

**Twentieth North American LCJE Meeting
Dallas, 24-26 February 2003**

**International LCJE Report 2003
Kai Kjær-Hansen**

Greetings in the name of our Messiah. We are now gathered for the twentieth North American LCJE Meeting. As international coordinator I would like to congratulate you on these 20 years. It is great. No other LCJE chapter can demonstrate a similar level of activity. It bears witness to that which is one of LCJE's objectives, namely that Jewish as well as non-Jewish believers in Jesus can strategize together in order that more Jewish people will hear and consider the gospel.

As at the other meetings over the years, I see both well-known and unknown faces. That is how it should be. And I hope that some of those who take part in an LCJE meeting for the first time may feel at home here and perhaps even join us as members. I also miss some, notably Dr. Louis Goldberg, who passed away last autumn. Few have like he been faithful to LCJE's work and through his papers given us inspiration.

Since 1990 it has been my privilege to participate in these North American LCJE meetings. I have seen how you have shared information and resources on Jewish evangelism and in this way stimulated each other. A good example of networking, initiated in the context of LCJE over the last few years, will be dealt with by Bodil F. Skjøtt. Thanks to the papers given at these meetings, we have now valuable information on what is going on in the Jewish world now and what are the concerns of Jewish evangelism at this time. The presentation of many historical studies indicates a willingness to learn from history. Most of these studies have, which is quite natural, dealt with Jesus-believing Jews and their efforts to take the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to their *brothers* after the flesh. What a shame that we have failed to collect some of these contributions in a publication so that others might benefit from these studies.

Since I am going to make several reports this year in connection with the Helsinki meeting, I will restrict myself to mentioning two matters.

LCJE Helsinki 2003

The countdown to the Seventh International LCJE Conference has begun. At the latest two North American meetings the conference committee, Tuvya Zaretsky, Bodil F. Skjøtt and myself, have been able to discuss and work out a program. In October last year, the three of us met in connection with a conference in Oslo, Norway, when the program was finalized and shortly after published. The program is available on LCJE's website www.lcje.net, and so is the registration form. On the program there are about 50 speakers who are involved in Jewish evangelism. As at earlier conferences the program is a mixture of substantial papers on matters related to Jewish evangelism, reports and glimpses of what is going on in the context of Jewish evangelism around the world – and worship. It is our hope and prayer that this seventh international conference, like the previous ones, may provide us with something for the brain as well as the heart. We are looking forward to a lot of interaction and networking among the participants, so that we may get new inspiration to boldly continue the work: that Jewish people may hear the good news and accept Jesus as their Messiah and Lord.

The conference takes place just outside Helsinki in the days 7-12 August. The conference venue is The Finnish Bible Institute. It is situated in lovely, rural surroundings. We are not inviting people to a 5-star hotel. But we did not do that either at the previous International Conference at Hofstra University on Long Island, New York. We will not be able to fulfill everybody's wish for a room with toilet and bath. But as a compensation we can

offer a genuine Finnish sauna!

And now to an issue of a rather more fundamental nature.

In LCJE we need each other

LCJE is a loose network. It is not an organization. As we have often said: LCJE is what its members make it. We have a president and an international coordinator, but they are not popes who are expected to issue authoritative declarations every time a new problem presents itself. Inside the framework of LCJE there are different opinions and attitudes in a number of areas. So far we have been able to live with these things. What binds us together is the conviction that Jews as well as non-Jews need Jesus for salvation. And we are agreed that in Jewish evangelism Jews as well as non-Jews are needed. They may have different tasks and ministries – and we may not agree completely as to the definition of these tasks. But LCJE cannot live with a situation where the fundamental faith-unity between Jewish and non-Jewish believers is questioned. And it is contrary to the spirit of LCJE to deny or question that we need each other. For mutual inspiration and perhaps also correction.

The reason why I say this is that some Messianic believers – most recently at a meeting in Israel in December 2002 – have expressed views that make me sad. Let me first say that I have no doubt that the Christian mission has made many mistakes. Nor am I in doubt that we are making our own mistakes – whether we are Jews or non-Jews. In my opinion Jewish identity is a legitimate issue for Jesus-believing Jews. But it does not create a fertile ground for a discussion of this when one of the promoters can be quoted for the following: "God's Word came out of Zion, it did not come into Zion". Or when a participant, also a Messianic Jew, says, "We have been given authority by the Jewish Redeemer. We do not need a big brother [Christianity] do determine our faith for us."

I admit that the words have been taken from a short summary from the meeting. So here and now I have no intention of going into clinch with this group. Time will show how things will develop. But it does make me want to underscore that as international coordinator of LCJE I can *not* support such an attitude. In LCJE we need each other! If not, then this body will become an irrelevancy!

In my short paper today I am going to mention how Protestant missionaries in the 19th century came to Zion with God's Word about Jesus the Messiah. They returned to Zion the Word of God that had come out of Zion. They were willing to give up their lives for it. It is true that they made mistakes. But what would have happened if they had not come *to* Zion?

I am looking forward to a stimulating conference where we – Jews and Gentiles – can encourage each other in our work and efforts that more Jewish people may come to faith in Jesus.