ICEJ Remembers

WITH OUR PARTNERS AT YAD VASHEM
FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

This famous opening line from Charles Dickens’ novel A Tale of Two Cities perfectly summarizes the days we are currently living in here in the Middle East. On the one hand, we are witnessing the scourge of antisemitism continue to raise its ugly head worldwide. This was evident in the recent Amnesty International report which accuses Israel of the crime of “apartheid”, even though this is the most liberal, democratic and diverse nation in the entire region. In addition, Israel is greatly concerned with the possible renewal of the Iran nuclear deal, which could funnel huge financial windfalls into a radical regime that has brought only violence and chaos to the region through such terror proxies as Hamas and Hizbullah.

Yet at the same time, there is ample reason to view this as the “best of times”. The Abrahamic Accords are a true game-changer for the region that few saw coming. This is not just a peace of convenience, as the three-to-four daily flights between Tel Aviv and Dubai speak volumes about the new dynamic in the Middle East.

During our recent ENVISION pastors conference, we witnessed the exciting state visits of Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to Bahrain and Israeli President Isaac Herzog to the United Arab Emirates. We also saw Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi embrace the spirit of the Accords when he very warmly welcomed Israel’s Minister of Energy Karine Elharrar in front of a large regional gathering. These events further highlight the growing Arab acceptance of Israel.

Meanwhile, I know many of you are excited that Israel is finally opening its borders again! After two years of lockdowns and travel bans, Israel recently removed restrictions on incoming tourists, and we quickly saw the first groups arriving again in the Land of Israel. This means we are now preparing for our first physical Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem since 2019, and we are inviting you to join us!

This year’s Feast theme is “The Land of Promise”, and we have exciting plans for all our pilgrims to personally experience what God is doing today in Eretz Israel! Many will be surprised to see with your own eyes how much Israel has developed. So, please make plans to join us from 9-16 October in Jerusalem to celebrate this year’s Feast of Tabernacles.

I pray you will enjoy this issue of the Word From Jerusalem. There is much good content from our recent Envision conference, and I especially urge you to read the timely teaching of ICEJ Board Chairman, Rev. Ingolf Ellßel. Also, please prayerfully consider standing with us in the various aid projects outlined in this magazine. In particular, I strongly encourage you to support our unique partnership with Yad Vashem, as we prepare together for Israel’s upcoming Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Yom Hashoah, on 27/28 April. I can assure you it will have a great impact in Israel!

Many blessings from Jerusalem, and I hope to see you at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem this fall!

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
President
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

Support our ministry online at www.icej.org

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WHY CHURCHES NEED TO GET INVOLVED WITH Israel

BY INGOLF ELLßEL, ICEJ CHAIRMAN

This teaching is excerpted from a seminar message delivered during the Envision 2022 pastors and leaders conference by Rev. Ingolf Ellßel, Chairman of the ICEJ’s international Board of Trustees.

I am coming from the perspective of a denominational leader. I have been overseer of the German Pentecostal movement and would like to share on why I encourage pastors to stand on the side of Israel.

First, for me personally, when you are a leader of pastors, you have a responsibility to lead the Church into the whole Gospel and all the promises the Bible gives us. Every promise is important. We can read this in 2 Corinthians 1:20, how every promise of God is made “Yes” and “Amen” in Christ. So, we can also look at promises from the Old Testament... they are “Amen” through Jesus.

ISRAEL IS A REVELATION

The second point of why we stand on the side of Israel is because it is a revelation. When you have the grace of revelation that Jesus Christ is the only way to God, then you are obliged to preach it. And when you have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and you know this is the way to build up faith in your heart, you have to share this. So, revelation about the promises of God is a grace, but you are obliged to preach it and teach it. And the same is true when we have a revelation to stand on the side of Israel. You will find out that pure theology does not give this revelation to others who listen to you, but we need the help of the Holy Spirit whenever we preach from the Word.

I will share a personal testimony... I studied theology and I knew a lot about Israel through this study, but I realised that it was a dead letter in my life. It was just knowing it, but it was not in my heart. You know what you should do, but there was no power inside to live this.

My personal experience came when I preached the Gospel in a tent meeting in a neighbouring village. During the meeting, a business lady found Christ. One year later, she wanted to say ‘thank you’ and gave my wife and I tickets to visit Israel. We were just beginning to pastor a small church in 1983 and did not have much money. So, we were very excited.

We visited Israel for eight days. Israel is a wonderful country, with all the places to see. But there was a special moment when we were in Jerusalem, standing in front of the Western Wall. I realised the power of the Holy Spirit. It was like a Pentecost experience. After that, I felt a love for Israel deep down in my heart. From this grace I received, it obligated me to preach and teach and do something for Israel.
If you have not been inspired yourself, how can you inspire others? If you need such a revelation on Israel, pray! God can put this love for Israel in your heart, too.

**ISRAEL IS LOVED**

The third point I want to share is I find in the Bible that Israel is loved by God. In Jeremiah 31:3-4, it says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love”. Only God can do love everlasting and He spoke this through His prophet Jeremiah. And in verse 4, “I will build you up again. And you virgin Israel will be rebuilt.” So, the love of God in His heart for Israel gives Him the power to do something great for them.

Isaiah 43:4 adds: “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honoured, and I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life.” God is willing to do the best for Israel, and this is the same goal we want and the same God who gave us salvation through Jesus.

Even in the New Testament, in Romans 11:28, we find this statement from the Apostle Paul: “But concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.” So, we know about Abraham, who believed God... and walked with God in the new country the Lord wanted to give Abraham, and because he was obedient, even to offer his own son – this is awesome – God starts to love this man, and even all generations coming out from him.

I understood then, should not we also love what God loves? This is a strong argument. I understood that churches need help to find this secret. And I understood no pastor can oppose this argument. So as a leader of a denomination, I started to teach pastors about the love of God for Israel. And I asked them this question: Should we also love what God loves? The answer must be very clear. Yes!

**GOD MOTIVATES US**

Point four of why we stand on the side of Israel is because God motivates us to do this. There are many promises in the Bible on how to be blessed by God in different ways. Why should we omit even one of these wonderful promises? We have so many promises we received in the New Testament, because Jesus Christ is the foundation of all that God promised those who believe in Him. And we find a scripture in the Old Testament, in Genesis 12:3, where God spoke to Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

God allows us to bless ourselves if we start to get involved with Israel. So, I am motivated by knowing when I stand with Israel and speak for Israel, God will bless me... I am sure every person who starts to come into this secret would normally get involved with Israel.

**BECAUSE GOD TESTS US**

Point five is that relating to Israel is a test. It is not easy. I find a story in the Old Testament about Naomi and Ruth which is very simple. Naomi is an old lady who went out from the Land of Israel with her husband and two sons because it was dry over the years and there was nothing to eat. They went to the country of Moab, where both sons married Moabite women. Death came to this family. Naomi’s husband died. One of her sons died, and then the other one died, and Naomi was left standing with her two daughters-in-law.

Naomi felt in her spirit that she should return to her home country. There was a ceremony to say goodbye, and one of the daughters-in-law, Orpah, kissed Naomi goodbye. But Ruth clung to her. What we find here in Ruth 1:14 is a prophetic dimension. Naomi represents here the people of Israel. And we know there was a cloud over Israel for centuries; so many Jewish people died through different circumstances. They were hated by so many nations, and Israel was poor with no home country, like Naomi. And then there came a point where they came out of their homelessness to return to their own country, but they needed help with this.

So, Naomi received help from Ruth. In this story, Orpah and Ruth stand in a prophetic...
way for two types of Christians – the ‘Orpah Christians’ and the ‘Ruth Christians’. We see that Orpah Christians say “thank you” to Israel because their salvation came from the Jewish people... and that is all. “Thank you, Israel, for Jesus Christ, now go your way.” The other one, the Ruth Christians, clung to Israel and stood by her side. So, it is a test, especially when it is difficult to stand on the side of Israel. And up to now many Christians say, “it is too complicated. It is not good for me.” But Christians who love Israel like Ruth, they will cling to Israel. So, God is testing us, even as pastors and denominational leaders, and asking us: “Do you love what I love”?

Some say: “Yes, there was a time when Israel was poor, was homeless, but now they are returning back home. And of course, now the state of Israel is rich and the properties are very expensive.” And so, some think proper Christians do not need to help Israel. It is done! But I know the real poverty of Israel... They need people to visit them, and when they feel their love to them, they can open their heart, and we can serve them. And we need such Christians and such pastors. So, I teach superintendents from our movement to live this lifestyle, which will please God.

And another point here is that the persecution of Satan against the Jews still exists. Millions want Israel to perish. And I know personally, it is not easy to stand with a despised people, or stand on the side of the weak who have no honour in society. But this is what God does, to stand on the side of Israel, even in the difficult times. So, it is up to pastors to do the same.

The Scriptures also say that Jerusalem will become a test for the nations. In Zechariah 12, we find that Jerusalem becomes a ‘burdensome stone’ for the nations. Some will say “we support Israel” and some will say “no, we don’t”. Even Christians are in this test... Will I stand as a Christian on the side of Israel? Yes or No?

I will share an experience from the Pentecostal movement in Germany, which I have led for 12 years. I asked our Board: “Do we have a statement on Israel? Is there something on this in our movement?” And they all were quiet. I found there was no statement. Okay, so I said that we as Germans have a bad history, really a trauma, about the Holocaust and what our former generation had done to Israel. And still, they stepped away and said Israel is complicated, no statement.

But I taught them that you cannot be neutral in this. God was not neutral about Israel; He took a strong position on the side of Israel. He loved them, and He takes care of them. And when His Son, Jesus Christ, really lives in our heart, godly things will grow up in our mind, in our heart, and in our actions. So, it took three years to bring them out of the neutral position and the quiet position into a clear statement. And with this Board decision, we started to teach at our national conference about Israel. And we invited Dr. Jürgen Bühler, who spoke to our pastors and others, and it changed.

So, I help pastors and Christians to have a better understanding of Israel. All my trips to Israel were a study. An understanding for Israel grew in my heart and a relationship started. With this foundation I could now teach, because I had lived something...

THE CHURCH HAS QUESTIONS
Point six, the church has questions. Why do I make this point? As a denominational leader, you must deal with why Christians are silent or neutral about the Israel issue. And I found out that we must help our fellow Christians...
find answers, because they have a lot of honest questions. Here are some examples:

1. As a follower of Jesus, do I have to be a friend of Israel? This question exists in many hearts of Christians in our churches.

2. To what extent do I have to affirm everything that the State of Israel and the Jewish people do, including their personal and political mistakes? I hear this question often.

3. Why did God choose Israel? This is basics, but they do not know it. They think the Gentile Christian is chosen, but Israel is lost and God does not want to take care of them. But read the Bible! God will take care of them, but He looks for people like you and me to do it.

4. What happens to the Arabs? Can we be their friend if we also want to be friends of Israel?

5. How do we move from the New Testament position of faith and piety to Jewish custom and tradition? How do we counter the danger that with openness to Jewish tradition, customs and Judaism, an Old Testament-oriented “legalism” will reach us? They often fear coming back under the law.

6. Which Jewish festivals are practically important for us and ones we should also celebrate? Please give me theological justification for this?

These are questions which are in the hearts of the people.

A COMMON FATE

Point seven, our common fate is a very strong position. By ‘common fate’, I mean that Israel and Christians have the same End-Time challenges. Let us read carefully from Revelation 12:13. When the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been hurled down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. I teach and make it clear that the woman is Israel, that salvation comes out from the Jews [John 4:22], and the child is Jesus. He is Yeshua. But God protected the woman, even Israel, and Satan was angry. Then the dragon (Revelation 12:17) was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, those who obey God’s commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus. This is happening worldwide now.

I remember an experience from one of our Feast of Tabernacles, maybe it was 2016. Our leadership invited then-President Reuven Rivlin to deliver a word of greetings. And I remember from his speech a very important sentence. He said: “We have noticed very well that Christianity is the most persecuted religion. We know what persecution is, and we will speak out for you.” What an important statement from the President of Israel. They know about persecution from their own history, and now he stands up and sees Christianity is persecuted in so many countries. And we understand from Revelation 12, that the devil is behind this, he uses nations and peoples to oppress the Christian worldwide. And Israel is already stepping up to confront this. Where are the Christians taking this step for Israel? This is the question I share with all my pastors.

IN THE WILL OF GOD

Point eight, we stand with Israel to bring pastors and churches into the will of God. This is the last good reason which motivates me as superintendent of our movement. I see God cares for Israel. He has promised to do this. If we are pursuing His will, it gives us a sure knowledge of being used by God when we start to serve Israel. We are used in different ways, of course. In Aliyah, we see God wants to bring back all the people of Israel to their home country – the land He gave them. Just as Ruth took care of Naomi, we help Israel come back to the land of their fathers. I have encouraged our pastors to teach in their churches that every Christian should be able to say at the end of their life: I supported at least one Jewish person to fly home to Israel and live there.

“REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM, AND BE GLAD WITH HER, ALL YOU WHO LOVE HER.”
- Isaiah 66:10 -

Finally, we are encouraged to pray for the best for Jerusalem. Isaiah 66:10 says, “rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her.” This is true. When you have love for Israel, you will rejoice with her in all successes she has, through the grace of God. So, pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). Be the guardians on her walls, praying day and night (Isaiah 62:1). This is all happening, but we need to do more. We need to support them more.

I’m very thankful for the International Christian Embassy... I know they have the best contacts even with the Israeli government, and they are worldwide in their influence. So, it is a privilege for me to serve with the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. ☺️

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This year, the ICEJ held its annual Envision pastors and leaders conference under an entirely new format to better fit the busy schedules of church and community leaders worldwide. Through our special online streaming platform, Envision 2022 was expanded from our normal four-day conference to a month-long event spread out from 24 January to 17 February. For four weeks, we offered regional and global prayer sessions, virtual live visits to key places in Israel, informative webinars, keynote messages, and an array of seminars on fascinating biblical and current themes.

This year, Envision brought together nearly 900 Christian pastors and leaders from more than 70 nations under the conference theme “A World at the Crossroads.”

The annual gathering was timed once more to coincide with International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, to better inform Christian leaders on the Holocaust and the need to stand with Israel today. It was thus appropriate that the first of our four live-streamed visits to key locations around Israel was to Yad Vashem, Israel’s official Holocaust memorial and museum. The Christian Embassy marked the occasion with a special wreath-laying ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashem and a very memorable live interview with the museum’s new Chairman, Mr. Dani Dayan.

In the second week, we came live from Misgav Am, a Jewish community right on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, where we focused on the growing threat from Iranian-backed terror militias in Lebanon and Syria, and the urgent need for more bomb shelters in the northern region. Over the past 15 years, the ICEJ has placed over 160 mobile bomb shelters in vulnerable Israeli communities near Gaza and now along the increasingly volatile Lebanon border.

“I want to say to Christian leaders around the world that without faith, you will not finish this race.”

ANGUS BUCHAN
SOUTH AFRICAN EVANGELIST

“We’re at a great turning point for the Church today. The pandemic has given us a pause to look at the forms and the functions of the modern church… I believe it is a time of restoration, when God is restoring the smaller groups that were filled with the vitality of the Holy Spirit… The purpose of the Church in every age is to make disciples and ultimately to make them in all nations.”

PETER TSUKAHIRA
CO-FOUNDER OF CARMEL ASSEMBLY
In week three, our live visit took us to the Knesset for one of the first-ever live-streamed events by an outside organisation from Israel’s parliament. We spoke about the importance of Christian support for Israel with Josh Reinstein, Director of the Knesset Christian Allied Caucus, as well as two new Knesset members, MKs Simcha Rothman (Religious Zionism party) and Moshe Tur Paz (Yesh Atid party). “Faith-based diplomacy has become the most important weapon that we have in our diplomatic arsenal”, noted Reinstein.

The final week took us north again to Nazareth to discuss improved relations between Israeli Jews and Arabs, the continuing impact of the Abraham Accords, and the prophetic vision of the Isaiah 19 Highway. Local Arab pastor Saleem Shalash was a great host and representative for the Arab Christian community, while i24 News reporter Yoseph Haddad gave an informative perspective on how Israeli Arabs have reacted to the recent reconciliation between several Arab countries and the Jewish state.

At the weekly Global Prayer Gatherings during Envision, we heard encouraging messages from former ICEJ executive director Malcolm Hedding, Fijian pastor Manasa Kolivuso, South African evangelist Angus Buchan, and Mike Bickle of IHOP-Kansas City.

Meantime, the weekly webinars featured international lawyer Andrew Tucker, noted Bible scholar Dr. Brad Young, Israeli security analyst Major (Res) Elliot Chodoff, and a discussion by the ICEJ leadership team in Jerusalem on the excellent new book entitled “A Short History of Christian Zionism”, by Canadian author and church historian Donald M. Lewis. [This book comes highly recommended by our leadership and will be available soon at the ICEJ’s online store, visit www.icejstore.com] 

Each week of Envision then ended with powerful messages on leadership in our pivotal times from our keynote speakers, which included ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler, ORU President Dr. Billy Wilson, Israeli pastor Peter Tsukahira, and Jordanian pastor Afeef Halasah.

We also received special Envision greetings from several government leaders, including President Ilir Rexhep Meta of Albania, Princess Siu’ilikutapu of the Kingdom of Tonga, and US Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN).

There also were dozens of seminar teachings, briefings and interviews available on our Envision platform covering a variety of timely subjects, such as Leadership at the Crossroads, The Church at the Crossroads, The Church and Israel, and The Restoration of Israel. The seminar speakers ranged from Israeli hi-tech expert Avi Jorisch, to Bible scholars Dr. Brad Young and Dr. Gerald McDermott, Israeli pastors Wayne Hilsden, Asher Intrater and Israel Pochtar, Arab pastors Steven Khoury and Samuel Aweida, Ukrainian pastor Boris Grisenko, and Nigerian minister Mosy Madugba.

“We need all the friends that we can get and we should encourage connections with anyone who wants good for Israel, wants good for the region and wants good for everything that's important here... I thank you as an organisation for all the work you are doing to get people out of this wrong conception of what Israel is, what Israel should be and how other organisations and countries treat the state of Israel.”

MK SIMCHA ROTHMAN
RELIGIOUS ZIONISM PARTY
ABRAHAM ACCORDS VS. APARTHEID
AN INTERVIEW WITH YOSEPH HADDAD

Israel has seen a breakthrough in relations with the Arab world through the Abraham Accords, but also is under increasing assault by the BDS campaign for the false charge of apartheid. During a live-streamed visit to Nazareth at the ICEJ’s recent Envision conference, we discussed these topics with Yoseph Haddad, an Israeli Arab Christian and reporter for i24 News who has emerged as a strong defender of Israel. Here are excerpts:

David Parsons: Can you give us a little more on your background?

Yoseph Haddad: I was born in Haifa, the biggest mixed Arab/Jewish city in Israel. At age three, my parents moved us to Nazareth. I am a Catholic... and I grew up with Jewish, Arab, Christian, and Muslim friends, some secular, some religious, the full tapestry of Israel... We were all feeling equal, that there is no difference between Jews and Arabs, just human beings and Israelis. When you grow up like this, you eventually see the vision of how Israeli society really should be. And today, I’m trying to put that in front of extremists on both sides.

Parsons: And then you volunteered to serve in the Israeli army?

Yoseph Haddad: Yes! Many ask why I decided to join the army and I ask them what does the IDF stand for? It is the Israel Defense Forces, not the Jewish Defense Forces. The IDF protects all Israeli citizens, not just Jews. And when Hamas and Hizbullah attack Israel, their missiles don’t discriminate between Arabs and Jews, they attack all Israelis... I participated in the Second Lebanon War. Four days before the ceasefire, I was injured very badly by a Hizbullah anti-tank missile... My foot was cut off. In the hospital, the best doctors in the world – Arab and Jewish – took care of me. And a year later my foot was reattached, and today I play football and run a lot. Every day, I praise the Lord!

Parsons: We’re now in this time when the charge of apartheid against Israel is gaining momentum. Yet Arab countries also are reconciling with Israel via the Abraham Accords. With these two competing trends, how is it for you?

Yoseph Haddad: First, the motive of these organisations, from B’tselem to Breaking the Silence to Amnesty International, all of them are very far from being human rights organisations. In fact, they’re doing the opposite. They are hurting Israeli society, the Arabs who live in Israel, and mostly the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. When Amnesty refers to Israel as an apartheid state, it shows how little they know... Only 7% of the Israeli Arab population define themselves as “Palestinians”. As an Israeli Arab, I can go wherever I want, I can work in any job I want. I became a commander in the IDF over Jewish soldiers who must obey my command... So, there are problems we need to address in Israeli society. But when you categorize Israel as an apartheid state or as a state that does ethnic cleansing or genocide? In the Holocaust, the Jews went from 9 million to 3 million. That is ethnic cleansing. That is genocide. But since Israel’s independence in 1948, in every village and city, whether it’s in Gaza, the West Bank, or here in Israel, the Arab population has only increased.

Parsons: How were the Abraham Accords received among the Israeli Arab community?

Yoseph Haddad: The only Knesset members who voted against the Abraham Accords were Arab members. Yet, if you fly from Israel to Dubai, you see that 60 to 70% of the passengers are Israeli Arabs.

Parsons: Have you been yet?

Yoseph Haddad: Of course! I’ve been three times and I’m going back in two weeks. I have such amazing friends there. They are more than welcoming, and they love Israeli Arabs... This is an opportunity for me to reveal the truth about us, and also for me to learn more about their Arabic traditions. We love that! And this is just another case of Arab leaders acting entirely the opposite from society. They’re behind the times.

Parsons: I understand you also travelled to South Africa and did your own study of apartheid?

Yoseph Haddad: Yes! I visited Johannesburg and was actually confronted on live TV by the head of the BDS movement there, Muhammed Desai, and it was very hard for him to confront an Israeli Arab. In fact, I called him out for lying more than one time, and our debate went viral... And when I spoke to the black community in South Africa, I said that comparing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the apartheid in South Africa is actually doing injustice to the Africans who suffered from real apartheid. And everybody just nodded their heads.

Parsons: Okay, if people want to hear more from you, they can follow you on i24 News and YouTube?

Yoseph Haddad: Not only that, but I am doing a new show with my fiancée called “Headlines with the Haddads”. They can find it on the internet.
In his first appearance before an exclusively Christian audience as the new Chairman of Yad Vashem, Dani Dayan recently urged the Christian world to turn International Holocaust Remembrance Day every January 27 into a special day to reflect on the Holocaust, honour its victims, pray, and fight antisemitism today.

“For each decent person in the world, January 27 should not be a regular day. It should be a day of reflection,... a day of prayer,... a day of meditation on how to honour the victims, how to improve combatting antisemitism, and how to strengthen the relationship with the Jewish people and the state of Israel,” Dayan said. “All the things I said are good 365 days per year, but January 27 now has a special significance. So, I call upon all our viewers, when they wake up on January 27, don’t make it a regular day. Make it a day of reflection, a day of prayer, a day of faith, a day of solidarity with the victims, with the Jewish people and with the state of Israel, and a day to combat antisemitism.”

Dayan was appearing at the ICEJ’s annual Envision pastors and leaders conference beginning in late January. This year, Envision brought together nearly 900 Christian pastors and ministry leaders from more than 70 nations for a month-long online event.

In 2006, Yad Vashem entered a special partnership with the ICEJ to open a unique outreach to the Christian world by launching the “Christian Friends of Yad Vashem” initiative. As part of that cooperative effort, the ICEJ organises an annual pastors conference during the week of January 27th which aims to better educate Christian leaders on the Holocaust and the need to stand with Israel today. Because of coronavirus travel restrictions, this year’s conference was a fully online streaming event.

“And we call upon all your audience, first and foremost, to visit Israel, when I hope that COVID will disappear soon, and to visit Jerusalem and to visit Yad Vashem. I think that for many persons, I hear it constantly, the visit to Yad Vashem has been a life-changing experience. I think it is an educational one, but no less than that it also is a spiritual one. I believe that the Hall of Names or the Righteous of the Nations path are some of the most sacred places in Jerusalem. You know that sacred places are abundant [here]. But I think those are more than sacred places of Jerusalem that every person of faith should visit,” Dayan added.

“I can absolutely agree to that,” responded Dr. Bühler. “The fact that I’m here now for 27 years in Israel, to a very large degree I owe to my first visit at Yad Vashem. Visiting the exhibition to see what Christians, what Germans did to the Jewish people, that really touched my heart in an incredible way.”

In his discussions with Dr. Bühler, Dayan committed to expanding the work of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem in partnership with the ICEJ, and noted that he had attended several of our Feast of Tabernacles celebrations in Jerusalem over the years.

Dani Dayan was appointed last August as the new Chairman of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. He previously served as Israel’s Consul General in New York, as Chairman of the YESHA Council, and launched a successful software company.
YAD VASHEM’S NEW LEADERS REAFFIRM PARTNERSHIP WITH ICEJ

BY DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER, ICEJ PRESIDENT

On the slopes of Mount Herzl, a massive concrete wedge divides the mountain. The wedge hosts the most significant Holocaust memorial and museum in the world – Yad Vashem. The unique architecture powerfully depicts how the Holocaust is perceived by most Jews today: as a dark wedge driven by Nazi Germany into Jewish and even world history. Its name is taken from the prophet Isaiah: ‘I will give within My house and within My walls a monument (Yad) and name (Shem)...’ (Isaiah 56:5). Its purpose is to ensure the names and memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust will never be forgotten.

The idea to establish such a memorial dates back even to pre-state Israel. In 1942, Jewish leaders started hearing of the horrendous atrocities Germany was committing against the Jews. Consequently, the concept which became Yad Vashem was first proposed at a meeting of the Jewish National Fund. Just after the war, a Zionist meeting in London in August 1945 considered more detailed plans, and in 1946 Yad Vashem was established with offices in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. But only in 1953, when the Knesset passed the ‘Yad Vashem Law’, did it become the national institution it is today, mandated and supported by the Israeli government.

That Knesset law was very clear why Yad Vashem needed to be established: ‘...to commemorate the six million members of the Jewish people who died a martyrs’ death at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. To commemorate the Jewish families which, were wiped out with their communities, synagogues, movements and with their public, cultural educational, religious and benevolent institutions...’ Yet, the Knesset also mandated that Yad Vashem should commemorate “the high-minded gentiles who risked their lives to save the Jews” – what became known as the ‘Righteous among the Nations’.

Today, Yad Vashem is the leading address worldwide for Holocaust research and commemoration. Every head-of-state visiting Israel starts their official visit by laying a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashem. Its international significance was powerfully displayed in early 2020, as more than fifty kings, presidents and prime ministers arrived in Jerusalem to remember the Holocaust and jointly pledge “Never Again!”

Since the Holocaust was perpetrated by ‘Christian nations’ – particularly Germany, the nation of Martin Luther and the Reformation – for decades Yad Vashem’s relations with Christians were largely non-existent. It was, therefore, surprising when the museum’s international relations director Shaya Ben Yehuda approached the Christian Embassy’s former executive director Malcolm Hedding in 2004 with a request to help establish closer ties between Yad Vashem and the growing Evangelical community worldwide. Due to governmental oversight of Yad Vashem, this historic move needed the government’s support, and both the president and prime minister of Israel embraced the idea of setting up the ‘Christian Desk at Yad Vashem’ in partnership with ICEJ.

Since then, countless Christian pastors and leaders from around the world have gone through the educational programs offered by Christian Friends of Yad Vashem. Many other initiatives, ceremonies and events have been held by CFYV during these years.

Today, a new page is being opened between Yad Vashem and the ICEJ, as Yad Vashem’s newly appointed Chairman, Dani Dayan, is ready to build upon our unique partnership. Dayan embodies modern Israel like few others. Through his software company, he has been part of the success of the ‘Start-Up Nation’. He also has served in a key diplomatic role as Consul General in New York, as well as chairman of the YESHA council representing the Jewish communities of Judea and Samaria.

In this latter function, he often attended the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Thus, Chairman Dayan knows and appreciates the importance of Evangelical support, and we look forward to working closely with him.

In addition, the International Desk at Yad Vashem has a new director in Chaim Gerstner, replacing our friend Shaya Ben Yehuda, founder of the Christian Desk.

We recently had productive meetings with Yad Vashem’s new leaders and both sides are wholeheartedly determined to undergird our mutual partnership with new and exciting initiatives. For our part, the Christian Embassy is greatly encouraged by the fresh enthusiasm and vision of Yad Vashem’s new leadership. It is a tremendous privilege to serve as the Christian partner of this amazing institution tasked with keeping alive the memory of the Shoah. We are working together for a better future, to ensure “Never Again!” Please join us in this solemn yet exciting mission by supporting the initiatives presented here. May God bless you as you do so!
HONOURING THE ‘RIGHTeous AMONG THE NATIONS’
Yad Vashem is the only institution which gives official recognition to the “Righteous Among the Nations,” a special designation honouring non-Jews who took great personal risks to save, hide and rescue Jews during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem has planted some 2,000 trees at its Mt Herzl campus to honour the Righteous Among the Nations. These trees serve as a reminder of the light they shone in the darkest of times, but the trees are in need of yearly maintenance and tending. Christian Friends of Yad Vashem is seeking partners to help with the upkeep of the 2,000 trees for Righteous Gentiles that line the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. You are invited to identify with their legacy by becoming the Guardian of a Tree. For your donation of US $365 per year, you will receive:

- A certificate with the name of a ‘Righteous Gentile’ and your name as the one adopting the tree.
- The story of the Righteous Gentile.
- A picture of the tree itself.

COLLECTING SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES
The need to preserve first-hand testimonies of what the Jewish people suffered in the Nazi genocide became quickly clear when many already started denying the Holocaust in the years immediately following World War II. Today, the number of Holocaust survivors still with us is dwindling every year, and many survivors still have yet to tell their stories. In Israel there are now less than 170,000 Holocaust survivors and around 15,000 are passing away each year. Thus, we are in a race against time to collect, record and preserve their testimonies. Yad Vashem has launched a special project to accomplish this mission, which became even more urgent with the outbreak of COVID-19. They use trained interviewers to help draw the stories out of survivors, many of whom remain reluctant to talk about what happened to them as youths in Nazi-occupied Europe. Recording and preserving a survivor testimony for posterity in the Yad Vashem archives costs approximately US $1,400. Your generous support will be recognised by Yad Vashem.

MARKING YOM HASHOAH WITH ISRAEL
Beginning on the evening of 27 April this year, Yad Vashem will host Israel’s official state ceremonies marking Yom HaShoah, the nation’s annual Holocaust Remembrance Day, to honour the six million Jews murdered in the Nazi genocide. As a special partner of Yad Vashem, ICEJ will be on hand to enable Christians to take part in these solemn ceremonies. Plans are underway for the ICEJ to host a live-streamed event on 28 April which will include reports from the official wreath-laying ceremony in Warsaw Ghetto Square, as well as churches and even cities worldwide joining in observing two minutes of silence in solidarity with Israel’s nationwide siren on Yom HaShoah. More information on how you can participate will be made available through our website and social media in coming weeks.

Donate at: give.icej.org/yadvashem
As the world marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January, the ICEJ held a ceremony at our Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa, with several Knesset Members and local dignitaries present.

Judith Hershkovitz, a 93-year-old Holocaust survivor and current Haifa Home resident, shared her story with MK Inbar Bezek of the Yesh Atid party. Judith first showed a video of her story which plays in the museum at the Haifa Home. Pointing to a family photo on the wall, Judith also sadly noted that her entire family perished during the war.

Judith’s personal story also was one of several video-taped testimonials from Holocaust survivors beamed on the massive walls of the Old City in Jerusalem, and other landmark buildings in Tel Aviv, Beersheba, Herzliya and Haifa as part of Israel’s official program to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. With the number of Holocaust survivors shrinking each year, a social non-profit called “Live Forever” is working with the ICEJ and other charitable partners to preserve the Holocaust survivors’ memories for future generations. As one of the featured survivors this year, Judith also was interviewed by several Israeli newspapers and TV channels.

Judith grew up in a family of seven in Hungary. At age 11, her childhood was snatched away when the Germans invaded in 1944.

“Until 1944, somehow our life was tolerable” recalled Judith. “Then our tragedy started. All the Jews were forced to gather in the synagogue. We were allowed to take one suitcase with us. We were put in a ghetto. We lost our home, our store, everything. When the Germans came into our home, we were forced to give them our jewellery and everything we had.”

“After about two weeks we were taken to the train station, destination Auschwitz. The trip was terrible. I cannot bring myself to describe it. After three days we arrived at Auschwitz and were separated into two groups, men and women. My sister was 12 years old, and she was taken away with my grandmother and I never saw them alive again”, recounted Judith.

“I was taken to Germany to work in a factory. It was also a terrible trip. No food, no air, no water”, continued Judith.

Judith worked hard during this time, from six in the morning to six at night, and she remained constantly hungry as there was no food to eat. She also had nothing warm to wear to protect her from the bitterly cold winters. It was during her time in Germany that she heard the news her whole family had perished.

“I was the only person who remained alive from my family. I have a number on my hand”, said Judith.

As the war ended, Judith was forced into a very hard three-week march on foot, after which the Russians released her. She was taken to a German hospital and remained there for almost one year.

“There was a very nice German nurse there. Thanks to her, I managed to heal. She treated me like her own daughter”, Judith remembered.

In December 1946, Judith immigrated to Israel and blended in. She served in the army, met her husband, married, and had two children. Both her husband and daughter have since passed away, while her son now lives abroad.

So, being alone in Israel, Judith greatly appreciates the love and support she receives at the Haifa Home, where she has lived since 2013.

Holocaust survivor Shalom Stamberg’s story also was beamed onto the walls of Jerusalem and other Israeli cities. Shalom and his wife, Zelda, had been visiting the Haifa Home almost daily and although they were not yet residents, they were treated and cared for like residents. Shalom and Zelda planned on moving into the Haifa Home, but sadly Shalom passed away just before the move was possible. Zelda moved into the Home 30 days after his death.

Shalom was one of the last remaining survivors of the Warsaw ghetto and also survived five concentration camps.

According to an Israeli government report released in January, most Holocaust survivors left in the world now live in Israel, numbering some 165,800. Over 90% of these Holocaust survivors are 80 years and older. The average age is 85, and there are 950 survivors who are more than 100 years old.

A full 25% currently live in poverty and 30% are living alone.

The ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors is a warm environment where residents can live out their remaining years in dignity and comfort, with all their needs cared for by loving staff, including our dedicated team of Christian volunteers.

Please continue to support the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors.

To give, please go to: give.icej.org/survivors
MORE LOCKDOWNS
After a brief return to ‘normal’ life and enjoying each other’s company, our Haifa Home residents recently had to start eating their meals in their rooms once again due to a peak in the Omicron virus. Two residents and several staff also tested positive. Fortunately, everyone has completely recovered!

For many Holocaust survivors at our Haifa Home, the fear of becoming ill with coronavirus is even worse than the sickness itself. Many of their friends and family are getting COVID, and they are so afraid of getting it too. Plus the isolation they are experiencing is equally hard to bear, as they are mostly stuck at home again.

“I only speak to my caregiver and almost forget how to even speak. Can you please visit me more often?” Rivka pleaded.

Our team of Christian volunteers does everything possible to help them during these difficult times. We visit their apartments, help them make doctor and dentist appointments, and take them out for walks. With Israel experiencing a very cold, wet winter, they are hesitant to venture outside for a stroll. But Birgit, our physiotherapist, tries to get the survivors moving as much as she can. Some residents enjoy doing gymnastics in small groups, while Will Setz pops in with his guitar to bring a little music and joy!

ADAPTING OUR BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS
Instead of celebrating birthdays together in the dining hall, we now are going to the residents, bringing them a cake and joy through music. Yaacov, a long-time resident, just celebrated his 98th birthday, while Lydia just turned 84.

YEHUDA MOVES IN FOR NOW
Yehuda, an elderly Moroccan Jewish survivor, recently was referred to our Home by people who knew about our caring community for Holocaust survivors. Yehuda’s life has not been easy after he became deaf due to a sickness as a youth. For many years he has lived mostly on the streets, his few possessions stuffed in plastic bags inside a shopping cart. We have housed Yehuda temporarily to see if the Home is a suitable place for him. Our social worker, Fadi, is trying to collect more details about Yehuda before a decision is made on where is best for him. Meantime, our ICEJ volunteer team helped Yehuda decorate his room and turn it into a home. Several times Yehuda broke down, emotionally overwhelmed by the love and care showered upon him.

To support the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors, go to: give.icej.org/survivors
A LISTENING EAR HELPS ISRAELIS FIND WORK AND DIRECTION

BY LAURINA DRIESSE

When life gives you a few knocks and leaves you hopeless, sometimes all it takes is a listening ear and an encouraging word to restore your hope again.

Through our “Giving a Future and a Hope” aid program, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem seeks to help Israelis suffering setbacks in life, ensuring they have a place to turn. One way we are offering them renewed hope is by supporting an employment call center which reaches out to those in desperate need of advice and direction.

As Israel endured several long coronavirus lockdowns over recent years, many small businesses had to let go of staff, and thousands of Israelis suddenly found themselves jobless or on extended furlough with little compensation.

The ensuing crisis meant the employment call center went from 1,500 calls annually pre-pandemic to 8,700 calls for help last year alone. The call center urgently needed to expand its technology equipment, volunteer base, and staff training to handle the sheer volume of desperate callers.

“Knowing we could offer hope and practical help to a lot of people in crisis, we did not hesitate to come alongside the call center to allow them to make the necessary upgrades to their system”, remarked Nicole Yoder, ICEJ’s Vice President for AID and Aliyah.

With help from forty trained volunteers, 45% of the callers received advice and referrals to other job placement programs, vocational training, aid assistance, and information about their employment rights. Another 25% of the callers received personalized advice and assistance in facing specific employment hardships. An additional 9% received several weeks of coaching aimed at bringing about a meaningful employment change, while 21% of callers participated in live Zoom sessions for guidance on employment-related topics, like job market trends and job-hunting tools.

Yael Biton* was one of these desperate callers. She contacted the call center in April 2021, after being fired from her company because of the pandemic. Living in a small town in northern Israel, she found there were very few openings in her area, so she finally called the center in desperation.

Zehava, a newly trained volunteer, became Yael’s listening ear and the two quickly formed a bond. Zehava helped Yael rethink her career path, identify her strengths and weaknesses, re-write her CV, and prepare for job interviews. During this process, Yael decided to switch job sectors and began a focused search. She soon found work as a coordinator at an overnight camp for sick and special needs children.

“Zehava’s help was invaluable and contributed greatly to my success in finding this job”, said Yael. “She helped me through a difficult period, boosted my morale and strengthened me in all aspects of the job-hunting process.”

More positive testimonies from Israelis with renewed hope continue to flood into the call center.

“I wasn’t alone in the job-hunting process”, said one caller. “The mentoring I received from my volunteer coach boosted my morale and helped me feel I could move forward. My mentor gave me tips, shared his rich professional experience and helped me pinpoint my search.”

“Just the fact that I had someone to talk to helped a lot”, stated another caller. “It helped me get my thoughts straight, focus and motivate myself to action.”

Based on a recent survey by the call center, we can report that:

- 90% percent of callers became more focused in their search due to the coaching they received.
- 89% reported coping better emotionally with the job-hunting process.
- 88% gained relevant knowledge about the job market.
- 81% said they gained job-hunting skills.
- 19% reported finding work after receiving help from their assigned volunteer.

Your donations allow the ICEJ to continue meeting urgent needs here in the Land of Israel. Thank you for making it possible to help give a future and a hope to many struggling Israeli families.

To support this and similar projects, please give at: give.icej.org/givinghope

*Name changed to protect privacy.
It is wonderful to know you have made a difference in someone’s life. By donating to the ICEJ’s “Giving a Future and a Hope” program, you actually can impact many lives here in Israel!

The Christian Embassy is reaching out to many Israelis in desperate need of help due to unemployment, financial hardship or simply not having the strength to go on. One project we are supporting does home repairs for Israeli families living in poverty.

When Yaacov, a 91-year-old Auschwitz survivor, reached out to an Israeli social welfare worker, his living conditions were utterly inhuman and the renovation team simply were not prepared for what they saw. The team of skilled workers found the walls coated with dirt, there was no shower, the doors and windows were broken, and cobwebs were everywhere.

Yaacov lost his entire family in Auschwitz and he has lived alone his whole life. As he grew older, it became harder for him to care for himself. Not knowing help was available, he continued living in dreadful conditions.

So, the renovation team began scrubbing and gutting Yaacov’s apartment. The repairs took a full month and included a new kitchen, bathroom and shower, water heater, flooring, and windows and doors, plus fresh paint on the walls. Not only has Yaacov received a new home, his hope and dignity are restored.

“It is heart-breaking to see the extent of repairs needed in some of the homes” noted Nicole Yoder, ICEJ Vice President for AID and Aliyah. “The renovation team is amazing, though! They work with such kindness, in coordination with the social workers, to get the renovations done as quickly as possible.”

Another home was repaired for a family of six living in severe poverty in a tiny two-room Jerusalem apartment. The parents had enclosed a small balcony to create a bedroom for their four children. But the room was stifling hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, the walls became moldy, and the children soon became ill. And due to the poor living conditions, inviting friends over was not possible.

Upon hearing of this family’s situation, the renovation team began stripping the moldy walls, sanitized the apartment, and built a new dividing wall in the living room to create a proper bedroom for the children. The family now enjoys a clean living-space, and the children have a safe place to sleep and can now invite friends over after school.

Soon, the renovation team entered another apartment of an elderly couple in Jerusalem. The wife is wheelchair bound and the husband suffers from a heart condition. They were physically unable to fix their home, which was poorly lit and had become dilapidated and hazardous, with broken and missing floor tiles increasing the risk of falling and getting injured. The renovation team began by painting the walls, which instantly brightened the apartment. They also replaced light fixtures and retiled the floors. Next, grab bars and railings were affixed to the walls. The overjoyed couple now feel safe in their home, and promptly wrote a letter of thanks stating: “You made our home into a palace.”

Your donations to our “Giving a Future and a Hope” fund allows the ICEJ to extend compassion and aid to many Israeli families like these who are living below the poverty line. 🕊

Please give today at: give.icej.org/givinghope
The modern-day return of Ethiopian Jewry to Israel has often been a story of daring rescues. It also is increasingly a success story, as more Ethiopians find success in Israel’s hi-tech society. This has required determination by the Ethiopian immigrants themselves, as well as much outside help for them to adjust to life in Israel. And the ICEJ is actively involved in both the Aliyah and absorption phases of their return.

Last year, the “Operation Rock of Israel” airlift flew 2,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel, with the ICEJ sponsoring flights for over 500 of them. Israel is planning another airlift of 3,000 more Ethiopian Jews expected to start arriving soon, and currently we are raising funds to bring several hundred of these immigrants. But just as important is helping them through the crucial absorption process, which usually takes longer than other immigrant communities. Thus, over the past decade the ICEJ has expanded its efforts to assist Ethiopian newcomers to integrate better into Israeli society.

Amira Ahronoviz, CEO of The Jewish Agency For Israel, recently explained some of the advantages the latest arrivals have over previous Ethiopian immigrants. “For Ethiopian Jews, the dream of reaching the Promised Land is fulfilled once they land in Israel. They kiss the ground and burst into tears, and we share that moment with them,” said Ahronoviz. “But the real work for us only begins once they arrive at Ben-Gurion Airport. They face huge gaps in language and education, and the lack of skills needed to compete for good positions in the Israeli job market. Because of these gaps, the Ethiopians are the only immigrant community who are given two full years for free in absorption facilities.”

So, the good news is that many new Ethiopian immigrants already have some level of computer skills. But there are some who cannot afford a decent home computer or must share an old computer with family members. Many also must first complete their high school education before enrolling in university studies or vocational training. To help them, the ICEJ is currently sponsoring a special program for 25 recent Ethiopian immigrants who will finish high school in only nine months. Our support includes providing them with computers to complete the course.

“We see that in some vocational training courses, we assumed not more than 20 would enroll in computer literacy skills, but then found 80 of them standing in line to join the courses,” added Ahronoviz. “That’s magic! We were never able to do that in the past.”

But then she noted an interesting change which is making her more optimistic about the current wave of Ethiopian Aliyah. “Those families who are now being reunited – the 2,000 that we brought last year as well as the 3,000 we are now working to bring very quickly – are ones that have spent quite a significant period of time in an urban environment,” said Ahronoviz. “They left their small farming villages more than a decade ago, and so many of the children and the younger adults have ... attended school or received some sort of formal education and have been exposed more to technology and modern life.”

This means that they come to Israel with a better base for us to help them acclimate into a Western society”, she continued. “And we are seeing that suddenly, we have more than 100 of them with higher academic degrees within our absorption centers. We have more than 500 of them who have completed 12 years of education, which is phenomenal because it means that it sets them on a whole different accelerated track of absorption in Israel.”

“We see that in some vocational training courses, we assumed not more than 20 would enroll in computer literacy skills, but then found 80 of them standing in line to join the courses,” added Ahronoviz. “That’s magic! We were never able to do that in the past.”

“We invite you to join us in making the return of more Ethiopian Jews a true success story. Help us not only sponsor their Aliyah flights, but also to be ready with the educational courses and computers they will need to speed up their adjustment to life in Israel.”

Donate today at: give.icej.org/aliyah
ICEJ SPONSORS WINTER CAMPS FOR JEWISH YOUTHS
BY ANASTASIYA GOODING

Young people play a large part in determining the future of a country. Therefore, the Christian Embassy is supporting Jewish youth not only in Israel, but also in other lands - especially as a means to encourage them to make Aliyah to the Promised Land.

However, in the case of the former Soviet republics, this often involves re-establishing the connection between the Jewish community and their religious and cultural roots, which were severed during the Communist era.

“During the seven decades of the Soviet regime, the Jewish community of the former Soviet Union (FSU) experienced severe identity loss”, explained Roman Polonski, director of the FSU department for The Jewish Agency for Israel. “Thirty years after the regime’s collapse, only an estimated 20 percent of the 800,000 Jews across the broad expanse of what is now the FSU are meaningfully engaged in Jewish life. Russian-speaking Jews, therefore, have unique Jewish educational needs.”

In response, the ICEJ has been sponsoring Aliyah programs for Jewish youths for many years now, including Youth Aliyah camps. In these JAFI camps, Jewish children from age seven and up learn about Israel and the opportunities that await them here. Through the Naale and Sela programs, they also can continue their education and Jewish identity-building in Israel. Altogether, these Youth Aliyah programs have been a huge success in bringing Jewish children to Israel ahead of their parents, who also benefit once they arrive. Thus, it has been a great blessing for the ICEJ to support these youth camps and other pre-Aliyah programs.

In fact, the ICEJ just helped sponsor two Aliyah winter camps in January. One took place near St. Petersburg with 34 young people from ages ten to fifteen. Joined by six counselors, they enjoyed their camp experience in the historic city of Pushkin, a suburb of St. Petersburg. The camps helped participants embrace their Jewish identity and learn about Israeli culture through creative workshops, games, and other activities.

One local attendee, 11-year-old Daniel, was thrilled to take part. “I really enjoyed the winter festival”, he said. “It’s great to spend your holidays like this. The camp counselors made it fun and productive. We studied the history, traditions and culture of the Jewish people, held various master classes and games. There was also a snowball fight. I would like to thank the sponsors who help in holding such festivals.”

Another ICEJ assisted winter camp took place near Minsk, in Belarus, enrolling 52 children plus their camp counselors. The camp was allowed to happen despite strict Covid restrictions, which meant twice as many buses were needed. Thanks to our Christian supporters around the world, the ICEJ quickly covered these extra expenses as well.

Life in Belarus is very difficult, and parents want their children to make the transition to Israel, where they know they will have a better life. And we have the privilege to witness young Belarusian Jews discovering and embracing their heritage after decades of concealing it.

These Aliyah youth camps are usually staffed by young Israelis, and it is very inspiring for the campers to connect with them as they learn about life in the modern Israel. For most children, the camp is their first genuine encounter with what it means to be Jewish, providing the foundation of their Jewish identity and nurturing the desire to make Aliyah.

Please continue to support our Aliyah efforts in helping more young Jewish people to find their future in Israel and be a blessing for their country. Give towards the Aliyah efforts of the ICEJ.

Donate today at: give.icej.org/aliyah
Even though travel has been restricted over the past year, the work of the ICEJ’s International department has not stopped. Like other activities at the Christian Embassy, the development of our global network largely just moved online. It has been rewarding to see our relationships with the ICEJ national directors and representatives around the world even strengthened during this time. Indeed, we have never had such frequent contacts, and it has been a real joy to see familiar faces, exchange experiences and ideas, and pray for one another.

Every month, a global online meeting has been held called the “ICEJ Family Prayer”. Dozens of our national directors and representatives regularly participate, receiving first-hand information from the global headquarters in Jerusalem, while asking questions and praying together. In addition, 24 regional conferences were held during the last year. These online gatherings have provided a more intimate platform for deeper discussions, and an opportunity to invite pastors from the various regions to introduce them to the ICEJ ministry in a manner suited to their needs and specific region.

In addition, many members of our global family have regularly participated in the Global Prayer Gatherings on Wednesdays, or selected topics of interest from our series of weekly webinars on Thursdays. All these online activities have kept everyone up-to-date, and even proven to be a great way to showcase our ministry at its best to church leaders with little prior contact with us. And of course, the online Feast of Tabernacles provided a superb opportunity for thousands of Christians to join us virtually for this biblical festival in Jerusalem and even to celebrate Succot in their own countries. In addition, the monthly Rosh Chodesh prayer chains have added another special feature to our wide range of online programs, and their growing length demonstrates how many nations are finding it very exciting to be globally connected in prayer through the ICEJ.
NEW FACES
These online initiatives have yielded some precious fruit in the form of establishing or renewing contacts in many countries. For instance, we met a dedicated team from Cordoba and appointed them to represent the Christian Embassy in Argentina. New national teams also were appointed in Honduras and El Salvador, restarting works which had existed for many years but went through times of inactivity.

New representatives also were added in the Eastern Europe, namely in the two former Yugoslav Republics of Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina. In addition, there has been promising growth in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Latvia. And in Russia, we have been able to reach hundreds of new pastors and churches through our various online activities.

In South-East Asia, the country of the Philippines stands out, as the enormous potential of the only nation in Asia with a Christian majority is beginning to manifest itself. This is especially the case with their ever-growing prayer involvement, which is very impressive. There have been good developments in Malaysia, and Thailand also has become very active, even providing interpretation so that many local pastors can participate in our online events.

In Africa, we established a strong office in the Ivory Coast, a result of several years of cultivating relationships with senior leaders of the Body of Christ there. We appointed a new representative in Uganda and held a regional conference in Gabon, one of a few physical meetings which were possible. We expect further growth in this immense and important continent, and to facilitate it we have appointed regional coordinators for Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

NEW INITIATIVES
It has become quite clear that prayer functions as the engine of our ministry. It is probably the most inspiring part of what we do. We have established ties to prayer houses in many countries. Some of them go beyond a mere house of prayer to believers establishing prayer mountains. It started in the Philippines, where national board member Sister Mercy operates seven prayer mountains, one of which is solely dedicated to praying for Israel. We have heard wonderful testimonies about God’s power at work in those meetings. And recently, our new team in Argentina has decided to establishaltars of prayer throughout their country.

Last, but not least, our well-established offices in the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia, Taiwan and throughout Western Europe have all improved their performance. Thanks to generous donations mostly from these countries, we were able to finance a record number of 48 bomb shelters across Israel in 2021, as well as to help nearly 3,800 new immigrants return to their ancient homeland.

This illustrates well the value of our global family. We couldn’t achieve it alone; together we make up this unique ministry, united in love and passion for God’s purposes with Israel and the nations. We look forward to continuing this relationship in the new year, even as we may move through uncharted waters. It is our prayer that God might use us to comfort Israel and teach the Church about His unfolding redemptive plan for mankind.

ICEJ-GERMANY HOLDS HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, 27 January 2022, ICEJ-Germany hosted a special memorial service with around 100 Jewish and Christian participants to commemorate the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust. The remembrance service in Stuttgart began with Gottfried Bühler, National Director of ICEJ-Germany, recalling the Wannsee Conference 80 years earlier where “educated people, some even with a Christian upbringing”, planned the mass murder of European Jewry. He noted that the Jew-hatred behind this genocide campaign did not suddenly appear in 1933 when the Nazis seized power, but had been bred into Christians in Europe for centuries.

Holocaust survivor Ruth Michel-Rosenstock (93) shared how she made it through the Shoah as a young girl from the village of Mykulychyn, in modern-day Ukraine. After the German invasion in 1941, the local Jewish population of 205 men, women and children were arrested and transported to a mass grave, where they were all shot and killed. Ruth was 13 years old at the time and was able to flee along with her mother and younger sister. Incredibly, they escaped arrest several times after that and managed to survive the war.

Eva Erben, a 91-year-old Auschwitz survivor, also recounted her story by video message. Originally from Prague, she miraculously survived the concentration camps of Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Gross-Rosen as well as a death march. The only family member to survive the war, she decided to move to Israel, where she still deals with memories of the Shoah “every single day”.

The service concluded with Maren Steege, a representative of the Consulate General of Israel for Southern Germany, noting that so much life and potential were wiped out in the Holocaust, but Israel and Germany have since reached out to each other to shape a better future together.
When the German army invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, young Anna’s father was convinced that Moscow would be occupied and the safest place for his wife and four children would be with their grandfather, some 300 kilometers away. However, as happens in the tide of war, not only was his village captured but his house was seized as a residence for high-ranking German officers, forcing the family to live in the cellar.

Still innocent at three years old, little blond-haired, blue-eyed Anna was not afraid of the soldiers and knew nothing of war. But she did know about hunger and would sneak into the house to stand near the table, her head just showing above it. Her charm softened her enemies’ hardened hearts, so they would give her food, which she promptly shared with her mother and siblings in their underground shelter. It supplemented the potatoes and onions that Anna’s mother pulled from the frozen ground during the bitterly cold winters.

Anna’s mother must have been pregnant when she and her children were sent to the grandfather’s village as into these harsh conditions a fifth baby was born. Her mother rejected the advice of well-meaning neighbours who suggested to leave the tiny life outside in the -40°C weather. A mother’s love is strong. She washed diapers in cold water, putting them around her body to dry. Anna’s father had been sent to work at an arms factory at the beginning of the war and did not know another child had been born. He even assumed that when their grandfather’s home village had been taken over by the Germans, his family was likely murdered. In his despair he joined the Red Army, only to be killed at the front.

After the German army left the family home, local Fascists were afraid it had been booby-trapped and burned it to the ground. Anna’s mother, just in her early thirties, fled to Kazakhstan to look for work. She worked hard, even undertaking men’s jobs to feed her children. Sometimes with a smile, often with tears, Anna recalls her mother’s overflowing heart, full of love for her children as she tried to lift them above their poverty.

The strength of her mother’s love has been instilled in Anna. She met and married Holocaust survivor Evgeni, who had spent the war in hiding with his family. Together, they delighted in the achievements of their only child, Julia, who - despite the ever-present antisemitism in Russia - became a professional journalist with a promising career ahead.

But Julia’s life suddenly took a drastic turn one day when serious health issues arose. Doctors made a quick decision to operate, which did not go well. From then on, her condition deteriorated, and no other treatments helped. She lost her health, work, hopes and dreams, and became fully dependent on her parents, now in their eighties. After Aliyah, Israeli doctors tried to reverse the damage to her health done back in Russia, but to no avail. Out of this very challenging and heart-breaking situation, Anna has been caring for her daughter Julia with the same strength and love she received from her own mother.

For the past twenty years, ICEJ Homecare has been privileged to support this heroic family, with weekly visits, nursing assistance and supplemental support towards expenses. Anna says of their situation, “We couldn’t do it without your help. You are part of us, you have a place in our heart.”

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