

Israel Education Forum

John Sode-Woodhead, Chief Executive The Israel Education Forum

The Israel Education Forum (IEF) was founded in 2009 by some thirty Evangelical Arab and Messianic Jewish Israeli organisations engaged in education. The vision of the IEF is to harness Messianic and Evangelical education for the building of Gods Kingdom - our contribution to the fulfilment of the Lausanne Vision of evangelising the world. The mission of the IEF is to serve the needs of the Messianic and Evangelical communities in Israel, to impact on the nation of Israel and its component societies, and to 'serve the nations'. To do so the IEF focuses on the professional and spiritual development of its educators, on the development and capacity building of its member organisations, and collectively the implementation of our mission. As we include both Arab and Messianic educators and seek to serve all communities reconciliation plays a central role. Due to lack of resources we have focused at this stage on networking.

The vision for the IEF was developed in 2008 by Botrus Mansur (Nazareth Baptist School), David Zadok (HaGefen), Erez Soref (Israel Bible College), and John Sode-Woodhead, all graduates of the Student Fellowship, as are many of those engaged in IEF. The leaders of some thirty organisations adopted the vision in February 2009 and by November of that year the IEF was registered as an Israeli Amuta.

The IEF is divided into three 'Sections' covering schools, higher education institutions, and discipleship ministries

- ↳ **Schools** – Anglican International School in Jerusalem, Makor HaTikva Messianic School in Jerusalem, Nazareth Baptist School, Peniel Learning Centre in Tiberias, and Tabeetha Church of Scotland School in Yaffo
- ↳ **Higher Education Institutions** – Galilee Bible College, Haifa Theological Institute, Home for Bible Translators, Israel College of the Bible, Nazareth Evangelical Theological Seminary, Nazareth School of Nursing, and the University of the Holy Land
- ↳ **Discipleship Ministries** – Alliance Leadership Training Institute, Awana, Caspari Centre for Jewish Studies, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Emmaus Bible School, Fellowship of Christian Students, Kings Kids, Lech Lecha, Musalaha, Nazareth Village, Netivah, Operation Mobilisation, Potters Wheel Camps, Scripture Union

The mission of the IEF is to serve the needs of the Evangelical and Messianic communities, impact on the nation of Israel and its component societies, and 'serving the nations'

- ↳ **Serving the needs of the Evangelical and Messianic communities in Israel** – With the decrease in both moral values and education standards within the State educational system a growing number of believers are requesting Bible based schools. The major challenge is that to-date the Ministry of Education has refused to recognize these schools. The communities are well catered with opportunities for theological training although the challenge here is that their accreditation and the degrees they offer are not recognized in Israel. There are a good number of important initiatives servicing both children and adults. There are gaps, though, that need to be more clearly understood. One such gap is the support of believing pupils in secular schools.
- ↳ **Impacting on the nation and its component societies** – Schools and colleges can best do this by offering very high quality education and engaging in the national debate. The

best example is the Nazareth Baptist School recognised by the Ministry of Education as one of the top five schools in Israel and teaching a large number of Muslim students. The challenge for them is maintaining and developing a meaningful Christian witness that permeates the whole of the school. Another example is the Nazareth School of Nursing. Messianic schools and colleges are still to venture out into the community and in the process they do have a number of challenges to overcome. There are however a growing number of PhD holders who through their research and writing do have an increasing voice in society. The unquantifiable impact is that of the countless numbers of students graduates throughout their lifetimes

- ↪ **‘Serving the Nations’** – The Bible Colleges have been developing programmes for foreign students, the Home for Bible Translators prepare Bible translators from around the world to translate the Old Testament, and the Caspari Centre has an active programme for academics and students, primarily from the Lutheran world. Modern Israel and as the Land of the Bible has a uniqueness and competencies that can be a blessing to many. Colleges, schools, and discipleship ministries, all have a great deal of potential within them. This in time needs to be developed in a way that brings real blessing but is economically beneficial to IEF members without them loosing focus on their calling within Israel.

The objectives of the IEF are, the professional and spiritual development of its educators, the development and capacity building of its member organisations, and collectively the implementation of our mission,

- ↪ **The Professional and Spiritual Development of Educators** – The current focus of the IEF is on networking and training. Last September saw the first Teachers Conference take place and next is planned for August of this year. Following the next conference we are hoping to develop Special Interest Groups through which teachers can meet in smaller groups focusing on their specific areas of interest. These groups will provide fellowship, opportunity to tackle issues facing them and receiving professional training. As the IEF includes both Arabs and Jews a reconciliation curriculum will form an important element. The development and support of every believing educator as professionals and disciples is one of the important programmes of the IEF with a major focus on those in leadership.

- ↪ **The Development and Capacity Building of Member Organisation** – It is important to the IEF that each of its member organisations develop to maximize their ability to meet their own objectives in the most effective and efficient way. The IEF would wish to support at every stage in the organisational life cycle of its members from planning new organisations to closing down those that have served their purposes.

An important dimension is pedagogical development management and services. This will primarily be undertaken within each of the three Sections of Schools, Higher Education, and Discipleship. Issues include curriculum, witness, quality, special education needs, and the recruitment of teachers. As the majority of school’s follow the Ministry of Education’s curriculum an objective is to develop one which is Bible based but flexible enough to be adapted to the Arab and Messianic schools. Meeting the special education needs of pupils is an area of great potential for the IEF whether dealing with behavioural or learning disabilities. Potential exists for joint IT and library services, and the further development of research.

- ↪ **Collectively implementing the IEF mission** – The vision will be achieved through each member delivering on their own objectives and collectively striving to go beyond current opportunities.

Shortly after the IEF was officially registered at the end of 2009 the initial eighteen month worth of funding dried up and it has proved very difficult to attract new funding. Under such conditions it has been difficult for the IEF to develop its programme as outlined above. This is further exacerbated by the majority of IEF members struggling with their own funding not only limiting the contributions members can make financially but also absorbing the efforts of the leaders. In the meantime we have focused on networking with the objective of running conferences, workshops and special interest groups within each Section. So far the Schools Section is the most developed and advanced in its activities.

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