

The Next LCJE Generation

How to pass the baton

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In preparation for this report I solicited insights from younger mission staff, young adult workers and ministry mentors working with younger mission workers. I invited their insights about how we might better involve the next generation of Jewish mission workers in the LCJE network. I'm first reporting some of their general observations and looking for appropriate avenues where we can serve them. Then I'm suggesting actions that you as member Mission CEOs can take along with recommendations for LCJE regional and ICC leadership. My goal is to stimulate your thinking, benefit from feedback in the following discussion and to eventually see implementation of some of these ideas.

General observations about the next generation

- Defining term: Most of our senior LCJE members are from the post WWII *baby boom* generation (1946-1963). A post-Holocaust perspective and the founding of an independent Jewish State helped to shape their worldview. Their mission experience included the significant growth in Jews coming to faith in Jesus beginning in the 1970s.

Generation X, born between 1964-1981 is now in their early thirties and turning 50 years old. Many have already assumed significant positions as younger leaders in the field of Jewish evangelism. The fall of the Berlin wall, shifting international politics and increasing interconnection of global finance has contributed to their worldview.

The *Millennial generation* or *Gen Y* was born between 1982-2004. It is the age group now entering mission service. This is the next generation of future leaders.

I am not thinking so much about how to pass LCJE leadership to the next group of leaders. That, I believe is going to occur naturally as current leadership steps aside for others who are younger and already in leadership. In this discussion, I am thinking about how to introduce the value of the LCJE network to a younger generation of people who are engaged in Jewish evangelism.

- Observers told me, that Millennials are a more secularized generation than were their parents. They tend to be less biblically literate than the previous generations and therefore are hungry to discover the Bible. They want answers for their doubts and someone who will take seriously their questions about faith.

- Millennial Christians want to discover where they fit in God's plan and how they can use their spiritual gifts. They prefer to spiritual discovery through an experience with God and which they can share and discuss with their friends. They would say that they are motivated more by a call of God on their lives than a "call to the mission field."

- Millennials already value social networks. They are the generation that relates online with friends on FaceBook, creative ideas on Pintrest, and virtual armies on "League of Legends." Riot Games reported logon by 5 million concurrent global players on daily average in March. Participants were simultaneously located in various continents including the largest in Asia, followed by Latin America especially Brazil, Europe and with less than 10% located in North America. All of those young players are together at the same time around the globe, spending more than a billion hours online in competition with one another. Millennials get their news,

local, national and global from online sources instead of local newspaper or even television. Democratization of information (per Thomas Friedman) has made them more aware of cross-cultural differences and broader international human connections. They already participate in global networks. So do we as the LCJE. We need to consider how our network can better serve the newer generation of our mission workers.

Messianic Millennials

- One Gen X mission leader observed that, as a generalization, many in the next generation of Jewish believers are second generation Messianic Jews, the children of Jewish believer families.

- And if they are, then their parents are likely to be a Jewish-Gentile couples in more than 50% of the cases. They express their Jewish identity in very different terms from the previous generation. “Yiddishkeit,” an Ashkenazi expression for Jewishness, is not part of their Jewish identity.

- They identify with one another as a unique community that extends beyond the social bounds of their school or neighborhood. They see themselves as fitting more in the margins of the wider Jewish community.

- Generally, they do not share the same social loyalties that work for their parents. They particularly want no part of congregational or organizational disagreements that have previously occurred among their parents’ generation.

- Their Messianic believer social networks are formed at youth programs or camps for Messianic youth. Eventually, they will form their own factions, but right now they are more likely to identify with each another as a distinct and unique generational group of Messianic Jews.

Relationships

- Eli Birnbaum, a Gen Y messianic younger leader told me that relationships are especially important to the younger generation of Jewish believers. Those relationships with older believers are especially important when they can trust a mentor. He said, “We need to be inspired to do what God desires from us. We want to do something useful with our lives.” They want their ideas to be heard and discussed among wiser friends. One way that we can serve the newer generation of mission workers and leaders is by investing our time and interest through relationships with them.

Opportunities

- Some of the younger Jewish mission workers said that they want to be trusted with opportunities to lead the discussion and to give messages that are taken seriously. They don’t want to wait until they are 50 to be promoted.

Some suggestions to serve and involve the next LCJE generation

The following suggestions take three primary approaches. First, the next generation of LCJE needs to know the value of this unique network. Second, it needs opportunities to feel like their

involvement counts for their benefit and the LCJE network. Third, they have expressed the desire for mentoring relationships, like the ones from which some many of us benefitted in our earlier years of experience.

The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism was created 33 years ago 1980 to serve mission workers, academics and administrators in the field of Jewish Missions. Some of us who are the senior LCJE generation might possibly take what we have learned and benefitted from the network experience for granted. I think we want to keep ourselves sharp while introducing a new cycle of learning for training and developing younger mission workers. The primary responsibility for doing that is on you, the missions and your training. ME a mission innovator and a leadership training cadre of men, many who went into leadership with other orgs and women of great creativity and skill like Rivka Chester, Susan Perlman, Steffi Geiser Rubin and Amy Rabinovitz. However, the LCJE network can encourage you and provide useful resources as you ask for and invest in those opportunities that will benefit us all in the field of Jewish evangelism.

Create appreciation for LCJE

- It is up to you as senior LCJE leaders to foster appreciation for this network among your younger workers. They need to hear you tell them what you value most about the regional and international meetings. I heard Moishe Rosen say, “If there wasn’t an LCJE, we would need to create one.” He could tell me the value of meeting with other colleagues, sharing our mutual concerns, learning from one another and encouraging each other. It is easy to forget that the LCJE is not just another mission organization. It isn't even an organization. It is only a network that is created by all of us, participating actively together for the good of Jewish evangelism. Younger workers will attend LCJE meetings, because they see your esteem for the network and high regard for the opportunity.

- Investment: It takes some trust to bring your younger workers to the LCJE regional and international meetings. It costs you time away from the field and additional money. You all understand that those costs are only increased when you bring your younger workers with you to LCJE. However, you also know that investment is needed in the next generation of your missions and for the future LCJE as a resource serving you all.

- orientation: I am encouraging you to identify people that you are developing for leadership on your staff, or even interns, who could benefit from exposure to the LCJE network. As you mentor your younger leaders, give them an orientation to the value of LCJE consultations. Prior to regional or international meetings, help your younger leader understand what they will see and experience at consultations. Help them get the most out of the experience. During the meetings, take time to discuss what they are learning. Hear their perspective. Share with them what you are gaining from the opportunity. After LCJE consultations, again take time to review what you both can take away from the experience. Encourage them to report through the *BULLETIN* their insights for the benefit for others in their age group.

- LCJE has established five clear purposes. We need to intentionally teach the younger workers about what LCJE does and why we come together:

- *Sharing information and resources*
- *Studying and reporting current trends*
- *Stimulating one another's theological and missiological thinking*
- *Strategizing on a global missiological*
- *Arranging consultations that are useful to those engaged in Jewish evangelism*

The Value of an Opportunity

- We are being told that younger mission workers appreciate opportunities. The LCJE network meetings can provide safe and welcoming venues to provide opportunities where we can hear the perspectives of younger workers. We must encourage their exploration of new ideas for evangelism methods. They hear what has been done in Jewish missions and what current methods are employed. However, we need to hear their ideas about how things could be done “better” or differently.

- I think regional networks should provide intentional opportunities at their annual meetings for reports by young workers. This feature could be called, “Reports from our developing mission workers: perspectives and efforts in the field.” Mission leaders should help prepare younger staff to report their views of what is happening with suggestions for topics or improvements in their presentations. Program planners should be counting on you to recommend your topics and younger staff. Ask them to share about new technologies that are available for evangelism. What do they see as new and appropriate social avenues for gospel ministry presentation? Then, come to meetings prepared to hear from them, encourage them and appreciate their efforts.

- I am suggesting the same inclusion for opportunity by the ICC in the planning for the next international consultation for 2015 and to the International Coordinator as editorial policy for the LCJE BULLETIN. I think we need to give the younger workers an opportunity now to be heard, by us and by their peers, if we expect them to develop as leaders for the future LCJE network. We need help from you as mission CEOs to identify and encourage your developing younger leaders. This is one way that the LCJE experience can serve you.

- Young developing leaders have said that they want to learn from experiences. They still want to learn from you and others in the LCJE network. I think that they will enjoy the learning experience more if they can share your enthusiasm for this network. You can encourage them by offering them opportunities to present reports that you or other senior workers in your organization could have given. Demonstrate to your younger leaders their value to you and that they are fully accepted participants in the LCJE network.

- LCJE members need to express to our younger participants that we recognize how things change, how older patterns can morph and sometimes fade while giving way to new methods. We are counting on them to keep telling the gospel to Jewish people when we are gone...if the Lord doesn't return first! We need to ask them how we can serve them to prepare for that task.

Importance of mentoring relationships

- Younger mission workers are most encouraged through relationships and especially by people who will help them trust in God. As LCJE veterans, I encourage you to mentor your younger leaders - men and women, training them about the value of networking. Bring your trainees to the regional or international meetings and also encourage them to network with their peer group. Ask them for their perspectives and what they are learning. Don't expect them to have the same views that we seasoned workers hold. Appreciate their perspective as a unique cultural expression and a valid LCJE network partner. Point out people and ideas that they might appreciate at the meeting. Help them to speak up and share their questions and ideas at LCJE meetings. Help them see the potential value from their time as part of the network.

- Younger mission workers say that they need to know that they are appreciated. They are going to make mistakes. They are passionate to try new things, but want wisdom from others who can help them avoid needless mistakes. They need a platform to try out those ideas, where they can be heard and gently encouraged by people that they trust. LCJE consultations can be a safe place to do that.

- Aaron Abramson told me that younger mission workers want someone to inspire them. They are ready to serve the greater cause of Jewish evangelism. Perhaps we could set aside one of our papers on theological or missiological issues in order to give the younger members in our network something about intentional discipleship and spiritual formation.

The Value of a Network (Community)

- I am not suggesting a separate developing leaders track at the 2015 international consultation, because we need their integrated involvement and they need our attention and affirmation. However, the ICC will need your input about their ideas for contributions to the programs.

- I have to ask you as mission leaders to be honest about any fears that we might have about bringing younger workers to LCJE meetings. What do you risk by their being exposed to changes taking place in the field or new methodologies? Could that produce agents for change in our organizations from what they see, learn or think? Are we willing to change in order to be more relevant or effective in the work of Jewish evangelism?

- If the Lord Jesus does not return in the next 25 years, most of us who pioneered the LCJE network or contributed to the field of Jewish evangelism over the past 50 years will be retired or in heaven. By that time, the younger developing leaders of today will be leading the field and heading your organizations. This network can help you prepare them. It is up to you to see the value of it and invest in their participation now.