



International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) Meets in Latvia

11.06.2002

The International Council of Christians and Jews, the umbrella organisation of 37 national member organisations in 32 countries for the first time held its annual conference and general meeting in Riga, Latvia from 26 - 30 May 2002

International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) Meets in Latvia

The International Council of Christians and Jews, the umbrella organisation of 37 national member organisations in 32 countries for the first time held its annual conference and general meeting in Riga, Latvia from 26 - 30 May 2002, at the invitation of the recently formed Latvian Council of Christians and Jews.

The conference theme was Faithful to One's Tradition in the Presence of the Other - Perspectives of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue in the Baltic countries in the light of their respective histories.

The conference was opened at Riga University by the President of Latvia, Prof Dr Vaira Vike-Freiberga who spoke on Visions of Interreligious and Intercultural Encounter for the New Europe.

Lectures addressed topics of contemporary concern, including The Jewish Experience in the Baltic Countries, Religious Renaissance after the era of Atheism, Re-Thinking the Covenant - New Christian and Jewish Approaches and Interreligious Relations in the Wake of September 11th. In addition, conference delegates discussed in workshops such subjects as Truth and Reconciliation - Facing a Painful Past; a Religious Response to Refugees, Challenges of Globalisation.

The delegates also visited sites of remembrance of the Holocaust at Bikernieki where memorial prayers were said and the former Jewish Ghetto, as well churches and the sole surviving active synagogue.

The concluding session of the conference was generously hosted by the Riga Jewish Community in its reopened Community Centre where Rabbi David Rosen lectured on Faithfulness to Tradition and Peacemaking in the Middle East. This was followed by musical presentation culminating in excellent presentations from the Jewish children's dance groups; delegates also viewed the instructive exhibition on the Jews of Latvia from the earliest days until today.

Delegates were gratified to learn of the establishment of the International Martin Buber Foundation supported by the German Land Hesse to the sum of 3 million EURO. The foundation will ensure the continuation of the ICCJ's interreligious dialogue.

At its annual general meeting delegates paid tribute to the outgoing president, Rabbi Prof David Rosen who was elected honorary president and to ICCJ Patron, Sir Sigmund Sternberg, UK.

The following were elected to office for the next two years - President: Father Prof Dr John Pawlikowski, USA, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; Vice-Presidents: Mrs Gunnel Borgegård, Nordic Ecumenical Council, Uppsala, Sweden and Rabbi Ehud Bandel, Director Massorti Movement, Jerusalem; Joint Treasurers: Edwin Green and Clive Marks, UK; Executive Board: Bishop Luis des Castillo, Mello, Uruguay; Father Prof. Michael Czajkowski, co-chairman Polish Council of Christians and Jews, Poland; Rev Dick Pruiksma, Chairman of OJEC (Dutch Council of Christians and Jews) Netherlands; Prof Dr Stefan Schreiner, University of Tübingen, Germany; Sr Margaret Shepherd, Director Council of Christians and Jews, UK.

The annual ICCJ Sir Sigmund Sternberg Award was presented jointly to: Prof Dr Klaus Schwab, of the World Economic Forum and to Jubilee International Movement for Economic and Social Justice.

The Interfaith Gold Medallion 'Peace Through Dialogue' was presented to Father Michael Czajkowski.