

# Fifteenth North American LCJE Meeting San Diego, 2 - 4 March 1998

## International LCJE Report 1998 By Kai Kjær-Hansen

Allow me to begin by congratulating LCJE North America on the anniversary which you can celebrate with this conference, which is number fifteen. No other LCJE chapter can show the like of it. Most of the "old" LCJE members are still with us, but new members have also joined. It has been my privilege to participate in these meetings here in North America since 1990. This is something I appreciate very much.

Each year we are pleased to welcome new members in the LCJE network. LCJE is not an organisation or a mission, but a relatively loose network whose objective is to encourage its members to evangelization and mission to Israel, and by Israel we do not just mean the State of Israel but the people of Israel. We seek to realize this purpose, for example, through meetings like this and through international conferences. The economy rests on dues paid by members whether these are individuals or agencies. At the end of 1997 we had approximately 185 individual members and 33 agency members. LCJE's yearly income was approximately 23,000 US dollars.

It is my hope that also at this meeting we shall have new members joining us. The LCJE Bulletin is a quarterly journal which is printed in a number of 750.

In this brief report I would like to mention five items since our last LCJE meeting:

1. At last year's LCJE meeting in Philadelphia the message had only just reached us from Israel that two Knesset members had proposed a bill banning the printing and distribution of all evangelistic literature. This bill has taken up much room in the consciousness of Messianic Jews in Israel. The Messianic Action Committee (MAC) was set up with Baruch Maoz as chairman, and this committee has made an impressive effort to alert public opinion all over the world so that this undemocratic proposal might be rejected. We have not seen the end of this matter. The beginning of this year saw another even more incomprehensible proposal be introduced in the Knesset which, should it be carried, will make it a criminal act to convert from Judaism to another religion.

It is no wonder that MAC can write in their Anti-Freedom Report No. 43: "... the Knesset is now to be asked to push Israel back to the darkest of the Middle Ages, where today only nations like Iran and Saudi Arabia are to be found ..."

The reason why I mention this is that I want to remind us all that we who support both the State of Israel and Messianic Jews in Israel may sometimes be forced to choose sides. I hope that we shall have the courage to speak up against the State of Israel if their legislation goes against the Messianic Jews.

2. In the LCJE Bulletin 1997 we have had a debate about The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) and their view of Jewish evangelism. As editor I am of course responsible for all that is printed in the Bulletin, although I did not take the initiative to this debate in which Jim Schutz from ICEJ - and others - participated. Whether or not the debate resulted in a clarification of the International Embassy's stance on evangelization I will leave it to the readers to judge.

3. I would also like to focus on Professor Arthur F. Glasser's article from the LCJE Bulletin on "LCJE Gatherings in North America (1985-1997)". Here Glasser analyses the papers that have been given over the years, and he says, "Truly, this treasure trove represents LCJE at its best." It is still my opinion that LCJE North America should be challenged to publish some of this material and thereby join in the theological and missiological debate on Jewish evangelism.

4. In June 1997 LCJE's International Coordinating Committee was gathered in Jerusalem. We here discussed a proposal which was given to me at the LCJE meeting in Philadelphia last year, namely try to draw up a Code of Conduct. This is no easy task, and therefore we were very pleased when Dr Erwin Kolb accepted the challenge to write one in his own name. I am very pleased that we have Kolb among us in this meeting, which allows us to discuss this topic.

Allow me to make a few comments on the question of a code of conduct among LCJE

members. LCJE was formed in 1980 - with much enthusiasm and great expectations. LCJE is now in her teens and we have to make decisions about our future.

If we want LCJE to exist in the future, it is not unimportant how we behave towards each other. But we must also not be blind to the fact that there have always been tensions in this network. Perfection is for the world to come. Therefore, in my opinion, we need to be careful that we do not, on the one hand, exaggerate present tensions, nor, on the other hand, minimize earlier tensions. And as has often been said: If LCJE did not exist, people would have to create another forum where issues related to Jewish evangelism could be dealt with on a national as well an international level. So many forces - in the Jewish world and in the Christian churches - oppose Jewish evangelism that it would be sad if we are not level-headed and see the need to encourage and inspire and help each other in our common task. It would be a very sad thing if the work of other organisations should be hindered because of petty jealousy.

I hope that we shall survive our teens and will be able to face the next millennium undaunted. But this should not stop us asking each other in what direction we want LCJE to move. And the challenge for us "old ones" is to get young mission leaders to see that there is a need for an international network like LCJE.

5. Now I come to my last item, which I hope will take up much room in the consciousness of North American LCJE members in the coming year, namely the Sixth International LCJE Conference, which for the first time ever is to be held in North America.

LCJE began as a mini-consultation in Pattaya, Thailand, 1980, in connection with the world conference of the Lausanne Committee of World Evangelization (LCWE). Subsequently there were conferences in Newmarket (UK), 1983, in Easneye (UK), 1986, in Zeist (Holland), 1991, and the fifth in Jerusalem, 1995. The sixth will be in New York, 12-17 August, 1999.

The planning group for *New York 99* - consisting of Susan Perlman, Bodil F. Skjøtt and myself - have just met for a two-day meeting here in San Diego where we have worked along the lines laid down by LCJE's ICC at its meeting in Jerusalem, June 1997. The ICC's guidelines are: "Since the conference is held on the eve of the 3rd millennium this should be reflected in the program theme and content. The conference should seek to re-activate involvement in Jewish evangelism and show how LCJE can serve to make this happen. It is desired that also young mission leaders become actively involved in the work of LCJE and the conference should seek to make this come about."

So, we are getting ready to enter a new millennium. For me personally the year 2000 means nothing, absolutely nothing. I for one am pleased to observe that - historically - we are already well into the next millennium. The explanation is, of course, that Herod the Great died in 4 BC and that Jesus was born before the death of Herod and that an Irish monk in the sixth century made a miscalculation in our calendar.

But what I think or do not think cannot stop the 2000-year rage, which can already be felt. But I am also sure that there will be a return to the daily round - that is, if the world still exists. It is our day-to-day life we must take into account and equip ourselves for - the day-to-day work after 2000.

As International Coordinator I do hope that every individual member and every agency member will help to make *New York 99* known and will send representatives and participate themselves. And also give young leaders the opportunity to become involved in Jewish evangelism on an international level.

I also expect LCJE North America to give this conference a high priority and to work to make it known.

And in conclusion I would like to thank you for your encouragement and for your prayer for the International Coordinator.