Dear Friends,

Israel just went through another election season. As the only true democracy in the Middle East, all of the Jewish, Arab, Muslim, and Christian citizens of Israel can cast their vote. By the time this magazine reaches you, a new government might already be formed. One thing is for certain: whoever is being elected is done so by the will of God. Daniel declares: “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Daniel 4:32).

Our calling as Christians is to continue our prayers for Israel even more earnestly. Years ago, a long-standing friend of Israel told me that a certain government decision of the Knesset changed his support for Israel: “Such a nation I cannot support any longer,” he said. We need to understand that our friendship and support for Israel is not dependent on Israel’s political choices or on certain decisions in the Knesset, but it is based on God’s irrevocable calling and eternal covenants with Israel.

This new government will face many existential challenges. It will need to deal with the nuclear build-up of Iran. It dwells in a neighborhood which continues to be plagued by war and instability. The Islamic State terror militia continues its brutal onslaught against Christians, Muslims, and Jews. At the same time, we are witnessing in the Western world a new wave of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel hostility. Israel needs your prayers today more than ever before.

In this issue, you will also read about exciting developments in the nations. Rev. Juha Ketola received an exceptionally warm welcome in Papua New Guinea recently and saw an entire island nation blessing Israel. I also hope you will be blessed as you read a Bible teaching by one of Israel’s most articulate local church leaders, Peter Tsukahira, a message which he presented at our recent Envision pastors conference in January.

I trust that you will be encouraged as you read this latest Word from Jerusalem. May it truly speak to you!

And may the Lord richly bless you out of Zion!
BIBLE TEACHING

REFORMATION
THE NEW ARCHITECTURE FOR THE CHURCH

BY PETER TSUKAHIRA
Reformation is about changing the shape of the Church. The Apostle Paul said he was God’s “master builder” (1 Corinthians 3:10). In the biblical Greek, the words are ἀρχιτέκτον from which we derive the English word architect. Reformation means the Church needs new architecture!

To meet the challenges of a post-modern age, the Church worldwide must be remodeled to conform to the heavenly owner’s vision and the anointed architect’s plans. The goal of a new reformation is to make the Church more efficient in bearing fruit, and to make it a more accurate portrayal of God’s kingdom on earth.

The Message of the Kingdom
The kingdom of God was the focal point of Jesus’ ministry. He began His work with the proclamation, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Jesus’ method of teaching included the frequent use of parables. Many of them begin with the words, “the kingdom of heaven is like...” followed by His illustration. In the well-known Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the coming of God’s kingdom to the earth (Matthew 6:10); and later on in the same Sermon on the Mount, He instructed His disciples to seek for God’s kingdom before all other things (Matthew 6:33).

When Jesus began His ministry in the Galilee, the message of God’s kingdom was His principal teaching. Matthew wrote that, “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom...” (Matthew 4:23).

Jesus came to inaugurate a new covenant, but the concept of God’s rule as King was not foreign to the people of Israel. The Jewish followers of Jesus understood that God’s kingdom, that is, His rightful rule of their nation, was uniquely part of Israel’s heritage, and they hoped it would be a reality again in their own time.

The Birth of the Kingdom
Before the centuries of slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel were a close-knit family group led by a lineage of patriarchs chosen by God: first Abraham, then Isaac followed by Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. By the time of the Exodus, they were as many as three or four million people, but they were not a nation as we know it. They had been slaves for 400 years and had no national infrastructure or consciousness. They had never had a land of their own and at that stage, without an army, government, or legal system, they would surely have been classified as dysfunctional in terms of nationhood.

However, after the deliverance from Egypt, God met them in the desert and made a divine covenant with the people of Israel. Through that covenant, for the first time, they became a nation and God became their King. Thus, Israel as God’s nation is portrayed in the Bible as a prototype, an early picture of the kingdom of God on earth. Here is what God spoke to the people of Israel through Moses:

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel (Exodus 19:5-6).

Moses was never the king of Israel. He was called to be God’s prophet, the servant of the Lord. God Himself became King of Israel and there in the desert, His kingdom began to emerge in the form of an entire nation chosen as a model. From its beginning, God’s kingdom was meant to be more than just a religion, but also a whole, functioning society. Becoming God’s kingdom of priests meant that Israel’s role as a nation was to serve all other nations and to be their example.

Many Christians today regard Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God as a completely New Testament concept. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Jewish people of Jesus’...
day understood the concept of God's rule as King. They knew from the Scriptures and the history of their own nation that God had once been their King, and they longed for His rule over their society and culture to be restored.

The Jewish understanding was then, and still is today, that the Messiah will come from God and rule Israel as King. This belief was deep in the hearts of Jesus' own disciples throughout their years with Him and even after His resurrection from the dead.

The Nature of the Kingdom
The disciples’ understanding of God’s kingdom is revealed in the question they asked in their last minutes with Jesus before His ascension into heaven in Acts 1:6: “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying,”

“Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” The disciples asked Jesus when He was going to restore God’s kingdom, that is, to bring God’s rule back to their nation.

For centuries, Christians have wondered why the disciples asked the Lord such a strange last question. Didn't they realize by then that God’s kingdom is spiritual, not earthly, and for all nations not just theirs? Were they carnally nationalistic, or just not thinking?

However, the reason we may not understand the importance of their question is because we fail to see that God’s kingdom from the start was more than religion but also a whole nation. Since the Exodus from Egypt, in obedience as a shining light and in disobedience as an object of sorrow, Israel was and is God’s example of His intended and lawful reign over every area of society and culture.

The Builders of the Kingdom
John Calvin was one of the most brilliant and influential theologians of the Protestant Reformation. He was born over 500 years ago in France and his preaching and writings form the basis of today's Reformed, Presbyterian, and Congregational theological understandings.

In his commentary on the first chapter of Acts, Calvin examined the last question asked of Jesus by His disciples and wrote, “There are as many errors in this question as words.” Calvin went on to write that the disciples were foolish, ignorant, and poor scholars of the Bible because they longed for an earthly kingdom that God would rule among their own people. He wrote, “They are also greatly deceived herein, in that they restrain Christ's kingdom unto the carnal Israel.”

Wait a minute! Didn’t Jesus teach us all to pray that His kingdom would come on earth just as it is in heaven? Now that God has brought the people of Israel back to their own land and is restoring the good news of His kingdom to Jewish people everywhere, we can see that the disciples were wise and not foolish in the question they asked the Master.

Leaving this aside for a moment, let us examine the attitude that lies behind Calvin’s statements about Christ’s original, Jewish apostles. Calvin lived 1500 years after they walked the soil of Israel with Jesus and he thought they were ignorant about God’s kingdom? For three years, these men woke up each morning and looked at the face of God Incarnate! They were the personal students of the Son of God.

Among those disciples who asked Jesus
such an “erroneous” final question were men personally inspired by God to write the New Testament. They knew Jesus not only as their Lord but as their own countryman and friend, and they had access to His emotions, personal habits, even the tone of His voice. They listened to all of His teachings, not just the few we have recorded in the New Testament, but even the teachings He gave that were not written down (according to the apostle John there were a great many).

These men had witnessed His death on the cross as well as His physical resurrection. He had breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22), and then appeared to them over a period of forty days speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). They were truly New Testament believers by the time of His ascension and spiritual giants because of His ministry to them! John Calvin thought they were ignorant and grossly mistaken. The truth is it is we today who need a new reformation and to have the disciples’ apostolic vision of God’s kingdom restored to us!

The Scriptures are clear that God will never take back the gifts and calling He gave to Israel, the chosen example of His kingdom (Romans 11:28-29). Furthermore, Jesus Himself, said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

A new reformation means the Church must be restored to its biblical foundations so that once again society and culture will be transformed through the power and the glory of God’s kingdom on earth. Paul wrote, “According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it” (I Corinthians 3:10).

Describing this holy foundation, Paul also wrote:

…having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Jesus, the apostles, and the biblical prophets are none other than the particular “living stones” selected by God for the foundation of His kingdom. We also are living stones but we have come later and are built upon them. All the originals are from Israel, the nation that was chosen by God to be an example of His kingdom and our model for reformation in the Church today.

The Return of the Kingdom

Practically speaking, “new architecture” for the Church means a restoration to God’s original intention and plan. When God ruled Israel as King, He gave His laws to express His vision of a kingdom to a people who had never been a nation before. God’s laws, therefore, describe a social structure and the values meant to serve as a pattern or template not only for Israel, but for every nation. The laws govern all aspects of society, including religion, which has a vital and central role. Yes, religion is essential, but it is only part of God’s kingdom.

In our English Bibles, the word “church” is the translation of a New Testament Greek term ekklesia which refers to all the people “called out” or chosen by God. This word should not be restricted to religion, since only a small minority of God’s people are called to serve in the religious sector of society. The “church” should actually be God’s people who go everywhere in their society and culture as “salt and light,” bringing with them the righteous reign of God along with His gifts and His presence!

So what about the religious part of the kingdom? Should we do away with local and weekly assemblies? Absolutely not! We are commanded not to forsake assembling together, but there is a purpose in gathering for prayer, worship, fellowship, and teaching. The primary purpose is to equip, train, and prepare us to fulfill our individual callings in all areas of society.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The religious part of God’s kingdom plays a vital role just like the heart does in the human body. It “pumps” people in so that they can be saved, healed, refreshed, and equipped — and then it should also pump them out into society where they find their calling and use their gifts. A heart that only pumps in becomes enlarged, and in medical terms this is a disease! In God’s kingdom, the King, who is the Lord of the Harvest, wants religious activities that are efficient in discipling and transforming nations. He is not seeking religion that functions as an end in itself. Reformation today means new architecture for the Church! ☀
Susan Michael, ICEJ US Director, traveled to Washington, D.C., to present a petition signed by more than 23,000 Christians concerned about the current negotiations regarding Iran’s nuclear program. The petition was delivered to both the White House and Congressional leadership.

Aptly named ‘Not One Bomb for Iran,’ the petition is a grass roots effort initiated by the US Branch of the ICEJ to voice opposition to the Iranian regime’s quest for nuclear weapons.

Lawmakers were urged to insist that any agreement between the United States and Iran must conform to the following two standards:

- Any agreement the Administration signs with Iran must completely dismantle the regime’s ability to build a nuclear bomb.
- Congress must ratify any agreement proposed by the Administration with regard to Iran’s nuclear program.

Michael personally presented the petition to several members of Congress on behalf of so many Christians who understand the implications of a nuclear Iran on both America’s national security and Israel, our closest, longtime ally in the Middle East.

The ICEJ also signed on to a second position statement regarding Iran along with some 100 leaders of organizations representing tens of millions of American Christians. That statement was delivered at the same time.

“I’d like to personally thank everyone who understood the gravity of the situation and took action by signing this petition. God has not called us to be silent, but to speak up and take action at the appropriate time, just as Esther did for the Jewish people in Persia.” Michael said.

The petition campaigns will continue as it is expected that further negotiations with Iran will be extended for months to come. To learn more or to get involved go to: notonebombforiran.net.
ISRAEL
HOPE IN CRISIS

June 5-6, 2015

INVITED SPEAKERS
Amb. Ido Aharoni, Consul General of Israel
ICEJ Executive Director, Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ US Director, Susan Michael
ICEJ Int’l Spokesman, Rev. Malcolm Hedding
Pastor Allen Jackson, World Outreach Church
Dr. Brad Young, Oral Roberts University
Dr. John Swalls, Oral Roberts University
Dr. Tricia Miller, CAMERA
Other National Experts
Special Praise and Worship led by ICEJ Music
Director, Ray Ramirez, from Jerusalem

Register your small groups and friends. If ever we need a conference like this, we need it now!

Conference will be held at the
Embassy Suites Hotel
1200 Conference Center Blvd
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

Register before May 29 at
www.iceusa.org/summerconf2015 or 615.895.9830

Conference Registration Fee
$25 for all participants.

Special Hotel Rates
$129/night double-occupancy, breakfast & evening lobby reception included.

Conference Schedule
Registration Fee $25

Friday, June 5
4:30-7:00 pm Registration Check-In
7:00-8:30 pm Conference Worship Celebration, Dr. Jürgen Bühler & Ray Ramirez

Sat, June 6
8:30-9:00 am Registration Check-In
9:00-12:30 pm Break-Out Sessions with Guest Speakers
12:30-2:15 pm Lunch Break
2:30-4:15 pm Break-Out Sessions with Guest Speakers
6:30-7:30 pm Dinner Break
7:30 pm Conference Finale, Praise and Worship

ISAIAH 41:10
Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am Your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.
In February, I visited the lush tropical nation of Papua New Guinea along with ICEJ-Finland National Director, Kari Niemi. As first-time visitors, we were somewhat aware of the positive attitudes of the local believers towards Israel, but we were still taken by surprise at how strong the support for Israel actually is in this “isle afar off!”

We experienced an amazing and wonderfully warm welcome – simply because we came from Jerusalem and carried the Word of God! The roads were lined with people on both sides, dressed in blue and white (Israeli colors), smiling and throwing flowers and leaves into the air. Thousands of people gathered together to hear the message concerning Israel and to get connected with the people of God. During our visit I also met with many spiritual leaders, was interviewed on the state radio and on the nationwide Christian radio as well. So the whole nation was touched!

The ICEJ National Director for Papua New Guinea is Pastor Bezalel Tegi, who worked hard and did a very thorough job in connecting us with the entire nation. As a result, we had the privilege of hosting not only key spiritual leaders for the nation at our meetings, but also the Speaker of Parliament, the Hon. Theodore Zurenuoc; along with Member of Parliament, Jeffery Komal.

Traveling with us all the way through our tour was the Deputy Chairman of the nationwide Body of Christ, Dr. Michael Wilson, who represents all of the believers across the different denominations in Papua New Guinea.

Also accompanying us were Victor and Elsie Schlatter from Australia, who first arrived in the country back in 1960 to translate the Bible into the local languages, and they even lived there for some 30 years. As a result of their more than 50 years of ministering off-and-on in Papua New Guinea, not only were they able to plant 120 churches, but they taught many local Christians about the special role of Israel in God’s redemptive purposes as well. Thus, the Schlatter’s ministry is one of the major factors why believers in Papua New Guinea today are so open and receptive to really blessing and staying connected with Israel.

Tent Meetings in Mt. Hagen
We started out ministering in Mt. Hagen, a city with a population of 300,000 in the Western Highlands, where the local Engakas tribe under the leadership of Simon Mell had organized city-wide
meetings. They rented the largest tent in the country to hold the meetings and their faith was rewarded, as the tent was packed!

The Engakas tribe consists of not more than 2,000 people, many of them believers. However, the very striking thing is that this small tribe has been awakened and stirred up concerning Israel for several years now, and have been sending financial gifts to the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem consistently over the past ten years! Once a year, the whole tribe gets together for a special “Thanksgiving Day for Israel,” where the opportunity is given for members of their tribe to bring a special gift for Israel. And they do give – not only the believers, but the whole tribe is keen to bless the Jewish people! This is truly amazing to witness in person!

Reaching the Masses in Nipa
After traveling hours on rough and bumpy roads, we finally got from Mt. Hagen to Nipa in the Southern Highlands – and we will never forget the celebrations there!

I spoke to 300 pastors and leaders on the first night, and the following morning was a great day for an outdoor meeting on the premises of an old airstrip in Nipa. We could see the colorful sight of thousands of believers gathered together, with national and Israeli flags flying. We had the privilege of walking alongside the Speaker of Parliament, the Hon. Theodore Zurenuoc, to the official reception ceremonies. He is a strong believer and follower of Jesus, and shared a powerful message at this open air meeting from the word of God and also concerning current national issues in his country. MP Jeffery Komal also shared, Kari Niemi brought greetings, and I preached as well.

Moving on to Port Moresby
Our last stop was the largest city of Papua New Guinea, the capital of Port Moresby located on the Gulf of Papua. Again after the warm welcome ceremonies, we had powerful meetings over the weekend with several hundred people attending from a number of different churches.
80% call themselves Christians and in this country it means you have turned away from idols to the living God – the God of the Bible!

So as a people, they have now gone from paganism to being a God-fearing nation in just a few short generations. This is a huge difference in thinking compared to the nominal Christians of Europe, for example, whose concept of God has become somewhat blurry and where there is no longer any real difference between the nominal Christians and the non-Christians.

While in Papua New Guinea, I could truly see and believe – for the first time in my life – that it is truly possible for a whole nation to turn to God! It has not happened yet in full in Papua New Guinea, but I saw that it could happen in this “isle afar off!”

Yes, a nation as a whole can turn to God! May it happen in this unique and flourishing island nation of Papua New Guinea!

PNG’s Unique Relations with Israel

During his third term as prime minister in 2007, Sir Michael Somare, the first leader of an independent Papua New Guinea, publicly declared the abandonment of the nation’s ancestral idols on behalf of all the people. On television, radio, and newspapers, he openly acknowledged that from now on the God of the Bible would be the God of Papua New Guinea!

In 2013, current Prime Minister, Peter O’Neill, visited Israel and re-affirmed this covenant! He has also publicly shared his wish to open an Embassy in Israel – but in Jerusalem and not in Tel Aviv!

That same year, Speaker Zurenuoc had the idol carvings removed from the national Parliament Building and today they are in a process of replacing the existing totem pole with a “national identity and unity pillar.” He will also put a 400 year-old Bible in front of the parliament’s podium!

But what is perhaps the most exciting to see and hear of is the great expectations in the local churches regarding their future as a nation. They have faith that the times of restoration, transformation, healing, blessings, and of freedom have arrived. Why? Because Papua New Guinea will celebrate their 40th Independence Day on September 16, 2015; and the Christian leaders believe that they will experience as a nation something similar to what the Israelites experienced under Joshua when they entered into their Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the desert.

I believe together with them! A great opportunity has arrived and the nation is truly now on the verge of powerful change for the better! They have faith in the principles of the Word of God, a great willingness to connect with the chosen people of God in modern-day Israel, and they possess a readiness to receive the Word coming from Jerusalem! The church leaders also want to take an active part in the process of developing their nation.

All of this positions them to receive from God! Large deposits of oil, natural gas, precious minerals, and other natural resources have been discovered in Papua New Guinea, and the economic growth rate over recent years has also been very promising.

More Promising Signs

At the moment, more than 20% of the approximately eight million citizens of Papua New Guinea are born-again believers. But this does not give us the full picture of the spiritual landscape of the nation. About 80% call themselves Christians and in this country it means you have turned away from idols to the living God – the God of the Bible! So as a people, they have now gone from paganism to being a God-fearing nation in just a few short generations. This is a huge difference in thinking compared to the nominal Christians of Europe, for example, whose concept of God has become somewhat blurry and where there is no longer any real difference between the nominal Christians and the non-Christians.

Yes, a nation as a whole can turn to God! May it happen in this unique and flourishing island nation of Papua New Guinea!
The timing of the Lord is impeccable, and His ways beyond finding out!

Four years ago, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem received a prophetic word that we would soon open new national branches in ten Muslim countries. This was highly unexpected and left our leadership wondering how it could ever happen. But then a uniquely gifted African pastor connected with our ministry, and he has almost single-handedly accomplished this mission in a very short time.

Rev. Abdou Maiga was born into a strict Muslim family in a village near Timbuktu, in Mali. His parents sent him to a dawa (religious school) to become an imam, and he was even able to recite the entire Quran from memory as a teen.

But then God used a Christian magazine to open his eyes to the Gospel, and he became a Christian. At first, he faced persecution for converting and even poisoning attempts, but God preserved his life.

He later earned degrees in Biblical Studies and Theology, and is currently pursuing PhD studies in International Development at William Carey International University in California. Abdou also studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to further his knowledge of Biblical Hebrew at the affiliated Home for Bible Translators.

Today, Rev. Maiga is a respected pastor and Bible scholar with a popular teaching ministry throughout French-speaking West Africa. He is considered the region’s leading expert in Biblical Hebrew. In addition, Maiga holds teaching conferences on leadership and management principles, and serves as a regional advisor on conflict resolution and community development.

Finally, Rev. Maiga has a burning passion for Israel and is deeply committed to expanding the ICEJ’s reach in Africa.

Three years ago, Rev. Juha Ketola, ICEJ International Director, first met Abdou and appointed him the new national director for his current home country of Senegal and regional coordinator for West Africa. Since then, he has been using all the pastoral and governmental connections he has built up over his 30 years of ministry to assist the Christian Embassy in opening new branches in the French-speaking nations of West Africa, many of which have Muslim majorities.

So far, these new branches include Benin, Burkina-Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. He has also helped re-establish our branch in the Ivory Coast, and he is assisting us in opening new branches in Gambia and Guinea. Along with a new ICEJ national branch in an unnamed North African country and similar openings in Central Asia, this means we are approaching the ten branches in Muslim-majority countries spoken to us prophetically several years ago.

“The first time I met Abdou, we immediately clicked and were able to pray in such unity of spirit before
we left,” said Juha. “Without Abdou Maiga, we would not have been able to establish so many of these new branches in West Africa. And he has done it in a way that all the leaders of the local churches and the top government officials are on board with us, even in the Muslim countries. So he is truly a gift to our ministry.”

We asked Rev. Maiga for more insights into his ministry and the French-speaking region of West Africa.

1) What were you taught concerning the way Muslims should view Christians and Jews?

How the Quran and hadiths [traditions] see Christians and Jews is very ambiguous. Quran 29:46 teaches that Jews and Christians are “People of the Book” and have the same God as Muslims. So prophets of the Bible are considered authentic. Yet other Quranic verses and hadiths accuse Jews and Christians of being polytheists and of falsifying the Bible, and they ask Allah to destroy them. It is very clear that Islamic eschatology predicts that the Jewish people will finally perish.

2) How have your views on Israel and the Jewish people changed since becoming a Christian?

Islamic theology on the Jewish people and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict creates a natural block in young Muslim minds that can lead to hatred of Israel and the Jewish people. My conversion to Christ helped me realize that Jesus was a Jew and that the Bible was written by Jews, and in a Jewish context. One cannot claim to love Jesus and hate Israel and the Jews.

3) What about revival and church growth in West Africa?

Most churches in West Africa have experienced very rapid growth recently. Many Christians were disappointed by a classical approach and sought a more intense relationship with God. This freedom in worship encouraged the establishment of thousands of vibrant churches and many conversions, even in strongly Islamic regions. The clear evidence of the miraculous gifts (of healing and deliverance) has been a determining factor. When people actually see the power of God in action; their faith increases. The quantitative development of the Church in West Africa has created a balance between state and church, and regional governments now see the Church as a credible partner.

4) How has the rise of radical Islamic groups impacted Christians in West Africa?

The Islamist threat became more visible during the recent invasion by AQIM [Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb] in northern Mali and the intervention by the French army. But radical Muslim militias have been present in West
Africa for some time, powered by Islamist elements in Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya. Now add the numerous incursions of Boko Haram in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, and its recently declared loyalty to Daesh [Islamic State]. These Islamist groups are based on the innate thirst for conquest within Islam. A few years ago they began emphasizing the missionary character of Islam. We saw the proliferation of radical mosques throughout West Africa, often accompanied by social works and humanitarian assistance. The strategy has now evolved to military conquest with an unparalleled fanaticism. The price for the Christians in West Africa has been huge, with the destruction of many churches and physical violence on Christians. This temporarily slows the progress of the Church, but the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.

5) How do West African government leaders view the radical Islamists?

All statesmen in West Africa, Muslims and non-Muslims, recognize that radical Islam is one of the greatest dangers to humanity and social cohesion at all levels. Even Muslim political leaders have realized that if radical Islam is not controlled, it will lead to the decadence of Islam in the world. No credible leader can identify himself with radical Islam because Muslims are the first victims.

6) How do they view Israel?

I had the privilege of speaking about Israel with a number of statesmen and government ministers and I realized that Israel is the most admired nation in West Africa. In fact, Israel has more friends than enemies. I have heard national leaders admit that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and one of the most democratic nations in the world.

7) Why do you support the work of the ICEJ?

I think the vision and mission of ICEJ are unique and biblical. Supporting and comforting Israel and the Jewish people inevitably touches the heart of God and launches the blessings on our families and nations. Also, the bridge which ICEJ offers through the person of Jesus between Jew and Arab is an extraordinary instrument of peace and reconciliation. So supporting the ICEJ is not only to work for the consolation of God’s people, Israel, but also to work for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for preaching biblical truth among the nations.
The Jewish Agency for Israel held a special ceremony recently to pay tribute to the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and several other Christian groups for assisting in the Agency’s efforts to promote Jewish immigration to Israel, and particularly the emergency Aliyah from Ukraine over the past year.

The ceremony was held at the conclusion of JAFI’s annual Board of Governors meeting in Jerusalem in late February. In recognition of the vital Christian contribution to Aliyah, Jewish Agency Chairman, Natan Sharansky, told a room full of the group’s global leadership that it is Christian volunteers right now who are risking their own personal safety to enter war-torn areas of eastern Ukraine to extract Jewish refugees as they start the journey home to Israel.

“There is a long history of Christian involvement in our Aliyah operations and it is always appropriate to give thanks, but today, as Christian organizations help us save Jewish lives every day in Ukraine, it is particularly important to show our appreciation,” Sharansky said.

The ICEJ has assisted more than 115,000 Jews in moving to Israel over the past 25 years, mostly from the former Soviet Union. Last year, the Christian Embassy helped nearly 2,300 Jews in making Aliyah, including from Ukraine and France. The civil war in Ukraine, and growing anti-Semitism and Islamic terrorism in France have led to a sharp increase in Jewish immigration to Israel from these areas. The ICEJ is providing the Jewish Agency with significant funding to support these urgent Aliyah efforts.

The group of Jewish immigrants were mostly from the St. Petersburg area, along with a family from Uzbekistan and another family from Murmansk, well north of the Arctic Circle. Thanks to our extra baggage allowance, they were able to bring along more than 100 pieces of luggage, plus 5 bicycles, 3 prams, and a synthesizer.

Their journey began with a bus ride from St. Petersburg across the border to Helsinki, where they were hosted over Shabbat by Finnish Christian families. After a city tour and some shopping on Sunday, the group flew on to Israel the next day. The few days of rest and interaction with Finnish Christians in their homes often results in long-lasting friendships.

In the 1990’s, the ICEJ was the first Christian organization to sponsor flights for Jews from the Soviet Union. There were 54 full charter flights, followed by group and individual flights after that. Over the past 25 years, the ICEJ has sponsored 142 Aliyah flights which have brought a total of 16,783 Jewish olim home to Israel!

We expect many more Russian Jews to come to Israel through Finland and ask for your financial support during this sudden increase in the oldest ICEJ Aliyah route. Join us in being a part of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.
The need remains urgent to assist Jews in France and Ukraine to escape conflict, Muslim violence, and resurgent anti-Semitism so that they can make their way home to Israel.

In Ukraine, even though a ceasefire was recently declared there is still fighting and lawlessness in the eastern parts of the country. The war between Ukrainian forces and Russian separatists has either driven out hundreds of thousands of residents, or sent them into hiding in basements and shelters. This includes thousands of Jews, many of whom have now made the decision to move to Israel.

The number of Ukrainian Jews making Aliyah rose by almost 200 percent in 2014, to nearly 6,000 new immigrants. That number is expected to double this year. With a shaky truce in place, the country on the brink of bankruptcy, and the long winter now over, many more Ukrainian Jews are ready to start the journey home to Israel.

The ICEJ is currently funding efforts through the Jewish Agency to bring hundreds of Ukrainian Jews home to Israel by sponsoring pre and post flight costs, such as Aliyah fairs, temporary housing, transportation, and grants to needy families during the absorption phase in Israel. The average cost to bring Jews from Ukraine to Israel right now is $750 per person.

Meanwhile in France, the threat of Muslim violence against Jews has now reached dangerous levels because of the influence of the Islamic State. It was chilling for Jewish children in Toulouse to recognize the picture of a former 12 year-old classmate who recently executed a fellow Muslim at point-blank range in Syria. Many Jews are frightened and want to get to safety as soon as possible.

In the five weeks following the Paris terror attacks, more than 1,000 French Jews already left for Israel. At least 10,000 are expected to make Aliyah this year. Most will come this summer when the children are out of school. The Jewish Agency has asked us for urgent funding because more than 30% of the French Jews making Aliyah come from low-income, Muslim-majority neighborhoods surrounding Paris, and thus need our financial help to leave.

You can help us bring 1,000 French Jews home this year! So give today!

TO ASSIST JEWS COMING FROM FRANCE, GO TO: http://www.icejusa.org/french-aliyah

TO ASSIST JEWS COMING FROM UKRAINE, GO TO: http://www.icejusa.org/ukraine
Israel continues to be a haven of safety and hope for Jews all over the world. Whether they are caught up in the conflicts in Ukraine, facing renewed anti-Semitism in France, or economic difficulties in Latin America, Jews continue to come home to the land of their forefathers; but the landing in Israel is not always “soft.”

One of the ways in which the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem helps Jewish immigrants settle into the land is by supporting programs that ease their entry into Israel. In February, ICEJ AID Director, Nicole Yoder, took a group of Christians (brought over by our German branch) on a special visit to an absorption center for new immigrants in Beersheva. Funded by the ICEJ, the Yealim Center is a unique place where one can encounter Jewish newcomers from literally all over the world, including Cuba, India, Peru and Ukraine.

Martin and Alexandra told the Christian visitors that they came from South America with their two children to offer them a better future. “Here in Israel, we don’t have the same problems we did in Peru,” explained Martin. “We have peace and calm. The security situation especially is much better. Nothing will happen to us here.”

Another new immigrant extremely relieved to finally be in Israel was Igor, a young man from Donetsk in the eastern part of Ukraine, where a civil war has been raging over the past two years.
"I studied mining at the university in Donetsk. Because of the dangerous situation there, I fled the city and went to Kiev to live with a friend," Igor recounted.

"I had been to Israel before, and was informed that every Jew has the right to immigrate to Israel. For a long time I had been considering Aliyah, but I needed a push. The war that is now destroying my city was a convincing argument."

Igor learned about the assistance program for new immigrants at the Yealim Absorption Center and decided to start out his new life there. The center offers temporary housing, Hebrew language classes, vocational training, and job searches, among other helpful services.

"I am very happy to be here," he said.

"They welcomed me heartily and we have excellent teachers."

Even though a ceasefire was recently declared in Ukraine, there is still fighting and lawlessness in the eastern parts of the country. The number of Ukrainian Jews making Aliyah rose by almost 200 percent in 2014, to nearly 6,000 new immigrants. With a pause in the conflict and the long winter over, many more Ukrainian Jews are now expected to make their way to Israel.

Meanwhile, members of the German tour group were thrilled to be able to meet newly arrived Jewish families being helped by Christians.

"To meet new Jewish immigrants from different backgrounds was very impressive. I am happy for everyone who made it," said Barbara Schwindt. "The scattered Jewish people are coming back. We know it is not easy for them, but God is drawing them home."

"You can see that God is bringing His people back to Israel from the north, south, east, and west - just as the Bible tells us," said Maximilian Schmid. "God is fulfilling the promises He made thousands of years ago before our very eyes. And it is wonderful that we as Christians can support this." ☺

As we went to press, the ICEJ staff was busy preparing and distributing traditional Passover baskets to hundreds of needy Jewish families across Israel. The holiday gift baskets contained the customary matza bread, wine, and grape juice for the Pesach Seder meal, as well as food coupons, a holiday greeting card, and a special Haggadah (telling) of the Passover story. In cooperation with local social workers, we again focused on cities with many low-income families, such as Netanya, Ashdod, Beit Shean, and especially Jerusalem. Thanks to the generosity of Israel’s Christian friends around the world, we were able to make a real difference this Passover season for some 500 grateful Jewish families throughout Israel! ☺
LIFE’S NOT YET OVER!
A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR’S STORY OF COURAGE WHEN ALL HOPE SEEMED LOST

BY ESTERA WIEJA

It has been a great honor for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to sponsor the assisted-living home for Holocaust survivors in Haifa over recent years. We highly treasure this unique opportunity to assist needy Holocaust survivors in loving, practical ways as they reach a ripe old age.

One special resident of the Haifa Home is Yaakov, who was born in Frampol, in eastern Poland. Yaakov was eleven years old when the German army invaded Poland in 1939 and started bombarding cities, including his hometown. Yaakov, his parents, and his sister managed to escape just in time, but unfortunately, his two brothers and aunt died under the rubble of their home. Within days, Nazi soldiers marched into the city and began their destruction of the Jewish community. They cut off the beards of Jewish men, mocked them in the market squares, and stabled horses inside the synagogues.

As he recounts these horrid memories, Yaakov dons a pair of sunglasses to hide his tears.

The Germans put his family in a ghetto. Since Yaakov was still a child, he was able to sneak out through the fence to trade anything they had left, like jewelry and the shoes his father made, in exchange for food for his family. Eventually, his parents encouraged him to flee and promised they would follow later. Miraculously, the whole family did manage to escape, but only to face more hardships along the way towards the east. With no food or shelter, they continually were refused help and were even pushed back towards the battle front, until they finally reached Siberia.

Just as the war was ending, Yaakov fell ill with typhus. The family managed to return to Polish territory, this time to Silesia in the southwest. After getting better, it was time for young Yaakov to help support his family. His was one of the few families that did not immigrate to Israel right away after the war. Instead, they eventually joined the small Jewish community that remained in the city of Walbrzych.

Yaakov grew up speaking Polish, had many Christian friends, and felt very closely tied to Polish culture. At one point, he even became the president of the Union of Polish Youth in his city. He recalls dating a Polish girl, but they never got permission to marry, and eventually Yaakov married a Jewish girl from Kielce. Together, he and his wife immigrated to Israel in 1957.

Years have passed, and Yaakov was blessed to build a whole new life in the Promised Land. For over 30 years he worked in construction in Haifa, while his son started a family in Netanya. After his wife’s passing, Yaakov retired and started volunteering at the Histadrut, Israel’s association of labor unions. It was there that he met a volunteer from the Haifa Home for Holocaust survivors.

Encouraged by her stories of the Haifa Home, Yaakov had renewed hope that his life was not yet over. He was thrilled to move to a place where he would find support and friendship, and that would also bring joy into his daily life. Unsurprisingly, he was welcomed to the ICEJ-supported facility with open arms.

Today, this courageous man can finally relax and enjoy his remaining years in the Jewish homeland. Surrounded by fellow Holocaust survivors, each with their own unique stories, they can be blessed and cared for together by new generations of Jews and Christians who did not have to face the horrors of the Holocaust.
CURRENT NEEDS AT THE HAIFA HOME

The Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors is able to operate only thanks to the generosity of Christian donors like you! Every month, we trust the Lord with great faith that through your support this critical work will be sustained here in Israel. Please consider partnering with us, and be a blessing to these aging survivors while there is still time to touch their lives!

Here are some of the most pressing needs at the Haifa Home that we need to cover:

1. The Home’s normal operating cost amounts to $65,000 per month. One way to help is to join our “Adopt a Survivor” program; find out more at: http://www.icejusa.org/adopt

2. A recreation coordinator is needed at a salary of $1,800 per month.

3. Funds in the amount of $20,000 are also needed to renovate and furnish a ground-level apartment which will be turned into three new residential suites.

Give on-line today at: www.icejusa.org/haifa-home-current-needs

Purim Party!

Holocaust survivors supported through the ICEJ’s “Adopt a Survivor” program enjoyed a Purim party with students last month at a kibbutz in northern Israel. The survivors and local students came dressed in Purim costumes, ate and danced together, and enjoyed a play on the story of Esther.
STAFF OUTING TO EILAT

In March, the ICEJ’s Jerusalem staff and their families enjoyed a special outing together in the popular resort city of Eilat, at the southernmost tip of Israel. The staff retreat began with a jeep ride through the surrounding mountains, which were barren but quite beautiful, along with a look at the new security fence along the border with Sinai. Afterwards, we enjoyed a relaxing boat ride on the Red Sea while dodging dozens of small sailboats, kite boarders, and windsurfers who were all taking part in an annual international regatta. The next day, the group visited the famous Eilat coral reef observatory and then toured a nearby kibbutz, where we saw the birth of a calf and tasted the farming community’s incredible pomelos. On the final day, our tour took us to Timna Park and the replica of the Wilderness Tabernacle of Moses, complete with an inspiring lecture by our guide on its many foreshadowings of Christ.

ICEJ STAFF JOIN JERUSALEM MARATHON 2015

Last month, several ICEJ staff members joined with over 20,000 Israeli and international runners in the fifth annual Jerusalem Marathon through the streets of the capital. Launched by the Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat, an avid runner himself, the race has quickly become a popular event on the Israeli calendar. Participants could choose from several distances to run, but no one could avoid the difficult hilly portions of the race. Still, the scenery was great, the spring weather was terrific, and the crowded courses were filled with colorful runners. Here, ICEJ staffer, Mikko Peippo of Finland eases through an uphill stretch of the Jerusalem Marathon 2015.
JOIN THOUSANDS IN JERUSALEM FOR THE ICEJ’S FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

This fall, you can be part of the fulfillment of prophecy, journey to the land in which Scripture was written and join thousands of fellow worshippers seeking God at the 2015 International Christian Embassy Jerusalem’s Feast of Tabernacles Celebration.

This unforgettable time of celebration, teaching and pilgrimage declares to the nations that we stand with Israel and recognize God’s prophetic purpose for Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16). Contact Inspiration Cruises & Tours today to join us in the City of God. We promise the travel experience of a lifetime!

BOOK THE TOUR ONLINE: ICEJFEAST.COM
OR FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 844.294.3833