

FCC CONNECTION



The official newsletter of The Fellowship of Churches of Christ

CHURCH NEWS

Buckie Church of Christ, North East Scotland



The Buckie Church is going through a season of growth and testing writes the Minister, Sam Burton. Our online presence during the lockdown has been extremely successful. My wife, Brittan has also had a very locally successful ladies Bible study on Facebook live. We were the first Buckie Church to open our services to the public after lockdown, and our attendances have been excellent. We have had many people come to Church who are not yet Believers, but several are very close. Even our evening service has had good attendance. It has been excellent.

At the same time, we've had a lot of challenges with health and heartbreak. We've had some deaths, several cancer diagnoses, within the congregation and their families. Our families are having financial challenges due to Covid-19 unemployment. Plus, we've had to wrestle with some overt spiritual warfare. As a result, I have begun a podcast called Mystery Magic and the Supernatural. It's available on Spotify among other places. It's got a long way to go, quality wise, but we're taking baby steps.

It looks as though we will be having some baptisms soon – more in future editions – **Sam Burton (Minister)**

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Claremont Christian Church, Bournemouth



Meet The Pastor

My name is Mike Hallows minister of Claremont Christian Church (CCC), I have been here for almost twenty years. CCC is part of the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ, a well-known and respected worldwide group. I graduated from Springdale Christian College Birmingham in 1990. Immediately afterwards I was offered the opportunity to do a BA in Biblical Ministry at Kentucky Christian College USA. So I did and it was a real eye opener to see so many big Churches situated all over the USA. On our return to the UK we were encouraged to begin a new Church Plant, but this was not for me.

I always had a strong calling to the older established Churches of which there were quite a few back then. So, when an opening came here in Bournemouth we took it. When we first arrived at CCC there had been no conversions or baptisms for as long as people could remember. We were blessed very quickly in this area with two people who came to a member's house group that Rose Dyke had started not long before we arrived. Rose did this without any support from the previous leadership. These two baptisms were followed by more and more, unfortunately almost as many funerals followed as some of the elderly members began to die.

The first eight years here were very hard going as we had to battle many long-established traditions that were hindering the Church's witness, but the message was still being given and fruit was plain to see.

God's will has a way of overcoming anything! We now baptise about 5 people a year. This is a blessing, but the Lord has laid on us a real burden for all those who are close to our church building yet know nothing about His glorious salvation! To do nothing except church services and a Bible class a week would be the easiest thing in the world, but that's not an option for us. We believe in a Church made up of people who know what they believe, why they believe it and are not afraid to witness for their Lord. We also passionately believe in helping the poor and so we support Samaritans Purse as much as we can. We also have one off events to raise money for disasters like the tragedy in Haiti.

Up to date news:

Mike comments: ***"On the 11th October we had two baptisms a son and his mother. Alex came to faith in June and his mother Carol a few week later. It was a great occasion with tears of joy. As Carol came up out of the water she exclaimed "thank you Lord."***

The next week Alex proposed to his girlfriend Sarah during the morning service, and yes, she did say yes!

This week, I had the honour of conducting a funeral service for Charles Henley who at 95 was one of the very last rear gunners from WW2. The service can be seen soon on <https://www.obitus.com/> Login Fiju9538 Password 678004. This should be on line in a few day's time for 28 days.

Guardian Newspaper Article

“Churches tally up their value to society – at £12.4bn”

The Guardian newspaper has recently (12 October) carried a significant article under the heading “Churches tally up their value to society – at £12.4bn”. The article is taken from some research by the National Churches Trust. It is centred on the Church of England and they make the point that “from food banks to youth clubs, the C of E hosts 35,000 projects. Now a price has been put on its contribution”.

Much the same kind of result can be found amongst other churches. Some other quotes from the same article comment:

“Sixteen years ago, St Stephen’s church in Bradford was on the verge of closure. Its congregation had dwindled to half a dozen, and the building – a “big old barn of a place”, in a predominantly Muslim area – was in poor repair. “People thought it had had its day,” said the Rev Jimmy Hinton. Now, St Stephen’s is a vital hub, providing support and activities in an area of acute deprivation. The nave has been cleared of its pews, and heating has been installed. On a typical day, you might find an exercise class, a support group for asylum seekers and refugees, community meals being cooked and served, singing and stories for infants, mosaic-making, and people hunting for jobs or claiming benefits online.”

“It’s a story of resurrection,” said Hinton, who has been vicar at St Stephen’s since 2005. “New life has come from a place that was considered finished. The church is used every day of the week for planned activities but also for people who just want to be somewhere friendly and warm.”

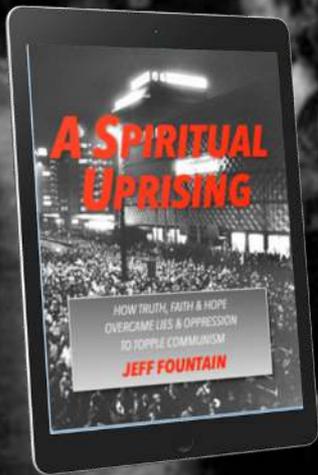
St Stephen’s is one of thousands of churches of all denominations providing and supporting social action projects across the country. Last week, the Church of England said its 16,000 churches were running or supporting 35,000 projects before the Covid-19 pandemic, including 8,000 food banks, 4,000 parent-toddler groups, 5,000 lunch clubs or coffee mornings, 2,700 community cafes, 2,400 night shelters and 2,300 breakfast or holiday clubs for children.”

“Now, for the first time, the financial value of the services and support that church buildings provide, and the health and wellbeing they create, has been calculated at £12.4bn a year.”

The figure comes from an independent study published today, commissioned by the National Churches Trust and carried out by State of Life, an organisation which measures social value. Its report, House of Good, says: “There are currently more food banks than McDonald’s in the UK – and churches have played a vital role in setting up and running the majority of them.” Other church-based projects include drug and alcohol support groups, mental health and counselling services, youth clubs, after-school care and credit unions. The market value of church-based projects is £2.4bn a year, it says. This includes running, staffing and hiring out of church buildings, the amount it would cost for authorities to replicate social and community services currently provided by churches, and the replacement cost of volunteers’ time at the national living wage.”

“In addition, the non-market value is put at least at £10bn a year. The report says: “Non-market (also called social and welfare) value describes an activity or outcome that is difficult to measure in pounds and pence. For example, things like health, happiness, confidence or trust are incredibly important but difficult to put a price on – let alone buy.”





Jeff sends out a weekly newsletter. His latest edition contains the wonderful story that you can read below.

A Story Worth Repeating

October 12, 2020

Protest movements last week in the name of free and fair elections in the former Soviet satellites of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan echo events in Central and Eastern Europe three decades ago.

Similar scenes were witnessed the streets of the eastern German city of Leipzig thirty-one years ago, leading up to a turning point on Friday, October 9, 1989. The miracle of Leipzig, as the remarkable event on this evening came to be called, was to lead directly to the fall of the Berlin Wall exactly one month later. It demonstrated the triumph of the 'soft powers' of truth, love and justice, exercised through prayer and non-violent protest, over repression and tyranny.

It is a story we have told before in this blog. It's a story worth repeating.

To mark the anniversary, East German Suse Chmell revisited this story in this month's [Schuman Talk](#) last Friday night. The daughter of a Lutheran pastor, Suse was a 15-year-old at the time, and often slipped away from home to join prayer meetings and protest marches in a neighbouring town.

Radical idea

The starting point of this movement of peaceful rebellion against the oppressive communist rule was the historic Nikolaikirche in Leipzig

where Luther had preached, and Johan Sebastian Bach was choir master and organist. Many of his compositions were heard for the first time in this church.

In 1982, Christian Führer, the pastor of the Nikolaikirche, started prayer meetings for peace, Friedensgebete, on Monday evenings with a handful of the faithful. Originally focused on the right to emigrate, by late summer 1988 the meetings embraced a more radical idea: to stay and agitate for a free and democratic Germany. Knowing that Stasi agents attended the meetings, Pastor Führer relished the chance to speak to a captive audience, for example, on the Sermon on the Mount.

Despite police brutality, the Friedensgebete continued to grow. By the spring, access for cars to the church were blocked. Even the closest motorway exits were closed off or subjected to large-scale checks.

By the autumn of 1989, the movement was approaching its climax. The Nikolaikirche continued to be open for all: believers and unbelievers, true worshippers and secret agents. The authorities tried to pressure the church leaders to cancel the peace prayers. Police surrounded the church and began making brutal arrests. Each Monday more arrests were being made, yet more visitors flocked to the church, overflowing its two thousand seats.

On Monday, 2nd October, 20,000 marched from the Nikolaikirche to the Thomaskirche on the far side of the city, where they were met by riot police with shields, helmets and truncheons. Wednesday, October 7, was the 40th anniversary of the GDR, an

occasion for widespread protest. Police waded into protesters, arresting many and hauling them off to horse stables.

Prayers and candles

Two days later, October 9, a thousand Stasi collaborators were sent to the Nikolaikirche to 'prevent provocations. By early afternoon, 600 of them had taken up positions inside the church. By mid-afternoon the church was full and late-comers filled up seven other churches in the city centre by 5pm.

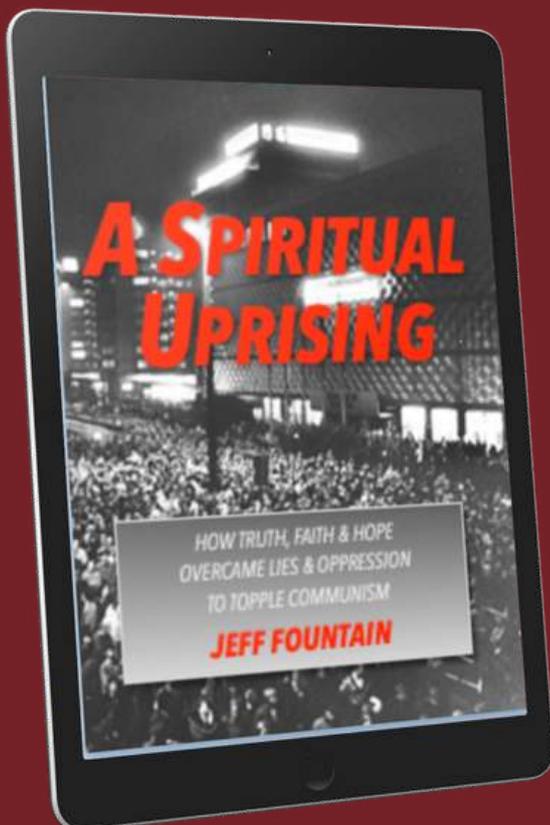
After the prayers, the 2000 congregants filed out of the building with their candles, to be greeted by 70,000 peace protestors in the streets. Waiting soldiers, paramilitaries and police began to move into the crowd seeking provocation, but no-one allowed themselves to react in violence.

Pfarrer Führer described what happened: 'If you carry a candle, you need two hands. You have to prevent the candle from going out.

You cannot hold a stone or a club in your hand. And the miracle came to pass. Jesus' spirit of nonviolence seized the masses and became a material, peaceful power. Troops, industrial militia groups, and the police were drawn in, became engaged in conversations, then withdrew. It was an evening in the spirit of our Lord Jesus for there were no victors or vanquished, no one triumphed over the other, and no one lost face.'

Later the head of the Stasi admitted: 'We were prepared for everything, except prayers and candles.'

Suse confessed that she was embarrassed to tell people she came from Eastern Germany until she realised that she had witnessed a miracle of God. By telling this story of the transformation of her nation, she could encourage others still agitating for freedom and justice in places like North Korea, Belarus and other former Soviet satellites.



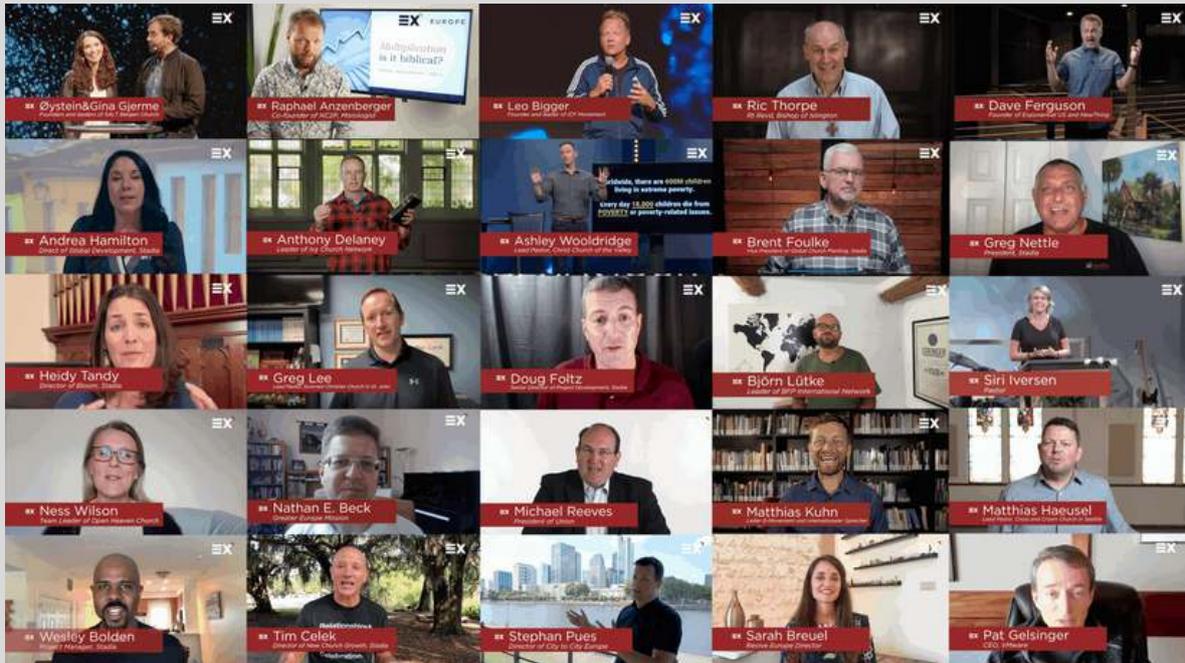
Free e-book: The miracle of Leipzig was just one of a number of events that took place across the former communist world leading to the collapse of Marxists governments from Estonia to Romania, East Germany to Russia. I have collated a dozen of these stories which have previously appeared in weekly word, into an e-book which I will send to you free on request. Write to me at jeff@schumancentre.eu.

RESOURCES

On the 13th October this year a remarkable European conference took place in approximately 130 cities across Europe. Around 2,000 leaders gathered in “live” roundtables in city gatherings around Europe.

It was called Exponential. The subject was church planting. There is a huge resource base that you can access and share with your church leaders.

ROUNDTABLE BUNDLE: €29 for all content





Church Planting Happens in Europe

At Exponential Roundtable the participants got to see a video with people from many church plants around Europe. All stories were from churches planted within M4 Europe. Listen to their story and get inspired. M4 Europe works in 15 European nations, and their goal is to see 100 new churches through their M4 Team process ([M4europe.com](https://m4europe.com)) and 1000 young people through M4 Ready recruitment process ([M4ready.com](https://m4ready.com)) within the next 18 months.