



# Commemorating Pesach and Easter in the Light of our Present Situation

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## **A Webinar hosted by the Theology Committee of the International Council of Christians and Jews.**

The ICCJ Theology Committee hosted a webinar on Thursday, March 26, 7 pm UTC, and explored how we as Jews and Christians perceive and commemorate our festivals of Pesach and Easter, respectively, in our contemporary contexts. The webinar - presented by members of the ICCJ Theology Committee from Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Israel, Peru and Great Britain - explored from Jewish and Christian perspectives the importance of Pesach and Easter in the light of what was happening locally and globally. This webinar was particularly pertinent given the war that had broken out between the USA and Iran since the webinar was first advertised. Rooted in the lived experience of its presenters, the webinar (in English) offered views from a variety of theological and practical perspectives. It was facilitated by Assoc. Prof. Pavol Bargar (from Prague in the Czech Republic) and Rev. Dr. Michael Trainor (Adelaide, South Australia) and was joined by 50+ attendees from across the globe.

**Dr. Deborah (Debbie) Weissman** (Jew, Israel), who has lived in Jerusalem since 1972, has taught Jewish studies and women's studies at the Hebrew University and many Christian institutions. Her involvement in interreligious dialogue, both locally and internationally, culminated in her serving two terms as President of the ICCJ from 2008 to 2014. Debbie's presentation reflected on her experience of living in Jerusalem in this most difficult period, the importance of preparing for and celebrating Pesach, especially given the origin of its commemoration, infused with the theme of liberation in a context of slavery as the Israelites left the confines of Egypt in the great Exodus moment.

**Rabbi Guillermo Bronstein** (Jew, Peru) rabbi emeritus in Lima, Peru and former co-president of the Peruvian Interreligious Committee, served as a visiting lecturer at various institutions of theological education. Rabbi Guillermo unfolded the background, history and theological significance of Pesach.

**Rev. Patrick Morrow** (Anglican Christian, UK) a priest in the Church of England, with a parish and a mental health chaplaincy role in the East of England, is secretary to ICCJ's Theology Committee. Patrick reflected on the theological significance of the most important chant sung during the Easter Vigil and especially the three-fold repetitive phrase, "This is the Night". The link between this phrase and the present, not simply a memorial echo but a rich immersion into the present with the Jewish community, explicates our desire for encountering the light in "This night" of what we are experiencing in the present.

**The Very Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Ready** (Orthodox-Christian, Canada), director of Orthodox Christian Studies at Trinity College within the University of Toronto, Canada, teaches liturgy, biblical studies, and pastoral theology. Under the auspices of the Orthodox Theological Association in America, Geoffrey also chairs Orthodox Christians in Dialogue with Jews. Geoffrey's presentation offered a very rich theological insight into the meaning of the Greek Orthodox celebration of the "Pascha" (a word linked to the Jewish celebration of Pesach). He explored the theological links of this

celebration with the Exodus event, its release from the power of Pharaoh, and its ongoing eternal relevance for today, as its liturgical celebration collapses time: What is celebrated and remembered now is not just about an event in the past. It is present now. It becomes present and realized in the believer.

The webinar was recorded and will be available on the ICCJ website.

**Dr. Michael TRAINOR** is the First Vice President of the ICCJ and the President of its Theological Committee.