

Eighteenth North American LCJE Meeting Los Angeles, 12-14 March 2001

International LCJE Report 2001 Kai Kjær-Hansen

Last time I participated in an LCJE-NA meeting in Los Angeles was in March 1992, in Beverly Hills. It is good to see that there are people who participated back in 1992 who are also here this time. And it is good to see that new people have joined. I am especially pleased to see the younger leaders, something to which I shall return.

When I think back to the Los Angeles 1992 conference something sticks to my mind, which actually happened prior to the conference. My wife, Kirsten and I had flown in to San Francisco, were picked up at the airport by Moishe Rosen in his car with the license number "Yeshua1" and a few days later we were handed a van which had the words written on it in big letters "Jews for Jesus". We were to take the van from San Francisco to Los Angeles where it had been donated to a different ministry. So there we were, driving down Highway Number 1 - as gentiles - and being perceived as Jews for Jesus at least for a couple of days. I can assure you it was some experience. But not a bad one. As a matter of fact we got quite a number of smiles and kind greetings on our way.

Greetings are something which I receive throughout the year as international coordinator. Most of them are an encouragement to me as I read them. But at times I also receive letters which do not bring me joy. But they remind me that our battle is a spiritual battle. Here is one such letter which reached me a few days before Christmas last year.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing this letter after viewing your webpage. Being a true Jew I found your page very offensive. We, the Jewish people, don't need Jesus or Christianity to be "saved." We have G-d and his laws as set down to us through the Torah. If Gentiles wish to believe in Christianity then I hope they find spiritual fulfillment but a Jew's place is in Judaism.>

Shalom,

Mr. c. Aaron Kinder-henkel

The Coalition for Equality and Human Rights

<http://home.angelfire.com/va2/fwwr/>

motto: Racism and Discrimination can only be stopped by ACTION !!!

It is hardly a coincidence that certain letters in this email were written with capital letters: Jew, Jewish, Judaism and Torah and God as G-d - and Gentiles. Just as it is no coincidence that a couple of words were written with lower case: Jesus and Christianity.

Be that as it may! To be involved in LCJE and Jewish evangelism will imply a certain amount of opposition from Jewish people. We have to live with this opposition. It also implies that some Jewish people accuse us of racism and discrimination. Also this accusation we have to live with, for we believe that real racism and discrimination would be to keep to ourselves that best of what we have received from the Jewish people, that is the gospel of Jesus the Messiah.

Jewish evangelism is an up-hill battle. It always has been. Because of resistance

from Jews, yes, but also because of the attitude many Christians have when they - even before trying - rule out that Jews can come to faith in Jesus. It is important to keep our hope and our vision. On this coming Friday I have been asked to give a paper on Rabinowitz at an LCJE meeting organized by LCJE Europe in France. Preparing for that I was again reminded of how our hope for the future is rooted in the past. This is the message which Rabinowitz greets us with in "The parable of the Wheel" from 1884:

A few foolish people driving in a four-wheeler happened to lose a wheel. Finding that the car moved along heavily, they looked about and found that a wheel was missing. One of the foolish men jumped down and ran forward in search of the missing wheel. To everyone he met he said, "We have lost a wheel. Have you seen a wheel? have you found a wheel?" One wise man at last said, "You are looking in the wrong direction. Instead of looking in front for your wheel, you ought to look behind." That is exactly the great mistake the Jews have been making for centuries. They have forgotten that in order to look forward aright, they must first look behind aright. The four wheels of Hebrew History may be said to be Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus. The Jews by looking in front, instead of behind, have failed to find their fourth wheel.

Thank God, that "the Sons of the New Covenant" have found the Supreme Wheel – Jesus. Abraham, Moses and David are but beautiful types and symbols of Jesus. They were, and still are, the repositories of His energy; they were, and are still, moved and managed by Him, as truly as are the Cherubim and Seraphim. Thank God, we have found Yeshua Achinu, our Brother Jesus, our All, "who of God has been made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" from whom alone we have found divine light, life, liberty, and love, for the great Here and the greater Hereafter. And now with bright eye and jubilant heart, we are looking forward to the pulsing splendors of His appearing.

Report 2001

My report is a little longer this year. We have a couple of issues which are pressing and I would appreciate your responses. But then my paper following the report is shorter!

ICC and new coordinators

At the sixth international LCJE conference at Hofstra University in 1999 elections were held for the ICC; members of the new ICC are Tuvya Zaretsky, Lisa Loden (Israel), Pirkko Säilä (Finland) and myself as international coordinator, with Bodil F. Skjøtt serving as secretary. The new ICC met in Israel in September 2000, unfortunately Pirkko Säilä was unable to attend. Present at the meeting were also the following coordinators: Theresa Newell (North America), Arthur Goldberg (Israel) and David Loden (Israel).

According to *LCJE's Rules and Procedures* area coordinators are elected at the international meetings. When this is not possible because of no or too few from the area attending the meeting a different solution should be found. With regard to *South America* at the Hofstra 1999 meeting it was left to the ICC to act on this matter for the future and appoint a coordinator. Yosef Koelner has now been approached and we are grateful that he has accepted the invitation and the challenge to serve as area coordinator. In his yearly report for the LCJE Bulletin he introduced himself as coordinator for *Latin America*. In the program for this meeting he is listed as "The South America LCJE Coordinator". I am told that this does not mean that South America is treated like a stepchild. I remember that Dan Quayle once

said that considering the growing importance of Latin America, he regretted that he had not studied *Latin* in school!

At the end of February we received a note from LCJE in *South Africa* that they had appointed a new area coordinator at their last LCJE meeting. Eliyah Gould has been replaced by Loren D. Larkin, who - by the way - has participated in previous LCJE meetings here in North America. I hope we can meet him at the meeting in France later this week. I know he plans to attend the European LCJE meeting there from Thursday - Sunday. In the latest LCJE Bulletin (February 2001) you will find the reports from the area coordinators.

Conferences in 2001

Networking in Jewish evangelism is a major concern for LCJE. I am therefore very happy to see that there will be an LCJE conference in Norway for CEO's, 9-13 August 2001, and a Lutheran conference in Israel 2-6 July 2001. Both these conferences are a result of the networking which happened at Hofstra.

LCJE South Africa met for a meeting in February and - as I have already mentioned - at the end of this week LCJE Europe will meet in France. I am sure other LCJE-areas will meet later in the year. However, there is no doubt that when it comes to the number of meetings held, LCJE-North America still holds the lead with this being the 18th LCJE-NA conference.

Seventh International LCJE Conference

We left Hofstra and the sixth international conference in 1999 with two invitations for the seventh conference: one from Germany and one from Finland. The Germans withdrew their invitation in the fall of 2000. We can therefore conclude that the seventh international conference will be held in Finland. The dates have been set to 7-12 August 2003. Together with the Finnish LCJE we will decide on the place within the next couple of months. My feeling is that it will be close to Helsinki, in a scenic location close to one of Finland's many lakes. Already there you have something to look forward to. Following the conference it will be possible to participate in a trip to St. Petersburg, Russia.

Prior to our meeting here we had our first planning session for the LCJE 2003. Tuvya Zaretsky, Bodil F. Skjøtt and myself make up the conference committee. And we are very open to good and constructive suggestions and ideas. However ...

Next international LCWE conference

However ... now it looks like The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) has decided to arrange a conference in 2003. The exact dates have not been set but in a letter of 19 February 2001 it is said that it is intended that this fourth large scale Lausanne meeting (after Lausanne I in Lausanne in 1974, Pattaya in 1980, Lausanne II in Manilla 1989) should be patterned after the Pattaya event in Thailand and not one of the two Congresses. This means fewer participants - they are planning for about 800 - and the purpose will be to consider cutting edge strategic issues relevant to world evangelization for the decades ahead. It is anticipated that some 20 specific topics might be chosen for this purpose, with up to 40 people assigned to each topic. The aim is to produce practical output on each topic: a book, manual, CD, video, web site or training program, it is said in a letter from the LCWE. As it says in the letter this should be read as an invitation to "indicate from your perspective those issues which you feel to be of macro importance to the church at this time in its concern for outreach, evangelism, and helping greater understanding of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Whether or not this LCWE meeting should have any influence on our decision to meet for the seventh LCJE conference in Finland in 2003 I do not yet know. In the ICC we are of course aware of this new "problem". As LCJE we are a part of the LCWE-family. LCJE came about in connection with the Pattaya-meeting and its 17 mini consultations, one of which was the one on reaching Jewish People. As LCJE we still have something to share with the rest of the Church and a message to bring to the Church and those involved in mission work. My point of departure is that Jewish evangelism *has* to be on the program for the LCWE 2003 meeting and should be selected as one of the 20 topics. But I am also certain that there are more than 20 other groups out there who all believe that they are more important to the program than Jewish evangelism. But let us not be pessimistic beforehand.

And here I am very grateful to our president, Tuvya Zaretsky, and others here in the LCJE-NA - who have given priority to the involvement of LCJE in LCWE activities. In this way we are also fulfilling one of the proposed actions for ICC recommended at the Hofstra meeting. In connection with the planned Celebrate Messiah 2000 conference in Jerusalem around the new year Tuvya Zaretsky made it very clear to those representing LCWE that LCJE strongly wished to have Jewish evangelism on the program. The conference was canceled in the last minutes because of the political situation and - even more - because of visa problems

Young Leaders

ICC has engaged itself in some of the actions proposed by the general meeting at the Sixth International Conference, 1999. The relationship to LCWE has already been mentioned. Another is the relationship to young leaders' involvement in LCJE.

First of all, I am very happy to see young leaders taking part here in North America. Last year and again this year they have had their own separate meetings. The same will be true at the European conference later this week. In the ICC and in the planning committee for Finland 2003 we are very open to suggestions from their side. It is the opinion of the ICC that issues related to the young leaders should be part of the main program. ICC is also open for the idea of having a Young Leaders Conference in 2004 or 2005. All this to say that ICC appreciate very much the enthusiasm expressed by its younger members and is very open to how this can be incorporated into the main work of LCJE.

LCJE Web site

LCJE-NA already has its own home page. The greeting which I mentioned in my introduction shows that it is used also by none-LCJE members. At the ICC meeting in Jerusalem last September it was suggested that one LCJE web-site be made in order to make best use of resources. This should be not only for the LCJE International nor for LCJE-NA, but for all the LCJE chapters. Theresa Newell was asked to investigate how this could best be done. We have talked about this in brief prior to the meeting here and I am sure that Theresa will mention it also in her report.

It is my strong impression that the ICC will be willing to use some of its financial resources for this. It implies that rules and regulations be made and - something which is very important - that we make a quality control of what is placed on the site. One thing is to make information about LCJE accessible and have papers and other information placed at the site. But I find a web site even more important from the point of view of networking - which is what LCJE is all about. LCJE agencies should here have an opportunity to present their evangelistic materials, just there should be links to their homepages and to individual members where they could present themselves and their area of expertise. In this way we

would have a “catalogue” listing tools and expertise in Jewish evangelism and in the context of LCJE.

If we succeeded in establishing such a web page it would be a great way to express what we mean by networking.

Two minefields

The last of the all together five proposed Actions from the General Meeting in 1999 had to do with *Jewish evangelism and democracy in Israel*. It reads:

The General Meeting of the LCJE expresses its gratitude and support for the work of MAC [Messianic Action Committee] in this respect - and calls on its members, friends and churches worldwide to do the same, to be alert to future developments in this respect, and to enlist support as broad as possible for the continued work of MAC.

Those who participated in the Hofstra meeting will remember how this resulted in a discussion among the participants. The President, Ole Chr. Kvarme, clarified that the statement about MAC stands as an expression of the support of the group but is not part of the conference statement. Participants were encouraged to take it back to their organizations and supporters.

Today we find ourselves in a similar position. Member of Knesset Rabbi Moshe Gafni has proposed a law which, if it is approved, will prohibit missionary activity and dissemination of missionary material that includes soliciting to change one’s religion by means of the mail, the fax, the electronic mail or any other instrument of communication. This can be punished with up to three months in jail. At the preliminary reading held prior to the election of the prime minister the Knesset approved it, despite the opposition of the (previous) government.

In its newsletter MAC appeals - as it has done on previous occasions - to those of us outside Israel to protest against such an undemocratic law. But the problem is that there are Messianic Jews in Israel who disagree with MAC and who object to the interference of others outside Israel in internal Israeli affairs - including this one.

Opposing the approach of MAC some of these write, “we believe that it is God’s desire to make this issue of Jesus’ messiahship an ‘internal’ issue in Israel once again, just as it was 2000 years ago. We believe that we will see a revival among our people when the Gospel again becomes truly an ‘intra-Jewish’ affair.” They do not believe that one can - as MAC does - argue on democratic and human rights grounds. They go on to say: “The record shows that when we plead with the government and society on democratic and human rights grounds, those who take our side are mostly the secular and Arab parties. The secular parties are at the forefront of destroying the Jewish character of our country, including expurgating traditional, Biblical values from the schools, and giving away our Biblical homeland, including the Temple Mount, in order to appease terrorists bent on the destruction of our nation. The Arab parties spew hateful rhetoric that often denies the Biblical right of the Jewish people to live in this land.”

So here we are - having to choose sides between two groups of Messianic Jews in Israel. As international coordinator I can live with the fact that we do not have a shared view on this issue. So far we have been able to live with many differences in an LCJE context. *Personally*, I do not understand the objection to MAC. In my view the struggle of MAC makes what we all know very visible, that we do not have one but more Israels to relate to. *Personally*, I still believe that we render the gospel - and Messianic believers in Israel - a service by having a critical approach to the part of Israel which attempts to pass laws against the spread of the gospel. *Personally*, I love Israel so much that it hurts me to see the state of

Israel compared to states like Iran or Irak or South Africa under the previous regime, where apartheid was part of the political system. I therefore, *personally*, believe that when members of the Knesset try to criminalize the proclamation of the gospel for Jews in Israel, we have to take a stand: *against* one part of Israel and *for* another part of Israel.

The other minefield is the present conflict between Jews and Palestinians. Like the rest of the country also Messianic Jews are divided in their view of the peace process, the question of handing over land, the treatment of Palestinians, etc. Among those of us who are involved in Jewish evangelism today there are most certainly quite different attitudes to Zionism, or rather to the way Zionism is given expression in today's Israel, i.e. the State of Israel. So far we have been able to live with these differences in the LCJE context.

Personally, I believe that although we do not want to become a political movement, we who in our churches seek to promote Jewish evangelism cannot avoid making up our minds about what is going on in the Zionist state of Israel today, i.e. to the conflict between Jews and Palestinians.

My point is that it may easily influence our *cause*, namely Jewish evangelism, negatively if we dare not be critical of the State of Israel. Palestinians are also created in God's image. God also loves Palestinians! God has not called us to preach hatred of the Palestinians!

How I wish that we had the courage to say as Lisa Loden does with the following comment on the relationship between Israeli Jewish believers and Palestinian believers:

They are together part of the 'one new man' in Messiah. Both have been reconciled to God and each has received an ongoing ministry of reconciliation that is first of all to be exercised towards each other. Being in the Body of Messiah means more than any ethnic or national identity. Issues of love and reconciliation, ethical behavior and morality are of greater importance than territorial considerations regardless of one's status as occupier or occupied. However important, when taken in light of the implications of Jesus' love, territorial considerations are secondary (The Bible and the Land: An Encounter, Musalaha, Jerusalem, 2000: p. 34).

Less than a month ago, on 16-17 February, more than 160 women: Palestinian Christians, Messianic Jews and others in Israel met for the sixth yearly women's conference held by Musalaha. I can only see this as a light shining in the darkness.

Don't get me wrong. What I am driving at is not an LCJE fellowship where we all think alike or all share the same opinions. That is not what LCJE is and not what it should be. Our fellowship is in the Messiah, in our faith in Jesus, and the mandate which unites us: sharing the Jewish Jesus with the Jewish people. But this does not happen in a vacuum. We therefore have to dare - together - to move into minefields, like to two I have mentioned here. As far as they have something to do with Jewish evangelism.

In my opinion they both do!