

International report on the LCJE Australasia

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Shalom to my colleagues of the LCJE here in Jerusalem.

Some history of the LCJE AustralAsian corner

In Pattiya in 1980, one Jewish believer from Melbourne, Miss Betty Baruch, a former schoolteacher, was appointed representative of LCJE for Australia. Her participation was limited and mostly figurehead. Following her in the role was Miss Joy Hickman, an accountant and host of Israeli travelers from Auckland, New Zealand. After her tenure, Lawrence Hirsch, who heads Celebrate Messiah in Melbourne took the helm. No national meetings took place during anyone's tenure. Each made reports to the LCJE at the international level.

In 2007, at the LCJE 8th International conference in Hungary, I was appointed AustralAsian representative, a new term with a wider geographic perspective. This new territory includes New Zealand, Singapore and other South Pacific islands. In Hungary, I met with the representatives of LCJE Japan and Hong Kong as well as others from Australia, and we purposed to

conduct an LCJE AustralAsian conference before the next international which would take place in four years.

After meeting with some members from Melbourne a few months later, we decided to conduct that conference in 2009 in Sydney. This was historic. And since 2009 we have had three other such gatherings (2010, 2012, 2014), in other words, now, every two years, with the purpose to convene those interested in Jewish evangelism along the principles and under the rubrics of the Lausanne covenant. Major speakers at these past conferences have included Darrell Bock twice, David Brickner and Wayne Hilsden. Our own representatives including Mark Warren, our prayer chairman here at this conference, as well as Lawrence Hirsch, Ashley Crane, Kon Michailidis, Paul Cohen, Scott Brown among others have brought wonderful papers and to lead discussions. Our next conference will be in Sydney in 2016 with Michael Brown as our main speaker. One of our members, Natasha Michailidis continues as our historian and reporter of our conferences to the Bulletin of the LCJE.

Prayer matters

One of the major activities at each of our four conferences is prayer. We seriously pray together. At the start of each day, over 90% of the participants

gather to seek God together and to listen to one another. It sets the tone for the rest of our interactions and we also pray for our works back home and situations that might arise.

Also as we are a network we have had two different prayer chairwomen whose ministry among us, throughout the years, month by month, is to collect prayer requests from each ministry and each individual member, collate them, and distribute these prayer targets electronically. We owe a great debt to both Marion Hall and now Juanita Doody, who continues in that voluntary post.

Locally

In Sydney since 2001, every four months on average, we have a meeting of leaders we title “JOOS” (Jewish Outreaches Of Sydney). It is sort of a mini-LCJE without papers being delivered. During this fellowship evening we hear stories from one another and pray for each other. We eat together first and have dessert after the somewhat formal gathering. We move from house to house over the years. It’s a very helpful method to seriously care about each other in Messiah.

What about the churches...who gets it?

There is significant interest in Jewish evangelism among Asian Christians. The “Back to Jerusalem” movement is a Chinese-driven, 10/40 evangelism scheme, but features an ending in evangelism in Israel, even among Jewish people. Many Israeli Jewish ministries visit Singapore each year and find good reception. The Anglican cathedral there features “One New Man” meetings which highlight the linkage of the Christian church to her Jewish roots.

Simply put, ethnic churches ‘get it’ when we speak about Jews needing a particular outreach to them. Generic (sometimes I title them ‘vanilla’) churches don’t get us at all. This is true in New Zealand and Australia especially.

In Australia there is increasing interest in Jewish evangelism among only a small section of the Church. For most pastors, Jewish evangelism is not on their radar. The issues the opponents of Jewish evangelism raise are usually either sociological or theological. For some Christians any issue related to Jews is linked with *Zionism*, and in their view usually ultra-Zionism, and as such is political only and not biblical. For others, *particular* evangelism, that is, reaching any subset of humanity, is not in keeping with biblical universalism, by which I mean reaching the whole planet, without emphasis on any one people group. For them, our emphasis on reaching

Jews is racist. For other Christians, Jewish people had their chance in the first century, and now are *cast aside* as a special people. Therefore our interest in reaching Jewish people is seen as unhistorical and certainly irrelevant. For other Christians our interest in Jewish people is theologically inaccurate since the Jewish people will be saved in a *rapture*-begun, dispensation to come, so our interest in them today is too early and thus a waste of resources.

All that said, within a slightly widening circle of Christians, Jewish evangelism is of notice and support. Income for Jewish Christian missions is up over the last decade in a dramatic fashion. Both of the major missions, Jews for Jesus and Celebrate Messiah have taken on staff and increased national and regional activities. Other missions carry on good work among Jewish people and/or among the churches in teaching about Jewish people.

Mention “Jewish people” to most Christians in Australia and they will consider this something of an oddity. Most will use adjectives like rich, cheap, or the verb *to jew* someone down without thinking of the derogatory nature of the labels. Most Sydney Christians think all Jews live ‘over there’ in the Eastern suburbs, and in Melbourne Jews live in Caulfield, and are an enigma. They wear those ‘funny little hats’ and have different rules about

eating and worship on a different day. Evangelism? Most admit, “I wouldn’t have a clue how to begin” or “I don’t know any Jews.” Anecdotally a pastor in Caulfield North told me that he wasn’t interested in having me speak at his church since none of his parishioners knew any Jewish people, because the Jews all live in Caulfield South, approximately only 8 minutes away!

Particular works

There are mostly-English speaking messianic congregations in Australia, most notably the one in Melbourne. There are two Russian speaking congregations. There are many small outreaches, each of which is faithful to Messiah’s calling to communicate the love of God to His ancient people.

For decades The Vineyard has been published by David House Fellowship, formerly “Jewish Evangelical Witness” and the previously-mentioned Mark along with his wife Robyn Warren, along with a great group of volunteers send out loads of those witnessing tools throughout the region.

You have heard much already from Lawrence about the work of Celebrate Messiah in Far East Russia and their congregation in Melbourne if you went to those sessions. Also Celebrate is hoping to build on their current location a messianic centre and art gallery in the heart of Jewish Melbourne. So I don’t need to rehearse those good efforts.

Scott Brown among others in New Zealand in other organizations like HIT (with our friend Omri Jaakobovitch whose talk some heard on Monday night), and JFJ host Israeli tourists in their homes and camp to welcome them to NZ and to welcome them into the Kingdom of God, with commensurate discipleship.

Jews for Jesus continues to operate as we do worldwide with broadsiding creative Gospel tracts and visiting one-to-one in Jewish enquirers' homes and offices. But we have a couple distinctives. One, our newsletter is translated each quarter into Chinese, Korean and Spanish from Australia. And our major distinctive for the last 11 years in Sydney has been a book shop in the middle of the Jewish neighborhood, in the centre in what is called Bondi Junction. With over 800 products from Israel, England, the US and anywhere and everywhere, it's a comfortable place for people to consider Yeshua for themselves. Each week at least one, and more often than not, several unsaved Jewish people enter the shop and enquire or argue or buy products.

Here is a typical example from Three weeks ago.

Chaim from Jerusalem came into the shop, wearing full chasidic regalia. Black and white with fringes abundant. He was wearing a fedora and on entry kissed the mezuzah. He asked if we had large kippot. I showed him our supply of kippot and he looked, but underneath his fedora he already had a

large kippah! Why was he querying? Because he couldn't come in and make a simple enquiry; he had to have a 'real' reason. He left with a shake of the head and a lot to consider about our message of faith in Messiah.

Some like Daniella came in and left with a Bible in her own language and she, a 26 year old Jewish woman from South America, returned every week this year for 4 months to our Bible class. She's still not a believer, but we are delighted in her growth, in her Bible reading, in her questioning, and in her being 'almost persuaded.' And God's not done with her yet. Others like Zeke do come to faith, after having come to the shop, and meeting with our staff. It's an expensive proposition, but we find it a great entry point for people, especially our Jewish people, to discuss what really matters in life.

To summarize

17 years ago I moved to Australia from New York City to found Jews for Jesus and have been privileged to preach in over 1,400 churches, Bible colleges and Christian schools. Along with my staff our total rises to 2,500. We are finding people who really do want to reach the whole world with the whole gospel. Jews are coming to faith in Jesus, one at a time. Evangelism among Jews is happening in homes and in programs, in magazines and public events sponsored by David House, by CWI and JFJ and CPM and others. God is putting Jewish evangelism on the map of Australia. This is a

good sign; we are encouraged and hopeful for the next decade if Jesus' return is delayed.

Thank you to each of you who participates in LCJE international and who guide it well. May you continue to remember the needs of the Jewish people in Australia, Singapore, New Zealand and beyond, and help us as required to make Jesus known among them.