

ICEJ Invites Christians to Celebrate Feast of Tabernacles Alongside Israel in Global Online Event

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem serves a unique purpose in the body of Christ, a purpose rooted in an equally unique calling: to minister Christian love and support to the Jewish people. Founded in 1980, the ICEJ carries out that calling in a variety of ways, including the annual global celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, scheduled this year for Sept. 20-27. Receive more information and register at this [link](#).

The celebration of the Feast, which now includes a large online component, played a significant role in the ministry's founding, says ICEJ USA Director Dr. Susan Michael.

"In the late '70s, there was a group of Christian leaders living in Jerusalem for different reasons," she recalls. "There were academics, there were journalists, there were people involved in local churches and others just called to be there in the city and to pray." Some of those leaders included Merv and Merla Watson, gifted worship leaders from Canada who helped drive the vision forward.

As the Watsons and others prayed, God gave them two burdens, Michael says. "The first one was that they needed to begin celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles and bringing an awareness to the global church of what the Feast of Tabernacles is all about."

Most Christian churches know about Passover because of its Christian fulfillment in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Michael says. And most believers also know about

Pentecost, when God brought tongues of fire down from heaven as He sent forth His Holy Spirit. But typically, they're not at all familiar with Israel's third great feast, the Feast of Tabernacles.

The group of assembled Christians wanted to change that, Michael says. "They wanted to bring the understanding of this prophetic feast to the churches, and that's why they organized a Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles there in Jerusalem."

Standing With Israel

At that first celebration, more than 1,000 Christians from 15 countries gathered, Michael says. But the Feast wasn't the only purpose God placed on the leaders' hearts. "At the same time, these Christian leaders were also talking about the need to start a Christian organization that would work in support of Israel—because in the '70s, there were none."

God moved in history in a supernatural way while the team was planning and preparing the Feast, Michael says. "The Israeli government passed what's called the Jerusalem Bill. And that's when they legally declared what was already de facto, but they put it into law: that all of Jerusalem was the eternal and undivided capital of the state of Israel."

That summer, all the national embassies located in Jerusalem packed up and moved out in protest. But the Christians still came there to celebrate the Feast.

"And while they were there, the organizers announced, 'We do not support what our governments have just done, and we are starting an International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem that represents the millions of Bible-believing Christians around the world who understand the significance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people and stand with Israel at this moment,'" Michael explains.

With founders Johann Luckhoff of South Africa, executive

director, and Rev. Jan Willem van der Hoeven, spokesperson, the ICEJ opened on Sept. 30, 1980, as the only embassy in Jerusalem for the next 38 years. Right away, the ICEJ played a representative role for Christians around the world to the Israeli government and people, Michael says. "Immediately, we began opening branches ... and today, we have representatives and branch offices in over 90 countries around the world."

ICEJ represents a global constituency and, because of its international breadth, remains the largest pro-Israel Christian organization in the world, Michael says. The organization is now in its third generation of leadership. Johann Luckhoff was followed by Rev. Malcolm Hedding as Executive Director, and now Dr. Jürgen Bühler is leading as President.

ICEJ USA is integral to the global organization's work, Michael says. "As a branch of the Jerusalem network, our first priority is to bring awareness to the Christian community about our ministry there in Israel and to raise support for it, but secondly, it is to educate the Christian community in our nation."

As a part of that, the U.S. branch started an educational website, , which educates visitors on Israel, Christian Zionism and antisemitism. Michael herself conducts numerous teaching and training seminars along with hosting Out of Zion, her popular podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.

ICEJ USA has also started the powerful American Christian Leaders for Israel, , which brings together evangelical leaders, helping them unite their voices in collaborative initiatives and events in support of Israel.

Preparing the Way

The ICEJ's unique calling lends itself to a unique role that is "wrapped up in the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles," Michael says. "We really have a prophetic end-time calling

that's unique because of the uniqueness of this Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem and what the Scriptures have to say about it."

In explaining the meaning of this Feast, Michael points to a particular prophecy: "Then it will be that all the nations who have come against Jerusalem and survived will go up each year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zech. 14:16).

Michael says this passage describes "a future day that I believe we even now are preparing for. The ICEJ is working in almost every nation on earth now. And one day, we will say, 'We have a representative from every nation on earth celebrating the feast this year.'"

That international representation does not signify a fulfillment of the Zechariah prophecy, however, but a preparation for it, Michael says. Just as ICEJ grew out of the Feast of Tabernacles, "part of our mandate is to bring an awareness of the Feast to the nations and bring them up to Jerusalem now, which is only a preparing of the way for that future time when the Lord returns and stands on the Mount of Olives, which is also in Zechariah" (Zech. 14:4).

Michael sees yet another prophetic tie to the Feast in the book of Revelation, where John describes the new heaven and new earth. "And I heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, 'Look! The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them. They shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God'" (Rev. 14:3).

"That's a wonderful future event that we look forward to," Michael says. "And I just believe that we are in some small way preparing the way for that."

Celebrating the Feast

Through the years, the ICEJ has brought "at least 150,000

Christians up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast," Michael says. "And that's a very conservative number." For 2020 and 2021, the celebration has gone online, with more than 7,000 paid registrants last year along with watch parties in churches, making an accurate participation count difficult to obtain. Key Israeli leaders have appeared on the stage for the Feasts through the years, including every mayor of Jerusalem and every prime minister of Israel except one.

"We now have the potential online to have 150,000 people celebrating at one time, and our goal is just to keep growing this," Michael says. "With technology, it's just going to be phenomenally easy to reach every nation on earth and have them celebrating with us, whether virtually or in person in Jerusalem."

But why does the ICEJ continue to focus on this unique celebration? Beyond the prophecies concerning it, Scripture sets forth the Feast of Tabernacles as one of the three great feasts of the Lord. "The men of Israel were required to go up to Jerusalem and appear before the Lord and celebrate this," Michael says. "The Feast of Tabernacles was given to the Israelites by God. Those who celebrate this feast are celebrating God's provision and covering of them during the wilderness wanderings.

"But God also tabernacled with His people during the wilderness wanderings," she adds. "His presence was there in the tabernacle in the desert, and He was with them. And so He tells them to do this every year, to remember that experience."

As a part of the tabernacle celebration, God told the people to rejoice before Him for seven days, she explains, noting one aspect that aligns with the chaos our world faces today. "God understood no matter how difficult life is, no matter what problems you may be going through, He set aside seven days and said, 'Rejoice and celebrate before Me.'

"We need this just like we need a Shabbat every week to rest," she says. "We need a week every year where we just forget our problems, rejoice and celebrate over His provision for us."

The significance of the Feast doesn't stop there, however. Once the nation of Israel entered the promised land, the Feast also included a celebration of the harvest as part of God's provision, Michael says.

Over the years, the Jews added what they called a Water Libation Ceremony to the Feast of Tabernacles, "where they would go down to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem and bring fresh, living water up to the temple and pour it out over the altar," she says. "And they knew that it not only signified rain—and they would pray for rain for the next year's crops—but they also knew it signified the Holy Spirit, the living waters of the Lord."

A key verse in John 7 reveals this truth, Michael says: "And it was on that day of the Feast, that Jesus stood in the temple and said, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water' (John 7:37-38).

"These are the different elements that we're celebrating; there's such rich meaning in the Feast of Tabernacles, and we as Christians can also celebrate those meanings," she says. "And we see it as celebrating, in a way, the taste of the kingdom of God that we have in our lives by the Holy Spirit. We're celebrating a reality of what God's doing today while we look forward to a prophetic fulfillment on a global scale."

Blessing Abraham's People

Through the years, ICEJ's driving motivation remains rooted in Scripture and realized in practicality.

"One of the motivating factors in the ministry of the ICEJ is our belief that the return of the Jewish people to their

homeland is not an accident of history or a coincidence; it is an act of God, fulfilling His promises to Abraham that this is their land, and His promises to the Israelites and confirmed through the prophets that they would return to their land, never to be uprooted again," Michael says.

"Because we see the hand of God in this, and the fulfillment of so many prophecies as a part of it, we want to be involved, and we want to bless what God is blessing, and we want to support it," she adds. "And then we understand the spiritual significance of this return to the land for the world. And we understand because of that, the spiritual warfare, the evil hatred of it, and we see the responsibility of standing against that."

To that end, ICEJ has long given active support to Jews participating in aliyah, the Hebrew word for "ascent," a term for immigrating to Israel. The ICEJ just celebrated 30 years of assisting Jews—more than 160,000 of them—in making aliyah, or "coming home to Israel." This can mean anything from helping future immigrants attend seminars to prepare for moving to Israel to assisting with paperwork to helping them get to the airport and even to funding their flight.

Christians often sum up their support of Israel via what has become a go-to Scripture, Michael says. "I will bless them who bless you and curse him who curses you, and in you all families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

While not denying the importance of this truth, she takes it deeper. "It's like a law of spiritual blessing God put in place, because as we are blessing the Jewish people, we're standing on God's side of this equation. And we're blessings His plan, His choice of that people and His plan to use them to reach the world with redemption. We're blessing that plan of redemption, and that's why it is so key that we do bless Israel."

This blessing carries special significance when we look at over 1,500 years of Christian antisemitism, Michael explains. ICEJ's mission statement itself comes from Isaiah 40:1: "Comfort, O comfort, My people, says your God."

"And so our mission as a Christian organization is to speak words of love and support, which were a comfort to the Jewish people," she says. From its founding forward, ICEJ has sought to voice and demonstrate Christian love and support in practical ways, including various humanitarian aid projects.

"We have an Israel in Crisis fund whereby we have placed almost 150 bomb shelters in the south of Israel in vulnerable communities," Michael says. "We bought firefighting equipment for all the south of Israel because of the terrorist arson fires that were being started."

All these are tangible signs to the Jewish people that Christians are not only praying for them but giving financially and doing everything they can to help them, she says. But the ICEJ initiatives don't stop there.

"Back about 13 years ago, we were approached by Yad Vashem, which is the Holocaust Memorial and Remembrance Center in Jerusalem," Michael says. The center wanted to engage the Christian world and sought ICEJ's help in achieving such a partnership.

That partnership, Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, helps bring Christians to the memorial center while also bringing Holocaust awareness to churches around the world. ICEJ also sponsors and supports the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors, and during the pandemic, received government passes to deliver food to Holocaust survivors out in the communities who couldn't get out to buy groceries.

Believers who feel led to stand with ICEJ in showing strong support for Israel won't want to miss this year's Feast of the Tabernacles, which Michael says is "the largest solidarity

event with Israel,” in person or online.

“We often are a part of the Jerusalem March, where we march through Jerusalem with banners of support from the nations, and the people of Israel love it,” she says. “We invite everyone to sign up and be a part of this event and help us make it a huge show of support for Israel.”

Michael invites Americans in particular to register for the historic celebration, saying ICEJ hopes the U.S. will have the most representatives at the feast of any nation outside Israel. “We really encourage people to sign up, and their participation will bring back blessing on our country and on them as they go before the Lord during this Feast.”

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