Dear friends,

"Restoration" is the theme which God has placed on our hearts for this year. It describes perfectly what God is doing in Israel. However, if we look across Israel’s northern border, we see an unprecedented slaughter of Christians in Syria, as al-Qaida forces gain control over Christian villages and the killing starts. Men, women and children alike are targeted under the battle cry, “Allahu Akbar.”

An Arab pastor from Beirut recently told me it’s the worst time in the history of Syria for the local Church. But then he also said that in the midst of all these troubles, many Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

The Word of God clearly states the eternal purpose of God for the Syrian people. Isaiah 19:24 promises that a time will come when Assyria will be called “a blessing in the midst of the land.” That is the purpose of God for this land which is suffering so much today. So pray for the Church in Syria as never before.

Here in Israel, we have started the year out with a special month of prayer and fasting in January. It is a joy to see our staff seeking God and we know that He will be found by those who seek Him.

As I write this, I am on my way to Nigeria for a pastor’s conference in Port Harcourt. Later this month, we will welcome 70 Pastors for our own Envision conference here in Jerusalem. I ask that you pray for us, “that utterance may be given to us to speak boldly the mystery of the Gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). We need your prayers above all else.

Thank you for standing with us!

Your co-laborer in Christ,

DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ Executive Director
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WORD FROM JERUSALEM

We will have a report on the Envision 2014 Pastors Conference in Jerusalem, as well as more updates on our Aid Projects. Plus we’ll look deeper into the biblical theme of Restoration.

Learn more about our upcoming events at: www.icejusa.org/events
THERE IS NO QUESTION that we are living in times of restoration. Never before was God so active as in the past century in restoring what needs to be restored. Both Israel and the Church have experienced extended periods of divine restoration. God is surely not at the end of this process, as the Word of God tells us the best is yet to come. These are truly exciting days to be alive.

A God of Restoration
Restoration is certainly a theme for the last days, but it also characterizes God’s work throughout history.

Jesus’ ministry on earth was one of restoration. He restored the health and well-being of countless people in Israel. He desired to restore sinners and lepers back to society. Freedom was restored to the demon possessed as they were set free by the power of his word. After his death on Calvary and then his resurrection, millions and millions of people from all tribes and tongues and nations have been restored to a relationship with their God and Creator. Families have been restored, broken marriages have been mended, many have experienced financial restoration, and even emotionally wounded people have experienced the restoring power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter encourages the Church with these words: “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Peter 5:10 ESV).

So Peter sees for the suffering church a coming period of restoration, while Paul also admonishes the church in Corinth: “Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration...” (2 Corinthians 13:11 ESV).

Restoration needs to be part of our personal agenda. God is a God of restoration and no matter how difficult our circumstances may be, we should never lose our trust that He wants to restore all things. Restoration is the essence of the cross of Calvary, where a powerful exchange took place from ‘minus’ to ‘plus,’ so to speak. Think and pray about how you can bring the restoring power of the blood of Jesus to the people around you. Aim for restoration!

Restoration of the Church
A powerful process of restoration can be seen in operation in the true Church today. It was triggered centuries ago, when, after the sad and dark era of the Middle Ages, God started to restore important truths to the Church through the Protestant Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries.

In this time, the Church rediscovered the authority of the Scriptures after believers had been discouraged for centuries from reading the Bible and rather were told to trust the priests and Christian sages for the correct interpretation. In fact for most a Bible did not even exist in their native language, as it was available only in Latin or other ancient tongues. A personal relationship with Christ became almost impossible, as the priests used the Church not as a vehicle to bring men to God but rather as one to financially exploit and control them.

With the Reformation, the Bible became available to ordinary believers in their own language. For instance, Martin Luther translated the Word of God from Hebrew and Greek into an ordinary non-liturgical language - German. Its distribution received a significant boost when Johannes Gutenberg invented the first printing presses in Europe. The newly translated Bible quickly became accessible to countless believers all across Germany.

Just a few years later, France received its first printed Bibles in French. The same took place in England when King James I commissioned an authorized English translation of the two Testaments just over 400 years ago.

In the following centuries, the Word of God became widely available and biblical truths were restored to the Church. Righteousness by faith and not by works; the priesthood of all saints rather than the rule of a corrupt clergy; baptism of those who believe rather than of new-born babes - these are just a few of the theological discoveries which came out of the Reformation. Yet, these were not new doctrines but ancient truths of the Bible, which were restored to the Church.

The Puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries rediscovered God’s covenant faithfulness with the Jewish people and foresaw a restoration of Israel long before there was a political Zionist movement. The following centuries saw the restoration of the great missionary
movements. From the 18th century onward, Moravian missionaries would leave for Greenland, William Carey to India, Hudson Taylor to China, and David Livingstone to Africa.

In the 20th century, the Church saw the restoration of the gifts of the Spirit, which impacted even the mainline churches through the Charismatic movement. Along with it came a rediscovery of the five-fold ministry. The list goes on....

That God wants to restore the Church even further is beyond doubt. The Apostle Paul declares: “...just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25–27).

The Word of God declares that at the return of Christ, the Church will be in a most glorious state – like a bride made ready for her bridegroom. This makes me believe that the most glorious spiritual condition of the Church is still ahead of us. What a great hope we have!

Restoration through the Church
It is a fact that without the transforming power of the Church, our Western societies would not be what they are today. Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM, documents in his book “Transformation” how the reformation of John Calvin and Martin Luther had a major impact in shaping European culture.

Luther and his preachers told people that whatever they do, they should do so to the glory of God. Whether you are a carpenter or a blacksmith, you can do the work of God by carrying out your work for His glory. He took sanctity out of the cathedrals and brought it into the homes and workbenches of the believers. Out of this emerged what became known in coming centuries as the German work ethic.

John Calvin challenged the rulers of Geneva over usury, as money lenders asked for interest rates of up to 60 percent. Calvin called for a fixed interest rate of no more than 4 percent, which was implemented and became the start of the Swiss banking system. Calvin also called for every believer to own a watch so they “should not waste God’s time.” His summons gave Switzerland its reputation for punctuality and built the foundation for its world renowned watch industry.

The Indian philosopher Vishal Mangalwadi documents in his book “The Legacy of William Carey” how that great English missionary transformed India in a way that is still felt to this day.

Today, close to half of the world’s Jewish population is residing in Israel, compared to only 0.5% in 1889

It is widely recognized today that without the revival of the Wesley brothers, England would have experienced a massive social revolution similar to the French revolution, with its horrible human toll. Many more examples could be mentioned of the transforming power of the Gospel over society.

Today we see a similar development taking place in Africa, where the growing church of Nigeria is impacting that nation in a significant way. We have witnessed this as well in the Ivory Coast, where high-ranking politicians have a pastoral council helping them to make godly decisions for their nation.

There is no area which can be excluded from the transforming power of the Kingdom of God, even today.

Restoration for Israel
The most widely covered restorative theme in the Bible relates to Israel. God declares through the prophet Jeremiah: “...I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord...” (Jeremiah 29:14, ESV).

Nearly every Hebrew prophet foresaw a time when God would restore the fortunes of the Jewish people following a long period of exile, destitution and suppression. Indeed, they would return from all countries where God had scattered them (Jeremiah 32:37). He would plant them back in the land of their fathers (Jeremiah 24:6). They would rebuild the ancient cities (Isaiah 61:4). They would turn the desert into a blossoming garden (Isaiah 51:3). God would increase them in numbers (Ezekiel 37:26). And most importantly, God would restore His people not only physically but also spiritually (Ezekiel 36:24ff).

In the second half of the 19th century, the Jewish people entered into a period of divine favor and restoration as Jews mainly from Europe began longing to “return to Zion.” As a result, the first Jewish settlements were established in Ottoman-ruled Palestine.

In the ensuing decades, many more Jews would come until in 1948 the State of Israel was established. This reminded many of the question posed by Isaiah long ago: “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?” (Isaiah 66:8 ESV).

In May 1948, the resounding answer was “Yes!” The German theologian Karl Barth later proclaimed: “Now we can read it in the newspapers: God keeps His promises.”

Today, close to half of the world’s Jewish population is residing in Israel, compared to only 0.5% in 1889. They have turned the State of Israel into a hub of technology and innovation. Israel’s ancient cities are not only rebuilt, but they are larger and more beautiful than ever before.

But this process of restoration has not ended yet, as many of the promises of God for Israel are still outstanding. The Hebrew prophets foresaw that God will one day pour out His Spirit of grace and supplication upon His people and they would look upon him whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10). A people which Moses and the prophets described as rebellious and with an uncircumcised heart, will receive a new heart of flesh and will be filled by the Spirit of God (Jeremiah 31:31). This is exactly what the Psalmist declares: “…the set time to favor Zion has come.” It is the time of restoration.

Restoration in Troublesome Times
Recently, somebody told me: “Jürgen, you have a far too optimistic outlook on our world, as the Bible speaks clearly about great judgments, apostasies and tribulations to come.” The truth is, the Bible speaks about both. It speaks about the judgment
of the nations (Joel 3), but also about the outpouring of His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32). And both will take place before the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

It is true that the Word of God does speak about the great falling away and apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4), but it also talks about God preparing an end-time church without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:25-27). It speaks about five foolish virgins with empty vessels, but also about five wise virgins with vessels filled with oil (Matthew 25:1-13). The question is, therefore, not so much which eschatology you hold to, but more about on which side do you want to be?

It would indeed be foolish to ignore the difficult times which the Word of God foresees ahead. Looking on our world today, one cannot help seeing the dark signs on the horizon. But, in the midst of all the chaos, God is doing a marvelous work. The Church is increasing every year in staggering numbers. Israel is back in its land and thriving as a successful nation.

This is what Isaiah foresaw: “For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you” (Isaiah 60:2).

He calls upon us and upon Israel to arise and let our lights shine in a world which increasingly is covered with darkness.

In the years ahead, the gulf between light and darkness will increase. Gray areas will become either black or white. Luke-warmness will not be tolerated anymore. We are called to make up our mind to be either hot or cold.

We purposefully chose “Restoration” as the theme for this year’s Feast of Tabernacles as we believe that there is great hope for both Israel and the Church. There is still great hope of restoration for you, your family, your city, and your nation.

As God is restoring Israel, He is calling upon the Church to have an active part in it. This is why we help with Aliyah and why we support Holocaust survivors. But this is also why we bring Jews and Arabs together to declare to them the great and glorious future God has for this region. It is the time of restoration. Join with us to fulfill that calling. Make a purposeful decision today to expect, hope, and work for restoration. As a child of God, your personal agenda needs to be an agenda of restoration. Think of what you can do in the sphere where God has placed you to bring restoration to the people and situations around you. Aim for restoration!

**NEW IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING TO ISRAEL IN 1947**

Dr. Jürgen Bühler is an ordained minister and trained physicist who serves as Executive Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
MOST JEWISH FAMILIES IN ISRAEL come together for a traditional Shabbat meal on Friday evening. The dinner begins by lighting the Shabbat candles and blessing the bread and wine. These venerable customs lie at the heart of Jewish life.

Thus, the Christian Embassy has been privileged to help the elderly residents at our Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors celebrate every Shabbat in a warm family atmosphere. It is part of what makes this assisted-living home so unique.

Shabbat at the Haifa Home begins with these same time-honored traditions each week. Everyone has a task to do, whether setting tables, lighting candles, or serving food. At one end of the dining hall, large doors open to access a small synagogue donated by the ICEJ.

Everyone dresses nicely for the occasion. One of the ladies lights the candles while a gentleman offers the blessing over the wine and challah bread. Then Shimon Sabag, director of the home, shares a message from the Torah portion, and the residents of the Haifa Home enter their Shabbat rest.

For four years now, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been creating a comfortable and loving place for aging Holocaust survivors in financial difficulty to live out their lives in dignity, with all their needs met. In 2013, its third year of operation, the Haifa Home was a bustling community of activity, with local Israelis, and many from abroad coming to see the wonderful home and meet its unforgettable residents. Here is a review of some of the happenings at the Haifa Home in 2013.

Trees of Life
The year began with a special ceremony on January 27th, the date set by the United Nations to remember the Holocaust. This time, the commemorations coincided with Tu B’shvat, the annual Jewish Arbor Day. So the Haifa Home residents lit a flame to recall the victims and heroes of the Holocaust, while also planting trees on their grounds as a symbol of hope for the future.

Expanding the Home
Thanks to ICEJ funding, this was another year of expansion at the Haifa Home, as numerous new apartments in the immediate neighborhood were acquired and renovated to house needy survivors. There were workers and volunteers busy with painting walls and stairwells, fixing lights and plumbing, installing sinks and cabinets, planting gardens, and so much more. The Haifa Home now takes up almost an entire city block and has over 70 full-time residents. Plans are underway to add more apartments in the coming year to house another 20 residents.

Exceptional Visitors
The Haifa Home welcomed an array of
special visitors from near and far over the past year. For instance, a group of 14 German high school students visited the home to engage with elderly Jews whose own youth was ravaged by the Nazis. The students listened to the survivors' stories and sang Hebrew songs as the residents joyfully clapped along. One young German girl handed out roses to each resident as an act of contrition.

Another unusual group of visitors were Iranians now living and studying in London. Although leaders of their native country issue threats to annihilate Israel and deny the Holocaust, these Iranian students are now Christians, thus they honor the Jewish people as still chosen of God. They came to learn about Israel and to hear first-hand stories from Jews who somehow had survived the Nazi atrocities. An ICEJ team was there to mediate this incredible moment of reconciliation.

The most colorful visitors were undoubtedly a group of Christians from Papua New Guinea. The Holocaust survivors were excited to meet these exotic guests and greatly enjoyed the cultural treats of beautiful native songs and dances.

There also were many local visitors that heard about the home and stopped by to meet the residents. On one occasion, members of an area Eastern Orthodox church came by with gifts and refreshments. Local units of IDF soldiers and police trainees regularly showed up to volunteer their time and services. This included a group of Druze soldiers. On another occasion, Tel Aviv University students visited the Home and promptly organized a fundraising event back on campus.

**Day to Remember**

On the day each April when Israel remembers the Holocaust, the Haifa Home hosted its own moving ceremony attended by many dignitaries, IDF soldiers, and the children and grandchildren of survivors, as well as the survivors themselves. Yudit Setz of ICEJ AID was invited to speak and told the survivors: "I embrace you today in the name of millions of Christians worldwide."

**New Kitchen**

This past year a new kitchen was built on the side of the community dining hall, which was also expanded to seat more people as the number of residents and guests grows. The new kitchen is fitted with commercial-grade equipment and provides a more efficient area for serving all the diners. The ICEJ’s Austrian branch provided generous funding for this kitchen upgrade.

**Radiating Beauty**

For the second year the Haifa Home was involved in a unique beauty contest for Holocaust survivors, co-sponsored by the ICEJ. The beauty pageant last August attracted much media attention, as an audience of over 2,000 people, many fellow Holocaust survivors, watched 16 contestants vie for the title of Miss Holocaust Survivor 2013. Arriving in limousines, the contestants were attended to backstage by beauticians and hairdressers volunteering their talents to make the ladies look their best. But it was inner beauty which counted most, and 94 year-old Shoshanna Kolmer, a new resident of the Haifa Home, took the crown. A survivor of Auschwitz, she shared her story of unimaginable suffering with rare courage and grace.

**Little Things Count**

There is a full calendar of community activities for residents at the Haifa Home, including arts and crafts, exercises, music, dancing, Torah studies, board games and outings. The ICEJ surprised the residents this past year with a large screen television in the dining hall, so they can now enjoy movie nights complete with popcorn - made in their new popcorn machine.

**Impacting Israelis**

The Haifa Home has attracted ample media attention, with Israeli newspapers and television highlighting the uniqueness of the facility and the vital support of the Christian Embassy. The foreign press has also taken notice and a documentary film was produced about the Haifa Home last year.

As the home has become more widely known, the Haifa community has embraced it as their own. A local salon has been offering residents hair and beauty treatments at little or no cost. Restaurants have provided free meals, and businesses have sponsored outings. The home held an open house on Independence Day last May and attracted hundreds of Israeli visitors. There also has been regular interaction with students of all ages who perform songs, provide friendship, and teach computer skills to the Holocaust survivors.
FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS just four years ago, the ICEJ’s Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa has grown into a thriving assisted-living community which houses and cares for over 70 residents. As we enter 2014, plans are underway to expand the facility into other nearby buildings to provide apartments for another 20 residents, and enhance the services for the survivors.

Thus the Haifa Home has to be considered a great success, as it has not only provided urgently needed care for dozens of needy survivors of the Shoah, but also many more Israelis are now aware of the great well-spring of Christian love and support for their nation.

Yet to sustain this unique initiative will take a great commitment from our friends and supporters. The residents of the Haifa Home are now dependent on us to help them live out their lives with dignity.

Expanding the Home
Going forward, we are seeking to expand the Haifa Home to take in more needy Holocaust survivors. Roughly one third of the 190,000 Holocaust survivors in Israel today are impoverished, struggling with illness, or living alone. So an assisted-living facility specifically for poor or ill Holocaust survivors was urgently needed, and that makes the Haifa Home the only retirement home of its kind in Israel.

As the Haifa Home began operating, property owners in the neighborhood realized the great benefits it was bringing to worthy survivors in need, so they started offering to sell us their apartments on the same block. Currently, a building across the street owned by a fellow Holocaust survivor has been made available over coming years to house survivors. It has seven apartments that will be used to accommodate another 15 residents, and extensive renovations are already underway to turn them into comfortable flats.

Another building at the other end of the street has enough apartments to house 10 more survivors, and it is also being refurbished. Still other apartments nearby are opening up and will be fixed up in the months ahead.

Meantime, people from throughout the Haifa region are coming to volunteer their time to assist with the renovations, saving untold amounts of money. This includes area policemen, soldiers, students and many more.

These added apartments are so needed, as some of the survivors slated to move in have come from living on the streets.

To acquire these additional apartment buildings and complete the renovations, we need to raise $1,000,000 over the coming year. So we need your help!

Maintaining the Home
The Haifa Home provides residents with assisted-living housing, meals, medical care, in-home care-givers, community activities, and a warm family environment. Meeting the ongoing costs involved in caring for the residents is a continual challenge. Some pay what they can afford towards their living expenses, but in most cases this comes to very little.

The operating costs of the Haifa Home for 2014 will be an estimated $85,000 per month. This includes maintenance, utilities, services, salaries, and other...
recurring expenses. The Christian Embassy contributes towards these costs every month and has developed a specific program that provides us with steady income to help run the home.

Through our ‘Adopt a Holocaust Survivor’ program, you can help cover the monthly costs of a resident at the Haifa Home. You will be uniquely connected to a survivor with their own story of tragedy and triumph. We ask that you commit to a Holocaust survivor in any amount for a minimum of six months. You can write for more details on how to adopt a resident of the Haifa Home at: icejusa@icejusa.org.

Feeding Survivors
About 100 Holocaust survivors are fed each day at the Haifa Home, including the residents and other survivors in the neighborhood. In addition, our Israeli partner in running the home, Shimon Sabag of the charity Yad Ezer L’Haver, provides daily meals to another 400 Holocaust survivors in Haifa through a home delivery service. Naomi, a retired kindergarten teacher who now volunteers to deliver meals to survivors, insists many of them would be begging on the streets without this food.

A fleet of seven vans are used to pick up the food donated by nearby bakeries, hotels, banquet halls, IDF bases and company cafeterias, and then distribute it to the homes of area survivors. The ICEJ has helped purchase some of these delivery vans, which are also used to transport disabled survivors to medical appointments and other activities.

To support the Haifa Home and all that it does for Holocaust survivors, you can donate on-line today by visiting:
http://www.icejusa.org/expanding-haifa-home

SURVIVOR PROFILE: SHOSHANNA ALON

A Holocaust survivor originally from Austria, Shoshanna Alon lives in a decent neighborhood in Haifa but her high medical bills recently forced her to start coming to the Haifa Home for lunch. Yet when a severe winter storm hit Israel in mid-December, she was stuck at home.

So Haifa Home director Shimon Sabag sent a team to deliver her food and blankets. But, when they arrived, they were shocked to find Shoshanna living in wretched conditions. Garbage and clutter were piled to the ceiling. Cats and cobwebs were everywhere, and she had lived with no water or electricity for two years due to unpaid bills. Shoshanna showered by pouring cups of water over her head from a neighbor’s spigot.

Shoshanna did not seem to mind the decrepit state of her apartment. “It is better than the ghetto,” she insisted. “My father and mother died in the Shoah, so why should I complain about no water.”

She does not have a mental disorder, just a strong fear of starving again like she did as a child in the Holocaust. Psychiatrists say it is a common fear among many survivors. So she hoarded everything, and never threw anything away.

“This was the most difficult case I have ever seen,” said Shimon. “The stench was overpowering and this dear lady was already sick from a medical ailment. I knew that I could not go home and rest in a good bed at night while a woman who had endured the Holocaust lived like this.”

Shimon convinced Shoshanna to move out temporarily while his team cleaned and renovated her flat. Volunteers came from area youth centers, IDF bases and police stations, and even fellow survivors pitched in. They literally shoveled mounds of debris out of broken windows into the yard two floors below. In all, 20 tons of refuse were carted off in eight truck loads.

Shoshanna now insists on moving back into her own home. The renovations are almost complete and she can return soon. But Shimon will deliver hot meals to her home every day, and a volunteer will come once a week to keep the place clean. The ICEJ will also join with Shimon to cover her electric and water bills, which had mounted to thousands of shekels.

The entire Haifa area has heard of Shoshanna’s story and Shimon’s heart for helping others. But he always gives the credit to the ICEJ as his steadfast partner in all his endeavors. “The whole North talks about the Christian Embassy,” he says.
Last November, I had the grace and favor from the Lord to minister at the Dunamis International Gospel Center in Abuja, Nigeria. And I do say grace and favor because of what the Holy Spirit is doing through the life and ministry of senior pastors Drs. Paul and Becky Enenche! It is truly remarkable!

Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, was built mainly in the 1980s. Thus, some parts of this city of three million people have a very modern look. It is a ‘planned city,’ making it even more fitting for the Dunamis International Church to be located there, as the Enenches have a very clear sense of destiny in God – which is reflected in everything they do.

The church was planted in 1996 with a handful of people and has since grown to tens of thousands with its own Dunamis TV station and more than 100 sister churches worldwide. The ‘mother church’ in Abuja has five services on Sundays with about 8000-9000 people attending each one. In addition, there are more than 50 other local Dunamis churches in Abuja alone, some as large as the main church.

The calling of God on Dunamis is clear and everything is done with a spirit of excellence. The character of God is truly honored in this African-based ministry. And most importantly, the Lord is constantly confirming His word with salvations, signs and wonders, healings and miracles, and a very strong presence of God in the services.

What a privilege then for me to share God’s plans and purposes concerning Israel as a guest speaker at the 2013 Kingdom, Power and Glory world conference.

Pastors Paul and Becky Enenche are standing with Israel unashamedly, embracing God’s call to bless the Jewish people, and wanting to connect Nigerians to Israel. Dr. Paul is a Board member of ICEJ-Nigeria and a speaker at our Feast of Tabernacles, thus making it even more joyful for me to minister at this conference.

The main hall could only hold about 5,000 delegates, but with some 14 overflow halls and people standing outside in front of huge screens, the total attendance was 40,000.

Again, I could see – and feel – how today the followers of Jesus in the Southern hemisphere are hungering for the fire of the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God in every area. They also have the spiritual understanding and willingness to bless and pray for Israel and to stand with her! And again the question arose in my heart: What is the true spiritual state of the Church in Europe and the Western world today? Is it really moving forward – or actually receding?
NEW DOORS OPEN IN USA VISIT

Recently, ICEJ Executive Director Jürgen Bühler and International Director Juha Ketola travelled to the United States for a series of meetings and ministry opportunities at key churches in the Dallas and Los Angeles areas, organized by ICEJ-USA national director Susan Michael. While in Texas, they had the opportunity to be welcomed at the noted Gateway Church by Pastor Robert Morris, they ministered at Cornerstone Community Church with Pastor Josh Richards, and they addressed a large gathering of pastors and apostolic leaders from around the world. In southern California, the team was hosted by the respected Evangelical figure Dr. Jack Hayford, who introduced them to numerous influential church leaders in the region. Dr. Hayford brought Jürgen to speak at his former congregation, Church on the Way, and also arranged an appearance before “Nexus Israel,” a group of prominent Christian and Jewish leaders from the Greater Los Angeles area who meet regularly about common ways to support Israel. Jürgen also ministered at The Rock Forum, pastored by Jerry Dirmann, while Juha was invited to speak at Tree of Life Church, where Javier Kosacki is pastor. A number of other meetings were held with key leaders of the Four Square denomination formerly headed by Dr. Hayford, where they briefed them on ways that they can stand in support of Israel.

ARISE IMPACTS POLISH YOUTH

ICEJ Arise Director Jani Salokangas paid a visit to southern Poland for the second time this year to take part in the country’s largest annual Evangelical youth conference. As the featured speaker, Jani challenged the hundreds of young adults to live courageously by keeping their aim towards God. Many young people gave their hearts to Christ and embraced a new vision for their lives. Jani also travelled in recent months to Germany for a series of meetings to encourage the young generation there to stand for Israel.
TWO MONTHS after the islands of the central Philippines were struck by the powerful typhoon Haiyan last November, there are still areas in its path struggling to recover from its devastating force. But thanks to the generous response of our friends and supporters, the ICEJ has been there as part of a unique Christian-Israeli joint relief effort to bring badly needed aid to the local residents.

After co-sponsoring an initial team of Israeli and German doctors to assist in some of the hardest hit regions, we decided to help fund a second emergency aid team which has set up another mobile clinic to treat beleaguered Filipino communities.

The special Christian-Israeli relief effort was first launched by the ICEJ’s German branch after the Israeli consul general in Munich requested Christian help in sponsoring an Israeli aid mission to the Philippines the day after the typhoon struck. ICEJ-Germany not only began collecting funds for the effort, but also found German doctors and nurses who were willing to go and volunteer their time and services in the impacted areas. The Gospel Forum in Stuttgart together with the non-profit Shai Fund (co-founded by former ICEJ staffer Charmaine Hedding) joined the effort, while the ICEJ branch in the Philippines worked quickly to organize accommodations, transport and the cooperation of local churches.

The German medical personnel arrived within days together with members of the Israeli relief organization IsraAID and were assigned by the World Health Organization to open an emergency medical clinic in the heavily-impacted western coastline of Leyte. By the end of November, that initial Christian-Israeli relief team had completed their mission in the town of Ipił and handed...
over the clinic to local doctors. During their
stay, the nine-member team was able to treat
200 people per day for various wounds and
diseases, and to distribute food and other aid
to 1750 displaced persons.

A second team was then dispatched to Ormoc,
one of the largest towns on Leyte’s western
cost. They have been busy assisting several
local medical clinics in the area around the
town and have so far treated 800 people for
various medical needs related to the storm.
Though largely forgotten in the news, the
situation in the area is still grave and a third
Christian-Israeli aid team is being planned to
help the needy people of the Philippines!

Recently, the Word From Jerusalem was able to
speak with several members of the German
Christian medical teams that had volunteered
for the Philippines mission.

“It was only in the field in Ipil that we realized
the scale of destruction from the typhoon,”
said Heike Krämer, a 31 year-old medical
doctor completing his internship. “So many
children were affected. There is a lack of
medical care and of the bare necessities.
They lost everything entirely. Television
pictures can’t really depict the scale of the
catastrophe.”

“We just did what was important and needed,
especially to help the children. We treated
many injuries, infections and wounds. Some
of the parents just needed reassurance that
their children would be okay,” Heike added.

“When we finally arrived to treat people, it was
positive stress,” explained Michael Gösele,
a nurse. “We had Filipino interpreters who
were medically trained that was very helpful
and worked fantastic.”

Michael recalled two men who fell from the
roof of their emergency clinic while they were
trying to repair it, both suffering deep wounds
in their arms. So the team treated them with
first aid and took them to a local hospital. But
the next day they came back to get tetanus
shots because the local hospital had run out.

Simeon Gleich, a German engineering
student who joined the second team, arrived
several weeks after the disaster, but still found
total devastation.

“There were destroyed cottages everywhere,”
he said. “Most of the people lost their homes,
their jobs and they don’t have money to buy
food and drinking water. It is a problem to get
clean water and the power supply system is
still down. When the sun sets down it is dark
everywhere.”

Simeon said the first rush of severely
injured persons was over but they were still
vaccinating people, and treating fractures,
abscesses, infections, colds and fevers.
The tropical heat was trying for all as the
wounded waited in long lines.

“The positive attitude of the Filipino people,
despite all the hardships, really impressed
me,” Simeon noted.

He added that he also “was very much
impressed by our Christian brothers and
sisters in the Philippines. Jesus shines
through them! They are full of incredible love
and hospitality. Without them, nothing we
did would have been possible. The Israelis
also were very excited about the network of
local Christians who helped us. We all really
became friends.”

“It was fantastic to work together with the
Israelis and the local Christian churches,”
Heike agreed. “I learned a lot. As Germans
we plan very much – while the Israelis just
get going and do something. It is a super
combination when we meet in the middle.
We very much complemented each other –
and laughed a lot together.”

“We had a really good relationship with the
Filipino Christians from local churches in
Cebu,” concurred Michael. “They stood with
us, encouraged us and prayed for us. Several
Filipino sisters also helped us in practical
terms, like driving us and calling us every
evening to ask how we are doing. We felt like
members of one big family.”
IN LATE DECEMBER, the Christian Embassy was privileged to sponsor the aliyah flights of another group from the Bnei Menashe community in India who were making their way home to Israel after 2700 years in exile. There were many emotions and tears as these latest Bnei Menashe arrivals reunited with family, people and homeland.

The group of 38 Bnei Menashe landed at Ben-Gurion Airport the day after Christmas, looking equally exhausted and elated at the end of their long journey from the remote province of Mizoram, in northeast India.

For 76-year old Yaffa Hlondo, a widow, it was a particularly moving moment. Her husband had long dreamed of making aliyah, but he passed away last year while still on Indian soil. Yet when Yaffa walked into the arrivals hall at Ben-Gurion Airport, she was welcomed by her son and grandson - the latter dressed in the uniform of an elite IDF infantry unit. The family had been separated for the past seven years, but now was reunited in Israel.

"We have been waiting eagerly to come home to our ancestral lands," said Elyashiv Khupchwang, a young Bnei Menashe father. "I am so proud of this moment and feel such peace about finally making it home."

Elyashiv, 28, was especially relieved to be in the Jewish homeland due to the harassment he has faced back in India for deciding to publicly embrace his Israelite heritage. He says many of his friends turned their backs on him, and even some of his relatives.

"Some would laugh at me on the street, and call me 'the circumcised.' Even in school, they made fun of me – not just my friends, but my teachers and even..."
the principal. They would say, ‘Look, it’s the Old Testament coming,’” recounted Elyashiv. “My connection to Judaism was strong but still, it is very hard to win over people who are all the time snickering around you.”

“India is a great country and Mizoram is a beautiful and peaceful land, but Israel is our home. This is the place we should be,” he assured.

“We are very thankful for all the Christians who have helped make this happen,” Elyashiv added.

“This was a long and tiring journey, but the enthusiasm of their arrival is overwhelming. We all feel blessed to be a part of this prophetic fulfillment,” said Michael Freund, the chairman of Shavei Israel, who was accompanying the group on their flights to Tel Aviv.

Freund is coordinating the return of the Bnei Menashe while the ICEJ has committed to sponsoring their airline tickets. Three more flights are scheduled to arrive by the end of January, bringing to 160 the total number of Bnei Menashe newcomers we have assisted in this latest wave of aliyah.

The Bnei Menashe trace their descent back to the tribe of Manasseh, one of the ten lost tribes of Israel exiled by the Assyrian empire in 722 BC. Despite being cut off from the Jewish mainstream for so many centuries, they retained their distinct 'Israelite' identity, observing Shabbat and keeping kosher, among other traditions.

Some 2,000 Bnei Menashe are now living in Israel, with 7,000 still in northeast India awaiting their turn to come home to Zion.

Last year, the ICEJ paid for the flights of a group of 274 Bnei Menashe olim who were allowed by Israeli authorities to move to Israel. All of those new immigrants are now in their own apartments and over 80% of the adults have found work. So recently, the Israeli cabinet gave its approval for another 900 Bnei Menashe to make the journey over the next 15 months.

This latest group will spend the next several months in an absorption center, where they will continue to take Hebrew and Judaism classes, as well as receive job training. By summer, they will move into permanent housing in Upper Nazareth and take up jobs, freeing up the absorption center to accommodate the next group of Bnei Menashe arrivals.

“The bureaucratic, logistical and financial challenges of this particular aliyah are enormous,” explained Freund. "But, thankfully, we live in a day when Jews and Christians are partnering together in the return to Zion precisely as the prophet Isaiah foretold in chapter 49:22. And we are grateful to the Christian Embassy for your sponsorship of the flights, and for your love and prayers and support."

Please join with us in this historic return of the Bnei Menashe to Israel. It is Bible prophecy unfolding before our very eyes and you can be a part. For $1,000 (or €730), you can sponsor the flights for a member of a Bnei Menashe family. ☝️

Make an on-line donation today at: www.icejusa.org/donate/bnei-menashe
THREE PRETTY LADIES enter the room giggling. With all the sounds of laughter, one would never guess these women are deaf. Only their vigorous hand motions give it away.

Nida, Rula and Chitam met recently with an ICEJ delegation to thank Christian supporters from around the world for the support they have received through our ministry. Each one studies at the Institute for the Advancement of Deaf Persons in Israel, which empowers and trains the deaf and hearing impaired. The Christian Embassy has been involved over recent years in promoting their independence and integration into Israeli society.

Our encounter was both fascinating and beautiful. The three ladies grew up in communities where only Arabic was spoken, while the interpreter spoke Hebrew. Normally, they could not converse. But since the entire region has adopted a uniform sign language, they have no problem communicating. With the interpreter’s help, we were able to converse with ease.

Nida first came to the Institute with friends who tagged along for support, as she was scared and embarrassed. Today, she is a different person. The program transformed her into a self-assured, independent woman who has learned to view her deafness as an opportunity for personal growth. She is now herself a teacher at a center for the deaf in Nazareth.

Chitam also teaches and even started a support group for deaf women in her city. But her childhood was tougher than one would expect. No one cared enough to teach her to sign, so she was communicating only with close family on a basic level until she was 15. Then she was introduced to sign language and started venturing out from home to meet new people.

Rula also lacked confidence when she first came to the Institute. She was afraid to travel alone and was very dependent on her husband. She feared not hearing the sounds of traffic or announcements at public transport stations. But with her husband’s encouragement, she was able to join the Institute’s empowerment program and today she travels to its offices in Tel Aviv all by herself.

“The women often lack courage in communicating,” Rula tells us via the interpreter. “They come to me for encouragement and with questions about raising children. I’m so grateful for the professional training I have received here!”

Thanks to the support of Christians worldwide, these deaf ladies and many more like them can join the program and use their new-found confidence and skills to contribute to their respective communities.

Among its many social initiatives, ICEJ AID seeks to assist those with disabilities and special needs in Israeli society, raising public awareness and minimizing the gaps in opportunity for them. With the help of Christians like you, we can make a difference in many deserving lives!

Make your donation today at: www.icejusa.org/aid

RESTORING CONFIDENCE TO THE DEAF
BY ESTERA WIEJA
IT WAS A LONG, sad farewell for Ariel Sharon, the Israeli military legend turned politician of great consequence. Israel’s eleventh prime minister had lain in a coma for the past eight years. Many had written their eulogies long ago – some adoring, some scathing, but most with the deep respect befitting a man who had helped define his time.

Sharon finally passed away on January 11, 2014, after failing to regain consciousness following a massive stroke that prematurely ended his premiership in early 2006. Back then, he was poised to win re-election as prime minister by an expected landslide. His campaign platform was simple. He reminded Israelis that he was one of the few giants left from the nation’s founding generation and asked them to simply trust him in drawing the final borders of Israel.

Short in stature but casting a giant shadow – such were the contradictions of Ariel Sharon. In his long and eventful military and public career, Sharon carved out a complex legacy that left everyone with something to either love or hate. The Israeli Right reverred his aggressiveness on the battlefield, while the Left recoiled when it seemed he went too far. The settlers considered him the ‘father’ of their movement, only to turn on him when he forcibly uprooted some of their communities. Meanwhile, the doves drove him out of government and wrote him off for good, only to turn back to Sharon when they needed their own father figure to steer the nation through the bloodiest of intifadas.

All Israelis admired his bravery and military genius. He was severely wounded and left for dead in the critical Battle for Latrun in 1948. He repeatedly outfoxed, outflanked and overran larger Arab forces in Israel’s wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973. He was a pioneer in the fledgling field of counter-terrorism. His military maneuvers and strategies are still studied and taught in war colleges worldwide.

Leveraging his storied army career, Brig. Gen. Sharon entered politics and immediately made an impact, playing midwife to two small right-wing factions that would unite to become the powerful Likud party. But after spearheading the disastrous venture into Lebanon in 1982, Sharon was forced to resign as defense minister and had little hope of ever rising again. Yet he fought to defend his name in a prolonged libel suit against TIME and slowly charted his comeback. It ended in a remarkable triumph, as he won a sweeping victory in 2001 amid the carnage of Oslo’s collapse.

Once in high office, many of his conservative followers expected Sharon to stick to a hawkish agenda. But noting that “things look different from up here,” Sharon gradually made a turn to the center.

While squelching the armed Palestinian uprising, he won re-election in 2003 and proceeded to carry out the platform of his opponent, building a security fence around Judea/Samaria and evacuating all Jewish settlers and soldiers from Gaza. The Right screamed betrayal, the Left belatedly embraced him. And then came the stroke that finally felled the man so invincible in battle.

If you asked Sharon who he really was, he would say that he was first a farmer, and only then a soldier, and lastly a politician. I know this because I once had the opportunity to ask him. He loved the Land of Israel and always returned to ranching after every battle, election campaign, and cabinet meeting.

I also was curious where Sharon was when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came to Jerusalem to finally make peace with Israel. His answer was illuminating.

Sharon said he was on the tarmac at Ben-Gurion Airport but his low Knesset ranking at the time had him way down the receiving line. Yet when Sadat descended from the plane and was greeted by Prime Minister Menachem Begin and other top ministers, he kept asking, “Where is Sharon? Where is Sharon?”

When the two finally shook hands, Sadat remarked, “I could not defeat you on the battlefield, so I have now come to make peace.”

Peace through strength – that is the enduring legacy of one of Israel’s greatest modern-day heroes.
AS WE ENTER 2014, Israel finds itself in a region undergoing tremendous changes, with the outcome of the historic shifts of the ‘Arab Spring’ still unclear. The challenges facing Israel include the renewed Palestinian peace talks, the persistent campaign to delegitimize the Jewish state, the relentless bloodshed in Syria, and the recurring turmoil in Egypt. The United States also appears to be altering its approach to the region, baffling traditional allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia. And the most over-arching concern remains the ever-growing Iranian nuclear threat.

Yet some Israeli analysts say the nation is in better shape than one might think. In a recent briefing by Amos Yadlin, former head of IDF Military Intelligence, he optimistically noted that Israel is an island of stability and strength in the midst of a chaotic Middle East. Its most rabid enemy Syria is paralyzed by civil war, and the new military rulers in Egypt appear to be a lot friendlier than the Muslim Brotherhood. He added that Israel also will soon achieve energy independence with its huge discoveries of natural gas off the coast and shale oil on land.

Still, Yadlin conceded that the threat of a nuclear armed Iran overrides all other concerns, and a leading security thinktank in London has just warned Iran now has the ‘breakout’ capability to build an atomic warhead in one month’s time. So it is not hard to see why Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu has become so alarmed about Tehran’s drive for nuclear arms. With US Secretary of State John Kerry standing at his side in late November, Netanyahu publicly berated the proposed nuclear agreement being offered by the Western powers to the Islamic Republic, describing it as a “very, very bad deal” which Israel “utterly rejects.”

Rapprochement with Iran
The diplomatic “charm offensive” launched by new Iranian President Hassan Rouhani at the United Nations last September changed the dynamics of the prolonged nuclear stand-off with Iran. The world’s leading powers decided to reach an interim deal with Iran that offers limited sanctions relief in exchange for a halt to uranium enrichment over the next six months. During this time, talks will continue on a permanent accord to resolve the intractable dispute over Iran’s atomic ambitions.

The Obama administration hailed the deal for making the world more secure. But Netanyahu called it a “historic mistake,” which had made the world a “much more dangerous place.” He charged that for the first time the world had conceded to Iran the right to enrich uranium, while also relieving the pressure of sanctions that have taken years to build up. This
was all in exchange for cosmetic Iranian concessions that they can reverse in a matter of weeks.

Israeli officials also contended the deal undermines six UN Security Council resolutions which require Iran to completely dismantle its enrichment facilities. They also stressed that Iran has invested over $200 billion dollars in its nuclear program already without seeing any peaceful benefits yet - not even one watt of electrical power.

Many in the US Congress also shared Israel’s concerns that Iran can easily reverse its actions and then it will take years to reinstate sanctions and build up the economic pressure which forced Tehran to the negotiating table.

Ultimately, critics of the Geneva agreement claim it has revealed US President Barack Obama is now more interested in a historic rapprochement with Iran than simply stopping the Islamic regime’s quest for nuclear arms. Indeed, the US has been making diplomatic overtures to Iran not seen since the storming of the US Embassy back in 1979, including Obama’s personal outreach to Rouhani last September.

American Policy Shifts
The Obama administration has made other recent moves in the Middle East that sent shockwaves through the region. First, the White House suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in US aid to Egypt in protest of the army’s overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government back in July. This upset not only Cairo, but Jerusalem as well, since US foreign aid is a linchpin of the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

Meanwhile, Obama also backtracked on his threats to launch strikes against the Assad regime in Syria for using chemical weapons against civilians, a retreat that also likely included assurances of Assad’s political survival for now. This all had Saudi Arabia so upset, it refused a seat on the UN Security Council in protest of Washington’s new approach to the region.

By courting Iran, the US is increasingly viewed in the region as tilting towards the Shi’ite bloc at the expense of the Sunni Arab majority. This comes as the ancient Sunni-Shi’ite rift has intensified once again in the wake of the Arab Spring, especially in Syria, but also in Iraq and Lebanon. The Syrian death toll from two years of fighting now tops 130,000, with another six to eight million driven from their homes.

Charting the Arab Spring
January marks three full years since the wave of political uprisings known as the Arab Spring began sweeping across the Middle East. The turmoil has seen entrenched dictators toppled and nations ravaged by violence and civil war. Yet 36 months in, it is still difficult to gauge the exact impact and direction of these historic upheavals.

The Arab Spring first spawned hopes that democratic freedoms would finally take hold in the Arab world. But such optimism quickly ran aground on the harsh realities of this volatile region. One clear trend has emerged, however, and that is every time an Arab country has allowed free elections the people have voted in radical Islamic elements that are actually bent on suppressing democratic rights.

Scholars suggest the notion that Islam and democracy are incompatible seems to be holding true, as it is a religion which does not separate mosque and state, and requires total subservience to shari’a law.

Meanwhile, international efforts are ratcheting up to convene another peace conference in early 2014 to end the brutal civil war in Syria. The main sticking point remains the rebel forces’ demand that dictator Bashar Assad first agree to step down from power during the transition to a new government.

Kerry’s Quest
Another effort at brokering peace in the region does appear to be gathering steam – the renewed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. US Secretary of State John Kerry has now made ten trips to the region in the past year in pursuit of an historic peace deal. Yet a final agreement remains out of reach, as the gaps on most core issues remain too far apart. For instance, the Palestinians are adamantly refusing Israel’s demand for a continued military presence in the Jordan Valley, while Israelis see unrelenting Palestinian incitement as a signal they are still unwilling to compromise. The Palestinian Authority also lacks control of Gaza and thus could not keep its end of the bargain.

So Kerry is now claiming progress towards a “framework” agreement to guide the parties in future negotiations towards a comprehensive deal to end this 100 year-old conflict. Such an interim deal could be completed by the April deadline set by the Obama team, but the resulting final-status talks could then drag on for years and any final peace agreement could take even longer to implement.

By then, who knows what new changes and upheavals will have rippled their way through the Middle East.
UNDERSTANDING REVELATION

BY MALCOLM HEDDING

“For too many Christians, Revelation is a closed book - they have considered its mysteries and symbols too difficult to understand, and have in effect passed it by. All too often the topics addressed in Revelation are not dealt with from the pulpit. Much of its contents are ridiculed as being unimportant to the real issues and beliefs of the Christian faith. This is a deception. Revelation is in fact rich in devotional instruction and so important to God that He promises a blessing upon those who diligently study its pages. This book has been written to provoke your interest and inspire you to further study of the Book of Revelation in the hope that promised blessing of God will be yours.”


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