

Ninth European LCJE Conference, Krakow, Poland, November 15-18/19, 2010

LCJE Update

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

It is not really up to me to say, “Welcome to Poland”, but as international LCJE coordinator I want to address a few words of thanks to Jean-Paul and his Polish assistants for the work put into the organization of this LCJE conference – the ninth in the line of European LCJE conferences. The Icelandic volcanic ash cloud over the European airports forced us to cancel the conference in April. Even though Jean-Paul Rempp did not have to begin the planning of the conference from scratch, there were still quite a few changes to be made. Which he did. He has invested a lot of resources in this, but thanks to him we are now gathered here!

If, as planned, we had held our conference in April, it would have been in the shadow of the tragic plane crash which less than two weeks earlier had cost the lives of the Polish President and his wife as well as almost one hundred high-ranking individuals.

Without ignoring this tragic event – and grief, it must also be said: Our conference on Jewish evangelism here in Poland is held in the shadow of what happened here and in countries around in the 1930s and 1940s. And not only that but in the shadow of the Christian church’s anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism down through the ages.

Six million Jews were exterminated seventy or eighty years ago – most of them in so-called Christian countries. Among them there were also Jesus-believing Jews. Whether or not they could produce a certificate of baptism made no difference.

We cannot escape this shadow which the Holocaust casts on Jewish evangelism, nor should we try to do so. On the contrary. As a network we have an obligation to keep alive the memory of these horrific facts. Remembering the past may help us to open our eyes to a present reality which we may feel tempted to shut our eyes to and not react to. Due to an obligation back in Denmark it is unfortunately not possible for me to revisit Auschwitz on Thursday. But it is a good thing that such a visit has been made possible; from time to time we need such a visit in order to avoid a very human triumphalism, and we need to be reminded that the triumph we believers share – and witness about for others – is about a Jew on a cross that Israel’s God raised from the dead.

A couple of years ago I reviewed the various statements made in LCJE contexts over the years in order to find out what we in LCJE stand for. About “anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism” I was able to conclude this:

In practically all LCJE statements, both from International and European Conferences, there is a distinct dissociation from any form of anti-Semitism. At the same time it is made clear that omission to bring the gospel to Jewish people is a form of anti-Semitism.

As long as LCJE maintains that Jews, like all other people, need Jesus for salvation it is, in my opinion, an illusion to believe that Jews will give us credit for that – nor for our struggle against anti-Semitism. But no matter what, we will continue that struggle. And the struggle against misrepresentations of Judaism.

But being a part of the Body of Messiah, the Jewish Messiah, and being involved in Jewish evangelism, also implies that we have to be prepared to be called anti-Semites, both by the synagogue and parts of the Christian Church.

Such a statement may not be irrelevant when we are gathered under the theme “Uniqueness of Christ, Post-Holocaust Theology and anti-Semitism in Europe (Israel Included)”.

What is LCJE?

LCJE – 30 years

When in April I skimmed the list of participants enrolled for the April conference, I could see that more than 50 of a total of 80 participants had not previously attended an international LCJE conference. The situation is not much different at this November conference. Therefore briefly: What is LCJE, the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism?

As the name indicates, we are a part of the Lausanne Movement, which had its first world conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. Its third world congress was held in October this year in Cape Town, South Africa. Bodil F. Skjøtt will later update us on this and on which role we, LCJE, played in this connection.

At the end of June this year, LCJE turned 30. Our network was set up in Pattaya, Thailand, in 1980, in connection with the Lausanne Movement’s Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE). 30 years is not much when compared to, for example, the London Jews’ Society, now the Church’s Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ) which last year celebrated its bicentenary. In Denmark, in March earlier this year, we could celebrate the Danish Israel Mission’s 125-year anniversary. Other mission societies which saw the light of day in the 19th century have had their anniversaries. In some cases it has been in *continuity* with their founders’ intentions. In other cases in *discontinuity*, when the original purpose, to evangelize Jews, has been abandoned. I am happy to say that LCJE through these thirty years has preserved its identity.

We are a network. We create a platform. We *talk* about Jewish Evangelism. We encourage to cooperation between mission agencies and congregations. Our vision is that together we can do more and, if possible, avoid duplicating each other, but LCJE as such does not carry out Jewish evangelism.

So LCJE is what the individual member makes it. And I want to encourage each one of you to become a member of LCJE.

In order to become a member of LCJE you have to be in substantial agreement with the Lausanne Covenant. We may have quite different opinions about, for example, eschatology, the present state of Israel, mission strategy and methods, etc. We are happy to discuss these matters. And we can live with our differences.

But there is one thing that is not up for discussion, and that is that Jews need Jesus for salvation.

There are LCJE chapters in AustralAsia, Israel, Europe, Japan, North America, Latin America and South Africa. Practically all LCJE chapters held conferences in 2009, as reported by the respective LCJE coordinators in their annual reports in the LCJE Bulletin 98 (2010).

LCJE North America held its 27th meeting in Atlanta in March this year. LCJE Israel also had a meeting in this spring. LCJE South Africa had theirs on October 15, in Cape Town. Next year the ninth

international LCJE Conference will be held at High Leigh Conference Center, north of London, August 7-12, 2011.

And now we have opened the ninth European LCJE conference.

This is where we have been before.

EUROPEAN LCJE MEETINGS 1987-2010

01: 1987	March 2-4	Amsterdam, Holland
02: 1988	September 29 – October 1	Copenhagen, Denmark
03: 1990	October 5-8	Budapest, Hungary
04: 1992	September 19-21	Adelboden, Switzerland
05: 1994	November 28-30	Cobham, England
06: 1996	October 28-30	Stuttgart, Germany
07: 2001	March 15-18	Dijon (La Bussière-Sur Ouche), France
08: 2005	March 10-14	Révfülöp (Lake Balaton), Hungary
09: 2010	November 15-18/19	Krakow, Poland

I think I am the only one here who has had the privilege of attending all these conferences. If I am not mistaken Jean-Paul Rempp, our present coordinator, first attended a European conference in Adelboden, Switzerland, in 1992.

At this conference it is good to see persons who have been in this work several years, but I am also pleased to see new and young leaders who can lead LCJE on in the years to come.

And lastly: yes, we do have a language barrier. The LCJE language is English. For some it is their mother tongue. For others among us it is a foreign language. I hope we can help each other with this. I personally am famous for making a mess of my language at LCJE conferences. So take heart, and do not be shy. Take part in the discussions.

I am looking forward to a conference where we challenge and inspire each other to continued service for the salvation of Israel through faith in Israel's Messiah, Jesus, the crucified and risen One, the Saviour and Lord of all the world.