EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

LEADING IN TIMES OF CRISIS
Dear Friends,

I hope and pray that the new year has started well for you. As I write this, we are bracing for a possible third wave of the coronavirus here in Israel. Only the coming year will fully reveal the huge economic impact the pandemic has had here. Yet one thing is already certain: our AID team is receiving more requests for help from Israelis than ever before.

As we did throughout 2020, we pray that God will allow us to continue showing love and support to the increasing number of Israelis who are hard hit by successive waves of coronavirus lockdowns. We have provided an overview of our projects in this magazine and invite you to partner with us at increased levels in 2021.

The coronavirus crisis brought many challenges but also many opportunities. In a recent meeting with some 50 international Christian leaders, I heard many share about how COVID-19 had impacted their ministries. The recurrent themes were more prayer, more open doors to minister, a new wave of young people engaged in ministry, and an increased sense of unity among believers and churches. When I listened to their testimonies, I thanked God because we have experienced much the same—both in Jerusalem and in many of our national branches worldwide.

We have never prayed so much as in 2020. We increased our AID work in many areas. New doors have opened to our ministry. We just restructured some of our departments, and young, dedicated leaders are stepping up to take on new responsibilities. Our branch leaders keep telling me that in 2020 we grew closer together as a global family. For these and other reasons, we are full of gratitude for how God has been with us.

We are looking forward to sharing what we have learned with pastors and leaders at our Envision conference this month. We are expecting several hundred leaders to attend the online conference. Please invite your pastor to join us.

And this is what I hope and pray for you in this new year, that amid all the new challenges, you will experience Immanuel (“God with us,” Isaiah 7:14) in a real way. Remember, God is with you wherever you go!

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
President
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO: Envision Conference 2021 theme
FOR MAGAZINE ARCHIVES visit www.icejusa.org/wfj
EXPECT
THE UNEXPECTED

BY DR JÜRGEN BÜHLER • ICEJ PRESIDENT
**THE SEVEN THUNDERS**

Reading recently through the book of Revelation, I had to stop at chapter 10. John the apostle sees a “mighty angel” coming down from heaven. Majestically, he places his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. In his hand, he has an open scroll. He opened his mouth, and as he spoke, the “seven thunders” sounded. What a magnificent experience! Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, and seven thunders. John was just about to write what he heard from these seven thunders when he was instructed: “Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down” (Revelation 10:4). I was always puzzled when I read this passage. I wanted to know: What did the thunders say and why was John not allowed to write it down? And why is it even recorded in the Bible if it all is a secret?

During the coronavirus crisis, I have sensed that this passage is there for a purpose. Through it, God wants to inform us that certain matters are deliberately hidden from mankind and even from the church. God placed this story deliberately so that it awakens our curiosity for exactly that purpose in the Bible. He wants us to know that we do not know everything. He wants us to know that despite all the Revelation and knowledge He might give us, there will always be the unknown and many surprises.

**A YEAR OF SURPRISES**

Indeed, 2020 has been full of surprises, and not only in Israel. I well remember how the year started. Our theme for last year’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration was in danger of being canceled for the first time in 40 years. We accomplished many of the targets we set for ourselves for the coming years faster than we ever could have anticipated during those February strategy meetings. Challenged by the coronavirus, we have prayed more than ever. We wanted to meet and collaborate more with our branches, which happened once we began using Zoom. Our AID team in Israel managed to reach far more people during the virus than the year before. We assisted more Jewish immigrants with their Aliyah flights to Israel than since the massive wave of Soviet Jews in the 1990s. And the Feast of Tabernacles reached more people in 2020 than ever before.

We had to acknowledge that “our plans are many, but the purpose of the Lord will stand” (Proverbs 19:21). Man plans but God guides. Many times, the plans and expectations we have, even as believers, do not come to completion, and often we are confronted with new and unexpected situations. So I asked myself: Why was there was no clear prophetic warning about an event of such global proportions?

**THE LORD COMES!**

Then I felt God speak to me that it is exactly in these unexpected and surprising situations when our faith is tested the most. It was in unforeseen challenges like the sudden advance of an opposing army (2 Chronicles 20:1ff) or unexpected sickness (2 Kings 20:1ff) and even unexpected death (John 11:14) when God’s power manifested itself.

It was exactly five years ago when—after a season of prayer and seeking the Lord—I was diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer. The doctors declared me to be an “inoperable case,” such that no doctor in Israel would operate on me. My life came to a halt, and my family was shaken to our very foundations. But it was exactly in this sudden, humanly impossible situation that God not only came through and powerfully preserved my life, but we also came to know him more deeply than ever before.

We should never forget that often God comes to meet His people while clothed in darkness (Psalm 18:9; Isaiah 19:1ff) and amid great challenges. This current season of darkness and testings can become the time of your greatest miracle.

We need to remind ourselves that God’s ways will never be revealed to us in their entirety. The apostle Paul declares that our knowledge
is partial (1 Corinthians 13:9), and Moses declared to the people that there will always be a mysterious side to God who will leave us puzzled at times (Deuteronomy 29:29). A main thought from Jesus, which runs through his Olivet Discourse on the last days, is exactly that. Six times Jesus assures us: “You do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (see Matthew 24:36, 39, 42, 44, 50; 25:13).

BIRTH PANGS OF MESSIAH
It is true that many developments will and can be expected in the end times because the Bible’s prophetic passages announce them. The physical rebuilding of Israel and her spiritual restoration, the return of the Jews back to their homeland, the rise of the antichrist, a global revival—all these things are clearly foretold in the Word of God. Yet at the same time, we need to expect the unexpected. John was not allowed to write what the seven thunders said, as some things may not be revealed to us before their time.

A word that resonated in my heart repeatedly in recent months is “Brace!” Brace yourself, not for a fatal impact, but for rough times ahead. I personally believe coronavirus is just a warm-up; it is just the beginning of the testings ahead. This is what we have heard from many leaders around the world. In a recent Global Prayer Gathering, our brother Peter Tsukahira called our times the “birth pangs of Messiah.” Birth pangs are all the same. The closer you come to birth, the more frequent and more intense they become.

Recent developments should make us all alert. As I write this article, the US election looks as if it will likely leave us with a new president in the White House who already has announced plans to reverse many of the Trump administration’s favorable policies, including toward Israel. So Israel is bracing for much cooler relations with a new US administration. At the same time, we are seeing an escalation of tension with Iran, with Israel being ready for “all options.”

Meantime, the coronavirus might lead to unprecedented regulations on a global scale, including a potential mandatory vaccination program. While we all appreciate the need for vaccines, which might have saved us from deadly diseases before, now, for the first time, we are being offered vaccines that directly impact our human genetic code and which might be forced upon the world population rapidly. With this, a dangerous line has been crossed—and not just for many Christians.

Also, evangelical believers are increasingly singled out as a threat to Western societies. Not only in America but in a growing number of Western countries, Bible-believing Christians who pray for their own nation, care for the well-being of their state, and uphold biblical moral and ethical standards are branded today as “Evangelical nationalists” who threaten the new world order. A German official recently singled out “Pentecostal churches” as one of the few virus super-spreaders that need to be watched.

The year 2021 is a year when the church needs to be on the alert. But not just on alert regarding the latest news—even more, we need spiritual alertness. It is a time when prayer, our commitment to the Word of God, and fellowship with other believers is more important than ever. A sad development around the world is that the move to online services has dramatically lowered attendance at church meetings—even online.

The parable of the ten virgins in Mathew 25 reminds us of the sudden appearance of the bridegroom. His arrival surprised all ten virgins. All were sleepy, but only five had enough oil in their lamps. When a discussion quickly arose about sharing each other’s oil, the five “foolish virgins” were told to “buy for themselves.” It is a time when you cannot rely on your pastor, parents, or spouse’s faith. Each one of us needs to be ready and braced for more shakings. It is a time when our walk with Christ needs to be intentional, bold, and wholehearted. Even as the world gets darker around us, we are called to arise and shine—because the Lord’s light has risen upon us! He is the unshakable rock that will preserve us even in a stormy 2021.

The worship song “The Blessing” has indeed blessed millions during the coronavirus crisis. It is a prayer that I offer for all of us as we enter an uncertain 2021. Despite all that may come, we know one thing will never change: that is Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, including in 2021!
Join the ICEJ’s
SHOMER SOCIETY
Leave a Legacy for Israel’s Future

Consider the ICEJ in your Will or Estate Plans

The ICEJ has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Israel for almost 40 years. Our Shomer Society has been an integral part of continuing this work. Your gift of cash, stocks and bonds, mutual funds, life insurance, excess in retirement funds, property, or a gift annuity are excellent ways to help the ICEJ carry on your love for Israel. With proper foresight, it is possible for you to bless Israel greatly for many years to come.

Leave a legacy! Make a critical difference!

The Lord has placed before us a great calling to bless His chosen and beloved people and we simply cannot do it without your help. Your donation will make a measurable difference for God’s purposes here in Jerusalem and beyond. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem – USA, Inc. is classified by the I.R.S. as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Corporate and personal contributions to the ICEJ’s US Branch, to the extent allowed by law, are fully tax-deductible.
LEADING IN TIMES OF CRISIS
ICEJ LEADS THE WAY INTO 2021

BY JULAINE STARK, CONTENT MARKETING MANAGER

Starting this month with our annual Envision Pastors and Ministry Leaders Conference, ICEJ stands ready to connect the global church to what God is doing in the Land of Israel and particularly within the local body of believers. This year’s Envision theme, “Leading in Times of Crisis,” accurately reflects the solid foundation of ICEJ’s steadfast presence in Israel throughout the past 40 years and our commitment to impact all segments of Israeli society in 2021 regardless of the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Whatever shakings may come in 2021, ICEJ will continue to stand as your connection to the Land and people of Israel. We invite you to experience Israel, comfort Israel, understand Israel, and impact Israel with ICEJ USA in 2021.

EXPERIENCE ISRAEL

In keeping with the prophetic vision of Zechariah 14, the ICEJ sponsors an annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration, which has brought some 150,000 Christians from over 100 countries to Jerusalem for the largest annual Christian gathering in Israel. Besides our annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration, the ICEJ has vast expertise in helping Christians experience Israel firsthand. This includes:


• ICEJ offers special tours of Israel for churches, pastors, and young adults ages 18–30. Our capable staff organizes and leads life-changing tours that include visits to biblical sites, briefings on current affairs, worship and teaching, volunteer work, and just plain fun. Learn more at: www.icejusa.org/tours

• Christian Friends of Yad Vashem (CFYV) is a partnership initiative between the ICEJ and Yad Vashem to better educate Christians about the history and universal lessons of the Holocaust and features an annual weeklong seminar for Christian leaders. 2021 seminar will be held online. Find out more at: www.icejusa.org/yadvashem
Through ICEJ AID, Christians around the world bless Israel each and every day. Led by professionals experienced in social work and community development in Israel, ICEJ AID represents Christian love and support for the people of Israel through social assistance projects in nearly every town and village in the Land.

The main areas of this ministry of comfort to Israel include:

- **ICEJ AID’s A Future and A Hope** helps needy Israeli youth and families reach for a brighter future by providing educational enrichment, vocational training, and other practical assistance to improve the long-term quality of life for Israelis.

- **The ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors** provides a warm, loving family in a secure place of residence for almost 100 elderly Survivors living in Israel. Despite the challenges of the past year, Christian volunteers from ICEJ’s Haifa team provided residents with daily interaction, loving care, and a much-needed connection to the outside world throughout the lockdowns and restrictions. Through this tangible Christian witness, hot meals, medical care, and social activities are provided for these precious souls who have known great tragedy and loneliness in their lives.

- **Israel in Crisis:** In times of turmoil, when war or natural disaster strike, ICEJ AID steps in to help vulnerable communities. Due to ongoing rocket attacks in the area, the ICEJ has placed some 110 bomb shelters protecting playgrounds, schools, synagogues, and community centers, including a recent installation at the AMIT Technological High School in Ashkelon (see page 17). When emergencies arise, it is a tremendous testimony when Christians are the first to arrive with help.

- **Aliyah and Integration:** The ICEJ will continue to partner with God in the Jewish people’s great prophetic ingathering in modern times, known as Aliyah. As the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed, “For I will set my eyes on them for good, and I bring them back to this land; I will build them and not tear them down, and I will plant them and not uproot them” (Jeremiah 24:6). The ICEJ has now assisted nearly 160,000 Jews from around the world to make Aliyah (return) to Israel and, despite continuing travel restrictions, continues to partner with the Jewish Agency to bring them home from all over the world.
The ICEJ is a global movement made up of Christians who have been inspired to stand with Israel in these momentous times. Together, we can impact Israel! Here are four ways to get involved:

- **PARTNER:** Your financial partnership with the ICEJ will enable you to bless Israel through the extensive work and witness of the ICEJ in Israel and worldwide. Donate today at: www.icejusa.org/donate

- **PRAY:** This ministry greatly values the power of prayer. In 2020 the ICEJ’s prayer ministry expanded and flourished in amazing new ways and will continue into the new year. For more details on the ICEJ’s current prayer initiatives and schedule of upcoming prayer events, see the article on page 12 of this issue. Or visit: www.icejusa.org/Isaiah62_Pledge

- **VOLUNTEER:** The ICEJ offers unique opportunities for Christians to come volunteer in Israel on short- or long-term commitments. In this issue, ICEJ’s outgoing director of media & publications shares highlights of her five years of service with ICEJ in Jerusalem (see page 13). To learn more about volunteer opportunities in Israel, write to us at: info@icejusa.org

- **HOST THE ICEJ:** The ICEJ is committed to being good stewards of the biblical “mystery” of Israel. To host an ICEJ speaker or event at your church, contact us at: info@icejusa.org

The ICEJ has numerous publications and media outlets to disseminate our biblical message regarding Israel, keep you informed about our ministry and the region, and help you counter anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias.

- **Sign up to receive our flagship monthly magazine Word From Jerusalem at www.icejusa.org/sign-up.**

- **ICEJ’s weekly podcasts and video reports are found on all major platforms and channels. Join us for rich biblical teachings, ministry updates, and reports on Israel’s amazing advances today. The Encounter Israel TV program, Out of Zion podcast, and more is also found on our website at: www.icejusa.org**

- **ICEJUSA.org is our dynamic, interactive online presence and is the best way to keep up with our fast-paced, global ministry centered on blessing and comforting Israel. Go to: www.icejusa.org**

- **Israelanswers.com is a unique and extensive educational website about Israel, anti-Semitism, and Christian Zionism hosted by the US Branch of the ICEJ. Sign up for Israel Answers email updates at: www.israelanswers.com**

- **ICEJ Store is your one-stop omme destination for israeli artwork and souvenirs, Judaica, books, teaching materials, Hebraic worship music, and other products. Visit us at: www.icej.store**

- **Social media: Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter**
FAITHFULLY SUPPORTING ISRAEL

Be a part of that future generation spoken of in Psalm 102 that is partnering with the Lord in His work to restore Zion, for the set time has come.

PARTNER LEVELS

Covenant Partner
Show your love and support for Israel by partnering with the ICEJ. Become a Covenant Partner at a giving level of at least $30 a month. In appreciation, you will receive the following resources:

- A Partnership Certificate
- The Word From Jerusalem magazine
- A year-end gift of appreciation

Ambassadorial Partner
Partnership in ministry is a gift God gives to strengthen and undergird His work. Become an Ambassadorial Partner with the ICEJ at a giving level of at least $100 a month. In appreciation, you will receive everything in the Covenant Partnership level plus:

- Exclusive access to ICEJ’s quarterly Mid-East ministry update conference call from Jerusalem
- An invitation to attend our ICEJ USA leadership briefing during our national conference

Builder of Zion Partner
Isaiah declared the Lord will call Zion’s walls “salvation” and her gates “praise” (60:18). As we walk together side by side, the ICEJ would be honored if you would become a Builder of Zion Partner at a giving level of $2,500 a year or more. In appreciation, you will receive everything in the Ambassadorial Partnership level plus:

- A discount of $200.00 on a pilgrimage tour to Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles or other qualifying tour
- An additional gift acknowledging you as a Builder of Zion Partner

Gateway of Zion Partner
Show compassion for Zion and bless the people of Israel. The ICEJ would be honored if you were to become a Gateway of Zion partner at a giving level of $20,000 a year or more. In appreciation, you will receive everything in the Builder of Zion Partnership level plus:

- The opportunity to meet with ICEJ leadership and/or receive personal briefings on ICEJ projects that are of interest
- Special invites to exclusive events such as pastors’ lunches and VIP meetings that are held in your area or community
- An additional gift acknowledging you as a Gateway of Zion Partner

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Over the past year, the ICEJ’s prayer ministry has expanded and flourished in amazing new ways. In the early months of the coronavirus pandemic last spring, our leadership in Jerusalem sought the Lord about how to respond to this crisis. As many nations around the world began to close their borders and go into lockdown, it seemed the connection with our ICEJ friends and supporters worldwide could be impacted. However, our Father has turned it all for good: we have found ways to stay connected and engage in more prayer times together than ever before.

In late March, two different prayer initiatives were birthed in the same week. First, we were approached by Jewish scholar Dr. Dimitry Radyshevsky about joining Jews and Christians in reading the book of Psalms together online as prayers to the Lord for deliverance from the coronavirus threat. The initiative “Calling to God Together” quickly drew hundreds of viewers, as well as Psalm readers from the Knesset and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to far-off Lapland and the islands of the Pacific.

That same week, we also launched our first online Global Prayer Gathering (GPG) as a way to connect local Israeli and international church and ministry leaders to unite our faith and voices in prayer. Cohosted by ICEJ President Jürgen Bühler and South African evangelist Angus Buchan, the GPG soon was joined by thousands around the globe watching and praying on Zoom, Facebook Live, and YouTube. Other regular guests have included Peter Tsukahira and Suzette Hattingh, while Daniel Kolenda, Steven Strang, Paul Wilbur, Mats Ola Ishoel, and many others have made special guest appearances. The prayer sessions have been fresh and powerful, and many have told us how it has ministered and sustained them in prayer during these difficult months.

A third prayer initiative was launched during the Feast of Pentecost in early June. This global initiative involved hundreds of intercessors worldwide, forming an international 12-hour prayer chain starting in Jerusalem as Pentecost (Shavuot) began and continuing with our national branches and other prayer ministries around the globe. The response was astonishing as more than 40 nations joined in the special prayer vigil—from Fiji to Egypt to Europe and the Americas.

Afterward, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the only critique being that 12 hours was not enough. Thus, we initiated longer global prayer vigils of 36 hours and then 72 hours, timed to coincide with the biblical festival Rosh Chodesh (marked by the new moon at the beginning of each Hebrew month). Early on, it was clear that this is a time God has set aside to meet with His people. Six months later, we are continuing these Rosh Chodesh prayer chains with much enthusiasm among the national branches and prayer ministries involved.

Amid all this prayer activity, we also are continuing with our monthly Isaiah 62 Prayer Initiative, which is going as strong as ever, with hundreds of churches and prayer groups, as well as thousands of individual intercessors taking part on the first Wednesday of every month. Our Isaiah 62 prayer partners now come from more than 150 nations worldwide.

So as we begin a new year, we want to invite you to participate in as many of the ICEJ’s current prayer initiatives as you can. Please note the schedule below for our upcoming prayer events.

**ISAIAH 62 PRAYER INITIATIVE:**
A global day of prayer and fasting on the first Wednesday of each month. Subscribe to our Isaiah 62 monthly Prayer Letter at: www.icejusa.org/Isaiah62_Pledge

**ICEJ GLOBAL PRAYER GATHERING:**
An online prayer event held every Wednesday from 9:00–11:00 a.m. (EST);
Join us at: www.icejusa.org/Isaiah62_Pledge

**ROSH CHODESH PRAYER CHAIN:**
A global 72-hour prayer vigil beginning with the new month on the Hebrew calendar.
January 13 (11:00 a.m. EST) to 16 (11:00 a.m. EST)
February 11 (11:00 a.m. EST) to 14 (11:00 a.m. EST)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ICEJ PRAYER EVENTS,
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: WWW.ICEJUSA.ORG/ISAIAH62_PLEDGE
God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Isaiah 49:22 says, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I will beckon to the nations, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their hips.’”

The ICEJ exists because 40 years ago, the Lord beckoned to the four corners of the earth, and the nations came—ordinary people who took God at word, and through their lives, accomplished extraordinary things for the people of Israel.

Five years ago, I arrived in Jerusalem to serve as assistant to Barry Denison, ICEJ’s vice president of operations. Prior to accepting this volunteer position in Israel, I had never planned to live abroad. I had never even stepped foot off the continent of North America. Nor had I ever heard of the ICEJ, and Thanksgiving dinner was my definition of a “Feast.”

But the Lord heard my unconditional “yes” to Jesus, and this is where He brought me. I guess you could say the God of Israel beckoned. Every ICEJ staff member has a similar story—leaving “father and mother, daughters and sons,” surrendering to the Lord’s plan over their own, and coming in obedience to the Holy Land.

Woven through those first years are shining memories: Conducting visitor tours of our former Rachel Imeinu property; working VIP receptions in the Embassy garden; painting a single mom’s apartment; weekend outings with new friends. Some memories are humorous and ironic, like during the Feast 2016 when I was trapped in a broken Pais Arena elevator on opening night and missed the entire Parade of Nations. For someone tasked with solving problems, it was an awkward yet laughable place to be.

Others are poignant and priceless: Learning to line dance alongside residents of our Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors; standing inside a newly installed bomb shelter, trying to imagine the piercing shriek of air raid sirens outside; greeting new immigrants (Olim) at the airport, and seeing with my own eyes the ongoing fulfillment of prophetic promises.

The Bible springs to life here. On a recent visit to the garden of Gethsemane, I lifted my eyes to see the majestic Temple Mount just meters away. The close proximity of the garden to where the Temple stood was jarring. I could not help but wonder if, during his night of agony there, Jesus gazed on that glorious Golden Gate to strengthen himself: “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Hebrews 12:2). Everything about Jesus became more real to me that day.

Living in Israel is different than experiencing it from a tour bus; the Bible comes alive in a different way. Rubbing shoulders with local Israelis, shopping with new friends, everyday conversations—I began to see extraordinary parallels between these very normal, ordinary people and Bible characters from Sunday school.

Every time I spoke to Holocaust Survivors, I would picture Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. Nurses, engineers, farmers, teachers—these were individuals who had survived unimaginable horrors and came to Israel to build a life for themselves and their children. With bare hands, they built a nation—and at the same time, faced hardships. These were ordinary people whom God used in an extraordinary way.

The Israel I leave is vastly different from the one that greeted me five years ago. So much has changed. I have changed. In fact, the entire world has changed. What a strange and yet perfect time to start something completely new, hand in hand with Jesus.

As I return to the United States to join the team at the ICEJ US Branch, I am deeply grateful to the Lord and to the ICEJ for the blessing and privilege of these treasured years in Jerusalem and for the wealth of memories, new connections, insight, and perspective I have gained along the way.
Uniting to confront the rising anti-Semitism—this was the central message of a conference held in southern Germany in September that drew approximately 280 delegates from across the country. ICEJ Germany, a key partner in the event, was represented by three speakers.

The opening address by Dr. Michael Blume, the commissioner on anti-Semitism for the German state of Baden-Württemberg, was followed by high-profile speakers on effective measures to counter the current rise of anti-Semitism. Gottfried Bühler, the national director of ICEJ Germany, urged church leaders not to treat Israel and the Jewish people as a side issue but to address it in their teaching regularly.

Dr. Blume expressed concern that merely teaching Holocaust history in schools was not sufficient. He emphasized the particular importance of personal encounters between Jews and non-Jews. Bühler agreed and related how ICEJ Germany regularly organizes visits by Holocaust Survivors to public schools, which greatly impact hundreds of students involved.

Another conference speaker was Ahmed Mansour, an Israeli-born German-Arab psychologist and author. “Germany has a historical responsibility, in particular, to fight anti-Semitism,” he said.

Holocaust Survivor Ruth Rosenstock also shared her experiences during World War II. She survived the Holocaust (Shoah) in Mikuliczyn (modern-day Ukraine), but her father and many other Jews from her village were brutally murdered by the Nazis. “I owe it to God to tell my story,” Rosenstock told a moved audience.

The delegates also discussed current developments in various seminars and workshops. In his seminar “Anti-Israelism: The New Anti-Semitism?” Gottfried Bühler explained that indifference toward God’s plan with Israel is one of the breeding grounds for anti-Semitism. Christoph Scharmweber, the German branch Isaiah 62 prayer coordinator, highlighted how politics, the media, and anti-Israel boycott movements repeatedly evaluate Israel through a double standard and how Christians can counter this. Ester Heinzmann of ICEJ’s PR team elaborated on the dangerous spread of Jew-hatred on the internet and why Christians in particular need to join the Jewish people in fighting this poison.

The one concern all the speakers unanimously emphasized was the increasing intensity of anti-Semitism in Germany and worldwide. More than 75 years after the Shoah, it is more important than ever for Christians and other friends of Israel to acknowledge this development and stand alongside Israel and the Jewish people—in word and deed.
Over recent weeks, our US Branch gathered over 400 pastors and Christian leaders for an informative series of webinars discussing the explosive growth of anti-Semitism in the United States. Organized under the banner of the American Christian Leaders for Israel (ACLI) network, the webinars were designed not just to educate but to begin a national conversation among Christian leaders about the problem and how to collaborate and mobilize against it.

Last year, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recorded more incidents of assault, vandalism, and harassment against American Jews than in any year since they began tracking such incidents in 1979. Since then, coronavirus conspiracy theories have blamed Jews for the pandemic—to either dominate the world or make money off the antidote—and many protestors have been heard chanting anti-Israel and anti-Jewish slogans in the streets.

“How could this be happening in the United States, where support for Israel and the Jewish people—from the president and Congress down to thousands of churches and millions of citizens—is so strong?” asked ICEJ USA National Director Dr. Susan M. Michael. “This rise in anti-Semitism is alarming. However, what has me the most concerned is the lack of outrage against it.”

The webinars were the first step in bringing greater awareness to anti-Semitism by allowing experts to discuss the problem and recommend solutions. Speakers included US State Department Special Envoy Elan Carr and US Commission on International Religious Freedom member Gary Bauer who spoke about the US government response to the global phenomenon.

Carr described the problem as coming from the far right, far left, and Islamists. US government policies aim to help provide physical safety for places of worship, to fight hate crimes, and to promote the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism.

In the second webinar, Alyza Lewin of the Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (LDB) described the problem Jewish students are facing on campuses where a fundamental part of their ethnic identity as Jews—Zionism—is attacked. Liora Rez, cofounder of stopantisemitism.org, also addressed how anti-Semitic tropes proliferate on social media and influence many spheres of society.

The next webinar focused on vulnerabilities within the Christian community. Dr. Michael Brown discussed what we can learn from the error of anti-Semitism in Christian history, while Dr. Gerald McDermott covered the fallacies of Replacement Theology, which was the theological seedbed for centuries of Christian anti-Semitism and is prevalent in evangelical seminaries.

The closing session was a discussion of how anti-Semitism affects Israel in the international arena, led by Mr. Noam Katz, Deputy Director General, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The series was brought to a close with a conversation amongst the Christian leaders on unifying against this hatred.

“While the webinars were a first step in a campaign of increasing awareness, it was a major step forward,” said Michael. “We will build on this foundation in the coming months and year, and with God’s help, we will make sure this evil ideology does not take root in American society."
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Ashkelon sits on the southern Israeli coast and is home to many lower-income families. Sadly, the city is within reach of terrorist rocket attacks from Gaza and often finds itself on the receiving end of these barrages.

Many families feel insecure as they do not have a safe room in their apartment. When the red-alert siren sounds, they run to find the nearest shelter. Schools operating in the area are required to have bomb shelters—otherwise, they are not allowed to operate during heightened tensions. Knowing a shelter is nearby may be the only peace of mind parents have when sending their children to school.

The ICEJ recently visited the AMIT Technological High School in Ashkelon, which has a good reputation for dedicated students and advanced learning. On a Shabhat during the 2014 Gaza war with Hamas, this school took a direct hit from a rocket attack, destroying the entrance and several classrooms. Thankfully, none of the children were at school. However, what happened is engraved in the community’s memory and left a long-lasting mark on the school.

This national religious school has around 400 students, mostly boys. However, they recently started a separate girl’s program, allowing approximately 60 Orthodox girls to study separately from the boys in their own school complex. As the girls’ complex was being remodeled, the ICEJ heard about the urgent need for bomb shelters on the premises.

With generous donations received from Christians in the United States and Switzerland, the ICEJ installed two bomb shelters at the new Ulpana religious girls’ complex. At the dedication ceremony, ICEJ Vice President of AID and Aliyah Nicole Yoder explained that the shelters were a gift from Christians who love Israel and wished them a blessed year ahead. The ICEJ plaque on the shelters serves as a continuous reminder of this demonstration of love.

The director thanked our donors, adding that they take security seriously, and without such shelters, they would not have been able to open the new girls’ program. Nicole responded that “although they now have the option to run to the shelter, may it be that they won’t ever need to!” Knowing that the shelters are there helps them to relax and focus on their studies.

Please consider a generous donation to help protect other vulnerable communities in Israel.

GIVE TODAY AT: WWW.ICEJUSA.ORG/BOMBSHELTERS
After the media declared Joe Biden the winner of the US elections in early November, leaders in Israel and the Middle East quickly began taking measures in anticipation of Biden taking office on January 20. However, these moves may prove premature as President Donald Trump has contested the results over allegations of massive election fraud and is seeking to secure a second term on constitutional grounds. As we go to press, the outcome of those efforts is still unresolved, but the prospects of a Biden presidency have already caused key shifts in the region.

From an Israeli perspective, it would be hard for any president to measure up to Trump. He recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moved the US Embassy there; recognized the Golan as sovereign Israeli territory; gave legitimacy to Israel’s presence in Judea/Samaria; played down the two-state solution; cut off US funding to the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA refugee agency; withdrew from the flawed Iranian nuclear agreement; confronted the bullying of Israel in the United Nations; and recently swayed three Arab states to normalize relations with Israel. For all these reasons, Trump is widely admired in Israel, with one preelection poll showing 66% of Israelis were pulling for his reelection.

Meantime, Biden has his own long record on Israel and the region. During his 36 years in the US Senate, he did tend to go along with the pro-Israel consensus in Congress. But as vice president for eight years in the Obama administration, there were many occasions when he could have distanced himself from its unfriendly policies toward Israel, yet he failed to do so. This extends from when a newly sworn-in Barack Obama immediately pressured Israel to impose an unprecedented ten-month settlement freeze, all the way to when the outgoing Obama team orchestrated the very one-sided UN Security Council resolution 2334, which declared Israeli settlements a “flagrant violation under international law.”

Given this record, most Mideast leaders have been expecting Biden to take a completely different approach to the region than Trump. As a general rule, Biden is bent on undoing many of Trump’s executive decisions—both at home and abroad. This might not mean returning the US Embassy to Tel Aviv. But it would include warming US relations with the PLO and restoring US funding to the PA and UNRWA—although Biden would need to adhere to the new Taylor Force Act, which now blocks US funding if the Palestinians are still paying welfare benefits to terrorists.

He also would vigorously push the two-state solution again, as well as pressure Israel on settlement activity. And he would likely revert to the “linkage” theory—the State Department’s traditional position that all conflicts in the region stem from the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, which needs to be solved before other regional problems can be addressed.

Buoyed by the thought Trump was on his way out, the PA leadership in Ramallah quickly signaled Biden they were ready to start restoring security cooperation with Israel and even to enter renewed negotiations with Jerusalem, after boycotting any talks during Trump’s time in office.

European Union officials also felt emboldened to ratchet up their opposition to all settlement activity, denouncing in particular Israeli plans to build hundreds of new housing units in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Givat Hamatos.

However, many Arab leaders continued to take steps to normalize relations with Israel. Even Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman hosted a discreet meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss future moves should Biden take office. Meanwhile, on Iran, many analysts believe Biden would either reenter the old nuclear deal or seek a new one with minor changes and an extended deadline. However, Tehran’s clerical regime made it clear they would exact a high price even to consider possible changes to the JCPOA negotiated under Obama.

Otherwise, Biden is largely seen as a “globalist”—a view reflected in his picks so far for senior foreign policy positions. Many are former Obama appointees, which could prove worrisome to Israelis still smarting from the Obama years. But Biden’s defenders insist he would respect the close US-Israel relationship and help maintain Israel’s military edge in the region.

For America’s traditional Sunni Arab allies, however, there are serious concerns Biden would return to the Obama-era appeasement of Iran by lifting sanctions and overlooking its aggressive tactics in the region. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo paid a visit to the region to reassure Israel and the Arabs that Trump was still around. A few days later, Iran’s top nuclear scientist was assassinated—setting back its atomic program no matter who occupies the White House. ☎️
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