

LCJE at LCWE Cape Town – What did we achieve?

Bodil F. Skjøtt

Report at the 9th European LCJE conference in Krakow, November 2010

Those of us involved in Jewish ministry might be able to brag about being involved in the first mission or the oldest mission in the world. But we cannot brag about being involved in the largest, if we would be anything it would be the smallest. If we did not know that before we went to Cape Town, none of us left from there without that conviction.

And of course we knew it before Cape Town. However, knowing it has not – from time to time - prevented us from talking and acting as if Jewish mission is not only first but also for most. Being at Cape Town and seeing and hearing the way “God is on the move” (one of the congress two themes) and meeting members of God’s family from around the world and getting to know their situation and challenges made it clear to us that there *is* a light among the gentiles, it already shines through other gentiles and it points to the God of Israel. When we in our mission talk about difficulties, persecutions and hardships then the stories of others whom we met make our own stories seem insignificant. Daniel Nessim writes in an article to be published in the December 2010 LCJE Bulletin:

Sometimes I think that in the Jewish missions community we tend to become a little myopic focused on our own field of endeavour. We’re probably not the only community prone to this. But after all we may think, we are ministering to (or may even be part of) the Chosen People, and our ‘field’ of evangelism is fraught with missiological and theological implications like no other.

To be among Christians of every different ethnic group imaginable, among missionaries from every group, is an eye-opener. It is a helpful reminder that we are part of our Lord’s Commission to make disciples of all nations.

Part of the family

I left Cape Town with many impressions. One of them connects very much to what Daniel says: We are part of God’s Commission, different but still part of, *and* we have a part to play. At Cape Town we were given room and also permission if not even encouragement to play it!

There were five dialogues sessions at the congress in which Jewish evangelism and Jewish believers were focussed in different ways and I will get back to that. Furthermore, we were also assured that a paragraph on the necessity for the church to share the good news with the Jewish people would be included in the Cape Town Commitment - the statement from the congress – when it appears. It is scheduled for beginning of 2011. This is very different from the 1989 congress in Manila and Manila Manifesto where such a call *was* included but only after a lot discussion which left some bruises on the relationship between LCWE and LCJE. This time we have all the reason to say that we – as Jewish missions – were seen as a part of the world mission family. Perhaps the challenge now is for us to see ourselves in that way and play our part. We need to do so in contributing to the missiological discussions and include ourselves in the caring and praying for the part of God’s family wherever sisters and brothers –our sisters and brothers - are struggling. After Cape Town we can no longer say that we don’t know them. We do, for we shared, prayed and interacted with them for more than a week.

The LCJE dialogue sessions

As a special Interest committee (SIC) of LCWE we were given the opportunity to host a number of dialogue sessions. We did so during all the four afternoons where this was possible. Apart from that the organizers included a fifth session on Jewish evangelism was held by Stuart Dauermann. The five sessions were part of the more than 160 dialogue sessions which people could choose from during the late afternoon sessions, so competition was high; not only among the other participants but also among ourselves. Attending and LCJE session meant that you could not be in one of the other 160 sessions. And one question we had to struggle with was: Where would our presence have a bigger impact – on ourselves and on others? Should we all be in our program and welcome others here or should we get involved in some of the other dialogue sessions and add our perspective to the discussion there?

The four dialogue sessions

The title of the four sessions arranged by the LCJE leadership were 1) How to pray for the peace of Jerusalem; 2) Discipleship issues affecting messianic Jews (MJ) and Muslim background believers (MBB); 3) Evangelism in the State of Israel and 4) Contemporary trends in the world wide messianic Jewish movement.

1) “How to pray for the peace of Jerusalem” had three speakers: David Brickner who underscored the importance of sharing the prince of peace (=evangelism) as a way of working for the peace of Jerusalem. Salim Munayer, who underscored the need to be agents of peace and reconciliation ourselves and not shy away from addressing the difficult issues affecting believers in Jerusalem from both sides of the present conflict, and Wayne Hilsden who underlined the importance of a prayer ministry for Jerusalem and its people.

2) “Disciple issues affecting JMs and MBBs” has two speakers: Richard Harvey presenting the difficulties that MJs face as they embrace faith in Jesus/Yeshua, and Grant Porter presenting the difficulties that MBBs face when they embrace faith in Jesus/Issa. What became very clear were the similarities between the challenges that both groups face. Hopefully the two speakers can develop their “findings” and make them available in a form where they can be shared. In that way both sides can gain from the experience of the other and the similarities between two groups become more evident rather than the differences.

This session also had a “guest speaker”, Brother Daniel, an MBB himself. He shared from his experience in discipling MBBs in an African Muslim context. Brother Daniel’s contribution made it clear that “God is on the move” – also in the Islamic culture today.

3) “Evangelism in the State of Israel” also had three speakers, David Zadok, Dan Sered and Rachel Goldstein-Davies. Together they gave a picture of what is happening mainly within the messianic community in Israel, the difficulties but also the impact the movement has on the society in Israel.

4) In the last session on contemporary trends world wide six people share briefly from the areas where they work: Mitch Glaser gave an introduction and talked about North America, Lawrence Hirsch shared from AustralAsia, Daniel Nessim from Canada and England, Vladimir Pikman from Germany, Boris Grisenko from Ukraine and Michael Sischy from South Africa. The session was closed with an encouragement to the church to be involved within the Messianic movement because – as it was said: “Jewish evangelism has always been strongest when the church has been involved and has taken evangelism to the Jews seriously.”

The number of people attending the four sessions varied from 25-45. The number of “guests” – people not already connected with LCJE - was between 10-20. When we consider the number of dialogue session participants could choose between this number was good and worth the effort. New contacts were made and the awareness of Jewish believers within the church world wide was raised.

Present at the family table at the congress

The formal and planned interactions at the congress were valuable but perhaps even more valuable were the informal meetings during the congress, both for us and for others. The way the congress was arranged made the personal contact easy and very meaningful. During all the morning session people sat at tables of six sharing, discussing and praying together as members around the same table and as individuals who each brought to the table understanding, experience and concerns. We were able to share our stories and influence and be influenced by brothers and sisters from very different walks of life but all united around the gospel and our desire to share that with people in our own community or with those to whom God had sent us. Some of our African or Asian brothers and sister could tell us that they were praying for the Jewish people although they had never before met a Jew. Others from the Arab world could tell us about their desire to see peace and reconciliation in the region, the price they paid for taking such a stand and their plea for us to understand their situation. The table fellowship challenged all of us to grabble what it means that “the wall of partition” has been broken and to come to terms with what our unity in the Messiah means in our daily lives.

This became evident when the organisers had arranged rooms for two prayer meetings – one for Palestine and one for Israel. The rooms were right next to each other – with only a wall between. Fortunately “the wall came down” as the participant moved into one room and prayed together – divided only by language and style.

Conclusion

Let me conclude the way, Tuvya Zaretsky, LCJE president concludes his report to be found in the next LCJE Bulletin where you also find a full report on each of the dialogue session:

I particularly want to encourage any of our readers to take part in Lausanne network opportunities. You have great benefit to gain from engaging in the global network. And the current network participants need your input if they are to remain agile and grow in the directions that God is moving in world evangelism. The 2010 Lausanne Conference signaled that there is a place for Jewish evangelism in the global proclamation of the gospel. Doug Birdsall declared that he “hopes Lausanne gatherings will breath oxygen into the fire that sparks more fires” for the cause of evangelism.