

Twenty-fifth North American LCJE Meeting Boston, 7-9 April, 2008

International LCJE Report 2008 Kai Kjær-Hansen

Greetings in the name of our Messiah. We are gathered here “For Zion’s Sake” – and in the name of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the whole world. This meeting is number 25 in the sequence of North American LCJE meetings. As International Coordinator it is my pleasure to congratulate you on this. No other LCJE chapter has anything similar to show. Through these 25 years there has been a lot of networking on Jewish evangelism, and through this quarter century you have collected a copious resource material about the cause that unites us, namely that Jewish people may come to faith in Jesus. In a moment I will return to the first meeting, held in Dallas in 1984, but right now I want to say that I am very pleased that we have young leaders among us. LCJE’s continued existence depends on them.

The fact that we can celebrate a 25-year anniversary here in Boston is also worth marking. It has been my privilege to participate in all North American LCJE meetings since 1990. On this point my memory does not fail me. But I have never before been to Boston for an LCJE meeting. Has LCJE been here before? I had to go to the archives to find the answer. The answer is no! This is the first time LCJE has a meeting in Boston. But of course it is not the first time in Boston that Jewish evangelism is in focus.

I said that I have never before been to Boston. But in my thoughts I have often been in Boston the last couple of years. Or rather: I have concerned myself with individuals in Syria and Jerusalem in the 1820’s, sent out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) – founded in 1810, and indeed, right here in Boston. Some of the first Bible-men or Protestant missionaries to visit Jerusalem in the 1820’s were Americans sent out from Boston. You can read about this in a series of articles which have been, and are being, published in *Mishkan*.

In 1819 it is announced by the American Board: “*Jerusalem* has been selected as a missionary station by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.” It was not to be quite as easy as that. Beirut became the centre for the American missionaries, something I cannot go into here and now.

The first American missionaries to be sent out from Boston to Syria and Palestine were Levi Parsons and Pliny Fisk. This happened in 1819. Both had been born in 1792 here in the state of Massachusetts. Both studied theology in Andover. Parsons was ordained in Park Street Church here in Boston. This church still exists – unlike the older Old South Meeting House, the only two Trinitarian Congregational churches in Boston at that time. It was destroyed in the great fire in 1872. The New Old South Church was soon after built in a different place.

In both churches Jewish evangelism was on the program on Sunday, October 31, 1819. This is only a few days before Parsons and Fisk are due to leave. In the morning both churches hold a communion service with the missionaries. In the afternoon Parsons delivers his farewell sermon in Park Street Church on the Jewish people’s apostasy and restoration in the light of Hosea 3:4-5. In the evening Fisk delivers his farewell sermon in the Old South Meeting House. He chooses as his text Acts 20:22: “And now, behold, I go up bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there.”

So what could be more natural than here at the opening of our meeting in Boston than letting Fisk preach for us. In concluding the sermon he said:

Whether we shall be buried in a watery tomb; whether disease shall bring us to an early grave; whether the suspicion of government or the bigotry of false religion shall shut the door against us; or whether a great and effectual door shall be opened before us, and the word of the Lord have free course and be glorified, as it is with you; whether we shall spend a long life in labours, and die having only sown the seed from which others may reap the harvest, or whether we shall see the truths prevail, and die surrounded by converts from error, who may soothe the bed of death and weep over our tomb; these are points to be decided, not by human sagacity, but by Him, whose Providence calls us, whom we would cheerfully obey, and in whom we would trust the future.

The time has arrived, when we are called by the Providence of God, if its language is not altogether misunderstood, to leave the scenes of our childhood, and the country that is blessed beyond any other country under heaven, with civil and religious privileges; not to find other privileges and friends like them in another land; but to meet the uncertainties and difficulties, attendant on a Christian mission among Turks and Jews.

If any circumstances can affect the mind in health, as it is affected by a near prospect of death, it is perhaps thus affected with the prospect of leaving for life all who have ever been known, and all that has ever been seen. This prospect brings eternity near. It excites solicitude respecting that meeting which shall be an eternal meeting, or a prelude to eternal separation.

How did things turn out for them? Parsons distributed Scriptures in Jerusalem in 1821 – mostly to pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. In 1822 he was again on his way to Jerusalem together with his friend Fisk but Fisk had to bury him in Alexandria. Parsons had not yet turned 30. In the period 1823 to 1825 Fisk was in Jerusalem three times. He died in Beirut in October 1825, not yet turned 33.

So we will let Fisk's Boston sermon and the two Americans' efforts, for which they paid with their lives, be the starting point for a whole-hearted effort in our service – and for our discussions at this LCJE meeting in Boston. They teach us that the worst thing is not to die for the gospel.

Some have preceded us. This is also the case with the first North American LCJE meeting, held in Dallas, 5-6 April 1984.

First North American LCJE meeting 1984

Before the first North American LCJE meeting in Dallas, a tack force for Jewish evangelism had been formed in 1980 in Pattaya, Thailand, where the Lausanne movement had held a conference. In 1983 the second international LCJE meeting was held in Newmarket in England. The meeting in Newmarket called for the setting-up of LCJE-chapters around the world.

This request was realized in North America at the meeting in Dallas in 1984. It was a small meeting but it would prove to have a great importance for LCJE's subsequent history. There were no more delegates present than they can all be mentioned by name:

Jack Estep – Conservative Baptist Home Mission Board (Wheaton, IL)

H.A. Overton – Message to Israel

Moishe Rosen – Jews for Jesus (San Francisco, CA)

Irwin Kolb – Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod Board of Evangelism

Louis Goldberg – (observer) Jewish Studies Department of Moody Bible Institute

Harold Sevenser – American Board of Mission to the Jews (now Chosen People Ministries)

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum – Ariel Ministries (San Antonio, TX)

William Currie – American Messianic Fellowship (Chicago, IL)

Raleigh J. Forrell – Special Ministries of the Home Missions of the Assemblies of God.

If the minutes from the meeting are accurate, it means that there were nine *men* present at the first meeting. And then there was one *woman*. She chaired the sixth session, which had the title “Membership in the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.” Who was this woman? The minutes give the answer: “The discussion was led by Miss Susan Perlman who was at the meeting representing the International Coordinating Committee.”

I wonder if anyone has participated in *all 25* North American LCJE meetings, from the first in 1984 until today? If so, it can only be this “Miss Susan Perlman”.

Altogether there were ten sessions at this two-day meeting. At the next meeting the following year, also in Dallas, the number of participants had increased; now there were 14 men – and one woman. Does anyone want to guess?

Time does not allow me to go into details about what was discussed at the first meeting, but at the meeting that the LCJE “Steering Committee” had in London almost two months later, at the end of May 1984, Susan Perlman presented the report of the first LCJE North American meeting and the following was recorded in the minutes:

“Notice was particularly made of the agreement of the North American Co-ordinating Committee meeting on the following items.

- 1) THAT Messianic Jewish congregations should be included within L.C.J.E.
- 2) THAT we need to address the matters of organisations that stress the need to comfort Israel without taking the gospel to our people.
- 3) THAT some of the formal ‘dialogue’ between Jewish people and evangelicals could be damaging to the cause of the Gospel.
- 4) THAT great care was necessarily to avoid unethical presentations in mission literature.”

Today, at this 25-year anniversary, we cannot say that these four points are obsolete. With the sixtieth anniversary of the state of Israel coming up, it must be appropriate to say that in connection with this 60-year anniversary we shall probably be hearing quite a lot from Christian organizations that are eager to “comfort Israel” – but who also fail to share the gospel with Israel. It is my hope that LCJE members through their organizations also in the future will comfort Israel *primarily* by returning Jesus to the people of Israel.

And now for a short LCJE update.

Short LCJE Update

As most of you know, the eighth international LCJE conference was held in Hungary at Lake Balaton in August 2007. More than 160 individuals participated in the meeting, which had the theme “Jewish Evangelism – Telling the Story”. And many stories were indeed told – even more than those that are gathered in the five conference booklets with a total of 322 pages. These are still for sale. The material is also available on LCJE’s homepage.

An international conference also means election to LCJE’s International Coordinating Committee (ICC) and election of area coordinators. Tuvya Zaretsky was re-elected as president, and Mitch Glaser was elected as new ICC member. In the case of North America, Theresa Newell was replaced by Jim Sibley as coordinator, and Robert Specter was replaced by Kathi Graham as secretary.

A few LCJE chapters had been “dormant” for some years, as one of the reports at the Lake Balaton meeting put it. The greater was the joy when, in the beginning of March, I was informed by

David Zadok, the new LCJE Israel coordinator, that some 40 or so people have registered for the LCJE meeting in March in Israel. More about this LCJE meeting in the next LCJE Bulletin.

There is also good news from South Africa from the new LCJE coordinator, Cecilia Burger. In the list of LCJE members in 2007 prior to the international conference there were two individuals; now there are 15.

The LCJE Bulletin, whose first issue, by the way, was also published in 1984, has been given a new layout. Cindy Osborn has become new editorial assistant and she is also responsible for the design. She is among us at this conference, and although she is relatively new in an LCJE context, this is not the case when it comes to Jewish evangelism. She has worked for the Caspari Center – first in Jerusalem and now in the USA – and she continues to serve as linguistic editor of the journal Mishkan, now published by the Pasche Institute.

At our ICC meeting after the conference at Lake Balaton we had a discussion about how to get more organizations to join LCJE as agency members. These discussions will be continued at our next ICC meeting, which will take place here in Boston, after our conference. Right now I am happy to be able to say that after the Lake Balaton conference two American organizations have become agency members, namely CMJ USA, whose chairman is Theresa Newell, and Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, whose chairman is Kevin Parviz. There is still room for more agency members – also from North America!

At the next ICC meeting, a number of things are on the agenda, among them the preliminary talks about where the ninth International LCJE Conference in 2011 will be placed.

Please pray that we may make the right decisions.

Later at this meeting, our LCJE president, Tuvya Zaretsky, will inform us about an important conference on Jewish evangelism in Germany, scheduled for August this year and arranged by World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

Finally I can say that the third LCJE CEO conference will be held May 18-22, 2009 in France, east of Avignon and north of Marseilles. Further details about this in the LCJE Bulletin and on the homepage.

And let me then conclude by saying: At the first North American LCJE meeting in 1984 it was asked: “How Frequently Should the North American Coordinating Committee Meet? According to the minutes the answer was: “On the question, whether it would be a good thing to continue to meet, the consensus was that it is a good thing.”

It should always be “a good thing” to meet “For Zion’s Sake” – and in the name of Jesus. May this meeting become “a good thing” – an inspiration for all of us in our efforts that more Jewish people may come to faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

Appendix

LCJE HISTORY

NORTH AMERICAN LCJE MEETINGS 1984-2008

01:1984	April 5-6	Dallas, Texas
02:1985	April 10-11	Dallas, Texas
03:1986	April 2-3	Chicago, Illinois
04:1987	March 25-26	Chicago, Illinois
05:1988	April 13-14	Baltimore, Maryland
06:1989	April 4-5	Los Angeles, California
07:1990	March 14-15	St. Louis, Missouri
08:1991	March 27-28	Atlanta, Georgia
09:1992	March 23-25	Los Angeles, California
10:1993	March 22-24	Minneapolis, Minnesota
11:1994	April 11-13	New York, New York
12:1995	February 27- March 1	Las Vegas, Nevada
13:1996	April 15-17	Chicago, Illinois
14:1997	March 3-5	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
15:1998	March 2-4	San Diego, California
16:1999	March 8-10	St. Louis, Missouri
17:2000	March 13-15	Atlanta, Georgia
18:2001	March 12-14	Los Angeles, California
19:2002	March 11-13	Orlando, Florida
20:2003	February 24-26	Dallas, Texas
21:2004	April 26-27	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
22:2005	March 7-9	San Francisco, California
23:2006	March 24-26	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
24:2007	April 16-18	San Antonio, Texas
25:2008	April 7-9	Boston, Massachusetts
26:2009	March 2-4	Phoenix, Arizona