructure for the benefit of the local Arab population is under constant attack from these very same quarters. Palestinian youths today are among the most educated Arabs in the Middle East. Yet instead of gratitude, they allow themselves to be exploited by Islamist and nationalist elements. We are called to pray for their deliverance from these evil influences, which drives them towards violence.

We need to pray in particular for the Arab churches in Israel and the Palestinian areas, that a spirit of courage will come upon them to stand up like Gideon and rid themselves from the influence and intimidation which has shackled the church in the Middle East for almost 1,300 years.

At the same time, we see that our work in Israel is bringing much fruit. We have seen over recent weeks that our efforts are considered a blessing by more and more Israelis. During our recent Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem, we hosted a group of Holocaust survivors as our special guests of honour. I was personally touched as they came with tears in their eyes to thank Christians for the moral and practical support we are providing to them. It is a new day! Especially now, when Israel is challenged again by Arab unrest, our support means so much to the people of Israel.

So I want to thank you for standing with us. Without your help, we cannot fulfil our calling here in Israel. No matter where you live, as a supporter of the Christian Embassy you are here with us in Jerusalem. Our team are your extended hands and feet to bless Israel on your behalf. Please be assured that I and the entire ICEJ staff are praying for you. We trust that the Lord will be a generous rewarder for the seeds you have planted into this ministry.

Thank you so much for your support, and may the Lord bless you richly!

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director

Over recent years, God has placed a new emphasis on prayer throughout the worldwide ministry of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. The days in which we live demand that we draw near to the Lord and ask Him to intervene in our lives and in our world.

Our global Isaiah 62 Prayer Initiative has been a real source of strength and direction for the work we have been called to do. And we want to start out the coming new year of 2015 with a dedicated time of prayer during the month of January for the exciting yet uncertain days ahead.

Every Wednesday in January, we are asking our friends and supporters to join with us in a time of prayer and fasting for Israel, the region and our ministry. So please consider joining us next month for our intensive season of prayer to start out the new year of 2015.

To receive our weekly prayer alerts during the month of January, just fill out our on-line pledge form at

www.icej.org/Isaiah62_Pledge

Thank you for joining your faith to our faith in prayer!
One of the greatest tenets of the Christian faith is what the theologian Erich Sauer called “the nobility of man”. We are all created in the likeness of God. This is what sets humanity apart from the rest of Creation.

For men compose symphonies, write novels, invent sophisticated tools, and research the secret complexities of the Universe. We display divine creativity in every part of our lives. Even the most advanced primates are light-years apart from the glory which God placed in mankind.

All women and men are created in the image of God. This very truth forms the basis of Western civilization. It gives value and dignity to every human being and demands that they are treated with respect and equality, no matter our race, religion or gender. This sets the biblical faith and worldview apart from every other religion.

What is even more striking is that the God Who created us did so with a very special purpose. Every evening in “the coolness of the day”, He would come to converse with the newly formed couple in the Garden of Eden. God talked to them about their daily lives and enjoyed their fellowship because they were like Him. In His word, God often calls us His children. No other faith offers such a personal relationship with a God Who likes to spend time with His creation.

Sadly, this original purpose of mankind was lost in that same Garden. One of the character traits which God placed within humanity as part of our divine nature was that He gave man free will. We can choose to follow Him or not. We can choose to believe and obey Him or to rebel against Him. The fall in Eden thus became the tragedy of Creation, of history and of mankind.

But God from the very beginning knew perfectly well that this possibility existed. So before anything was created, He already provided a way for men to come back to the Father. That is why the Book of Revelation describes Jesus as “the lamb slain before the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). This means that even before creation, God already understood that He would need to provide humanity with a means of redemption.

The manner in which this salvation was provided underscores in a marvellous way the nobility of man. David, the King of Israel, already grasped that the sacrifices of rams and bulls would not be sufficient to restore those whom the Lord created in His own image. In order to accomplish this, God Himself would have to come down in the form of His only begotten son. Thus the birth of Christ underlines man’s glorious calling.

Therefore, Christmas represents a divine affirmation to those who are created in the ‘likeness of God’. It is a kiss from God to restore our nobility. Through Christ’s birth, death and resurrection, we are restored back to the family of heaven. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brethren.

What a wonderful truth! God came to dwell among us. The angles broke out in praise: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14). When Christ appeared in the fullness of time, he restored peace between God and mankind and showed His goodwill towards those created in His image.

So let us thank God for this incredible calling to be part of His family. And let us commit ourselves to walk worthy of this noble calling.

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” (1 Peter 1:18-20)

On behalf of the ICEJ leadership and staff in Jerusalem and all around the world, we extend to you and your loved ones our prayers and best wishes for a very blessed and merry Christmas. May God use us powerfully in the coming year to bless His chosen people Israel!
The residents of the Christian Embassy’s warm home for needy Holocaust survivors in Haifa are looking forward with great joy and expectancy to celebrating Hanukkah in December. The week-long Jewish festival of lights will end this year on Christmas Eve. Every evening for eight days, residents of the Haifa Home will come together to sing songs and light candles to recall the miracle eight days of oil required to cleanse the Temple after the Maccabean victory over Syrian-Greek invaders in 165 BC.

“It’s wonderful to be here for this, after all we’ve been through”, said Rivka, one of the 70 Holocaust survivors living at the Haifa Home.

Each resident has had to overcome their own times of unbelievable trial and darkness, and they welcome visitors who want to learn more about their lives - whether Israeli schoolchildren, IDF soldiers, or Christian tour groups brought in by the ICEJ. So we look forward to bringing a little Hanukkah joy and laughter to the Haifa Home this holiday season.

Thanks for the new elevator Ever since the new community center opened recently, residents of the Haifa Home and other nearby Holocaust survivors are enjoying the many recreational activities offered there, such as receptions, lectures, computer lessons, movies, gymnastic classes and games. But those who have difficulty walking up and down stairs are eagerly awaiting the new elevator currently being installed, so they can join in the coming holiday festivities without any problems. The elevator costs were $30,000, and we thank all those donors who helped over recent weeks to meet this need!

Russian Christians bring warmth and joy Recently, a group of Christian ladies from Siberia brought warmth and joy to Holocaust survivors during an emotional visit to the Haifa Home. Dressed in colourful costumes, the group's harmonious singing delighted their audience. Later, everyone happily joined in traditional Siberian dances. As many residents of the home also speak Russian, there were plenty of lively conversations taking place.

Completing the new kitchen Work continues on the expansion and renovation of the main kitchen and dining hall at the Haifa Home. Recently, a large commercial dish washer and one of two new stoves were installed in the expanded kitchen. And until now, food had to be brought in every day. But trained cooks are now on-site preparing three hot meals each day for the residents.

“This is a great improvement in service for the residents, as the food is tasty and prepared with love”, said Yudit Setz of ICEJ AID. “But we need help to cover the remaining costs to finish the kitchen project.”

Introducing... Yehuda and Marcel Yehuda was 12 years old when war broke out in Hungary in 1940. He had been living peacefully with his parents and three sisters. But then they were forced into a Jewish ghetto in Hungary and later assigned to forced labour in Vienna, Austria, where they lived in a deserted schoolhouse and existed on scraps of food. Later, Yehuda and his family were sent on a forced march of about 400 kilometres to the notoriously cruel Mauthausen concentration camp in Germany. Following the war, Yehuda and the rest of the family all eventually found refuge in the reborn nation of Israel. Yehuda and his wife Marcel are proud parents of four daughters. But the couple is in deteriorating health and recently were invited to join the family of residents at the Haifa Home.

Adopt a Survivor Some 70 Holocaust survivors are currently living at the Haifa Home. A select committee approves new residents from a long list of waiting applications, based on greatest need. Please help us to care for these precious Jewish survivors of the Nazi genocide. They suffered so much in their lives and thus appreciate Christian compassion all the more. The ICEJ is especially looking for donors who are willing to give regular support to cover the monthly operating costs of the Haifa Home. The best way is by joining our “Adopt a Holocaust survivor” program.

For details, go to: www.icej.org/adopt

Please help us with your much needed gifts to take care of the precious Haifa Home residents like Shula, Yehuda and Marcel. And remember them in your prayers!
This was not an easy year for Israel and the Jewish people. After the intense Gaza conflict this summer and rising anti-Semitism worldwide, Israelis are now facing a campaign of hatred and violence directed at Jerusalem.

This comes as both Hanukkah and Christmas are quickly approaching. These festive winter holidays fall just days apart this year, and the Christian Embassy is looking to bring comfort and encouragement to the people of the Holy Land this holiday season.

This Christmas, the ICEJ will be reaching out once again to Arab Christian communities in the renowned biblical towns of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jericho. Each was an important setting where God’s love was revealed to the world. Working through local Arab pastors and churches, the ICEJ will sponsor holiday gatherings and distribute Christmas gifts to many deserving Christian families.

Like every year, we want to bless the youngest ones the most during this special time. Children in Bethlehem and Jericho will receive Christmas packages that will include clothing and toys. With your help, needy Christian families in Jerusalem and Nazareth will be blessed with food coupons, to help them celebrate together around the Christmas table.

The Christian Embassy also will assist many Israelis once more in marking Hanukkah. With your support, we can help Jewish children, the elderly, new immigrants and disadvantaged families celebrate the joy and light of this special holiday.

Current Needs at Haifa Home
Here are some of the most pressing needs at the Haifa Home:

1. The Home’s normal operating costs amount to $65,000 per month. One way to help is to join our ‘Adopt a Survivor’ program; Find out more at: http://www.icej.org/adopt
2. The salary for a recreation coordinator is $1,800 per month.
3. Funds in the amount of $60,000 are also needed to renovate and furnish a ground-level apartment which will be turned into three new residential suites.

Give on-line today at www.icej.org/haifa-home-current-needs
The brutal civil war in eastern Ukraine shows no signs of abating. Russian troops have now crossed the border, prompting Kiev to cut off all government subsidies to rebel-held areas. Entire cities are being reduced to rubble. There are widespread food and power shortages, while the Ukrainian economy is in “freefall”, according to the UN. And to make matters worse, the region’s harsh winter is now setting in.

The deepening crisis has forced many Jews to flee westward to crowded refugee camps, where they are anxiously waiting to move on to Israel. Recently, the ICEJ helped to sponsor seven weekend seminars hosted by the Jewish Agency and attended by some 900 Ukrainian Jews eager to make aliyah. They were all counselled on life in Israel and many registered to begin the immigration process.

Besides the aliyah fairs inside Ukraine, the ICEJ is being asked by the Jewish Agency to help with other pre- and post-flight costs, such as temporary housing and grants to needy families during the absorption phase in Israel. The average cost for Ukrainian Jews to make aliyah right now is $750 per person.

So please consider making a generous donation today to help with this urgent need!

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has responded to another urgent request from the Jewish Agency to help endangered Jews from war-torn Ukraine in making aliyah. With our latest efforts, we are on pace this year to provide various levels of assistance to nearly 1,000 Ukrainian Jews as they make the desperate journey home to Israel.

Latest wave of Bnei Menashe arrives

In November, the ICEJ sponsored flights for 250 more members of the Bnei Menashe community from India making aliyah to Israel. ICEJ staff members from Jerusalem were on hand at Ben-Gurion airport to welcome the newcomers.

"It’s amazing to see how God is faithful to keep His promises to bring home the sons of Israel no matter how far they were scattered”, noted ICEJ staff member Ants Seiler from Estonia. “The Christian Embassy is totally changing these people’s lives.”

With these latest arrivals, the ICEJ has now sponsored the aliyah flights of nearly 1,000 Bnei Menashe over the past twenty four months, including a record 680 this year. The Bnei Menashe claim descent from the Israelite tribe of Manasseh and aspire to come home to the Land of Israel after 2700 years of exile.

Please support the ICEJ’s on-going aliyah operations! Make an on-line donation today at: int.icej.org/aliyah

Ukrainian Jews light Shabbat candles at a recent Aliyah weekend sponsored by the ICEJ
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