



ICCJ 2020 Conference: Stories We Live By

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Preparations for ICCJ's 2020 annual conference to be held in Bratislava/Slovakia, June 28 - July 1, are under way. The theme of the conference is "Stories We Live By: Relating to the Self and Other"

European societies today are in deep search for answers and understanding related to existential and ethical challenges. Different traditions meet, and occasionally clash. This is particularly visible in contemporary Europe due to increased movement of people across borders. It can be seen in the tensions between Christians, Jews, and Muslims, especially triggered by the recent arrivals to Europe. To foster better communication and provide a basis for common understanding and tolerance, we aim to offer a platform for wide-ranging discussion and a Jewish and Christian voice to contribute to the contemporary quest for responses to existential, social, and ethical issues.

Human life can be rendered as a story. Story represents a means that helps construct human identity. Each one of us, both individually and communally, has their particular story. In many fields, both academic and more practice-oriented contexts, story has proven to be a helpful tool to reflect on various areas of human existence. It is a teaching tool with a powerful explanatory potential. But story's primary strength lies in its structural resemblance with human life. Such reflection, however, should not end up with reinforcing what can become just another cliché.

Rather, the narrative approach to human existence ought to lead us to asking serious questions about the nature of being human:

- How does "my" own story relate to the stories of other members of my social/religious/ethnic/cultural group?
- In what ways do the founding story/stories of a certain community enable or disable relationships between that community and others who do not share the same story?
- How does one's transformed self-understanding change the way one tells and relate to the other's story?
- How can we avoid lethal stories and, instead, nurture life-affirming ones?
- What positive role(s) can stories play in conflict resolution and the building of interreligious and intercultural relations?

This programmatic vision is expressed in the design of a conference, to be held in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 28 June – 1 July 2020, as part of the long-term vision and mission of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ).

During its three and a half days, the event will offer keynote lectures and plenary sessions on the theme as well as a number of interactive workshops. The program will employ the narrative approach to investigate such areas as the interpretation of sacred scriptures and traditions, religious self-understanding, interreligious dialogue, the coming to terms with one's past and present both in Slovakia and the wider Central and Eastern European region, and the disappointment from false hopes/prophecies.

The conference will strive to provide a better understanding of commonalities, individually and communally. It will offer a framework for societies and communities to strengthen their resolve in

responding to the way common stories are abused/dishonored by political leaders who seek to encourage racial hatred and ethnic divisions.

The ICCJ Executive Board, together with the ICCJ General Secretary and the Co-chairs of the conference planning committee - ICCJ Vice President Dr Pavol Bargár and the President of the Association of Christians and Jews in Slovakia Ms Lucia Faltin - look forward to welcoming you to Slovakia in 2020!

A pdf-file of the introduction to the conference theme for Bratislava 2020 can be found [here](#) - please share it with colleagues and friends.

Further information will follow on ICCJ's website in due time.

To receive new information and updates promptly by e-mail, please register for the [ICCJ-newsletter](#).

The online-registration for participants in ICCJ's 2020 conference will open at the end of February 2020.

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