



Lausanne-Orthodox
INITIATIVE

A Short Introduction



The Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative (LOI) was born of informal conversations between leaders of the Lausanne Movement and Orthodox observers at the 2010 Lausanne III Congress in Cape Town. These conversations led to a desire to explore what our two quite different Christian traditions might have in common as we engage in mission. A core group was formed in 2011 of five Orthodox and five Evangelical leaders with an Anglican facilitator. In 2013 they organized the first consultation on 'The Mission of God', which brought together in Albania Evangelical and Orthodox leaders from across the world with a focus on mission. Subsequent global and regional consultations have developed this exploration and built on relationships established. A specialist consultation for theological educators took place in Cambridge (2017). The LOI Board (the successor body to the core group) continues to explore possibilities for further global and regional consultations, as well as other joint actions.

The LOI Commitment

The goal of the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative is to reflect constructively on the history of relationships between Orthodox and Evangelicals in order to work towards better understanding, and encourage reconciliation and healing where wounds exist. Through this process Evangelicals and Orthodox are mutually enriched and strengthened in the work of mission, working towards mutual respect, support and cooperation in the spirit of our Lord's prayer for His Church in John 17.

To achieve this goal the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative is committed to encouraging members of its two traditions to: pray for each other and study Scripture together; encourage mutual understanding, respect and appreciation of one another's tradition and practice; promote collaboration in mission wherever this is possible; build short-term and long-term mission partnerships; and facilitate the exchange and sharing of resources for mission.

Why this work is important today

A historical perspective

The LOI undertakes its work in a particular historical context, one which requires repentance, forgiveness, healing and generosity in the life of the Spirit. Over many centuries, and particularly during the twentieth century, we have seen both the persecution of Evangelical Christians by Orthodox communities and the demonization of the Orthodox faith by Evangelical missionaries. There has been suffering and hurt on both sides and much of this continues today. But this is not the whole story. Particularly during periods of anti-Christian persecution, Christians of different traditions have stood side by side, as indeed they do in Egypt and Syria today, maintaining a common witness for the Gospel. LOI seeks to mediate reconciliation and healing and build constructive relationships of trust and respect.

Common commitments



As we build more positive relationships, we recognize that we have a common mission agenda. Orthodox Christians have worshipped as a missionary community for two millennia. Nina of Georgia (left), Gregory the Illuminator, Cyril and Methodius, Stephen of Perm, Nicholas Ilminski, Innocent and Herman of Alaska, Isaias Polikin of China, Nicholas of Japan, and Maria Skobtsova stand in a long line of cross-cultural mission leaders. Evangelicals have a shorter history but no less of a heritage of mission leaders, including William Carey, Johann Ludwig Krapf, Amy Carmichael, Samuel Crowther, Abdul Masih, Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, and Wang Ming Dao. Both communities take seriously the missionary imperative of the gospel and long to see people of all nations, tribes and languages gathered round God's throne (Revelation 7:9). The Lausanne Movement, with its strong focus on Evangelization and the Mission of the People of God, provides a suitable meeting place for those from different Christian traditions who have a heart for

mission.

Theological honesty

The LOI does not seek to gloss over the real theological differences which exist between Evangelical and Orthodox believers. However, we believe that we can only move forward if we work hard and honestly at theological issues. In doing so, we draw on much good work already been done by others, particularly through theological dialogues in Europe and North America. Our Board includes some who have been involved in this work. We have also invited scholars from both traditions to help us at our international consultations in such areas as the theological concepts of justification, salvation and *theosis*, practical issues related to discipling our people, the pastoral outworking of mission and the missional formation of leaders, and challenging topics such as that of proselytism and canonical territory.



Missiological focus

Whilst recognizing the importance of theology, our focus is on mission. Most of the leaders attending have been mission practitioners, missiologists or theologians / church leaders with a deep commitment to mission. In addition to our consultations, we seek to sponsor joint mission initiatives and activities. In 2013 we reached out to children in Egypt through a team of Orthodox and Evangelical workers. In 2014 we sponsored a consultation for students from both traditions that ran in parallel with our main consultation. *The Mission of God: Studies in Orthodox and Evangelical Mission*, edited by Mark Oxbrow and Tim Grass, drawing together papers from the first two consultations, was published by Regnum in 2015. More recently, we have worked with American Bible Society to introduce their Trauma Healing Initiative in Egypt.



Relational praxis

Our primary methodology is to build relationships of understanding, respect and trust. We are not looking for superficial working relationships that fail to address differences and difficulties. Rather, we believe that we demonstrate respect when we take difference and disagreement seriously and work to overcome them. Our Board members seek to develop close relationships of trust and each of us feels enriched by the Christian traditions the others bring to the table.

Why the Lausanne Movement is a sponsor of this initiative



In one sense this initiative could have been sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance or some other body. However, sometimes it is important to let movements grow organically, especially when they are at their very heart relational. LOI was born when an evangelical leader met an Oriental Orthodox leader at the Lausanne 2010 gathering in Cape Town and asked him, 'Who are you, what are you, what are you doing here?' This initiative remains relational. Few who attend consultations or work with us in other ways are officially appointed by their churches, and there is no 'reporting back' to ecclesial structures. We remain individuals who share a passion for reconciliation as a foundation for mission.

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) convened a parallel group looking at issues of proselytism, but each member of that group clearly represented a particular ecclesial constituency. Their work is important but very different from that of the LOI. If this initiative had been sponsored by the WEA it might have faced similar challenges to the GCF, with legitimate demands for 'representation'. Hosted by Lausanne, the LOI is free to be a movement of like-minded people who do not represent others but seek to be catalysts, advocates and influences within their own constituency.

It is very important to note that Lausanne is not the sole sponsor of this movement – the other is 'the Orthodox Churches'. We have two co-chairs, one Orthodox and one evangelical. The Global Christian Forum, WEA, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate have had participants at our consultations and we keep in contact with all three.

What the LOI is currently working on

- Assisting with a local consultation in Alaska during September 2020;
- Convening a consultation on Scripture engagement in Austria during February 2021;
- Planning a youth consultation in the UK during Summer 2021;
- Investigating possibilities for 'listening visits' by small groups to areas where relationships are particularly difficult;
- Publishing another volume of presentations from more recent consultations;
- Expanding the resources for Orthodox and Evangelical mission leaders on our website: www.loimission.net;
- Developing closer relationships with the Lausanne Movement as a whole, the WEA, the GCF, and other bodies who share our concerns;
- Seeking to initiate or broker joint action projects in mission;
- Extending our prayer and support network (on the website you can sign up to receive updates and / or our newsletter).

The Board

Co-Chairs

Archbishop Angaelos, Orthodox, UK

Leslie Doll, Evangelical, USA

Members

Dragos Herescu, Orthodox, UK

Nathan Hoppe, Orthodox, Albania

Ralph Lee, Orthodox, UK

Danut Manastireanu, Evangelical, UK

Grace Mathews, Evangelical, India / USA

Mark Oxbrow, Evangelical, UK

Stephen Platt, Orthodox, UK

Anton Ponomarev, Orthodox, UK

Jim Stamoolis, Evangelical, USA

Metropolitan Yulios, Orthodox, India

Advisors

Femi Adeleye, Evangelical, Ghana

Anne-Marie Kool, Evangelical, Croatia

Kosta Milkov, Evangelical, Macedonia

Brad Nassif, Orthodox, USA

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