

# **A Time for Recommitment: Building the New Relationship between Jews and Christians**

**Written by International Council of Christians and Jews**

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In the summer of 1947, 65 Jews and Christians from 19 countries gathered in Seelisberg, Switzerland. They came together to express their profound grief over the Holocaust, their determination to combat antisemitism, and their desire to foster stronger relationships between Jews and Christians. They denounced antisemitism both as a sin against God and humanity and as a danger to modern civilization. And to address these vital concerns, they issued a call in the form of 10 points to Christian churches to reform and renew their understandings of Judaism and the relationships between Judaism and Christianity.

Now, more than 60 years later, the International Council of Christians and Jews issues a new call?this one to both Christian and Jewish communities around the world. It commemorates the anniversary of the Seelisberg gathering, which was also the genesis of the International Council of Christians and Jews. Today's call reflects the need to refine the Ten Points of Seelisberg, consistent with the advances in interreligious dialogue since that groundbreaking document of 1947.

This new call contains 12 points?presented as goals, and addressed to Christians and Jews, and to Christian and Jewish communities together. After listing the 12 points and several specific tasks for each one, the document reviews the history of the relationship between Christians and Jews, which has provided the contextual framework and impetus for our initiative.

We members of the International Council of Christians and Jews speak together in this new call as active members of our traditions with a centuries-long history of alienation, hostility and conflict, punctuated by instances of persecution and violence against Jews in Christian-dominated Europe, as well by as moments of graciousness and mutual recognition from which we can take inspiration

Spurred by the Seelisberg initiative, we have worked to overcome the legacy of prejudice, hatred and mutual distrust. Through a serious commitment to dialogue, self-critical examination of our texts and traditions, and joint study and action for justice, we better understand each other, accept each other in the fullness of our differences, and affirm our common humanity. We understand that Jewish-Christian relations are not a "problem" that is going to be "solved," but rather a continuing process of learning and refinement. Perhaps most important, we have found friendship and trust. We have sought and found light together.

The journey has been neither simple nor easy. We have encountered many obstacles and setbacks, including conflicts—some quite serious—over theological or historical developments. But our determination to pursue the dialogue in spite of difficulties, to communicate honestly, and to assume our partners' good will has helped us stay the course. For these reasons, we believe that the history, the challenges, and the accomplishments of our dialogue are relevant for all those who are dealing with intergroup and interreligious conflicts.

In that spirit, we issue this call to Christian and Jewish communities around the world.

# A Time for Recommitment: The Twelve Points of Berlin

## A Call to Christian and Jewish Communities Worldwide

We, the International Council of Christians and Jews and our member organizations, resolve to renew our engagement with the Ten Points of Seelisberg that inspired our beginnings. Therefore, we issue these calls to Christians, Jews, and all people of good will:

### A Call To Christians and Christian Communities

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite all Christians and Christian communities to join us in the continuing effort to remove all vestiges of contempt towards Jews and enhance bonds with the Jewish communities worldwide.

#### 1. To combat religious, racial and all other forms of antisemitism

##### *Biblically*

- By recognizing Jesus' profound identity as a Jew of his day, and interpreting his teachings within the contextual framework of first-century Judaism.
- By recognizing Paul's profound identity as a Jew of his day, and interpreting his writings within the contextual framework of first-century Judaism.
- By emphasizing that recent scholarship on both the commonality and gradual separation of Christianity and Judaism is critical for our basic understanding of the Jewish-Christian relationship.
- By presenting the two Testaments in the Christian Bible as complementary and mutually affirming rather than antagonistic or inferior/superior. Denominations that use lectionaries are encouraged to choose and link biblical texts that offer such an affirming theology.
- By speaking out against Christian misreadings of biblical texts regarding Jews and Judaism that can provoke caricatures or animosity.

##### *Liturgically*

- By highlighting the connection between Jewish and Christian liturgy.
- By drawing upon the spiritual richness of Jewish interpretations of the scriptures.
- By cleansing Christian liturgies of anti-Jewish perspectives, particularly in preaching, prayers and hymns.

##### *Catechetically*

- By presenting the Christian-Jewish relationship in positive tones in the education of Christians of all ages, underlining the Jewish foundations of Christian belief and accurately describing the ways Jews themselves understand their own traditions and practices. This includes the curricula of Christian schools, seminaries and adult education programs.
- By promoting awareness of the long-lived traditions of Christian anti-Judaism and providing models for renewing the unique Jewish-Christian relationship.

- By underscoring the immense religious wealth found in the Jewish tradition, especially by studying its authoritative texts.

## **2. To promote interreligious dialogue with Jews**

- By understanding dialogue as requiring trust and equality among all participants and rejecting any notion of convincing others to accept one's own beliefs.
- By appreciating that dialogue encourages participants to examine critically their own perceptions of both their own tradition and that of their dialogue partners in the light of a genuine engagement with the other.

## **3. To develop theological understandings of Judaism that affirm its distinctive integrity**

- By eliminating any teachings that Christians have replaced Jews as a people in covenant with God.
- By emphasizing the common mission of Jews and Christians in preparing the world for the kingdom of God or the Age to Come.
- By establishing equal, reciprocal working relationships with Jewish religious and civic organizations.
- By ensuring that emerging theological movements from Asia, Africa and Latin America, and feminist, liberationist or other approaches integrate an accurate understanding of Judaism and Christian-Jewish relations into their theological formulations.
- By opposing organized efforts at the conversion of Jews.

## **4. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem**

- By promoting the belief in an inherent connectedness between Christians and Jews.
- By understanding more fully Judaism's deep attachment to the Land of Israel as a fundamental religious perspective and many Jewish people's connection with the State of Israel as a matter of physical and cultural survival.
- By reflecting on ways that the Bible's spiritual understanding of the land can be better incorporated into Christian faith perspectives.
- By critiquing the policies of Israeli and Palestinian governmental and social institutions when such criticism is morally warranted, at the same time acknowledging both communities' deep attachment to the land.
- By critiquing attacks on Zionism when they become expressions of antisemitism.
- By joining with Jewish, Christian and Muslim peace workers, with Israelis and Palestinians, to build trust and peace in a Middle East where all can live secure in independent, viable states rooted in international law and guaranteed human rights.
- By enhancing the security and prosperity of Christian communities both in Israel and Palestine.
- By working for improved relations among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and the rest of the world.

## **A Call To Jews and Jewish Communities**

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite all Jews and Jewish communities to join us in the continuing effort to remove all vestiges of animosity and caricature toward Christians and to enhance bonds with Christian churches of the world.

### **5. To acknowledge the efforts of many Christian communities in the late 20th century to reform their attitudes toward Jews**

- By learning about these reforms through more intensive dialogue with Christians.
- By discussing the implications of changes in Christian churches regarding Jews and their understandings of Judaism.
- By teaching Jews of all ages about these changes, both in the context of the history of Jewish-Christian relations and according to the appropriate stage of education for each group.
- By including basic and accurate background information about Christianity in the curricula of Jewish schools, rabbinic seminaries and adult education programs.
- By studying the New Testament both as Christianity's sacred text and as literature written to a large degree by Jews in an historical-cultural context similar to early Rabbinic literature, thereby offering insight into the development of Judaism in the early centuries of the Common Era.

### **6. To re-examine Jewish texts and liturgy in the light of these Christian reforms**

- By grappling with Jewish texts that appear xenophobic or racist, realizing that many religious traditions have uplifting, inspirational texts as well as problematic ones. The emphasis for all religious traditions should be on texts that promote tolerance and openness.
- By placing problematic texts within their historical context, in particular writings from the times when Jews were a powerless, persecuted and humiliated minority.
- By addressing the possible re-interpretation, change or omission of parts of Jewish liturgy that treat others in problematic ways.

### **7. To differentiate between fair-minded criticism of Israel and antisemitism**

- By understanding and promoting biblical examples of just criticism as expressions of loyalty and love.
- By helping Christians appreciate that communal identity and interconnectedness are intrinsic to Jewish self-understanding, in addition to religious faith and practice, therefore making the commitment to the survival and security of the State of Israel of great importance to most Jews.

### **8. To offer encouragement to the State of Israel as it works to fulfil the ideals stated in its founding documents, a task Israel shares with many nations of the world.**

- By ensuring equal rights for religious and ethnic minorities, including Christians, living within the Jewish state.
- By achieving a just and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## **A Call To Both Christian and Jewish Communities and Others**

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite Jews, Christians and Muslims, together with all people of faith and goodwill, always to respect the other and to accept each other's differences and dignity.

### **9. To enhance interreligious and intercultural education**

- By combating negative images of others, teaching the foundational truth that each human being is created in the image of God.
- By making the removal of prejudices against the other a high priority in the educational process.
- By encouraging mutual study of religious texts, so that Jews, Christians, Muslims and members of other religious groups can learn both from and with each other.
- By supporting common social action in the pursuit of common values.

### **10. To promote interreligious friendship and cooperation as well as social justice in the global society**

- By rejoicing in the uniqueness of each person, and promoting everyone's political, economic and social well-being.
- By recognizing as equal citizens members of faith traditions who have migrated to new homelands where they may have become part of a religious minority.
- By striving for equal rights for all people, regardless of their religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- By recognizing and grappling with the fact that feelings of religious superiority—and an accompanying sense that other religions are inferior—are present in each tradition, including one's own.

### **11. To enhance dialogue with political and economic bodies**

- By collaborating with political and economic bodies whenever possible to promote interreligious understanding.
- By benefiting from political and economic groups' growing interest in interreligious relations.
- By initiating discussion with political and economic bodies around the urgent need for justice in the global community.

### **12. To network with all those whose work responds to the demands of environmental stewardship**

- By fostering commitment to the belief that every human being is entrusted with the care of the Earth.
- By recognizing the shared Jewish and Christian biblical duty toward creation, and the responsibility to bring it to bear in public discourse and action.

To all these challenges and responsibilities, we—the International Council of Christians and Jews and its member organizations—commit ourselves.

*Berlin, Germany, July 2009 At the International Conference and the Annual General Meeting of the International Council of Christians and Jews.*

# The Story of the Transformation of a Relationship

## Introduction

Just over 40 years ago, all humankind had a first glimpse of Earth from the moon, and gained new perspective on the beauty and fragility of our planet. Whatever our differences, those photos from the vastness of space showed us our common home. Questions about how we care for one another and for our world took on new urgency.

For many Jews and Christians, this view of our planet evoked the Psalmist's cry, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?" (Psalm 8:4) Both the ancient poetry of the Psalms and the technology that took us to the moon cause us to pause once again to ponder our human calling.

Reflection compels us to acknowledge the scars our planet bears, including consequences of wars, disparities in wealth and access to the necessities of life, and depletion of earth's resources. We are mindful that violence tears apart the fabric of humanity and intensifies fear.

Religion, we confess, has been implicated in that violence. Over the ages, men and women have used religion to motivate and justify vilification and persecution of those whose beliefs differ from their own. Violence in the name of religion has caused bloodshed and perverted religion itself. Whenever religion becomes complicit in violence, it must be questioned.

When religions promote service to others and respect for those who are different, they are powerful forces for good. They inspire care for the other and loving-kindness. They challenge us to aspire to a time when people "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4)

The relationship between Christians and Jews is one such sword being refashioned into a plowshare. The history of these two peoples has been marked largely by rivalry and conflict. Centuries of Christian disparagement of Judaism and abuse of power have contributed to antisemitism and provided fertile ground for Nazism's genocidal assault on Jews. Confronted by the horror of this darkness, Jews and Christians have turned to one another in dialogue, seeking the light of mutual understanding and friendship.

This ongoing dialogue continues the work begun in Seelisberg, Switzerland, in 1947. There, a multinational group of 65 Jews and Christians called on Christian churches to reflect on and renew their understandings of Judaism and their relationships with Jews. Their call came to be known as the Ten Points of Seelisberg.

We members of the International Council of Christians and Jews have come together more than six decades after the Seelisberg conference, steeped in the spirit of its work. We are mindful that genocide continues to afflict humankind, that hatred of the other continues to fuel violence. Yet the healing between Christians and Jews in the years since Seelisberg shows that enmity and hostility can be transformed. This statement has been written collaboratively by Jews and Christians and addressed to the Jewish and Christian communities and all people of goodwill. It has been born of our conviction that when religious people commit themselves to the work of reconciliation, our planet becomes more peaceful. The statement rises from this realization and this hope.

# A. The Intertwined Lives of Jews and Christians over the Centuries

## 1. An Ambivalent Relationship

Christianity and Judaism have a unique relationship among the world's religions. Both Jews and Christians hold the texts of biblical Israel to be sacred scripture, though they organize and interpret those texts in different ways. Christians and Jews share many religious and ethical principles, although some common terms are understood in different ways. Jews and Christians both anticipate a similar destiny for the world in a messianic age, although the arrival of that age is envisioned in different ways. Christians and Jews have been dealing with one another, for good and for ill, for many centuries, sometimes influencing each other's religious ideas and practices along the way. All of these forces have produced an ambivalent relationship that has shaped their interactions.

The two traditions are also linked because Jesus was born, lived and died a Jew. The first Christians were Jews and it was centuries rather than decades after the death of Jesus that Christianity and Judaism separated in a process that unfolded differently in various places. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in the year 70 and persecutions of Christians were among the factors that motivated the Gospel writers and their early interpreters to downplay the Roman governor's role in the execution of Jesus. They also sought to explain why many Jews disagreed with Christian claims about Jesus. Invective was often the result. Christians came to view Jews as an obsolete covenant people, replaced by the newly covenanted people of the Christian church. Christian authors increasingly regarded the Christian church as the new and true Israel (*verus Israel*). This theology of replacement is often termed "supersessionism." Yet for several centuries many Gentile Christians continued to be attracted to synagogues and welcomed at services, including at Passover.

Christian leaders such as John Chrysostom (c. 350–407) complained about the appeal of the synagogue and delivered vitriolic sermons against Jews and Judaism, contributing to a literary genre called *adversus Judaeos*. They insisted that Jews did not understand the Old Testament and that the Judaism of the rabbis was founded on error. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) portrayed Jews as children of Cain whose dispersion and debasement were God's punishment. Jews, he argued, served as witnesses to Christian truth and were not to be harmed. This basic theological approach remained influential for the next thousand years.

Once Christianity was established as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the late fourth century, the situation for Jews became more difficult. Roman law codes, such as the Code of Justinian, began to erode Jewish legal rights. The erosion took place gradually over the next four centuries at the same time Christianized Rome was also expending great effort on defeating pagans and those deemed to be Christian heretics.

By the sixth century, Judaism and Christianity had fully separated and Jewish forms of Christianity ceased to exist. Through the centuries, however, Christians and Jews have been entwined in their veneration of the same Scriptures. For the most part, what Christians call Old Testament and Jews *Tanakh* is one and the same, though their content, structure and the methods to interpret them differ. Hence the saying, "Jews and Christians are divided by a common Bible." Jews and Christians are also divided by several theological convictions, notably Christian claims about the divinity of Jesus.

Because they were a minority group in both the Islamic world and Christendom, Jews pondered possible reasons for the flourishing of these two traditions. One view held that Christianity was a form of idolatry. Another categorized Christianity according to the Noachide Laws, which defined Gentile moral standards without a demand for conversion to Judaism. A third view, propagated by Judah ha-Levi (1075-1141) and Maimonides (1135-1204), affirmed that Christianity introduced the nations to the worship of the God of Israel and thus prepared the way for redemption. Menahem ha-Meiri's (1249–1316) positive argument was that Christianity should be understood as a form of monotheism. He coined the phrase “nations bound by the ways of religion” to interpret certain rabbinic laws and enable a more fruitful interaction between Jews and Christians.

Widespread expulsions and anti-Jewish activity in Western Europe characterized the later medieval period, roughly after 1000, and led to the social decline or devastation of Jewish communities there. As Western Christendom became more homogeneous, Jews were seen as one of the last “different” groups. Especially during the First Crusade (1096), mob violence inspired by Christian preaching wiped out dozens of Jewish communities. As time passed, and despite the efforts of various popes, Jews were accused of the ritual murder of Christian children, of desecrating the consecrated Christian sacramental bread and of causing the Black Death. They were demonized as "children of the devil." These accusations usually led to group expulsions or executions. At the order of Pope Gregory IX and with the cooperation of the Inquisition, thousands of Jewish books were burned (Paris, 1242). Christian leaders preached conversionist sermons which Jews were forced to attend and held enforced public disputations (such as Paris, 1240; Barcelona, 1263). The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required Jews to wear an identifying badge. By the 16th century, Jews had been expelled from most of Western Europe, with the notable exception of Rome. Beginning in 1555, Jews in some cities, among them Rome, Venice and Prague, were confined in ghettos. Travel was severely restricted and Jews were often locked at night in their ghettos.

There were some exceptions to this hostility. The *Convivencia* describes the relatively easy "coexistence" of Jews, Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain and Portugal until the 13th century. In northern Europe, Jews and Christians generally lived together peacefully and productively. A totally negative picture of Jewish life in Christian Europe in this period overlooks the persistence and spread of Jewish settlement there.

The 16th-century Reformation led to more positive attitudes toward Jews among Christians. The humanist tradition emphasized the enduring qualities of Jewish religious teaching. Although religious wars between Catholics and Protestants also triggered anti-Jewish violence, partly inspired by Luther's tractate *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), there were also smaller philosemitic Christian reform movements. The Anabaptists and Calvinist churches, for example, looked favorably on Judaism's adherence to Old Testament teachings, although they said that Jews did not fully understand them.

This interest in the Christian Old Testament helped to promote tolerance for Jews in the Netherlands and later in some of the American colonies. By the time of the American Revolution, the proliferation of religious groups, the growing desire to separate church and state, and an Enlightenment emphasis on the rights of the individual helped create a more hospitable climate for Jews. While the theology of supersessionism was brought to the New World by Christian settlers and missionaries, its social impact was blunted in regions that stressed basic human rights.

Also notable in the 16th century was a small English Protestant millenarian movement that emphasized Jewish restoration to the Land of Israel as an essential element in the Second Coming. This idea spread to continental Europe and in the 18th century to North America.

## 2. The Century before Seelisberg

In the 19th century, some discourse between Jews and Christians became more positive. Central and Western European Jews were allowed out of ghettos and began to integrate into the dominant European society. The desire to assimilate, however, also caused some Jews to conceal or abandon their heritage. Some Christians, impelled by a missionary intent, began to take more interest in the Jewish people and their beliefs and practices. A quest to recover the historical Jesus led some scholars to take a greater interest in first-century Judaism, often emphasizing, however, differences between Jesus and his allegedly corrupt Jewish contemporaries. In this period, Christians and Jews were motivated to communicate for different reasons. Jews wanted to improve their lot in society and were concerned for civil rights. Christian leaders wanted converts or to facilitate the assimilation of Judaism into Christianity.

Antisemitism, increasingly understood according to racist categories, was more and more accepted as a fact of life in European society. The hasty espionage conviction of a loyal French Jewish army officer, Albert Dreyfus, on the basis of highly suspicious evidence, generated a public sensation. State-sponsored persecutions, or pogroms, in Russia and Eastern Europe led to mass emigration to Western Europe and the United States. Such events began to cast a dark shadow over European Jewry. Some politicians also began to exploit pseudo-scientific claims of Aryan racial superiority and Jewish inferiority for their own advantage.

However, in the late 19th and early 20th century, a few Jewish and Christian scholars began to take a serious interest in each others' religion. Their writings marked the emergence of yet another moment of positive attitudes between members of the two faith traditions.

Abraham Geiger (1810-74), a leading German Reform rabbi, was one of the first Jewish scholars to place Jesus in the context of first-century Judaism. Herman Cohen (1842-1918), a German philosopher and a professor at Marburg, began to write extensive critiques of Christianity. Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) proposed a doctrine of two covenants. Martin Buber (1875-1965) accepted Christianity as a path to God, hoping Christians would do the same with regard to Judaism. Claude Montefiore (1858-1938), a liberal Anglo-Jewish leader and scholar, wrote a sympathetic study of the Gospels. Joseph Klausner (1874-1958) discussed Jesus and Paul in the context of Jewish Messianism.

Léon Bloy (1846-1917), Joseph Bonsirven (1880-1958), Herbert Danby (1889-1953), Robert Travers Herford (1860-1950), Charles Journet (1891-1975), and Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) were among the first Christians scholars to write extensively about the Talmud, Midrash and Mishnah or to advocate for affirmative theological approaches to Judaism and the Jewish people. Their scholarship challenged Christians to appreciate Rabbinic Judaism and dispel caricatures of the Pharisees. George Foot Moore (1851-1931) published a three-volume work, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*. James Parkes, an Anglican clergyman who worked in Central Europe in the 1930s, was one of the first Christians to warn of the dangers of Nazism. In *The Conflict of Church and Synagogue: A Study of the Origins of Antisemitism*, he blamed the centuries of Christian anti-Jewish teaching for contemporary antisemitism.

The early 20th century also saw the beginnings of scholarly dialogue. A Parliament of the World's Religions convened in Chicago in 1893. From its inception in 1904, the London Society for the Study of Religions had some Jewish members, including Claude Montefiore. And in 1927, the London Society of Jews and Christians was formed. The World Congress of Faiths, with members from all religions, was established in 1936.

Practical matters also were bringing some Jews and Christians together. In the U.S. presidential race of 1924, Alfred E. Smith, a Roman Catholic who unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination, was subjected to abuse by the Ku Klux Klan whose members were also antisemitic. Their slogan “America for the Americans” was a threat to all minorities. To counter their influence, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and B’nai B’rith set up a Committee on Good Will between Jews and Christians. Four years later, when Smith became the Democratic presidential nominee, the Roman Catholic Church joined with Protestants and Jews to establish the National Conference of Christians and Jews, which from the 1940s through the 1980s was well-known for sponsoring an annual Brotherhood Week.

By the mid-1930s, refugees from Nazi Germany were arriving in Britain where Jewish organizations found it increasingly difficult to care for the large numbers. In 1936, a newly formed Inter-Aid Committee comprised representatives of numerous Jewish and Christian social welfare agencies. Despite numerous failures to help refugees, in 1938, after the general attack on synagogues and Jewish property on the so-called *Kristallnacht*, “the Night of Shattered Glass,” a Refugee Children’s Movement was formed to find suitable homes for Jewish children who had been sent to England and Scotland by their parents.

With the outbreak of World War II, many people failed to see the threat that the Nazis represented and some Christian leaders supported them. Other Christian leaders began denouncing Nazi antisemitism, at the same time recognizing the overarching need to promote better relations between Christians and Jews. William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, convened a meeting in March 1942, resulting in the formation of the Council of Christians and Jews. While one of the organization’s goals was to combat all forms of racial and religious intolerance, special emphasis was placed on affirming the moral values shared by Jews and Christians, and on educational work, especially among the young. William W. Simpson, a Methodist minister who had been involved in the refugee effort, was appointed secretary. He held that position until 1974.

### **3. The Seelisberg Conference and Beginnings of the ICCJ**

After the end of World War II, the magnitude of the *Shoah*—the murder of two-thirds of the Jews of Europe and one-third of the Jewish community globally— became known to the entire world. Jews and Christians started to scrutinize how traditional Christian teaching might have contributed to—and even enhanced—the Third Reich’s industrial genocide. Jules Isaac furthered this examination when, in *Jésus et Israël* (1948), he highlighted the interplay between the anti-Judaism in Christian theology and racial-biological antisemitism. The title of his second study, *L’Enseignement du mépris* (1962), actually named what needed to be identified and excised from Christian theology: *the teaching of contempt*.

When the Second World War ended, William Simpson and others recognized that a new relationship between Jews and Christians had to be built internationally. A conference was held in Oxford in 1946. Dean Grüber from Berlin and Herman Mass from Heidelberg, both Christian pastors, received special permission to attend. Rabbi Leo Baeck, leader of the German Jewish community during the Third Reich, survivor of Theresienstadt, and a post-war émigré to London, was one of the speakers. Conference participants decided that an emergency meeting on the problem of antisemitism in Europe should be held as soon as possible. It took place in the Swiss village of Seelisberg in 1947.

In the history of Jewish-Christian dialogue, the Seelisberg conference is referred to primarily because of its Ten Points, which were specifically addressed “to the churches.” The first four points emphasized the deep and fundamental roots of Christianity in Judaism. The next six made it clear

that Judaism must no longer be presented negatively in Christian teaching. This challenge established one of the foundations for subsequent research on the complex relations between the two religious traditions.

Although numerous Christians at that time understood the Ten Points as a bold statement, it is now increasingly obvious to Jews and Christians alike that the document demands updating and new perspectives. For instance, the Seelisberg document never discusses the importance of covenantal theology. It does not address religious pluralism or the State of Israel, critically relevant topics that contemporary interreligious dialogue explores. The Ten Points were addressed only to Christians. Today, after six decades of expanded dialogue, a new text would properly address both Christians and Jews. The introduction to the Ten Points also reflects the influence of Third Reich-era terminology, use of the phrase “a Jewish problem,” for example, as if antisemitism were not first and foremost a “Gentile problem.”

While the Ten Points of Seelisberg have contributed to the improvement of Jewish-Christian relations in a number of ways over decades, the time is now ripe to refine the statement in the interests of refuting contemporary anti-Jewish theology and antisemitism, and for Jews and Christians together to address wider human needs.

The 1947 Emergency Conference on Antisemitism at Seelisberg also called for the establishment of an International Council of Christians and Jews “without delay.” The following year in Fribourg, Switzerland, a constitution for the nascent organization was adopted, an office in Geneva was opened and an address in London was established.

This initial phase of ICCJ’s existence lasted only a short time. The member organization from the United States—the National Conference of Christians and Jews—concluded after the Fribourg meeting that an International Council of Christians and Jews would have an agenda both too narrow and too religious to combat antisemitism and other forms of intergroup prejudices effectively. It set up a World Brotherhood project, while the European Christian-Jewish dialogue groups continued to focus particularly on improving the relations between Jews and Christians. The ICCJ office in Geneva was closed, although the London address continued.

A number of important statements and documents were published in the first years after World War II. At its First Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, the World Council of Churches declared that antisemitism, “no matter its origin [was] ... absolutely irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith. ... [It] is a sin against God and man.” Although the statement was powerful and accurate, what still demanded exploration were the ways in which Christian anti-Jewish teachings and actions had informed and nurtured antisemitism, a topic of particular interest to the embryonic ICCJ.

Another challenge arose when in 1950 a Vatican directive charging the ICCJ to be “indifferentist,” meaning that it allegedly held all religions to be of equal status, precluded Catholics from cooperating with the ICCJ. This limitation changed completely when the Catholic Church adopted a more positive outlook toward other religions during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Nonetheless, a growing number of European Jewish-Christian dialogue groups cooperated in the formation of an “Informal Liaison Committee” in the mid-1950s, and in 1962 of an “International Consultative Committee” supervised by William Simpson. After the NCCJ joined this consultative organization, its representative proposed in a 1974 meeting in Basel, Switzerland, that the Committee’s name become the “International Council of Christians and Jews.” Thus, 26 years after its first establishment at the 1948 Fribourg conference, the ICCJ finally came into full existence.

## B. Six Decades of Growth

### 1. Developments in Biblical Scholarship

Scholars devoted to the historical-critical study of the Christian Old Testament made great progress during the 19th century: biblical texts were examined against the background of contemporary writings, philological research flourished, and there was great interest in reconstructing the history of ancient Israel.

However, some influential scholars, such as Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), expressed Christian teaching of contempt against Jews in asserting that Old Testament passages could be dated by the extent to which they reflected “genuine spirituality.” Wellhausen and others argued that texts they judged to be narrow-minded and rigid demonstrated a decline from the high spirituality of the Hebrew prophets to a sterile legalism that supposedly prevailed in Judaism after the Babylonian Exile. The unspoken message – made explicit by some later Christian scholars – was that the Jesus movement was a religious reformation that returned to its authentic Hebrew sources and interpreted them in their original sense, before their distortion by legalistic Judaism. The latter characterization was given the technical term *Spätjudentum* (“late Judaism”), a supposed but far from neutral way to describe Jewish faith and life at the time of Jesus.

If, according to this construct, post-exilic or Second Temple Judaism can be described as a religious failure marked by a soulless spirituality, and if Judaism at the time of Jesus can be described as “late,” then a spiritually legitimate Judaism would have ceased and Judaism today would have no reason to exist. Post-World War II biblical studies have challenged such self-serving arguments.

The discoveries of texts—e.g., the Library of Nag Hammadi and the Dead Sea Scrolls in Qumran—have reminded biblical scholars that there was considerable variety in Christianity and Judaism during the first centuries of the Common Era. Scholars studying the historical Jesus and Paul have also realized that their own agendas and methods have sometimes rested on tenuous presuppositions. Although previous generations of scholars portrayed Jesus and Paul as constantly in conflict with their contemporaries, a growing number now address the historical fact that Jesus’ and Paul’s debates with their Jewish contemporaries reflect their firm grounding in Judaism and continuing identification with it. New Testament scholar Lloyd Gaston has argued that in critical scholarship anything that makes Jesus sound like a first-century Jew is to be preferred to anything that makes him sound like a twentieth-century Christian.

The most obvious example of scholarly reassessment concerns the role of the Law in the New Testament. Scholars used to describe the Law as having been “abrogated,” “annulled” or “replaced.” Contemporary scholarship generally avoids these anachronistic and antinomian presentations of earliest Christianity. Jesus is often presented not as a teacher who contested the Law, but as one who based his teaching on the *Torah* (the Pentateuch), *Neviim* (the Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (the Writings). Texts such as Matt. 5:17: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil,” receive greater weight in contemporary studies.

Recent scholarship increasingly portrays the historical Paul first and foremost as “an apostle to the Gentiles” (cf., Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8). His mission was not to condemn Jewish *Torah*-piety but to invite Gentiles into a covenantal relationship with the God of Israel. The motivating force in his theology is *inclusion* rather than *exclusion*. Arguably, his apostolic vision is nowhere presented more clearly than in Rom. 15:8f.: “Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the

truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”

One of the perennial issues confronting biblical scholarship is the “deicide charge,” the accusation against Jews that they, collectively or individually, are guilty of murdering God (as suggested, for instance, by 1 Th 2:14-16; Mt 27:25; Jn 19:13-16; Acts 3:14-15). Given this accusation’s history of inciting Christian antipathy toward Jews, the relevant New Testament texts that narrate a “trial” leading to the execution of Jesus are of great importance. Many researchers hesitate to use the word “trial” to describe these passages because there are so many questions about their historical accuracy.

A substantial consensus of scholarly opinion agrees with Krister Stendahl: that “...as the story grew and developed, the burden of guilt for Jesus' crucifixion shifted from Pilate to the high priests, from the high priests to the Pharisees, and on to ‘the Jews.’” Historical research around the death of Jesus emphasizes often-forgotten facts such as Pontius Pilate’s reputation. The writer Philo cites “the briberies, the insults, the robberies, the outrages and wanton injuries, the executions without trial constantly repeated, the ceaseless and supremely grievous cruelty.” In addition, the Temple leadership was co-opted by the Roman authorities and Caiaphas could function as the high priest only with Pilate’s consent; crucifixion was used by the Romans for crimes against the state and Jesus was crucified as a pretender “king of the Jews;” only a tiny fraction of the Jewish people would even have heard of Jesus at the time of his death; and most important, Jesus seems to have been popular with the common people (cf., Luke 20:19). Both Caiaphas and Pilate were interested in maintaining the peace during the volatile Passover season, and Jesus, who regularly proclaimed the coming of a “Kingdom of God,” was perceived as a threat to order and stability.

Any Christian inclination to accuse the Jewish people of the death of Jesus lacks historical plausibility. The view is also theologically meaningless. From a Christian point of view, everyone is blameworthy in the death of Jesus. S. Mark Heim has said, “The moment we point a finger at some ‘they’ as Jesus’ killers, we have enacted the sin that the very particularity of the cross meant to overcome.”

Tragically, the practice of interpreting New Testament texts to prove that Jews were cursed by God and should be demeaned in Christian society became habitual in European Christendom. Today it is self-evident that Christians have a particular responsibility to interpret with great care those New Testament passages that have provoked disregard and antagonism toward Judaism.

## **2. The Impact of the *Shoah***

Any consideration of the Holocaust must include Elie Wiesel's dictum that "to forget the victims is in fact to kill them a second time." Preserving the memory of those who perished under Nazism must remain a prime obligation both of Jews and Christians.

The *Shoah* opens the door for powerful reflection on a number of central issues challenging global society. For people of faith, understanding how God relates to the well-being of humanity emerges as a central question. If God is portrayed as all-powerful and deeply involved with humanity, the *Shoah* can leave us with the image of an uncaring God who did not use divine power to save those with whom God was in a covenantal relationship. In another sense, to marginalize God's influence on human society leaves a void easily filled by a disastrous ideology. So the challenge is to refine the relationship between God and the human community in a way that sees them as covenantal partners with co-responsibility for the future of all creation.

Reflection on the *Shoah* propels the effort to place human rights and human dignity at the core of religious faith. That the Nazi campaign of mass murder was necessary to initiate international covenants supporting human rights and opposing genocide is nothing short of tragic. It is incumbent on faith communities to acknowledge that their existence can never be pursued in ways that neglect or undercut human dignity and rights of others.

The *Shoah* presses upon people of all faiths a responsibility to combat religious bigotry and violence. Classical Christian antisemitism, while not the sole cause of the Holocaust, contributed to its implementation and weakened Christian opposition. No religious tradition can assume moral leadership until it first rids itself of all violent tendencies, including demeaning and hateful language and imagery towards those outside its community of belief. This represents a special challenge for religious education and preaching.

The *Shoah* reflects the importance of building solidarity across racial, ethnic and religious lines in times of relative social peace. If such bonds are not in place when social crises arise, it will prove difficult or impossible to build them on short notice under duress.

Study of the rescuers during the *Shoah* demonstrates that moral education must be implanted in people at an early age, particularly within the family. Concern for the other must become a deeply ingrained, natural response.

### **3. Changes in Institutions and Their Teachings**

In the six decades since Seelisberg, numerous Christian churches have issued statements, with varying degrees of authority, on the subjects of Jews and Judaism and of Christian-Jewish relations. These are the result of self-examinations generated by the *Shoah* and of an unprecedented number of serious dialogues between Jews and Christians. Some statements address historical matters, particularly the *Shoah*, while others treat biblical or theological issues. Those churches with centralized authority structures have tended to produce a greater number of documents whose goal is to alter education and practice, while more congregationally organized churches have tended to compose texts for study and discussion. In all cases, it is challenging to internalize new perspectives and attitudes throughout each faith community.

Among Catholic and traditional Reformation churches in the West, the following ideas have been expressed frequently. In general, Eastern Christianity is only beginning to grapple with the fuller implications of positive relations with Jews.

1. Jews remain in a covenantal relationship with God. The Christian churches' "new covenant" did not terminate Israel's covenantal life with God lived through the Torah.
2. The denigration of Judaism and all forms of antisemitism are sins against God.
3. Over the centuries, Christian preaching and teaching have contributed to antisemitism. Certain New Testament texts have regularly been misinterpreted or taken out of context and used to promote hostility. No divine curse on Jews can be asserted on the basis of the New Testament.
4. There exists a divinely willed ongoing relationship between Judaism and Christianity, a relationship that is unique among the world religions. Judaism has its own distinctive purpose in the divine plan that goes beyond the preparation for Christianity.
5. Jesus was and always remained a Jew, a son of Israel. He was not opposed to the Torah or the Judaism of his day.

6. Christians must learn to understand and affirm Jewish self-understanding of their own religious experience. This includes respect for Jewish attachment to *Eretz Yisrael*—the Land of Israel.
7. Christians can learn more about the One God and their relationship with God, as well as about Christianity, from the traditions of Judaism over the centuries and from the living faith of contemporary Jews.
8. The Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanakh*) have spiritual value as revelatory texts irrespective of later Christian re-readings of them through the lens of faith in Christ.
9. Christian understandings of the relationship between the “Old Testament” and the “New Testament” in terms of promise and fulfillment must be seen as still awaiting the complete fulfillment of God’s designs in the coming Kingdom.
10. Jews and Christians both have the covenantal duty to prepare for the Age to Come or Reign of God by pursuing justice, peace and the integrity of all creation.

These convictions represent authentic changes, in some cases total reversals, of attitudes that prevailed among Christians for almost two millennia. They pose profound theological challenges to Christian self-understanding.

Jews are also challenged by such unfamiliar Christian teachings. To the degree that Jewish self-understanding has been influenced by Christianity, significant reforms in Christian attitudes inevitably affect Jewish thought as well. This includes the development of a positive Jewish religious view of Christianity as a legitimate, non-idolatrous faith.

It is not surprising that some members of both communities prefer to avoid or marginalize dialogue. The core identity questions arising from substantive Christian-Jewish dialogue are seen as threatening or diminishing previous understandings. The ICCJ, however, believes that dialogue between Jews and Christians must intensify along with the mutual trust and respect that strengthens participants in their respective religious identities and practices.

#### **4. Lessons Learned from Decades of Dialogue**

Since the Seelisberg conference, the deepening encounter between Jews and Christians has demonstrated that a sustained relationship can produce real change. We have progressed from the initial, tentative conversations in which we first had to set aside our preconceptions and learn about the “other” through that person’s own self-understanding.

We are now at a point where empathy and honest self-criticism have made possible open discussions of fundamental differences and frank treatment of the disagreement and conflicts that inevitably arise. The critical study of religion and history has provided a much clearer, shared understanding of the complexity of the historical, scriptural and theological issues that both unite and divide Christians and Jews. We understand that Jewish-Christian relations are not a “problem” that is going to be “solved,” but rather a continuing process of learning and refinement. This process not only makes it possible for us to live together in peace but also enriches our understanding of our own tradition and of ourselves as children of God and religious people.

Even within the community of dialogue, we continue to learn the deep-seated patterns of thinking and fear that are obstacles to true mutuality. We are keenly aware that there are parts of the Jewish and the Christian worlds that remain untouched by dialogue and are resistant or even opposed to it, with much work remaining. In some cases, advances based on the dialogue have been ignored or reversed. This points to the need for the development of theologies across both traditions that affirm the permanent religious authenticity and integrity of the Jewish or Christian other.

We are learning to better appreciate the different memories and agendas that Christians and Jews bring to their exchanges. We are convinced that authentic dialogue never seeks to persuade the other of one's own truth claims, but rather to change one's own heart by understanding others on their own terms, to whatever degree possible. In fact, interreligious dialogue in the fullest sense of the term is impossible if any of the parties harbor desires to convert the other. It is also the general experience of both Christians and Jews that interreligious dialogue provides deeper insights into one's own religious tradition.

Most dialogue has occurred where Jews and Christians live in geographical proximity. It is important to eradicate stereotypes and promote accurate understandings of each other's traditions among those who may live at great distance from the other community or have no contact with it. We are also committed to the belief that the example of Jewish-Christian dialogue can be an inspiration and a model for other religious groups in conflict.

In recent years, both Jews and Christians have come to understand the critical need to build a dialogue with Muslims. This realization makes it tempting to assume that the work of Jewish-Christian relations is done and our attention can now be turned to our Muslim brothers and sisters. While the need for dialogue with Islam is pressing, it would be a mistake to abandon the Jewish-Christian effort, both because it serves as a successful model and because the work is unfinished. To ignore Islam would also be a mistake, both because of the size and geo-political significance of the Muslim community and because of the convergent and divergent religious claims among the three traditions. Engaging Islam in interreligious dialogue is not as simple as merely placing another chair at the table; while we have learned important lessons from the Jewish-Christian conversation, the one with Islam will develop its own methodologies reflecting the different dynamics that emerge in both bilateral and trilateral encounters.

As Jews and Christians we have come to understand more and more deeply that the lasting meaning of our dialogue will come from something more than promoting tolerance and understanding, as laudable as these goals are. It must also enable us as religious people to work together to address the challenges in today's world – perhaps most notably, responsible stewardship of the environment and protection of human life and freedoms.

## **5. Christian-Jewish Dialogue and the State of Israel**

The foundation of the State of Israel has had a profound impact on contemporary Jewish self-understanding, and by extension, on dialogue between Christians and Jews. For several reasons conversations about the State of Israel and the Middle East are often difficult and contentious, even where there is mutual trust between Jews and Christians.

First, religious and political factors combine with the complex geopolitics, disputes and history of the region in ways that are not easily understood. Second, there is a range of viewpoints about the State of Israel within the Jewish and Christian communities. Third, Jews and Christians generally have a fundamental difference in perspective about the significance of the Land – as distinct from the State – of Israel. This difference is rooted in the ways in which the two groups developed as they separated from one another, especially in how they responded to the Roman destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in the year 70 and to the definitive loss of Jewish self-rule after 135.

The early rabbis substituted the Jewish home for the vanished Temple as the central locus of celebration, and communal prayer and study took the place of the Temple's sacrificial rituals. The rabbis' creative work allowed Judaism and the Jewish people to survive without a homeland. Yet attachment to the Land of Israel remained enshrined in Jewish historical memory, finding

expression throughout rabbinic culture, tradition and liturgy throughout the centuries when no State of Israel existed.

New interpretations and understandings of the Temple and the Land also began to take shape among the Jews and Gentiles in the earliest churches. For nascent Christianity, the resurrected Jesus became the focus of worship. His victory over death itself was seen as important for all humanity and not restricted to a specific geographic location. This universalist view was later coupled with a polemic that interpreted the Jews' loss of national sovereignty as evidence of divine punishment for their refusal to accept Jesus Christ.

Over time, Christians have had conflicted attitudes about the Land of Israel. While some focused on the heavenly Jerusalem in the afterlife, others promoted pilgrimages to the places where Jesus walked. In recent centuries, some strands of Christian evangelicalism anticipated a Jewish ingathering to their ancestral homeland as a pre-condition for the return of Jesus Christ. Although some Christians did not see any religious significance in the 1948 foundation of the State of Israel, many welcomed its creation as a haven for oppressed Jews everywhere. Others saw the demise of the notion that God intended Jews to be homeless wanderers, while still others saw the possible dawning of the end of days. These various perspectives interacting within and among Christians are one important factor when Christians dialogue with Jews about the State of Israel.

Among Jews, the idea of re-establishing a national homeland arose in the 19th century in a movement called Zionism, one of many nationalistic movements of the time. Zionism was a pluralistic endeavor comprising many different points of view: religious and secular, liberal and conservative, socialist and capitalist. Not all Zionists were Jews, and not all Jews were Zionists. However, the *Shoah* convinced almost all Jews, including those who had previously been indifferent or opposed, of the need for a Jewish homeland where Jews could control their own destiny. The foundation of the State of Israel was the most important collective project of the Jewish people in modern times. Its safety and security now constitute a priority for the vast majority of Jews everywhere, who link their survival as a people with the survival of their national homeland. This is a conviction that many Jews bring to interreligious dialogue.

Recognizing and honoring this central Jewish connection to Israel does not mean that any specific religious perspective—Jewish, Christian or Muslim—can or should resolve current political conflicts. The birth of the State of Israel as a political reality has led many thoughtful Christians to reevaluate their theological presuppositions about the exile and return of the Jewish people, the People of Israel. But a renewed theology does not provide answers to specific *political* problems. Similarly, Muslim territorial claims to the land of Palestine—or any land—based on Islamic theology, cannot provide the sole grounds for political solutions, neither can territorial assertions made by Jewish groups based on religious claims. In short, territorial claims and political stability cannot rest on debated interpretations of different scriptures or theologies. Issues of legitimacy, borders, rights, citizenship, recompense and security can only be resolved through the agreement of all the relevant parties on the basis of international law and backed by credible measures of implementation.

Among the most pressing political and social problems is the catastrophic plight of the Palestinian people. Arguments over the many contributing causes of this situation must not distract the international community, including Israel and neighboring Arab states, from the urgent need to address the suffering and rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees. A concomitant Palestinian recognition of Israel's self-understanding is also urgently required for the establishment of peace and stability.

The State of Israel has many achievements and accomplishments, but also faces many problems and challenges in living up to its stated ideals, including guaranteeing equal status for all its citizens. It is not unique among the nations of the earth in this respect.

When Jews, Christians and Muslims engage in interreligious dialogue about these matters there is always the potential for antisemitism and Islamophobia and for hypersensitive perceptions and allegations of these twin curses. Those engaged in dialogue ought to be able to criticize freely the government of Israel and its policies without being automatically accused of antisemitism or anti-Zionism. Likewise, they should be free to critique the failings of Muslim leaders—secular or religious—and the policies of Muslim nations without being charged with harboring irrational fears of Islam. Local Christian leaders can also be critiqued without invoking charges of anti-Christian motives.

On the other hand, when criticism singles out the State of Israel according to standards not demanded of other nations, when Israel is denounced for military reprisals without condemnation of the attacks that provoked them, when Islam is branded as the religion of terrorists on the basis of statements and actions of radical extremists, when Palestinians are refused recognition as a distinct nationality—in short, whenever stereotypes and canards are invoked, the presence of ethnic or religious bigotry must be acknowledged and confronted.

Jews can expect their dialogue partners to support the rights of the State of Israel as a nation without expecting they will defend all of its actions and policies. Muslims can expect their dialogue partners to defend the rights and needs of Palestinians without expecting them to support all their claims and actions or to overlook failures. Christians can expect their dialogue partners to recognize the plight of Christians in the region, who are often buffeted minorities caught between contesting religious majorities, without expecting them to abandon their own priorities. And those Christians too should expect criticism if their declarations serve antisemitic purposes.

We believe that interreligious dialogues cannot avoid difficult questions if meaningful and lasting relationships are to develop. Bilateral and trilateral interreligious dialogues can contribute to peace by eliminating caricatures and promoting authentic mutual understanding. Interreligious dialogue can also encourage political leaders to seek the welfare of everyone, and not simply of one's own religious or ethnic group.

## **C. The Road Ahead**

### **1. The Changing World of the 21st Century**

Today's world is a place of turmoil and rapid change. In the nearly 70 years since the outbreak of World War II, about 28 million persons have been killed in wars and other conflicts. About 75 million people have been made refugees. These refugees fleeing war and persecution, and immigrants fleeing poverty and hopelessness have changed the demographics of Western Europe and the Americas. Many have encountered prejudice and discrimination in their new settings. Some have brought with them hatred and prejudice nurtured in other conflicts and cultures. Populations once dominant in a particular place can find themselves slipping towards minority status. Both growing minorities and dwindling majorities are tempted to respond to shifting demographics by adopting a "siege mentality" that reinforces religious dogmatism and fundamentalist perspectives. Many people living amid reshuffling populations have struggled with the problem of multiple identities, as they have tried to balance national, ethnic, religious, gender and age-related issues at

any given time. In these environments, interreligious dialogue is more necessary and more difficult. Yet dialogue empowers people to explore their experiences of grappling with competing identities.

We are more acutely aware of conflicts engendered around the globe by a process of globalization that both shrinks and enlarges our world. It is larger because a century ago, despite huge waves of immigration to the new world, most people were likely to be born, grow up, live and die within a small geographical area. Their experience of the world was limited by the ranges of train and ship, with air travel increasing by mid-century. Today, no place on the planet is beyond reach. Media reports supplement physical travel, showing countries and cultures beyond the experience of most. We have been exposed to the unfathomable diversity of human life, and our horizons have widened. The world seems larger.

The same technologies that bring every corner of the globe onto our television and computer screens are also shrinking our world. An exploding volcano, a tsunami, a bomb blast is known globally within minutes and has global repercussions. The promise of instant communication – that it would bring the world together, facilitate understanding, and overcome barriers – has often soured with the realization that it can spread calumny and advance hatred. While technology is a priceless tool for communication, information and research, its outlets are sometimes infected with misinformation and defamation. Internet hate sites abound, slander proliferates at electronic speed, and rampant pornography dehumanizes and objectifies people. While we oppose all prejudice based on race, ethnicity and ideology, whatever is rooted in religious bias and bigotry must especially concern us as committed religious individuals and organizations.

The rapid shifts in population, technologies and societies that characterize civilization today challenge Christians and Jews, as they do all people, and raise new insecurities. Thus the need is unprecedented for interreligious dialogue, understanding and cooperation that keeps pace with our changing world, helping us face its challenges together.

## **2. ICCJ and the Future**

We, the International Council of Christians and Jews, coming together to mark the promulgation of the Ten Points of Seelisberg, have reflected on the intervening six decades as well as the unique challenges of the 21st century. At this point in the history of our world and of our respective religious traditions, we stand more committed than ever to the work of building understanding and solidarity among Jews and Christians. It has become clear to us that the emerging realities of the 21st century require a reassessment of our interreligious relationships and new priorities for the future. This realization gives rise to the present document.

We invite Jews and Christians everywhere to join us in pursuing the goals we have set for ourselves, goals which spring from our common conviction that God want us— precisely as Jews and Christians—to prepare the world for the Reign of God, the Age to Come of God’s justice and peace. We urge all women and men with similar ideals to collaborate in promoting human solidarity, understanding and prosperity. We invite everyone to walk with us as together we continue to build a new relationship between Jews and Christians and among all peoples.

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