

More Than 6,000 Christians to Unite in Jerusalem for ICEJ's Feast of Tabernacles

This week, more than 6,000 Christians from almost 100 nations will be arriving in Jerusalem to take part in the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration, which is sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and runs this year from Oct. 6-11.

"We are expecting one of our biggest crowds ever at this year's feast," said ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler. "Thousands of Christians are once again being drawn here from all over the world by the dynamic worship experience which surrounds this unique biblical festival. But there also is the added attraction of celebrating the 50-year jubilee of a reunited Jerusalem, and this means we are truly in for a banner feast."

The 38th annual Feast gathering will kick off on Friday night, Oct. 6, with an outdoor meal and concert at the Ein Gedi oasis, along the shores of the Dead Sea. The festival then moves up to Jerusalem for the rest of the week of *Sukkot*, with most events held at the Jerusalem Pais Arena. Other highlights include the popular Jerusalem March through the streets of the capital, and a concluding prayer vigil at the historic Tower of David inside the walled Old City.

The ICEJ's feast gathering will once again be the largest solidarity mission to Israel this year, and the country's most popular annual event for Christian tourists. The feast's economic impact on Israel is expected to be \$18 to \$20 million.

Over the past four decades, the Christian celebration of *Sukkot* has impacted literally hundreds of thousands of

Christians and Jews alike. Multitudes of feast pilgrims have been enriched by the colorful worship experience and by their encounters with both ancient and modern Israel.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was birthed out of the very first public Christian celebration of the feast in September 1980, at a time when Israelis felt a sense of isolation concerning their historic claim to Jerusalem. That summer, the last thirteen national embassies left the city for Tel Aviv in protest of the Knesset's passage of the "Jerusalem Law." In response, over 1,000 Christians from some 40 nations attending that first feast decided to open an International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem as an act of comfort and solidarity with the 3000-year old Jewish claim and connection to this city.

Given that the issue of Jerusalem has once again come to the fore, this year's feast is also dedicated to reaffirming Christian support for a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. Among our feast participants will be some 30 national and state parliamentarians from around the globe affiliated with the Israel Allies Foundation, who have come at *Sukkot* to stand in solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to a united Jerusalem.