

From the International Council of Christians and Jews at the Martin Buber House, Heppenheim, Germany

a global network that

- builds Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Christian-Muslim understanding
- brings the religious and moral principles of these traditions to bear upon the problems of interfaith, inter-racial and international relations
- strives to eradicate prejudice, discrimination and their consequences
- promotes attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect

**Patron:** Sir Sigmund Sternberg, KCSG, **President:** Dr Deborah Weissman, **Vice-Presidents:** Rabbi Ehud Bandel, Dr Philip Cunningham, **Treasurer:** Prof Dr Abi Pitum, **Members:** Gunnel Borgegård, David Gifford, Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, **General Secretary:** Rev Dick Pruiksmas

## President's word

► In the midst of this winter holiday season, I would like to take the opportunity to greet all of our members and wish everyone a happy, healthy and fulfilling 2011.

2010 has been a very busy time for the ICCJ in several important directions: we have had a number of successful regional conferences, focusing mainly on our 2009 Berlin Document; we are exploring possibilities for reviving our Abrahamic Forum for trilateral dialogue; we are re-designing our Web site and beginning to use it more as an educational tool; and we are gearing up for our annual conference next summer, to be held in Cracow, Poland. I hope to see many of you there.

I hope that you are aware of the many resources available at our Web site and its sister site, [jrelations.net](http://jrelations.net). For those of you who may not be as comfortable as others with "surfing" the Web, I highly recommend that you include it on your list of "Internet favorites" so that you can easily see from time to time what we on the International Executive Board have been doing. One of our major projects this year was crafting a response to the Palestine Kairos document. It is important for us to continue to bring the insights and lessons we have learned from decades of Jewish-Christian dialogue to those parts of the world in which there isn't such a tradition, but to try as much as possible, to share our insights in a respectful and non-patronizing way.

Our work should be informed by Psalm 34:14, "Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." In other words, first we work together to eradicate antisemitism and Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism, wherever they appear. Then our dialogue enriches us, spiritually and culturally. Finally, it helps us in the pursuit of peace-in ourselves, our communities, and internationally. ■

*Dr Deborah Weissman*

## From the General Secretary

► As from December 1 the totally reshaped ICCJ Website is on line.

Apart from a bi-monthly E-Bulletin, ICCJ communicated with the general public mainly in printed form via this Newsletter. After many years ICCJ's communications

**NEW WEBSITE ONLINE**

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strategy will be changed fundamentally. For obvious reasons and like in many organisations, ICCJ from now on will concentrate for its outreach on web based communication. The advantage of this digital outreach to our member organisations, their local branches and to the general public is the fundamentally two-way approach. From presenting the ICCJ in print, the digital shift changes the character of our publications to a way of communication. Exciting new features appear on [www.iccj.org](http://www.iccj.org). ICCJ now has a comprehensive information system at its disposal. At MyICCJ you may subscribe to this news flow and indicate on what items and how frequently you want to be informed. In due time we will open discussion platforms for board members of ICCJ member organisations, for the general public and, on specific items, for specified groups of experts, e.g. on trilateral issues.

Also our resource website [www.jrelations.net](http://www.jrelations.net) has been renewed. Meet us at [www.iccj.org](http://www.iccj.org) and be part of our world wide interreligious dialogue. For detailed information, please see the enclosed info sheet! ■

*Rev. Dick Pruiksmas*



# Annual Conference in Istanbul, 20 – 23 June 2010

## A Christian-Jewish-Muslim Encounter

► Venue for the 2010 annual ICCJ conference was the beautiful city of Istanbul.

The opening address on Sunday June 20 was presented by ICCJ president Dr Deborah Weissman. ICCJ was most honoured by the presence of several distinguished guests. Among them His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I who gave an impressive address. The conference theme was taken from Sura 49:13 of the Quran which in its entirety reads: *O mankind, we created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you.*

## Conference program

Each day's work was introduced by a meditative moment from one of the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, encouraging us to listen with finely attuned ears to the respective message but also allowing questions. Followed by inspiring plenary lectures preceding each day's workshops and deliberations. Excellent key note addresses were presented by Prof Susannah Heschel, His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France and Dr. Abdul Malik Mujahid, the first ever Muslim President of the Council of the Parliament of World Religions. In their honesty and questions they opened up the participants' alertness to the workshop topics.

A wide range of workshop topics was offered to the participants. Here a couple of examples to give a flavour of the rich diversity of the workshops and the attempt to cover aspects which are sincerely relevant:

– **Islam in Europe** – described by a Pakistan born participant as a rare chance to speak openly also about the European identity developing opposition to the 20 million Muslims living in the EU fearing the loss of a "Christian Europe".

– **The Christian Orthodox Church in Turkey – past and present.** Presented by the Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and a Turkish academic, the historic rivalry in relation to Greece was discussed

– **Scriptural Reasoning** – exploring Quran 49:9-13; the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:38-48, and the Tenach texts Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 2:18-23 exemplifying the different ways each religion reasons about scripture.



On June 24 the 2010 ICCJ Annual General Meeting was held at the Kalyon Hotel in Istanbul. Left to right: Phil Cunningham, USA, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President, Ehud Bandel, Australia, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, Debbie Weissman, Israel, President, Abi Pitum, Germany, Treasurer and Dick Pruiksmā, Netherlands, General Secretary during the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

– **The Palestine/Kairos 2009 document by Palestinian Christians** – this workshop explored the impact of the Middle East conflict on the interreligious bilateral as well as trilateral dialogue. The general sense of participants was that all involved in the interreligious dialogue had things to learn from the Kairos Palestine document, whether or not they agree with all its assertions.

– **Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam** – exploring mystical traditions also in Turkish Islam as well as the dangers witnessed between the two world wars of being used or abused for nationalistic purposes.

## Outings

As so often in ICCJ conferences, animated conversations were heard at meal times as well as much laughter. Not just business cards, but personal friendships old as well as new were exchanged. The sky sometimes was grey. But that did not diminish the joy of visiting some of the famous sights, of a warm welcome by the St Esprit Harbiye Cathedral presenting us with a beautiful chant and organ concert, a visit to the Jewish museum and afternoon and evening prayers at the Ortaköy synagogue followed by a festive meal. Full texts of plenary lectures and opening addresses will become available on the ICCJ website as soon as possible.

When despite the recent tense situation ICCJ decided to hold the conference as originally envisaged, the ICCJ leadership knew that we were entering new ground facing new sensitivities and historical experiences. There is much we hope and intend to build on in the months to come. ■

Ruth Weyl

## YLC – conference in Dublin, July, 2010

### "Narrative, Identity and Action"

► The Youth Leadership Council of the ICCJ met at the end of July 2010 in the historic city of Dublin in Ireland. The conference entitled "Narrative, Identity and Action" provided a safe space for 25 young people from the UK, Canada, the USA, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Germany, Switzerland and Slovakia to encounter each other, build relationships and try different tools for cultivating dialogue and interfaith understanding. The purpose of the conference was three-fold: to encounter, to exchange, and to equip.

### Encounter

Participants "encountered" each other's traditions through discussion of religious texts, visiting a synagogue, mosque and church, and through many fascinating conversations which grew more intimate and insightful as the conference went on. Educational workshops through which delegates "encountered" different ideas and opinions included content on Gender, Engaging Fundamentalists in Interfaith, The Golden Age of Spain compared to London 2010 and the relationship between Interfaith and International Development.

### Exchange

The highlight of the "exchange" element was as always the Cultural Sharing Evening, where participants had ten minutes to present their home country, its culture, language and/or food. They experienced Iran's history



through an engaging video, learnt German songs, learnt American etiquette for attending baseball games and attempted both Israeli and traditional English dancing. Through this participants gained some insight and appreciation for not only their religious, but also their cultural differences, and built trust and goodwill within the group.

## Equip

This year, more than previous years, there was a focus on "equipping" participants to be able to start interfaith initiatives in their home countries, or to enhance existing projects. Time was given to Three Faiths Forum "Skills 4 Dialogue & Communication" training; a support circle was created for speaking about how interfaith activities can impact on one's own faith; and following a presentation from ICCJ President Dr Debbie Weissman and Dr Peter Pettit, participants devised "action plans" in country/regional groups. Dr Weissman expressed her immense pride at YLC's achievements this year, and looks forward to welcoming YLC to next year's conference in Poland, where the youth group will be programming some activities for the whole ICCJ.

The success of the event was in great part thanks to new chair Katie Sturm, who showed superb leadership and extreme dedication, and to the Board who worked incredibly hard this year. We look forward to harnessing the excitement and insights generated by this conference to enhance the national and international interfaith work. ■ *Debbie Danon, Three Faiths Forum, London*



## Baltic-Nordic-British conference on "A Time for Recommitment", Sigtunastiftelsen, 6 – 7 October

► *We want to come back next year – to have a follow-up of this meeting and to see what we have achieved in our own settings!* all the participants in the conference on "A Time for Recommitment" in Sigtuna, Sweden, in October said.

For the very first time a regional Nordic-Baltic-British conference on Jewish-Christian dialogue was arranged. There were participants from the Baltic countries, from the Nordic countries and from the British Isles. Some had long experience of dialogue, some were newcomers. The President and the General Secretary of the ICCJ participated as well and made an important contribution by giving the back-ground of the dialogue and the document and by setting the international scene.

We heard two excellent keynote addresses. The topic of the lecture by Dr Winston Pickett - an American Academic now living in the UK, an author and researcher on the subject of antisemitism and its new genre – was *The Old/New Antisemitism: déjà vu all over again*. Professor Jesper Svartvik - the first Krister Stendahl Professor of Theology of Religions at Lund University and at the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem – addressed *Why Is This Light Different from All Other Lights? – The Berlin Theses as a Beacon in the History of Jewish-Christian Relations*.

There was much room for national reports and all participants learnt a lot about the history and the situation of their neighbours.

The venue of the conference was Sigtunastiftelsen, not only a beautiful and comfortable conference venue in Sweden's oldest city but also a place of great interest for the inter-religious dialogue. Samarbetsrådet för Judar och Kristna, the Swedish CCJ, traces some of its roots to Sigtunastiftelsen, where inter-religious dialogue has been on the agenda since decades. It also played a significant role during World War II as a refuge for persons in the resistance movement such as Bishop Bell and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The ICCJ has member organizations in the British Isles where the number of Jews is significant. The ICCJ has member organizations also in Latvia and in Sweden. The Jewish population is small in Sweden and even smaller in the other Nordic and Baltic countries. That is probably the reason why Jewish-Christian dialogue has not been established there - yet.

There was a commitment – and a recommitment – to work for a deepening of the Christian – Jewish dialogue. Hopefully we can report next year about the result, after a "Sigtuna II". ■

*Gunnel Borgegård, Chair-person of Samarbetsrådet för Judar och Kristna*

## Conference in Chicago, 14 – 16 November

► From November 14 to 16, 2010, Catholic Theological Union in Chicago welcomed over forty Catholic, Protestant and Jewish participants to an in-depth discussion of the points of the 2009 ICCJ Berlin document as well as how the Jewish and Christian communities might continue to build a constructive relationship based on these points. The conference was co-sponsored by the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program of the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Center, the Jewish Federation/Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago and the International Council of Christians and Jews. The conference was designed to be highly interactive with group exchange being of the highest priority. Hence numbers were kept relatively small so that this goal could be realized. The conference began with a description of the process that created the Berlin document and its major emphases. This session was led by ICCJ Vice President Philip Cunningham of St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia and Dr. Deborah Weissman, ICCJ's current President.

On Monday and Tuesday the participants focused their attention on the particular points of the document. Discussion in each session was launched by two short reflections, one by a Christian and one by a Jew, which

attempted to spark points for consideration, introduced critical comments on the points, and suggested possible future implications and necessary clarifications. Presents included Dr. Karla Suomala of Luther College in Iowa, Rabbi Dr. David Sandmel, Crown-Ryan Professor of Jewish Studies at the Catholic Theological Union, Rev. Dr. Robert Reynolds of the Chicago Presbytery, Dr. Michael Kotzin, Executive Vice President of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, Dr. Jean-Pierre Ruiz of St. John's University in New York, a leading Latino theologian and a member of the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations, Rabbi A. James Rudin, consultant on interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee and a longtime international figure in the dialogue, Dr. Katharina von Kellenbach of St. Mary's College of Maryland and Rabbi Richard Marker, currently Chair of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC), the principal Jewish body for dialogue with the Vatican and the World Council of Churches. A final session on "Where Do We Go From Here" heard penetrating proposals from Dr. Peter Pettit of Muhlenberg College and Rabbi Gilbert Rosenthal, Chair of the National Council of Synagogue which conducts ongoing dialogue with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States. The conference ended with an optional public lecture attended by theological faculty and students as well as members of the local Christian and Jewish communities by Dr. Deborah Weissman. In her challenging lecture Dr. Weissman proposed a Jewish theological approach to other religious traditions that was based on key texts in the religious literature of Judaism. She strongly argued that it is definitely possible to make a case for Jewish respect for other religious communities and an openness for sustained dialogue with their members that is rooted in the traditional texts of Judaism. The conference was certainly successful in extending knowledge and understanding of the points of the Berlin ICCJ document within key elements of the Jewish and Christian communities both locally in the Chicago metropolitan community where dialogue has been an important part of the religious scene for many years thanks to the leadership of people such as the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and nationally as many of the participants play an important role at the national level in the United States. ■

*John T. Pawlikowski, OSM, Ph.D*

## Abrahamic Consultation, Berlin, 12 – 14 December

▶ In cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation an international Jewish-Christian-Muslim consultation will be held at the Berlin Academy of the Adenauer Foundation. A small expert group of 12 Jews, Christians and Muslims from European countries, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States of America gather in Germany to draft a paper on Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations based on which the ICCJ can revive its Abrahamic Forum in the near future. In Berlin issues will be discussed like the theological basis of trilateral dialogue as perceived from each of the three participating faith traditions and the issues the three faiths traditions want to bring to the dialogue table.

More information will be available as soon as possible on [www.iccj.org](http://www.iccj.org). ■

## 2011 – Annual ICCJ Conference in Cracow, 3 – 6 July

### "Religions and Ideologies, Poland as a case study"

▶ On Sunday July 3, the 2011 international ICCJ conference will start. This year the conference will be held in the beautiful city of Cracow in southern Poland. Co-hosted by the Jagiellonian University of Cracow the conference will deal with the present day situation of Judaism and Christianity, Jews and Christians in Eastern European countries after they have lived through two totalitarian systems, Nazism and Communism. All this exemplified by the Polish experience. Members of the conference planning committee represent the Jagiellonian University, the ICCJ, the Polish CCJ and the Cracovian dialogue group Covenant. Being in Cracow, a visit to Oswiecim/Auschwitz is a necessity. We will be hosted by the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer of which Father Manfred Deselaers is the chair of the conference planning committee. The Auschwitz Museum will be our partner in organizing the workshops during the day of our visit. For first time visitors an introductory tour through the museum will be offered. Please, subscribe at [www.iccj.org](http://www.iccj.org) under MyICCJ to receive updated information on this special event. ■

### The Association FRIENDS AND SPONSORS OF THE MARTIN BUBER HOUSE

▶ created to allow individuals and non-ICCJ affiliated groups to become partners in the world-wide work of the ICCJ, the income of the Association had in the past been used for general ICCJ purposes. It was agreed last year to use future income from the Association for specific ICCJ projects, most urgently in the first place the Young Leadership (YLC) whose courageous and wide outreach and commitment augur well for the future in our vulnerable 21st century. A more substantial sum could therefore be put at the disposal of the YLC in addition to the ICCJ's regular contribution. The report about the YLC's highly successful summer meeting in Dublin (see p. 3) surely is proof of the importance of that decision. It is our hope that our friends and readers will continue to support the strengthened outreach of today's younger generation. To fulfil our task and to stand by the commitment given seven decades ago that we shall make this a better world, we urge our readers to become individual participants through membership in the Association by filling in and returning the enclosed form. ■

*With thanks, Dr Eva Schulz-Jander, Association President & Ruth Weyl, Association Secretary.*

### NEW ICCJ WEBSITE

▶ This issue of the ICCJ Newsletter will be the last printed issue. With some feelings of melancholy we say farewell. We are grateful to all those who made this Newsletter appear during so many years. But we find comfort in the idea that much more information will be available and closer communication will be possible in the years to come by means of the Internet. Please, meet us at [www.iccj.org](http://www.iccj.org). Be part of it! ■

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