

# A Word from Jerusalem

January/February, 2000

*In the Beginning was the Word  
and the Word was God ... John 1:1*

Newsletter of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem



# *Letter From the Director*

*Dear Friends,*

By the time you receive this newsletter, the sensational build-up to the new Millennium will be behind us, and what we will have left is the ordinary passing of life. In many ways, the world will not be much different from what it was a year ago. However, things are changing constantly – not because of a millennial changeover, but because of the intensified pace of life and important scientific breakthroughs. These developments really have been going on for years now, but it does seem like the last few months have burst through to new horizons like never before.

We all know of the way the communications explosion and the growth of the Internet have influenced our lives, but just as important has been new discoveries in the scientific field. Breakthroughs have been reported in gene-mapping that could lead to cures for diseases before the maladies even have manifested themselves in someone's body. Other breakthroughs in microbiology are sure to dramatically change the whole course of medicine in the next few years. One scientist even has announced that his laboratory is on the verge of producing the beginnings of life by artificial means. Astronomers have, for the first time, caught the light of a distant planet – and not deduced its existence from the gravitational effects on the star around which it revolves. Some areas of the world have entered a period of economic prosperity unheard of in history. Along with economic prosperity and pride in what humanity is achieving, there also has come a hedonistic trend not seen since the dying days of the Roman Empire.

In facing the new times ahead, it certainly would behoove believers to avoid being swept away by this downward spiral now spreading in the world. Even as scientists discover more and more secrets of the universe, we must not forget the words of our Lord: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." (Luke 21:33) Here at the Christian Embassy, we truly are grateful for some of the technological advances, since it has benefited the work of the ministry tremendously. Remembering those earliest days and years of the Embassy's existence, when we had to work with the old-style typewriters, we are so grateful for the modern computers that have facilitated handling the extra workload of our expanding ministry. The instant communication today is a far cry from those beginning years, when a letter was mailed and we had to wait weeks for a response. Then again, sometimes we long for those early days, especially when we get e-mails requesting a response within an hour.

Here in Israel, because of the use of the Jewish calendar, there was less excitement about the millennium changeover than in most other countries – and yet the people were fascinated by it. This was also the reason why we were able to sponsor a special series of three Christmas concerts this year, since there was significant interest in the person whose birth two millennia ago prompted a new manner of marking time.

Life, however, has to continue. There are very serious priorities in the agenda of the nation of Israel right now. The latest developments regarding Syria are in the forefront of everyone's mind. Of course, many of us have our doubts about the long-term consequences should Israel hand such a strategic area as the Golan Heights back to Syria. But to many, there seems to be an inevitability about it, as the people are so tired of the tensions and the wars, and desire peace and a normal life for their sons and daughters. We must keep on praying and interceding, and reminding them that ultimately the destiny of this land is in the hands of the living God.

We as believers know that the only true peace comes from Him whose birth some 2000 years ago was celebrated by the world in various ways in these days. If the world truly wants to celebrate His birth, His message cannot be forgotten. We have to be an extension of His compassion, knowing that as some parts of the world are experiencing great prosperity, there are vast areas and billions of people still suffering serious poverty and every day thousands of children are dying because of abortion, neglect and malnutrition. If the world truly wants to celebrate 2000 years of Jesus, it will make these important issues a top priority. The compassion that Jesus had for widows and children, and for those who were sick and infirm, is the heart that we have to reflect both in spirit and deed, here in the land of His birth or wherever we have the opportunity.

Even though Israel's economy has shown real growth in recent years, especially with the successful absorption of thousands of new Russian immigrants, a recent National Insurance Institute report concluded that there are more than one million people in Israel living below the poverty line. These figures especially include families with children. Although we at the Christian Embassy certainly have a concern that the compassionate message of Jesus be preached to the ends of the earth, our prophetic calling and our practical responsibility lies with this nation where the Lord has placed us at this momentous time.

Happy New Year.

*Johann Lückhoff*

# *Israel at the Millennium*

***“For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.” Psalms 90:4***

The approach of the new Millennium captivated the entire world, with its remarkable blend of extraordinary promise and apocalyptic gloom. Many uncertainties surrounding this milestone – such as the impact of the so-called Y2K computer bug – were resolved quickly as the New Year passed. In a similar way, much of the universal excitement over the arrival of the year 2000 reached a pinnacle and abruptly dissipated... like any other yesterday.

While most of the world community was busy planning grand, carefree Millennium celebrations, for a number of reasons it was proving to be not such a buoyant time for Israel. For although the Land of Jesus’ birth and ministry 2000 years ago is at the centre of those observances, the Jewish state is faced with some unusual challenges that prove once again she is not like any other nation.

The list of serious concerns converging on Israel at this unique time can leave one uneasy. Weighty issues are under discussion in the peace process. Religious disputes threaten to enflame ancient tensions and choke Millennium tourism. And the press has made many Israelis overly anxious about someone coming here to “force the end.”

For over six years, Israel has pursued, for better or worse, the opportunity for peace presented by the diplomatic breakthrough reached secretly in Oslo in 1993. This road to peace with the Palestinians has been extremely rocky, calling for much caution. And now, peace talks with Syria have been suddenly aroused from a three-and-a-half year slumber. For thousands of Israelis living on the Golan, the instant, cruel realisation they stand to lose their homes and livelihoods is causing many sleepless nights.

The new Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, has said he can put an end to the long Arab-Israeli conflict within the next year or so. He also has pledged to submit his negotiated settlements with Syria and Lebanon, and with the Palestinians, to public referendums. No matter how they may eventually vote, many Israelis seem to support the search for peace out of a desperate hope that some day soon, once-and-for-all, the struggle for their existence can finally be settled and they can be done with the terrible plague of decades of terrorism and war. They have a very sober longing for peace here at the turn of the Millennium, not some utopian dream of a new era of world peace promoted by so many others around the globe.

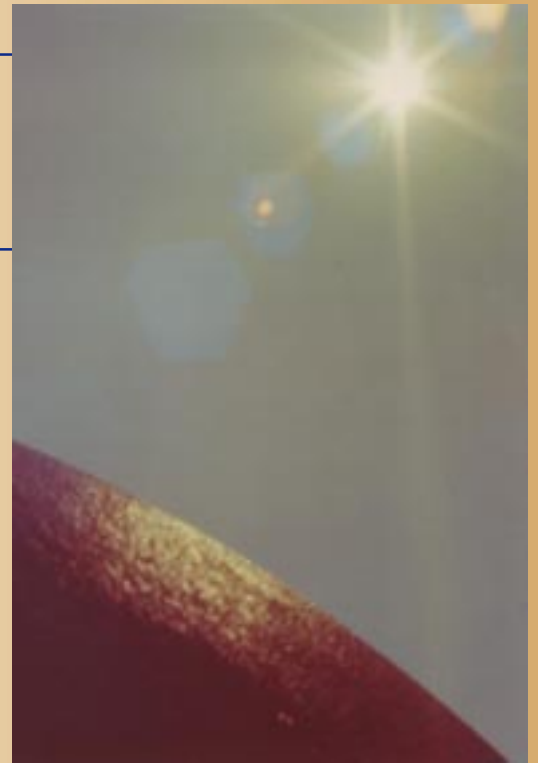
Meanwhile, Israeli authorities are trying to resolve festering inter-religious disputes that may scare off Millennium

pilgrims. An especially thorny feud has erupted between Christians and Muslims over construction of a provocative mosque near the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. The Barak government has been unable to sell a compromise proposal to local Church leaders, prompting the Vatican at one point to threaten a cancellation of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel in March 2000. It seems that in the minds of many radical Muslims, the Crusades have never ended, ...and the Jews, once again, are caught in the middle.

At the same time, the large press corps in Jerusalem has spent the last year focusing obsessively on the sensational beliefs of one or two fringe groups who believe the end of the age is now upon us. The world in general seems to be confusing the Millennium with the biblical concept of a Millennial reign of Messiah on the earth from this city. Therefore, it is easy to understand the confusion of many Israelis, who witness thousands of Christian tourists come and go in the Land of the Bible everyday without incident, even though the daily papers warn of dangerous elements that never quite materialise. In the end, Israel still has the “welcome mat” out for Christian pilgrims, while quietly having to take precautions for the year 2000 unlike any other people or nation.

So in recent days, the world welcomed the new Millennium with light-hearted festivities. Israelis joined in, but against the backdrop of decisive negotiations over the future of their Land, and potentially explosive religious quarrels. Finally, they are having to disregard the media’s attempts to spread fear and misunderstanding about Israel’s central role in the Bible’s prophetic vision of a coming age of peace on earth.

The Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:7, “*The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*” This happens to be a timely piece of biblical advice for all of us who care about God’s eternal purposes for Israel more than the passing of some date on the secular calendar.



# Christmas Concerts



*A presentation of the Nativity Scene with the actors, animals, angels, oratorio choir and orchestra.*

One of the most anointed and timely events that the Christian Embassy has ever sponsored was the three concerts over the past Christmas weekend in the big auditorium of the International Convention Centre in Jerusalem.

December 24th: Because of the uniqueness of this millennial time, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel gave special dispensation for the auditorium to be used by the Christian Embassy on this night, even though it was a Shabbat evening. Despite the fact that no public transport was running, there was a huge crowd to listen to the beautiful Christmas music, to participate in the singing of Christmas carols and to watch the wonderful presentation of the Nativity story. For the first time in the long history of the convention centre, permission was given for live animals to be brought on stage, as the presentation included a donkey, sheep and goats in the manger scene.

The whole production was extremely professional and there was a powerful anointing that touched the many Christians and Israelis present, amongst whom were hundreds



*Smoke Rise Community Church Choir*

of recent immigrants from Russia. Some of the congregations in Israel came especially by charter bus from Beer Sheva, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Tiberias for this event. They were all thankful for a real alternative on Christmas Eve for believers, rather than the politicised Bethlehem event under the Muslim Palestinian Authority.

December 25th: Christmas Day. It began with a unique, behind-the-scenes tour of Bethlehem, conducted by the noted Bible scholar, Dr. Randall Smith.

In the evening, the programme consisted of a presentation of Handel's "Messiah", by the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Oratorio Choir of over 80 voices, from Texas. The orchestra consisted mostly of Russian immigrants. By the time the big audience stood up for the Hallelujah Chorus, many of them were in tears. In the printed programme, the words of the oratorio—which are straight from the Bible—were in English and Russian, because, once again, a large crowd of Russian people were present.

Afterwards, Dr. David Keith, the conductor said: "The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Oratorio Choir



*Marvin Matthews, the gospel singer who performed on the evening of December 24th.*



*The Popov family on stage*

## ***Christmas Concerts (cont.)***

has been performing the “Messiah” for the past 87 years. This is the first time we have been able to do it in Jerusalem where it all took place, and to think that it happened on Christmas Day 1999! We shall never forget this experience.”

December 26th: By this evening, many who attended the first two nights returned as they were so thankful for another night of high quality sacred music.

The programme on this evening included gospel singer Twana Ellis from the United States, other singers from the US and Europe, and the Popov family.

At the beginning of the evening, the Smoke Rise Community Church Choir from New Jersey participated in five musical numbers appropriate for this Christmas time. The evening concluded with the Oratorio Choir presenting music from their wide repertoire and as an exciting climax, repeated the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s “Messiah”. Once again the audience was stunned by the anointing and the quality.

At the Christian Embassy, we are very thankful for all those who contributed towards tickets for Israelis, and especially the Russian immigrants, as this helped cover the costs of these evenings.

We also thank the choirs and the artists who performed at no cost to the Embassy. A Christmas like this comes but once in a thousand years and we are thankful for the unique opportunity to be the messenger of the Christmas story at the millennial transition.



*Twana Ellis sings gospel*

## ***Reception for Inuit Group***



*Representatives of the Inuit people presents gifts to Mr Zvi Liran from the Israeli Tourism Ministry.*

An important aspect of the work of the Christian Embassy is to make the cause of Israel known amongst the different nations. This is a prophetic task which includes hosting representatives from these nations when they visit Jerusalem. We are thankful that the present Embassy building lends itself ideally for these events.

One of the most interesting receptions this month was for delegates from the Inuit people group (formerly known as “Eskimos”). They have recently obtained autonomy within the Canadian Commonwealth and in April 1999 a vast region in north-western Canada, now called Nunavut, was designated as the homeland of the Inuit people. Several of the leaders of this “independence” movement were inspired by Israel’s story of how the land of their fathers was returned to the Jewish people.

At the reception the Christian Embassy was privileged to host several of these leaders. Also in attendance were a number of Israelis, including representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and the Foreign Ministry, as well as the religious advisor to the Mayor of Jerusalem. The Second Secretary of the Political Section of the Canadian Embassy also attended. Special gifts were presented to the Israeli officials – some of them the traditional wood carvings of the Inuit people. Many of these people came to Israel at great personal sacrifice since their tickets to fly from the northern regions of Canada to Toronto were almost as expensive as their journey from Toronto to Tel Aviv. This was, however, a very important pilgrimage for them because they, as Bible-believing Christians, wanted to establish a spiritual link with Jerusalem and the people of the land of Israel.

## *Children of the World Illustrate the Bible*

Many of you will have heard of the competition that was initiated from Israel, called "Children of the World Illustrate the Bible". The Embassy was invited to promote the competition all over the Christian world.

This year saw the completion and final exhibition of this wonderful expression of the truth of the Word of God going forth from Jerusalem.

On December 6th, members of the Embassy attended the presentation of the prizes which were given to each painter who won first prize in their own country. As a member of the praesidium, the ICEJ Director gave a message about the importance of the Bible being a unifying factor between Jewish people and Christians. The prize-winners were brought to Jerusalem from all over the world by the Israeli government for this exciting night.

Two hundred and fifty of the more than one thousand paintings submitted, were hung in the foyer of the Jerusalem Theatre and are a wonderful expression of creativity and Bible knowledge by children. The judges were astounded and thrilled to see the tremendous technical skills and creative ideas submitted. Subjects covered almost the whole Bible, from Old Testament creation scenes, to the New Jerusalem, as depicted in the New Testament.



*A few of the 250 paintings on exhibition in the foyer of the Jerusalem Theatre*

Front Cover:

The cover illustration is of a nativity scene as depicted by See Lee Zion, aged 10 from Singapore. Because this newsletter is the first issue of the new millennium, we put the nativity theme on the cover, as it was the birth of the child in Bethlehem that was chosen as the measure of time.

## *Two New Embassy Baby Boys*



The Embassy threw a party in December to welcome its two newest staff members.

On the left: Jürgen and Vesna Bühler with Nethanel. Jürgen is the Embassy's German Liaison.

On the right: David and José Parsons with Jonathan Amos. David is editor of the Middle East Digest.



## ***Gwen Shaw at the Feast '99***

*Excerpts from the message given on 30th September, 1999 (Sister Gwen's 75th birthday).*

We have stepped into an important time and must prepare our hearts for change and for the things that God is going to do in these last days. John wrote that Jesus told His disciples; “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. One soweth, and another reapeth.” (John 4:34,37). Mathew recorded that Jesus said, “The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Saul commanded the people, “Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food. And they came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground. And when they were in the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth.” (1 Samuel 14:24-26).

Dates are a very important [food] in the Middle East. They were and still are used to make the most delicious honey. A man's wealth and position were determined by the number of date-bearing palm trees he owned. We need the sweetness of the honey of the Spirit of God in our lives to give us the strength for the tremendous task that lies ahead for us to bring in the harvest. I wish that bringing in the harvest were as glamorous and beautiful as it is portrayed at our Feast. But if you've ever been out in the harvest field, you know that it is a hard, sweaty, hot, dirty, discouraging, disappointing task. Many times the one who is most forgotten in the kingdom, in the whole church life, is the harvester out on the distant, remote pastures who is bringing the harvest of souls in the far flung fields of God's vineyard. I have seen many, in my years of serving God, come to the nations of the world where I have worked for God. And I have seen some of the people become so discouraged, worn and weary, that they laid down their sickles before they had reaped their harvest.

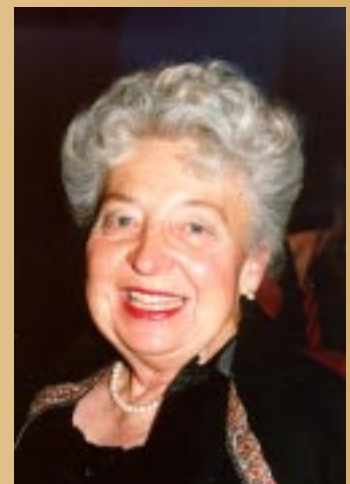
I grew up on a farm. We lived each year waiting for the harvest, because sometimes there was drought and there would be no harvest. Those were hard years when we didn't know how we were going to survive the winter. But when the rain did come the crops grew and then it was harvest time.

In your programme brother Gerald Rowlands wrote about the harvest in China. (When God called me to China), I saw a multitude of hundreds of thousands of Chinese people in need, and I began to hurt and cry for them. I later learned how to preach in Chinese. I landed in Shanghai on December 16th, 1947 with ten US dollars in my pocket and no promise of support, and the Holy Spirit and I have been going ever since. In 1963 I had a visitation from God where He showed me not only the Chinese nation, but the whole world as a mission field. [He said] “I'm going to send you to the nations of the world.” He began to send me to the Philippines and to Indonesia. He was beginning to prepare my heart for what would become the great love of my life — India.

Although I [now] live in America where God called me to raise up The Endtime Handmaidens and Servants, my heart remains in India — that great country with its teeming, yearning people, thousands of whom I harvested for the Lord. God is going to need every harvester for this harvest field. My burden is that God would take my burden and lay it upon you tonight, as He laid it on my son, as He laid it upon many of the Endtime Handmaidens and Servants of God, at great personal sacrifice for the nations.

In closing, I want to read this poem my son Tommy wrote. You see beloved, if we dip our rod into the honey we will have strength for the battle. As I read this poem, in faith, dip your rod into the supply of the Holy Spirit's honey that you might be strengthened for the battle ahead:

I stepped across the haze of dawn and stretched my legs across the gulf of time,  
I planted my feet on fertile soil.  
My back was young, my muscles rippled.  
I dipped my scythe into the wheat and waited.  
Then I heard it: the Master's call.  
“Reap the Harvest! Hoe to it! No slack. It must all be felled by nightfall.”  
I fell to with the enthusiasm of youth, the swish of our rhythm was mesmerizing.  
The day grew, the heat parched our lips, but we dare not slack.  
The day grew; and our sinews trembled, our muscles ached with the loss of youth.  
The day sky waned into the eve.  
Everywhere we looked, it seemed an endless sea of wheat.  
“Master!” we cried, “We cannot do it. Please don't fault us.  
Our blades have dulled. The field is so big, our replacements so few.  
Master, where are the labourers? Don't they know that it is harvest time?”  
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# Fishers' Concert in St. Petersburg



Below: St. Petersburg girls choir performing at the concert



Below: The most recent bus load of new immigrants sponsored by the ICEJ on their way to Finland en route to Israel.



In November the Christian Embassy was privileged to sponsor a concert in St Petersburg, Russia, for over 1000 Jewish people, to excite them about the calling and the possibility of making Aliyah to Israel. The presentation consisted of a beautiful music program and some messages. Most of the musicians, singers and dancers were brought by bus from Finland to St Petersburg by the Finnish Branch of the ICEJ. Local arrangements were supervised by Dr Howard Flowers, who now heads up the ICEJ office and work in St Petersburg.

Early in the morning of the same day as the concert, we gathered in the cold with family and friends to bid farewell to two busloads of new immigrants going to Finland on the first leg of their journey that would take them to Israel a few

days later. What was special about the bus transport that morning was that it included several new immigrants who came by train or flight from far away cities to St Petersburg, as part of the ICEJ's "Far Distant Cities program".

The activity of the work in St Petersburg is increasing constantly as our fishing efforts, also in these distant cities, are beginning to show the results. Following the concert in St Petersburg, for example, the ICEJ office experienced quite an upsurge in enquiries regarding Aliyah.

## ICEJ Information on the Web



For the year 2000 it is possible to access the ICEJ website very easily.

Current information about the Embassy's activities are updated frequently.

A new feature of the website is that the Embassy can now receive credit card transactions for resource material sales and donations. Information about this can be obtained by clicking on the "Bless Israel" page on the ICEJ's website.