



# In Memoriam Dr Jacobus (Coos) Schoneveld (27.1.1934 - 12.3.2015)

31.03.2015 | Dick Pruiksmā

*Many in the ICCJ family have lost a good friend now that Dr Jacobus Schoneveld has passed away. For many years, Coos Schoneveld pursued the improvement of Jewish-Christian relations, connecting his theological insights with his strong commitment to social and political justice.*

His thesis and subsequent publications amply demonstrate this effort by giving account of his painstaking research into the mutual perception of Israelis and Palestinians in textbooks used in religious education in schools in Israel and Palestine.

As a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dr Schoneveld was appointed in 1967 as the theological advisor of the church in Israel. By appointing Coos, the church in the Netherlands marked its deep conviction that the interreligious dialogue with Judaism is an indispensable part of the church's identity. Together with his wife Ellen, Coos lived in a beautiful house in Ein Karem, a place many visitors will warmly remember. His activity within the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity and the Rainbow group is to all a precious memory.

After thirteen years of fruitful work in Jerusalem, it was not surprising that the International Council of Christians and Jews invited Dr Schoneveld in 1980 to be its new General Secretary. The ICCJ had just moved from London to the Martin Buber House in Heppenheim, Germany and was about to earn, with a small but enthusiastic staff, its renewed place in the world of interreligious dialogue.

For sixteen years, Coos Schoneveld served the ICCJ with heart and soul. These were turbulent years. Frequent lack of money sometimes made the work difficult. There were emotional moments such as during the Warsaw 1994 Annual General Meeting when a proposal to establish an International Abrahamic Forum did not pass. But with ICCJ presidents like Victor Goldbloom and Martin Stöhr, Coos Schoneveld remained in a strong collegial partnership. His farewell from ICCJ took place during the 1996 conference in Mainz.

Coos and Ellen then returned part time back to Jerusalem. In the Ecumenical Institute in Tantur, Coos continued his efforts to improve the mutual perception of Israelis and Palestinians by critically examining the teaching methods used in religious education. Finally they returned to the Netherlands, from far and near surrounded by their children and grandchildren. The funeral card says a tzaddik (righteous person) is gone. May the peace of the Lord be his.

Dick Pruiksmā; ICCJ Consultant, former ICCJ's General Secretary.