

JOPPA, The "Jewish Outreach Partnership in the
Philadelphia Area"

A Report for the 1991 LCJE, North America in Atlanta

by Rev. Fred Klett

The History of JOPPA

Philadelphia has the fifth largest Jewish population in the world and the third largest in the United States. In 1984 four Philadelphia based missionaries to the Jewish people decided it would be good to sponsor an evangelistic campaign together, similar to the Jews for Jesus Summer Campaign. Art Banks, who worked with the Christian Jew Foundation, and Fred Klett, at that time working with InterVarsity as a Jewish evangelism specialist, were alumni of the Jews for Jesus New York Campaign. Herb Links, director of the Messianic Jewish Center, agreed to host the campaign. Mitch Triestman, then with Chosen People Ministries, also agreed to participate and help with the training. That August we started a small campaign. We scraped together about 25,000 tracts and came up with about fifteen volunteers. We divided up the contacts at the end of the campaign according to mutual consent.

We also decided it would be good to get together on a regular basis for prayer and fellowship. In a short time I came up with the name "JOPPA", an acronym standing for the "Jewish Outreach Partnership in the Philadelphia Area" and wrote up a brief charter. We invited other ministries in the area to join our monthly meetings, and soon Ron Elkin, working out of Tenth Presbyterian Church and Abe Sandler of Alliance Jewish Ministries were aboard. We met up with Jim Leaman of the Shofar Committee of the Mennonite Church at the LCJE consultation in England, and Jim has been involved ever since and lately has been the most frequent host of our monthly meetings. The current participants in JOPPA are:

Alliance Jewish Ministries - Rev. Abe Sandler (Christian and Missionary Alliance)

Ammi Ministries - Ron Elkin (Oriented toward the Presbyterian Church in America)

CHAIM - Rev. Fred Klett (Oriented toward the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

CMJ/USA Jim and Dona Smith (Episcopalian)

Congregation Beth Emmanuel - Jeff Friedman (Assembly of God congregational planting work)

Congregation Beth Messiah - Rev. Herbert Links (Presbyterian Church in the USA)

Beth Shiloh/Hebrew Christian Fellowship - Rev. Harris Brody

Beth Yeshua - Jeff Forman

Messiah's Lighthouse - David Stuart (Christian and Missionary Alliance)

The Shofar Committee - Rev. Jim Leaman (Mennonite)

JOPPA participants represent the bulk of those working in Jewish ministry in the Philadelphia area. Jean Kiefer, of the Lutheran Institute for Jewish Evangelism has been supportive, but has not usually been able to get involved due to time constraints. Chosen People Ministries has been making some changes in the Philadelphia area, so they currently do not have a staff person active in JOPPA. We hope this will change soon. Two other Jewish works in the area do not let their representatives participate. They are of a separatist and fundamentalist orientation and do not wish to cooperate in any way with either charismatics or Messianic congregations, though some JOPPA members have had informal contact with these groups.

The Philosophy of JOPPA

JOPPA is an "underground organization". Although we had a charter signing a few years back, many of the current ministries involved have not signed the charter. We have been talking about staging a "covenant renewal" ceremony in the near future. JOPPA is made up more of individuals who are involved in Jewish ministry, rather than organizations. Perhaps there would be some advantage to becoming more formal, but perhaps the looseness of our structure is also part of what makes it work.

As far as legal status is concerned, we have not formally incorporated. We may need to consider doing so at some time. Keeping JOPPA simple and with a small budget is an advantage. For your information, according to the IRS publication 557, Tax Exempt Status for Your Organization, "Some organizations are not required to file form 1023 (the application for recognition of exemption). These include: "Any organization (other than a private foundation) normally having annual gross receipts of less than \$5,000." As I understand this, once such a group incorporates as non-profit on a state level, it is automatically tax exempt on a federal level as long as the budget is kept under \$5,000. So far we have not seen the need to go forward with this. We did bring a suit against SEPTA, which controls the local train stations, in order to gain access for evangelism. They settled out of court. (We won.) It may be necessary to formally incorporate if we wish to pursue such a case further in the future.

We have a simple charter and by-laws which set forth our doctrinal basis and our general philosophy. (see appendix) Let us consider several points in the charter and by-laws.

Unity in the Body of Messiah is, of course our central focus. We all have our particular theological distinctions. However, by focusing on our common commitment to see Jewish people come to the Lord, we seem to get along. Indeed, the most tension has been between those involved in similar ministries, since we have many of the same constituents!

An unusual feature is that we only do anything by unanimous consent. Some may find this hard to imagine, but this has served us well and forces us to work together.

Standing side by side in evangelism is another key. JOPPA is not just a coffee clutch. We cooperate together on the street. Projects such as the campaign give opportunity to make unity more than just a word. Although all ministries have not been able to participate as

fully as we would like in the campaign, all must at least be supportive of this effort.

What Does JOPPA Do?

JOPPA has three main events. The first is the monthly meeting, the second is the yearly Unity Banquet, and the third is the campaign.

The Monthly Meeting

Once a month representatives from the various ministries get together for bagels, general kibitzing and shmoozing, a little midrash, some davening, and planning events. We take turns bringing the devotion and providing the nosh. We have also rotated the meeting place, though some locations are more central than others. Early morning meetings seem to fit best in most people's schedules. We have had special lunch meetings, such as when David Brickner from Jews for Jesus came to town and wanted to meet the various ministries.

Eating together at our monthly meetings has been a boon to fellowship. There is something about sitting at a table together sharing food which encourages unity. I'm sure we can all attest to the fact that often almost as much is accomplished at mealtimes at a conference as is accomplished during the plenary sessions!

Prayer together is, of course, absolutely essential. It is hard to hold a distance between yourself and another brother or sister in the Lord when you are praying for him.

The Banquet

We started having banquets in 1985. I must credit Ron Elkin with this idea. The banquet has developed into an event with a two-fold purpose. First it is a time to express unity among the Jewish ministries in the area on a broader basis. The monthly JOPPA meeting only includes leaders representing the various ministries. The banquet provides a way to include "lay" people in this expression of unity. Secondly, through the offering taken up at the banquet, we have been able to fund the campaign. All monies collected go directly to the purchase of the tracts for the campaign. JOPPA has no overhead.

We inform the banquet speakers we invite that they are to focus on unity in Jewish ministry. Theoretically they are to avoid issues JOPPA participants may not all agree upon. We have a policy to try to have speakers from outside of the geographical area, preferably from ministries other than those represented in JOPPA.

Our first banquet speaker was Moishe Rosen. Moishe has been a great boon to JOPPA, so it is fitting that he should have been the first. Previous to Moishe speaking at the banquet he had spoken at New Life Presbyterian Church. The offering taken was donated to JOPPA. This gave us \$1,200 toward the campaign. When Moishe spoke at the banquet he refused an honorarium. Both of these gestures really got us going financially and enabled us to go on with the campaign. Moishe, JOPPA owes you our heartfelt thanks. For several years now we have also had Shivat Tzion, a singing group from Beth Yeshua perform. Not only have

they not charged for their fine performance, but Beth Yeshua has paid for their dinners. We also owe them a great thanks. After Moishe we had Rich Nichol, Ray Gannon, Barry Leventhal, and Bob Mendelsohn. This year we decided to try something different, so we invited Alyosha Ryabinov to give a concert and share a few words with us. The 1991 banquet included T'Chiat Ami, a Messianic dance troupe from Beth Yeshua.

Our largest banquet had about two hundred in attendance and the smallest was about 90. This year we had over 130 people.

The Campaign

Art Banks and I had been to New York with Jews for Jesus for their campaign. Herb Links had also been exposed to this form of evangelism and Mitch Triestman had been involved with the (then) ABMJ step program. The four of us were the original founders of JOPPA and joined together for the first campaign. Art Banks and I ran the campaign together for the first couple of years. I have been heading up this effort since Art left the ministry. We have had a total of seven summer campaigns so far, and two one- day mini-campaigns lead by Ron Elkin. Ron is scheduled to work with me in leading the campaign this year. This is a group effort so we try to have as many ministries as possible involved in training our campaigners. All ministries involved with the campaign pitch in and help. We accomplish more together through a unified witness than any one of us could accomplish alone.

How does a cooperative campaign work? Each ministry recruits volunteers who represent that particular ministry, but on the street we all wear the same shirts and identify ourselves as "a coalition of believers in the Jewish Messiah". On the street no one knows we are from different groups. The only thing we tell the public is that we are Jewish and Gentile believers from different congregations, all united in our love of the Jewish people and our desire for people to know the Jewish Messiah. Any contacts generated by a particular campaigner are given to the ministry he represents. In this way there is an incentive for ministries to recruit volunteers. The more they recruit, the more they benefit from the campaign.

Recruits are asked to fill out an application and to pay a minimal fee toward the cost of evangelistic and training materials and their T-shirts. Most of the campaign funding comes from the offering taken at the banquet. We put the volunteers through one full day of training and assign them some reading materials, such as Moishe Rosen's Share the New Life with a Jew and Dan Juster's Jewishness and Jesus. In addition to the training, every recruit signs up for a minimum of one full day, which includes four sorties on the street. Some sign up for several days. One can participate for the whole week if one desires. The one day requirement allows people who may not otherwise be able to participate in such an effort to get involved.

We have had a number of veterans who participate year after year. For these people we have a "Track 2" program which involves some leadership training, some review, some more advanced apologetic, and time to help produce evangelistic picket signs for our yearly

evangelistic demonstration.

We conduct a Jews for Jesus style campaign, but on a much smaller scale. The actual evangelism involves the wearing of the T-shirts, handing out broadsides, and engaging people in gospel conversations. Contacts are later followed up by each ministry involved. One year we tried including street drama as part of Track 2, but we have not included this again because of the limited training time. One day isn't enough to prepare for drama, and since we have different people signed up for each day of the campaign, team drama is also ruled out. The evangelist demonstration, which is really a form of drama, seems to be the best way to go. The advantage to a demonstration is that it can involve a large number of people, and takes little training --providing the person leading it knows what he is doing. We have had as many as 25 campaigners on a given day of campaign and as little as two. Such a variation makes for some interesting logistical problems, so when in doubt of what to do with so many recruits, demonstrate! The demonstrations have not failed to produce unsaved Jewish contacts and have been one of our most effective tactics. We often go with a Fourth of July theme and try to tie it in with whatever is going on in Philadelphia during the Independence Day week. One year we combined a "Death Busters" broadside with a demonstration protesting death! We had fun with this one. Our Mennonite brother came up with the chant "Hell? No! We won't go!" I think we were hard to ignore, which is half the battle in apathetic Philadelphia. Another year we went with a Batman tract and were handing these out on the very evening the Batmobile was visiting South Street, also known as the "Hippest Street in Town".

Since we started campaigning in 1984, we have given out over 333,000 broadsides and 55 unsaved Jewish people have given their names for follow up. One tract has gone out for every Jewish person in our area.

Advantages of an Organization Like JOPPA

JOPPA encourages a sense of community among Jewish ministries. Most of the Jewish works in the Philadelphia area are small. Many have only one or two staff. This is a mission field in which it is particularly stressful to feel alone. Through JOPPA, it is easier to feel that the other ministries in the area are our co-laborers in the gospel rather than our competition. There is still competition and there are differing philosophies of ministry, of course, and this has sometimes caused stress, but having a cooperative forum makes it a little easier. At the very least we can refer to each other as "my brother xyz" or "my sister so and so" rather than just "the people from that other Jewish ministry". Making it personal helps a great deal. It is easier to feel animosity towards a depersonalized stranger than towards someone you pray for and do evangelism with. Each of us needs the understanding that we are part of a greater cause, the Kingdom of God, rather than just "my ministry". We all tend to want to build our own kingdoms. It is good to be reminded that we are all part of the same effort.

Sharing information is a great advantage. We will sometimes find we have contacts in common, and there always seem to be problem people who float from one ministry to another. As with the LCJE, we can discuss which approaches to evangelism work and which

do not. We share information about New materials, relevant books, the latest activity of the anti-missionaries, articles in the Jewish press, conferences, etc. At our last meeting one member was informed on the existence of the book Stand Firm, by Eliezer Maass, dealing with anti-missionary arguments. His congregation was looking for just such a resource for an upcoming class on apologetics. It was through LCJE that some of us knew about this book in the first place.

JOPPA is there to welcome newcomers to the community of Jewish ministry. Recently the Assemblies of God sent a new worker to our area. He was told about JOPPA and we were able not only to welcome him, but also to help acquaint him with the Jewish community in the area. Jewish community leadership has been helpful to us in providing a fine demographics study of the Jewish community in Philadelphia. We have been able to share this information with the new arrival. If they knew what their study is being used for they would plotz!

Obviously, there is much to say in favor of a unified witness. As parts of the body of Messiah, we all need each other. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Disadvantages and Ongoing Struggles

JOPPA is not utopia. There are always problems when human beings get together --even two! Some personalities, like oil and vinegar, don't easily mix, but shake them up together and add a little spice, and you have salad dressing!

Time commitment and individual agenda are always obstacles to joint efforts. Each ministry has its own demands. Most of us must please our superiors, area directors, etc. Not everyone has been able to be involved with the campaign. There is always a temptation for those who always seem to show up and do the work to resent those who are not as committed. Only the Holy Spirit can help us here. Keeping the unified agenda simple and to a minimum helps. Probably two events a year are enough. We tried twice to sponsor a Picnic, but it didn't seem to work very well. Few showed up. Perhaps it could work as an evangelistic event, or instead of a banquet.

Separatists have not been willing to participate. JOPPA, by nature, is broadly evangelical. We include charismatics and non-charismatics, Messianic congregations and Main Line church ministries. Various millennial positions and views of Israel are represented, just as with the LCJE. Some aren't willing to work with those who do not represent their own particular brand of Christianity.

There is also the danger of a large ministry dominating. So far this hasn't been too big of a problem. Having banquet speakers from out of town, and if possible from outside of the ministries participating has been a good policy. Our policy of unanimous consent also helps. In addition, representatives from smaller works may be able to be more flexible and devote more time to JOPPA projects.

Another danger is a lack of sensitivity for the diversity involved. We have tried to set

guidelines for banquet speakers emphasizing this is a coalition on ministries representing the broad evangelical spectrum, but this has not been fool proof. Some have not been as sensitive to the degree of diversity represented as we would have liked.

Real competition between ministries exists. Unfortunately, this is not going to go away any time soon. JOPPA forces us to try and work it out. Here's a timely example. At this present time Ron Elkin and I are both in hot competition for support from PCA churches. One morning we even saw each other driving side by side on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, each scheduled to speak at different churches in the same part of the country on the same morning! It hasn't been easy for us, but we had to drive all the way to Atlanta together and we will be working on the summer campaign together. We have been forced to try and get along and to communicate. Last year on the campaign I even took a PR photo for Ron using my own camera and film so that he could use it to approach the same churches I would like to support our work! We both still feel tension, but it is better to feel tension and work and pray together than to feel tension and have nothing to do with each other!

JOPPA is not the Heavenly Jerusalem, but JOPPA, the city in Hebrew known as "Yaffa" was the port of entry for those invading Jerusalem by sea. It means "beautiful" in Hebrew, and I believe our attempts at encouraging unity and cooperation among Jewish works in Philadelphia is indeed beautiful in God's eyes. Pray for us. I'm sure the evil one would like to bring division. We cannot take what we have had for the past seven years for granted.

A Proposal for the LCJE

We in Philadelphia would like to encourage the formation of additional local partnerships in Jewish ministry. We know there have been some cooperative efforts in other cities from time to time, but much more could be done. Perhaps the LCJE could pass a resolution encouraging such local cooperative forums. Perhaps the specific form JOPPA has taken is not suited to the needs of your area. Perhaps a cooperative campaign cannot be arranged. But I'm sure there must be some sort of common evangelistic project all could agree on. And could it hurt to gather together locally on a periodic basis, at least to pray and share information? Why not begin by having participants from the same area present at this consultation covenanting together to form such a group. May I suggest you get together at meal times and discuss this possibility?

There has been too much unhealthy competition and division between Jewish ministries. It is fine when we try to out do each other in love, in evangelism, and in service to the Lord, but this is not always the controlling attitude. Indeed, our field of endeavor has often been just as divided as is the church itself. Sometimes we act more like businesses. Rivalry and unnecessary multiplications of ministries have hurt our overall cause, as it has hurt the cause of the body of the Messiah as a whole. Remember how the Apostle Jacob (also known as James) warns us, "Where you have envy and selfish ambition (also translated or rivalry), there you find disorder and every evil practice." (James 3:16) Let us pursue unity at the national and international levels through the great blessing of the LCJE, and let us seek ways to work together for the sake of the gospel in our respective communities, as well. May God grant us grace to truly be a family, the children of the Messiah.

CHARTER OF THE JEWISH OUTREACH PARTNERSHIP IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA (J.O.P.P.A.)

JOPPA is a cooperative forum of several Jewish ministries with the purpose of promoting the advancement of the Messiah's Kingdom among Jewish people in the Philadelphia area.

Participants are required to:

1. meet together monthly for fellowship, prayer, and the dissemination of information
2. seek mutual cooperation when possible.
3. co-sponsor the annual summer outreach project
4. pray for each other
5. be in agreement with the charter

Doctrinal Agreement

Although we do not in any way wish to minimize the importance of sound doctrine and a biblical philosophy of ministry, JOPPA members have differing doctrinal positions and approaches to ministry. This is necessarily the case since JOPPA is a cooperative effort of several different ministries. JOPPA members agree not to make a major issue of doctrinal differences. Furthermore, no one ministry is to dominate the group, although responsibilities may vary.

However, we hold these doctrines as essential to participation in JOPPA:

1. The existence of One infinite and personal God who created the universe by His word. God is triune, One in essence, yet eternally existing in three co-equal, co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. The Messiah is fully divine and fully human. Both natures are united in the one person of the Son.
3. Yeshua (Jesus) is the true and living Messiah who died to bring perfect and complete redemption to the world. His death provides an atonement of infinite value which fully satisfies the justice of God in payment of the sins of those who believe. This New Covenant redemption is freely offered to all mankind and is received solely through faith in the Messiah.
4. Salvation is through faith alone in the work of the Messiah alone. All glory goes to God. Repentance always accompanies saving faith but is not the basis of forgiveness.
5. The bodily resurrection of the Messiah from the dead and His ascension to the place of the highest authority in the Universe.

6. The power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the salvation and sanctification of all who believe.
7. The personal and glorious return of Jesus the Messiah to judge the world and consummate His kingdom.
8. The creation of man in the image of God.
9. The fall of all mankind into sin and rebellion against God. All who are without Messiah as savior are lost and subject to eternal judgement.
10. The full and complete verbal inspiration of the 66 books of Old and New Covenant scriptures, which are inerrant in their original manuscripts and fully trustworthy in all they say. The scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.
11. The spiritual unity of all true believers in the Messiah.
12. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper given for the edification and instruction of believers.
13. The necessity of affiliation with a local body of believers in the Messiah.
14. The importance of proclaiming the gospel to the Jewish people in a culturally relevant way.
15. The legitimacy of cultivating and maintaining a Jewish identity within a New Covenant framework.

BY-LAWS OF THE JEWISH OUTREACH PARTNERSHIP IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

1. A "Jewish ministry" is defined as either an established Jewish mission agency, a local congregation, or a recognized ministry within a local church, denomination or agency.
2. JOPPA will function on a unanimous consensus basis. Each ministry represented will have one vote.
3. To be a voting ministry, you must sign the charter.
4. Funds are to be used for JOPPA-sponsored events as agreed by JOPPA members.
5. Members are to make the monthly meetings a priority and are expected to be represented unless this is impossible (death, illness, or other unavoidable circumstances). In this case, one may vote in absentia.
6. Non-members are welcome to attend at the invitation of members.
7. New members are admitted upon signing the charter and consensus of the existing membership.
8. Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month 7:30-9:30 a.m. unless otherwise agreed upon.
9. A quorum is constituted of two-thirds of the membership.
10. Potential members must attend regularly for three months before being considered for membership. JOPPA must vote on admission within six months. Acceptance will be decided by a meeting of members without the candidate present.
11. Individual members of JOPPA may invite representatives of other ministries to attend.
12. Termination of a problem member is by unanimous decision (not including the problem member).

Discussion

Their telephone number is on the tracts that are handed out. However, they don't get that many calls to make it an unfair practice. Contacts come from the street. Ron Elkin adds that each ministry has volunteers who put their names on cards. No one ministry is promoted over another.

Fred says there has been no major Jewish community opposition. They are not that visible as JOPPA. Only missions who are represented by volunteers get contacts. Each volunteer gets their own contact. The t-shirts worn say "We the People Need Messiah" and "Philadelphia, Get to Know Messiah." They have been using Vince Morgan's Jesus/Jewish star and have used many Philadelphia-connected slogans.