

FCC CONNECTION

The official newsletter of
The Fellowship of Churches of Christ

3 April 2021

Vol 2 No 1



EASTER REFLECTION



This edition of Connection marks a whole year since lockdown began and we started to publish Connection – initially every week. This second year of publication is now the start of Volume 2.

A great deal has changed over the last 12 months, not only for our churches and for society more widely, but also in the general openness of people to consider the things that really matter in life. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that God and spirituality in general is on the agenda for many more people than before the pandemic began.

Just recently, Mat Wilson, the Senior Pastor at Rowheath Pavilion took part in the national moment of reflection initiated by the Marie Curie Trust. You may remember that this was at midday on Tuesday 23rd March. Mat stood on the patio at the Pavilion and announced that he was the minister of the church and was going to lead some reflections with a Christian content. There were a good number of people around from the community enjoying coffee and conversation with each other. The reaction was fascinating. People fell silent and amidst the normal hubbub respected the moment. It was touching and suggested that people were open and grateful for this spiritual contribution.

IN THIS ISSUE

Easter Reflection

Developing FCC

Gratitude Initiative

Error Alert

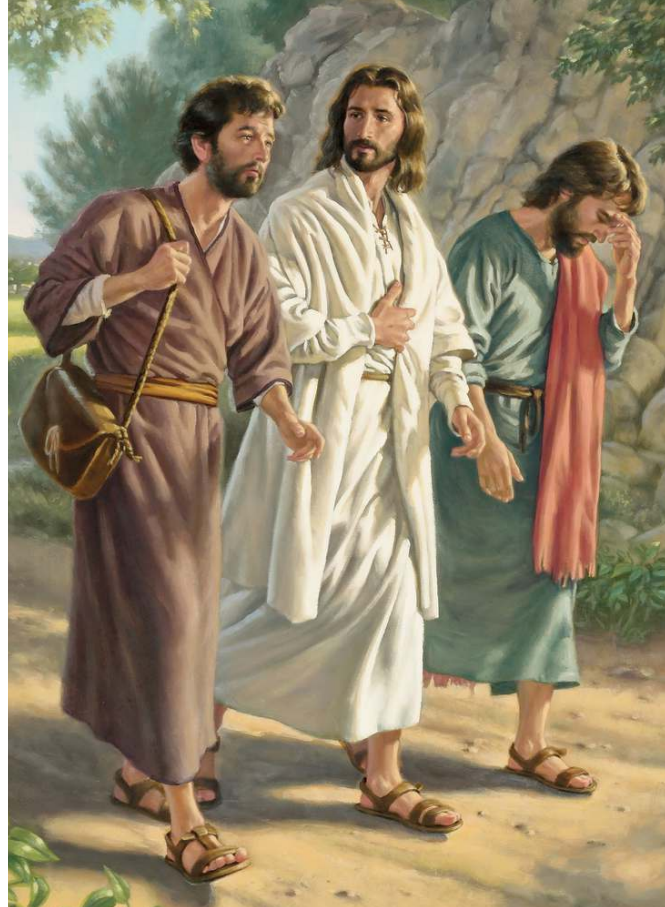
Forge Taster

Thought Piece: After-shock



In the same few days, an announcement went out on social media to the community about an Easter trail. Not an Easter egg hunt but stations around the park where people (especially children) can locate stations that tell the Easter story. The web page with the announcement received 12,000 hits! Maybe many of those were hoping for an Easter egg hunt (we don't have 12,000 Easter eggs!). Those who completed the trail could go to the café and receive a Celebration chocolate as a reward. We are getting through a number of tins of chocolate!

For many people the great story of Easter is not so much the stone rolled back but the road to Emmaus. A journey when two walkers were joined by a third and talk turned to spiritual matters. In the evening, during the breaking of the bread, the identity of the one who had joined them was revealed. That gradual revelation around a journey of faith, around conversation is probably more typical of how many come to faith. This is a time to be looking for those who are on that journey and entering into dialogue, creative conversation, leading people to the revelation of who Jesus really is.



DEVELOPING FCC

At the recent FCC Delegate Conference – Connect – we agreed to endorse our new structure. It replaces a structure that had become too small to facilitate our continued growth. In some ways the new structure is a little too large for our present size but, like buying our children's clothes, it's a structure that we need to grow into. Over the next year we will have two major priorities.

First, there are congregations that we have been in conversation with for some time about becoming part of FCC. The pandemic has made those conversations a little slower than we would have liked because our process involves some "getting to know you" and that is difficult by Zoom alone. However, by the time we come to our September (part two) of Connect, we hope that a good number of congregations will be ready to be welcomed in.

Second, we want to populate our new structure with volunteers. So, we are looking for people with particular skills – finance, administration, legal, human resources, property management, event management, social media, and knowledge of church life to name a few. Obviously, those who we commend need to be in good

relationship with FCC churches, either as a member or a committed friend. One of the boards, the Church Life Board, is an area we will be concentrating on over the next few months. The key areas of responsibility for the Church Life Board are as follows:

1. HR functions related to personnel

1. Visas for ministers and Christian workers from other countries
2. Ordination of ministers
3. Accreditation of ministers
4. Disciplinary issues particularly in relation to complaints

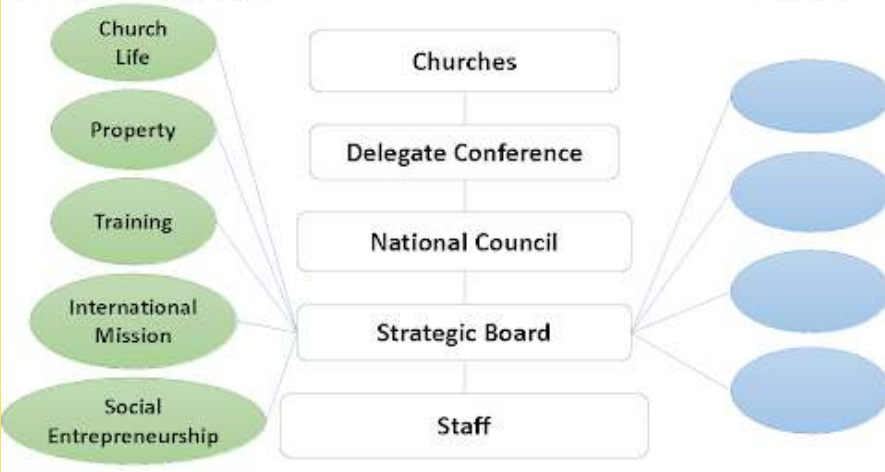
2. Congregational care

1. Applications to join (or leave) FCC
2. Advice on compliance with the law in relation to a range of issues
3. Regular communication with congregations

3. Congregational health and growth

1. Conflict mediation where there is an invitation to help
2. Consultancy in relation to overall health and growth. This is particularly a need to help "unstuck" congregations who have been in a long-term pattern of decline.

Committee structure



Initially, the work of the Church Life Board will be to suggest ways in which this work can be developed and financed as compared to actually doing the work as a Board. As the work develops the Board will oversee and hold accountable those who are doing the work.

If you know people, or if you are someone who feels called to help in any of these areas, please contact Lynda Robinson on lynda.robinson@the-fcc.org

GRATITUDE INITIATIVE

Some of you will remember the wonderful talk given by Girma Bishaw at the Create Conference a few years ago. Girma leads the **Gratitude Initiative** which is designed to bring a new dimension to conversations around immigration. His point is that migrants to the UK should learn to express gratitude for the enormous opportunities that the UK offers to them. Likewise, citizens in the UK can learn to express gratitude for the positive contribution that most migrants bring to the UK. Below is a feature offering a podcast on how to talk about gratitude.

Welcome to Let's Talk Gratitude; a podcast hosted by Gratitude Initiative. Join us as we explore how sharing gratitude can positively transform individual and community relationships. In our first episode, Clare Herriot chats to our Founder and Director Girma Bishaw on how gratitude can help you win the person, not the argument. Listen now on [Spotify](#), [Apple](#) or [Anchor](#).



ERROR ALERT

Some of you noticed that we made an error with the date of the second part of the Connect Conference in September and you kindly let us know! We announced the date as Saturday 24th September which is of course a Friday. We should have said **Saturday 25th September**. Thank you to all those very alert people who noticed the mistake.

FRI 23RD APRIL 6:30-9:00PM

PIONEER MISSIONAL TRAINING



**FORGE
TASTER**

FORGE TASTER

FORGE TASTER evening – a free opportunity to participate in the actual training.

Friday 23rd April, 6:30pm-9:00pm

ZOOM online, Book In here:

<https://www.engageuk.org.uk/event-details/forge-taster-missional-training-evening>

We'll be looking at **Missional Leadership** and hearing a current Missional Practitioner Story... Please join us.

THOUGHT PIECE: AFTER-SHOCK

"The after-shocks that have followed the final days of the Trump presidency and the turmoil of the Brexit vote in the UK have vividly exposed some profound fissures in our western post-second world war settlement that are deeply unsettling and troubling. Is it even possible to have meaningful discourse across the divides that have been revealed? How might we learn to live together, to build a common future and to address the anxieties that have risen so quickly to the surface?"

There are many social commentators who have been warning for decades that the fundamental underpinnings of the West have been gradually eviscerated for many years.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his book "Morality" noted: "The truth that free society is a moral achievement has been forgotten, ignored or denied since the moral revolution of the 1960's. Since then, a single underlying shift in the ethos of the West has produced identity groups, collective victimhood, loneliness, vulnerability, depression, drug-usage, merciless markets, polarised politics, growing economic inequality and intolerance for free speech on university campuses. These are the long-term consequences of the move from 'We' to 'I'. Social isolation has replaced community."

And again:

"if Europe loses the Judaeo-Christian heritage that gave it its historic identity and its greatest achievements in literature, art, music, education, politics, and economics, it will lose its identity and its greatness, not immediately, but before this century reaches its end. For when a civilisation loses its faith it loses its future. When it recovers its faith, it recovers its future."

As Tom Holland makes clear in his book "Dominion", it is not the values of the Enlightenment that gave birth to the foundations of the European Union and the Declaration of Independence in the USA, it is rather Christianity that gave shape to the Enlightenment itself. The decisive move of a politics that assumed Christian values but which simultaneously dismissed them are reaping their own grim consequences.

In a strange way, we could argue that the challenge of the corona virus has temporarily diverted our attention away from the crisis of our culture. The more immediate and present threat to our way of life has united our efforts to find a way forward. But that is only to postpone the divides that haunt our attempts to build a future common life.

This is a crucial time in which the churches in the west need to find a new "proper confidence", not in our own immediate ecclesial survival – we need to trust God for that – but more in rediscovering the riches of our own tradition so that we might offer deep foundations to a world that is struggling to find a basis for a life lived together. This is not an appeal to recover the past but rather to weave a new future that recasts the lived experience of the gospel message in meaningful community.

Martin Robinson