

FCC CONNECTION

The official newsletter of
The Fellowship of Churches of Christ

12 June 2021

Vol 2 No 3



COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND JOINS FCC



We are so pleased to welcome the first church from the Republic of Ireland to join FCC. They are called Community Christian Church, and meet at Unit 2 Gáirdín Mháire, Moycullen, Galway. The church was planted by two couples from the USA coming from the same tradition as FCC. We have been in conversation with Community Christian for some time and having now received their formal application we are pleased to welcome them into the Fellowship. You may wish to look at their website, <http://www.communitychristian.ie>

Many years ago, there were three FCC churches in Ireland – two in Belfast and one in Londonderry. That was before the Irish Free State was created. The first FCC church in Ireland was planted in 1875. We believe that the church in Galway will be the first of many FCC congregations in the whole of Ireland. The two lead planters at Community Christian are Stephen Walton and Luke Swain. Here they are (in the above photos) with their growing families!

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CHURCH PLANTING IN LONDON



Pastor Eyasu & Meti, who are of Ethiopian heritage have a passion to reach young people for Christ, across cultures, in the multi-cultural environment of central London. We see their emerging group as an FCC church plant. Hirpo Kumbi has been mentoring Eyasu and Meti for some time and offers continuing advice and guidance. Their picture is on the left and below is how they tell their story...

The Gate of Heaven Evangelical Church in London

The Gate of Heaven Evangelical Church in London was birthed from a vision that God had given us over a course of time. Our hearts were fully ready to serve with great passion and zeal,

and so when we realised that God had intrusted us to be aligned and carry the greatest mission of all – spreading the Good news of Jesus Christ, we made step of faith.

The naming of the Church has been taken from (Genesis 28:17), after many prayers and spiritual guidance.

We believe that leadership is all about serving and commitment. Our team is made up of dynamic, and gifted individuals that are passionate in displaying the heart of Christ in various areas of service, looking to Jesus as the perfect example.

We are a congregation of Ethiopian background; however, we highly believe in a multi-cultural church environment. One of our passions is also to serve people from different background and languages and cultivate a generation that worships in unity and love without any cultural barriers.

Our vision is to raise a generation that believes and is transformed by the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Raise a generation that lives a life of righteousness and makes an impact on others, and finally raise a generation who will be a cause of blessing and salvation for the coming generations.

Our mission is to preach the Gospel and raise disciples. Secondly, we want to make an impact in London and on a global scale shaping a nation that is transformed by the Gospel. Lastly, we want to raise and equip labourers of the harvest to expand God's kingdom and destroy the gates of hell.

Our main goals are preaching the Gospel, making disciples, all inclusive support and be proactive in further church planting and expansion of Gods kingdom.



THE GATE OF HEAVEN EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN LONDON
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INTRODUCING STEPHEN MERRICK AND THE CHURCH LIFE COMMITTEE



The Strategic Board of FCC has agreed to establish a Church Life committee to develop the following areas in our national life:

1. HR functions related to personnel
 - a. Visas for overseas workers and ministers
 - b. Ordination of ministers
 - c. Accreditation of ministers
 - d. Disciplinary issues particularly in relation to complaints
2. Congregational care
 - a. Applications to join (or leave) FCC
 - b. Advice on compliance with the law in relation to a range of issues
 - c. Regular communication with congregations – particularly around social media
3. Congregational health and growth
 - o Conflict mediation when invited to help

- o 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.

This all represents a huge amount of work which is very necessary in a world of increasing government legislation. We have invited Stephen Merrick who, together with his wife Valma, is the minister at Hollymoor Community Church in south Birmingham, to help develop these areas.

Stephen has already begun to post daily reflection on the FCC Facebook page which you may have noticed, and which have resulted in increased “traffic” to the site. Over the next few months, we will share more detail on the work that Stephen is developing. In the meantime, if you know of people who might be able to help in some of these areas please contact Stephen at: stephenmerrick@hollymoorcc.org.uk

INTRODUCING GRANT AND NAOMI KLINEFELTER



Grant and Naomi have recently arrived from the USA to serve as Christian workers in the UK. They have come with Greater Europe Mission with whom FCC has a partnership. Their skills are in communication through photography and text – in other words they know how to share great stories. They introduce themselves below...

Our names are Grant and Naomi Klinefelter and we are global workers with Greater Europe Mission. We share a deep love for Jesus, people, and culture. Our desire is to see people encounter Jesus, grow intimately close with Him, and live into their call as disciples in the unique way God designed for them. We live and serve in Birmingham with Rowheath Pavilion Church.

Our call from Jesus is two-fold—to be storytellers around Europe and to dwell wholeheartedly in Birmingham. Our hearts are to steward media well by using our gifts of photography, writing, and love of people to capture stories of what is God is doing around Europe through missionaries to challenge, encourage, and equip people to follow Jesus.

We also seek to be representatives of the love of Christ in Birmingham, not only within the walls of a local church, but also in our grocery shops, cafes, libraries, and out into the streets. In our free time, we enjoy reading, photography, traveling, sharing stories, coffee, and a bag of sour patch kids and popcorn at the cinema.

CONFERENCE DATE: 23 OCTOBER 2021

Following a recent National Council meeting, we have decided to move the second part of our Connect Conference back by a couple of weeks to 23rd October 2021. We apologise for this change but trust that it is sufficient notice that no-one has been inconvenienced. (The original date clashed with some events that impact some of our key churches.)

THOUGHT PIECE: THE PANDEMIC AND THE FUTURE FOR CHURCH

Pete Phillips - Director of the Centre for Digital Theology at Durham University, (Research Fellow in the Department of Theology and Religion and Head of Digital Theology at Premier Christian Media), has been working on biblical literacy in digital culture and on exploring digital theology in all its forms. He writes the following article.

At a church meeting the other day, the Chair shared a word of wisdom, *"The pandemic hasn't broken us; it's broken us up."*

The first bit is, at best, a half truth. The pandemic has broken things. It's fatally broken 125,000 lives at least and devastated so many others with grief, poverty, desperation, and loneliness. That's just in this country. It's broken our economy. It may have broken the viability of many of our churches. We lost lots of people who decided the pandemic was an opportunity to have a sabbatical from church, to break the habit of church-going. And so it has been suggested that up to 30% of congregations may well have drifted off. Will they come back?

But the second half of that phrase, the pandemic has broken us up, is a wonderful insight. We've been broken up like soil prepared for planting, broken apart and made ready to receive seeds. The pandemic has been a time when God has prepared us for the new thing. Look at all the discipleship activities that have been developed. More people praying, more people doing spiritual support groups, more people reading their Bible, more people being creative, more people bathing in God's awesome creation, etc.

We've moved from enabling the physical church to happen on screen, just setting the camera up and filming physical church as though that was taking it in the right direction. We've extended that offer into hybrid models of church, where we match digital and physical provision, or into building a community online.

We've begun a process of disruption, opening up the ground for new things to grow, for new opportunities for people to engage with God, for new ways to share the love of God with all people.

And of course, I'm not saying that new things can only happen in digital. There have been examples of people holding services in a village square, on their street, etc.

We need to think of ways that God has opened us up for new opportunities to do what we do best. In what way are we prepared as the soil which would bear new plants, new fruit, new harvest in the post-pandemic world? How is God preparing us during this pandemic time? You know, we're all working our socks off. It's harder for us to do anything. And yet I wonder whether the core thing that we should be doing is stopping and thinking and spending time with God and saying, *"God, will you till this soil because the soil needs preparation for what the new thing might be?"*

There was a joke at the beginning of the pandemic when churches closed. A cartoon of Satan saying he shut the church down with just a microvirus and a nice white-bearded God replying that He'd actually opened a new branch in every house. We need to remember that our network digital society allowed the church to go online, or rather, allowed those of us in offline church to join the thousands already engaged in online ministry, often the disabled, the chronically ill, the house-bound, those scared of coming into a crowd, those who have been put off by the church.



The opportunity that the shift online has given us cannot be downplayed. **Our research at Durham University with ComRes showed that 24% to 28% of the general public are now engaged in online organised devotion at least once a month. Many of them, young people. Some of our figures suggest half of all the young people, young adults, are attending online worship of some kind, many of them saying that we've provided a safe place to encounter the church.** We've provided a safe sofa behind the back pew; a place where they can come and come to the church on their terms rather than on ours, because churches are such scary places to come.

While we have rows about whether the digital church is real church, people are dropping into our online presence and seeking to hear about God, to encounter God, to see if God encounters them. They couldn't care less if the church has validated digital church.

They just found a safe place to find their answers about God and they come in their droves, seeking to hear about Him, to encounter Him.

They are not asking about the doctrines of the church, or what's a vicar or a minister, etc. They are asking, "How do I pray? How do I address God? If I get my words wrong, is God going to punish me?". God has incarnated Himself again on digital. God has made Himself present online where in fact He has been ever since the first networks were developed in the last century. God is a networking God, but He's there. He's present. He seeks us to follow him and meet Him and meet the people who are dropping in, looking for Him. We have the possibility, the privilege of being engaged in digital ministry. Until next time and please, if you would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please contact us.

Martin and Lynda Robinson