

The reflections in this paper stem from 26 years of ministry in St Johns Parish Wynberg in Cape Town South Africa. St Johns is a strongly Evangelical Anglican parish with a well established commitment to mission. When I joined the Parish staff in 1984 one of the ordained staff members was a Jewish believer who worked as the local representative of CMJ UK.¹ In 1997 I became the South African Director of CMJ, a post that I hold to the present day.

In this paper I will deal first with a general summary of some of the theological and pastoral considerations that form the background of ministry among Jewish people by the local church. Second I will reflect on some of the pastoral issues that ministry to Jewish people involves from personal experience in St John's Parish Wynberg.

The offense of the Gospel

At one level the Gospel will always be an offense. It's offensiveness lies in the fact that God, in Jesus the Messiah, did what we could not do for ourselves. God's gracious saving act offends our human pretension to self-sufficiency and our human dislike for being dependent of divine grace. It is this confrontation between human pride and the demands of the gospel to which the apostle Paul refers,

“For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.”²

The gospel can be made unnecessarily offensive to people by the context and manner in which we present it. The way that the gospel is expressed, in terms of language and theology, has historical, denominational and cultural roots. For the average church member the expression of the gospel familiar to them in their local denominational setting is usually received without much critical analysis. For this reason the responsibility for finding accurate expressions of the gospel, while avoiding unnecessarily offensive methods or language, lies squarely with the pastoral leadership of the congregation.

Most observant Jews will not enter a church building because it has images and statues, which they believe are contrary to the first commandment. The Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, Jonathan Sacks, stood outside Westminster Abbey for the duration of

¹ CMJ refers to The Church's Ministry Among the Jewish People. Established in 1809, this organisation was initially known as the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. The society is the oldest, and was the largest and best organized mission society of its type at the time. Today CMJ has extensive work in Israel and has local CMJ branches in many countries. In 1997 CMJ South Africa was established as a financially independent branch.

² 1 Corinthians

Princess Diana's funeral.³ His given explanation was that it was the Sabbath which and that Jews were excluded from mourning on that day. It is likely that both the day and the venue were a problem for him. I would be interested to know how many people noticed or wondered why he did not enter.

Theological and historical considerations.

Evangelism in the Jewish community has always been a complex affair. The relationship of the Church and the Jewish community has been fraught from the very beginning. It may be that the modern Church is only beginning to understand the complexity of this relationship as it is portrayed by the New Testament and particularly the Apostle Paul's writings. This new insight is due largely to the work of Sanders⁴ and Dunn⁵, among others. These scholars introduced Christians to the Apostle Paul as a Torah observant Pharisee who should be understood in the context of his Jewishness at least as much as the Greek identity through which Paul has traditionally been viewed.⁶

The Protestant reformation, that marked the transition from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period, established an understanding of Paul and his writings, which tended to reflect the theological struggle in Europe against elements of Roman Catholic teaching and practice, rather than the theological setting of the first century Church. This reformation perspective misunderstood first century Judaism, thinking that it sought a meritorious righteousness before God, as many Roman Catholics did in Europe. The result of this misunderstanding is demonstrated by the impression that Paul's argument with the Judaizers was about Christian grace versus Jewish legalism.

One of the great concerns or burdens of Sanders work was to demonstrate that the old, sometimes even anti-Semitic contrast between Christianity as a religion of grace and Judaism as a religion of works, including salvation by works, involves a caricature of early Judaism.⁷

³ The Independent Newspaper Saturday, 6 September 1997. Article by Amanda Kelly. "Diana - The Mourners: Every town and city to mark grief."

"Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks told Buckingham Palace that although he was unable to attend the funeral because Jewish law forbids mourning on the Sabbath, he had created a special service for Jews to observe which would express a "positive mood of thanksgiving" for the memory of Diana's life."

⁴ Sanders, E.P 1977 Paul and Palestinian Judaism. London: SCM Press
1983 Paul, the Law and the Jewish People. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

⁵ Dunn, James D.G. 1990 Jesus Paul and the Law. London: SPCK Press
1991 The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the character of Christianity. London: SCM Press.

⁶ Wright. N.T. 1992 The New Testament and the People of God Minneapolis : Fortress Press. p. 344

⁷ Witherington, B. <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2008/03/new-perspective-on-paul-and-law.html>

The new perspective on Paul has been fairly successful in showing that Paul's argument was rather about the status of Gentiles in a predominantly Jewish church. According to Dunn the term "works of the Torah (law)"⁸ refers to the distinguishing actions of circumcision, kashrut and Sabbath observance, all of which differentiated Jews from gentiles. Thus the "works of the law" argument challenges a trust in Jewish identity rather than the faithfulness of God.

The complexity of the inclusion of the gentiles in the Body of Messiah was initially a Jewish problem that was only partially resolved at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 and then worked out to a greater extent, although not comprehensively, in the epistolary material. While the rulings of the Jerusalem conference⁹ set the principles for the inclusion of the gentiles, the practical implications of full fellowship between the two communities raised difficulties, the details of which are not fully settled in the New Testament. The complexities of fellowship between gentile Christians and Jewish believers who wish to retain their Jewish identity remains problematic to this day.

Gentile Predominance

The growth of the gentile Church diminished the influence of the early Jewish leaders to the extent that joining the Kingdom of God became understood as, not so much leaving the gentile world to join a Jewish movement, as leaving the pagan world or the Jewish community in order to join the gentile church which had supplanted the Jewish Faith. Kai Kjaer-Hansen says,

"One can assume that already from about the middle of the second century the question of Jewish Christians was little more than a theoretical problem to many in the gentile church. For many gentiles who were indeed aware of Jewish Christians, they were no more than a tolerated minority."¹⁰

A strong case can be made for the development of a gospel that was diametrically apposed to what God had done in the history of the Jewish people. The Torah was viewed as the antithesis of grace and Moses as the enemy of Christ. This stance by the church forced the Jewish community into an impossible paradox with regard to the gospel. Paul van Buren expresses the situation as follows.

⁸ Dunn, James. D.G. 1990 *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p. 220.

This thesis with regard to the term "works of the law" is endorsed by many modern authors, including E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 147, Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert*, p. 131, F. J. Matera, *Galatians*, p. 93. Those who oppose the New Perspective on Paul reject this thesis.

⁹ Acts 15

¹⁰ Kjaer-Hansen, K. (ed.) 1996 *Jewish Identity and Faith in Jesus*. Jerusalem: Caspari Centre. p. 41

“The Gospel met Gentiles as a demand to abandon their pagan ways and the service of gods that are not God. The Gospel met the Jews, as the church after Paul's time preached it, as the demand to abandon the express commands and covenant of the very God whom the church proclaimed! Here is a profound incoherence that has arisen because of the lack of a proper Christian theology of Israel. The theological reality which such a theology must address, then, is that Israel said No to Jesus Christ out of faithfulness to his Father, the God of Israel.

What the Jewish people were taught by their Rabbis to deny was a church which taught that Israel's covenant with God had been superseded. The church was asking Israel to agree that its faithfulness to Torah had no longer any meaning, because Go&s faithfulness to his people had come to an end. For Israel to have accepted such a church would have been a betrayal of the covenant and a denial of the faithfulness of God!" ¹¹

For many Christians the familiar received version of the early Church is thoroughly gentile and hostile both to the Torah and a Jewish identity. The dilemma created for the Jewish community by this view of the gospel, as described above, escapes them. This perspective of the early Church provides fertile ground for the seeds of supersessionism in which the covenants with the Jewish Community are cancelled in favour of the predominantly Gentile Church which has become the heir of the promises leaving the Jewish community with almost nothing but the curses of the text.

The combination of this perspective of the early Church, and the accompanying caricature of first century Judaism, has a negative impact on the church's evangelism and ministry to Jewish people today. Until the nineteenth century Christian mission to Jewish people was almost exclusively based upon conversion through baptism and the renunciation of a Jewish identity and practice. Christians who hold this perspective often treat Jewish people as pagans who practice a religion devoid of any worth. This practice is the logical expression of the doctrine of Christian Supersessionism. The teaching of contempt¹² which was adopted by nearly all Christian scholars cast the Jewish people as forsaken by God and replaced by the Church. Today supersessionism no longer enjoys the unquestioned predominance in theological study it once did. This has important implications for the gospel and for pastoral practice in the local church.

¹¹ Paul M. van Buren, 1983 *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*, vol. 2, *A Christian Theology of the People Israel*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 34, 276. Quoted in Kinzer, M. 2005 *Post-Missionary Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*. Michigan: Brazos Press p. 224

¹² van Wijk-Bos, J.W.H. 2005 *Making Wise the Simple: The Torah on Christian Faith and Practice*. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing. p. 7

Evangelism of the Jewish Community today.

Christians are divided over the issue of the evangelisation of the Jewish community. The World Council of Churches' Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People produced a statement entitled, "Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue," which was received and commended to the churches by the WCC Executive Committee in 1982:

There are Christians who view a mission to the Jews as having a very special salvific significance, and those who believe the conversion of the Jews to be the eschatological event that will climax the history of the world. There are those who would place no special emphasis on a mission to the Jews, but would include them in the one mission to all those who have not accepted Christ as their Savior. There are those who believe that a mission to the Jews is not part of an authentic Christian witness, since the Jewish people finds its fulfillment in faithfulness to God's covenant of old.¹³

The four opinions described in the above statement represent a confusing picture particularly when viewed from the Jewish community. The confusion is by no means limited to the Jewish community. Christians have developed contradictory theologies with regard to the theological position of the Jews and the significance of evangelism to them.

Contact between Jews and Christians challenged the notions of supersessionism (replacement theology). The belief that the New Covenant replaces or supersedes the Old Covenant and that the Church replaces Israel in the purposes of God.¹⁴ Supersessionism was sustainable as long as ignorance about Jews and Judaism prevailed in the Christian community. Once the two communities became aware of the mutual commonalities the dismissal of the other became untenable.

A popular alternative to supersessionism known as "Two Covenant Theology" developed and gained wide-spread popularity among the Christians who considered interfaith dialogue with Jews as preferable to evangelism. This view is widely promoted in the rabbinic community by such luminaries as Jonathan Sacks¹⁵ and in the Christian community by those who do not believe that evangelism amongst Jews is desirable or appropriate. The basis of this view is the belief that God relates to the two communities through two separate covenants. Jews, according to the "two covenant theory" are under

¹³ <http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-considerations-on-jewish-christian-dialogue.html>

¹⁴ Jacob, A. 2010 The Case for Enlargement Theology. Saffron Walden: Glory to Glory Publishers. p 28

¹⁵ Sacks, J. 2005 The Dignity of Difference: How to avoid the Clash of Civilizations. London :Continuum. p55 .

the first covenant and Christians are under the new covenant. First introduced by Franz Rosenweig,¹⁶ the idea plays well to an audience seeking dialogue in a pluralist context. George Sheridan, while East Coast Regional Director for the Southern Baptist department of Interfaith Witness, stated that God's bond with the Jewish people was never superseded with the coming of Jesus: "The Jews of today, as ever, receive salvation through their having been chosen by God in covenant with Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. . . . My position is that the Jews do not require evangelization."¹⁷

The glaring weakness of the model, which has been noted by many critics, is that it does not account for the New Testament evidence of Jews proclaiming Jesus the Messiah as necessary for the salvation of their fellow Jews.

Given the confusion in Christian missiological debate Christian evangelism of Jewish people is one of the most hotly contested missiological issues in the Church today. Understandably, members of the Jewish religious establishment have been opposed to Christian missionaries, and their mission, since the time of Jesus. The decision to exclude Jews who follow Jesus from the Jewish community as *minim* (heretics) created an additional social barrier to the gospel.¹⁸ The twelfth benediction, the *Birkat ha-Minim*, was probably included in the daily prayers from the Maccabean era, but the reference to ha-Notzrim (Nazarenes meaning Christians) first appeared in this benediction between 150 and 400 CE.¹⁹

The sad history of persecution of Jews by the Church, particularly in Europe, though not limited to Europe, has done irreparable damage to the cause of the Gospel. The holocaust perpetrated against Jews during the Second World War by many who claimed to be Christians has changed the evangelistic landscape irrevocably. Christians of all denominations have had to re-assess their relationship to the Jewish People in the light of these events.

In 1965 the Roman Catholic Church issued the landmark document which brought significant change to Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. *Nostra Aetate* (Latin for "In Our Time") is a document that revolutionised the Catholic Church's approach to Jews and Judaism.

¹⁶ Ibid p 36

¹⁷ George Sheridan, quoted in an article by Mitch Glaser, "Critique of the Two Covenant Critique of The Two Covenant Theory (1988)

¹⁸ Jews believe that "Jews for Jesus," "Messianic Jews," and "Hebrew Christians" are no longer Jews, even if they were once Jews. <http://whatjewsbelieve.org/>

¹⁹ Wilson, M.R. 1989 *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the christian Faith*. Michigan: W.B Eerdmans p. 68

“As holy scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize God's moment when it came (see Lk 19:44). Jews for the most part did not accept the Gospel; on the contrary, many opposed its spread (see Rom 11:28). Even so, the apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made.

It is true that the church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy scripture.”²⁰

Many Protestant denominations have followed the Catholic example and produced documents too numerous to list in this paper. This spirit of repentance in the denominations of the Christian community can go some way towards creating an environment of communication necessary for the proclamation of the gospel in word and deed.

This movement towards a better relationship with the Jewish community has been hampered by the often myopic denominational response to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Though all criticism of Israel should not be construed as antisemitism, the conflict in Israel has provided an opportunity for those who are antisemitic to voice their hatred in a politically correct environment. Many of the mainline Churches, including the Anglican and Presbyterian churches, have chosen sides against Israel in favour of the Palestinians. A shameful example of this myopic approach is the publication of Anglican Peace and Justice Network statement on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in September 2004. So biased was the statement against Israel, and the resultant General Synod resolution, that Lord Carey (the previous Archbishop of Canterbury), was quoted as saying that it made him "ashamed to be an Anglican." He added, "a most regrettable and one-sided statement," and one that "ignores the trauma of ordinary Jewish people" in Israel subjected to terrorist attacks.²¹

Christian missions such as CMJ (The Church's Ministry Amongst the Jewish People) have found the changing climate in the church demanding. Once, one of the largest and most well resourced missions in the Anglican Church, CMJ finds itself today relegated to a ministry that is tolerated rather than supported by the church as an organisation. The society is maintained by a faithful core of individual supporters from many denominations. In 1992 the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey became the first Archbishop since the founding of CMJ in 1809 to decline the invitation to be patron of the society. This has since been repeated by Rowan Williams the current incumbent of Canterbury. Both Archbishops have opted instead to take positions on the inter-faith forum of the Council of Christians

²⁰ Nostra Aetate. Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non Christian Religions. Second Vatican Council. October 28, 1965

²¹ Jerusalem Post Article: Lord Carey 'ashamed to be an Anglican' by George Conger. 8 February 2006

and Jews which was founded in 1942²² and which is committed to dialogue not evangelism.

The Local congregation and the Jewish Community

Today Jewish believers in Jesus are scattered between two major movements in the Church. The growing Messianic movement and the established Gentile churches. The Messianic movement is quite varied. There are, Messianic fellowships that cater primarily for Jewish believers and there are messianic fellowships that are predominantly Gentile but have a Jewish ethos. The Gentile churches have two predominant attitudes to Jewish believers. There are Gentile churches that are messianic-friendly and respect the need to preserve the Jewish identity of Jewish believers. The majority of Gentile churches expect Jewish believers to leave their Jewish identity behind and to assimilate into a Gentile church as converts to Christianity.

Jewish believers are caught between two worlds. On the one hand they are Jewish, which means that they have background in, and relationships with, the Jewish community. This community has come to see itself as exclusively different from the Christian community. Jewish believers are viewed by rabbinic authorities as apostates who have excluded themselves from the Jewish community. This willingness to expel believers from the Jewish community can be traced to the historical treatment of the Jewish population by the Gentile Church. An example of this attitude is found on the anti-missionary website with the paradoxical name "What Jews believe."

"Please understand that if one joins a completely other faith, as messianic "Jews" have done by accepting Jesus as their personal savior and messiah, they are no longer Jews. They are Christians. One might also exclude the New Agers from the Jews as well, as well as the now ex-Jewish Buddhists, etc. To deny an element of a faith is not the same thing as joining another faith, getting baptized into it, etc."²³

On the other hand the Messianic Movement creates, for some, a half-way house between the two communities. It has been reasonably successful in this role, attracting both Gentiles and Jews into its congregations. The impact of this ministry on the Gentile Church and the Jewish Community is growing significantly. As the Messianic movement comes of age it is developing its own codes of pastoral practice and doctrinal emphases. In

²² 2001 Sharing One Hope?: The Church of England and Christian-Jewish relations: A Contribution to a continuing debate. Church of England Interfaith Consultative Group of the Archbishops' Council. London: Church House Publishers.

²³ Jews believe that "Jews for Jesus," "Messianic Jews," and "Hebrew Christians" are no longer Jews, even if they were once Jews. <http://whatjewsbelieve.org/>

this process the thorny questions of Torah observance, Jewish identity and relationship to the established Gentile Church become critical issues.

Jewish believers and the Gentile church

Why would a Jewish person join a Gentile church? It may be because sometimes assimilation is the least complicated option. Belonging to an established Church that has had time to codify its doctrinal beliefs and establish its pastoral practice, is far easier than being a member of a fellowship that is working through the process of establishing identity and pastoral practice.²⁴

According to Jim Sibley the attraction of the Gentile church is considerable.

“That fact of the matter is that the vast majority of Jews who believe in Yeshua are members of culturally Gentile churches. I recently heard that there were more Jewish believers at Willow Creek Community Church, alone, than the combined Jewish membership of all the Messianic congregations in the Chicago area.”²⁵

Jews and Gentiles and Paul’s vision of “the one new man”²⁶

The relationship between Jewish and gentile believers is challenged by Paul’s description of the one new man in the letter to the Ephesians.

There are three options for Jewish and Gentile believers.

First, they could mix in such a way that one group would assimilate the other thereby eliminating the distinction which the Temple’s dividing wall was designed to maintain.

Second, the groups could maintain their distinctions by keeping a distance from each other, living as though the dividing wall was still in place.

The third option is by far the most complex, which is probably why it has not really practiced. Both groups retain their distinctiveness, in terms of Torah observance on the part of Jewish believers, and a “Torah sensitive” lifestyle on the part of Gentile believers.²⁷

A Failure in the Church

There are many reasons why the Church has not achieved this way of living. First, it demands a maturity which is able to accept difference without being threatened by it.

²⁴ Atkinson, J. 2009. Whose Law is it anyway? Roots & Shoots Conference address. Cape Town July 2009

²⁵ Sherbock-Cohen. D.(ed) 2001 Voices of Messianic Judaism: Confronting Critical Issues Facing a Maturing Movement. Maryland. Lederer Publishers p. 55

²⁶ Ephesians 2:15b -16.

²⁷ Atkinson, J. 2008 Unpublished article: Jews and Gentiles: Metaphors of distinction and unity.

Second, it requires the willingness of messianic believers not to live like Gentiles and to maintain their Jewish identity in word and deed. David Stern comments on Torah observance among Messianic believers as follows,

“Not that there needs to be uniformity of opinion - the words of Beit-Hillel and of Beit-Shammai were both said to be the words of the living God - but that the issues need to be understood in depth.”²⁸

Third, it demands of Gentiles that they live in such a way that the Jewish observance of Torah is not compromised by their behaviour and that their behaviour is informed by Torah. This is reflected in the instructions given to the Gentile believers at Antioch by the Jerusalem Council.²⁹

Orienting the local church to Jewish Evangelism

The following reflections are based mainly on the context of the local church in St Johns Parish Wynberg in Cape Town.

In 1984 the Parish of St Johns Wynberg had a Missions Committee which encouraged mission and co-ordinated the support of missions and missionaries. This support was largely focused mainly on the support of individuals rather than organisations. Within the brief of this committee Jewish mission was given the same priority as mission to any other people or religious group. The fact that there was a Jewish clergyman who was involved in ministry amongst Jewish people was indicative of a general commitment to mission rather than an attempt to emphasise Jewish mission particularly.

From the five member churches in the Parish individuals tended to identify themselves with particular mission initiatives. This was true of the ministry to Jewish people which developed a small but active support group. Eventually a messianic congregation, not affiliated to St Johns Parish, was formed. First called Messiahs People and then later known as Beit Ariel. Today Beit Ariel is the most influential messianic fellowship in Cape Town.

On reflection, the formation of the messianic fellowship was indicative of two things. First, most Jewish believers did not feel at home in the Anglican services of St Johns Parish. Their numbers were never significant enough to exert influence on the liturgical life of the five congregations. Second the Jewish identity of believing Jews was not a priority for Parish pastoral policy.

²⁸ Stern, D.H. *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* Jerusalem. Jewish New Testament Publications p.137

²⁹ Acts 15:28-29

In time the ministry of CMJ found a home in St Johns Parish and a following of people who were interested in the Jewish roots of the Christian Faith, both from within and outside the Parish, began supporting the work. Relationships were established with the three messianic congregations in the Cape Town area. CMJ quarterly “Roots & Shoots Conferences” now attract approximately four hundred people to each conference.

A second model of Jewish ministry has formed at the Church of the Holy Spirit, one of the congregations in tSt Johns Parish. The congregation formed cluster groups around particular interests in mission. A group known as “Wild Olive” has formed to equip members of the congregation to develop an appreciation of Jewish roots and to be available for mission amongst Jewish People. This group is made up of about fifty people and meets once a month. The objectives of this group are expressed in the anagram PESACH:

1. To Pray for peace in the Middle East.
2. To Equip ourselves.
3. To Serve the local Jewish community.
4. To Actively prepare for the coming Messiah.
5. To Communicate with Jewish believers.
6. To share the Hope that is within us.³⁰

This initial outcomes of the formation of this group have been;

- 1 Greater awareness of the need for Jewish ministry in the wider congregation.
- 2 An established group that can be involved in mission with groups outside of the local congregation.
- 3 Focused teaching and an opportunity to deal with complex issues related to mission.
4. Encouragement of those who are interested in Jewish ministry.

Hindrances to Jewish Ministry in the Local Church

The following observations are made in the context of congregations where the minister in charge is supportive of Jewish ministry. Without the leadership supporting the developments enumerated the results would be quite different.

An “all or nothing” approach.

In our experience one of the most difficult challenges that face participation at a local church level is the attitude that the local church must be Messianic or Jewish Roots oriented in everything it says and does. In a local church there are bound to be people who feel just as called to other forms of mission, and for whom their particular area of interest is just as important as the calling of those who are involved in Jewish ministry. This all or

³⁰ Wild Olive founding document entitled CHS ‘Wild Olive’ cluster group November 2009

nothing expectation has led many to opt out of the local church in favour of more focused groups. We have spent many hours helping individuals and groups to appreciate the place of Jewish evangelism and ministry in the context of the bigger picture of the overall mission of the local church.

Ignorance of Jewish sensitivities.

Many church leaders are unaware of the sensitivities that keep their congregants and programmes out of contact with the Jewish community. Inviting Jewish people to a meeting in a church building is likely to fail because most Jewish people are hesitant about entering church buildings. Holding an event in a neutral venue can make all the difference. The best way to familiarise oneself with these sensitivities is to spend time in the Jewish community.

Talk to Jewish people you know and find out about the events in the community.

Attend Jewish meetings and events and make friends.

Subscribe to a local Jewish magazine or newspaper.

Go to the synagogue for a Shabbat service on Friday evening and soak in the atmosphere even if the Hebrew is beyond comprehension.

Aids to Jewish Ministry in the Local Church

Relationships of respect.

Helping people to develop relationships of respect for members of other communities, including the Jewish community, is an essential part of orienting the local church to Jewish evangelism. In our experience the Jewish roots teaching has helped many members of the congregations to develop an appreciation of Jewish teaching and practice. This has resulted in personal prejudices being challenged and misinformation being corrected. Individuals feel more able to engage with their Jewish work colleagues and friends about spiritual matters.

Knowledge of Jewish festivals and practices

Taking an interest in what other people do is a meaningful sign of respect. In my experience Jewish people have often expressed surprise that I take an interest in their festivals and the rabbinic writings. The fact that we see value in many aspects of Judaism creates an opportunity for communication. We have a great deal to learn of value from the Jewish community. Identifying the things we hold in common gives plenty of material to talk about.

Partnership with specialist organisations.

The organisations that devote themselves to the different aspects of ministry among Jewish people are an essential part of the church's resources in developing a ministry of

evangelism to the Jewish people. The supportive role that mission organisations can play in helping with the equipping of individuals and groups for ministry, the pastoral care of new believers and the sharing of information and a valuable asset to the local church.

Contact with Messianic Congregations

The situation in the Gentile Church and the Messianic Movement is changing. The Messianic Movement is in the process on establishing its own identity and practice. For this reason Mark Kinzer's book entitled Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism attempts to build a model for a new redefined relationship between the Gentile Church and the messianic movement. While Kinzer's views are controversial his sense of timing is not. The time for contact in an atmosphere of mutual respect has arrived.

Our experience of contact with the Messianic congregations has been one of mutual benefit and blessing.

Both groups must address the issues of distinction and unity. In true Hebraic fashion they are not mutually exclusive but rather a creative tension in which the manifold wisdom of God is to be demonstrated. When we choose to emphasise distinction to the detriment of unity we choose less than God's intention for His "one new man". When we insist on the loss of distinction the prerequisite for unity we loose the characteristics of a divine creation. Commenting on this concept Dwight Pryor says,

“...the echad of the "one" new humanity in Messiah is indeed a unity not a singularity. The division has been removed but the distinction remains which is why he pleads so earnestly again and again for that unity (echad) to be manifest in the life of the church.”³¹

³¹ Pryor, D.A. Private correspondence with the author quoted in: Atkinson, J. 2009. Whose Law is it anyway? Roots & Shoots Conference address. Cape Town July 2009