

FCC CONNECTION

The official newsletter of
The Fellowship of Churches of Christ

30 July 2022

Vol 3 No 4



THE BURSLEM STORY

Like many of the more historic congregations in FCC, the Burslem Church of Christ has experienced a long and gradual decline combined with a slow ageing of the existing congregation. Eventually, that kind of change produces a crisis. How does a congregation with much-reduced personnel and resources survive and grow?

In the past, that question has been answered by closing churches, tragic and sad as that has been. Today, FCC has a new determination to invest in declining and depleted congregations so that they do not close.

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Over the last few months, we have been working with the Burslem Church of Christ to explore the recruitment of people who can help to develop the life and growth of the church. The long-term objective is to recruit an American team who can work with the church to revitalise it. In the shorter term, we are attempting to make local contacts who might be able to offer some resources.

One of the unusual contacts we have made is with a network of Fijian Christians. Recently a group visited Burslem to offer friendship and encouragement.



DISCERNING THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Those who are leading churches that are growing frequently report that they have noticed a change in the spiritual atmosphere over the last few years. Generally, they report that there is a new openness to conversations about spiritual issues. That does not mean that people are beating down the doors of our churches wanting to become Christians. (Although there are some in the Iranian diaspora who are doing just that).

Research published by the Evangelical Alliance helps to reinforce the changes that those on the ground are noticing. (See some of the findings below). Some lessons stand out:

1. Churches that are deeply invested in their communities have more opportunities for conversations about faith.
2. Churches which actually talk to people about faith rather than just hoping that people will come to them are seeing encouraging fruit.
3. Church planting encourages a framework in which faith sharing is likely to take place.
4. Church planting is no longer a matter of launching with a large number of existing Christians and a huge budget. Many church plants are starting much more simply with small numbers of Christians sharing faith with friends, neighbours and those they intentionally meet.
5. Larger gatherings can be helpful, but these can happen occasionally when smaller church plants (new communities of faith) gather together from time to time.

Here are some helpful summary insights from the EA research:

“This ground-breaking report by Alpha, the Evangelical Alliance, HOPE Together, Luis Palau Association and Kingsgate Community Church shows the state of faith in the UK, how people come to faith in Jesus and how we, as the church, can talk about Jesus more effectively with our friends and in our community.

Since the special launch event, evangelists and Christian media have already been widely sharing the encouraging findings that 45% of the UK population believe in the resurrection, 20% of the UK population believe that Jesus is God, but also that only 6% of UK adults are practising Christians. The partners hope this wave of encouragement and challenge will spur the church on to greater confidence and boldness in sharing the gospel.

So much more to be explored

Yet there are so many further fascinating findings still to be explored, putting a wealth of insights in the hands of the UK church to empower evangelism and inform strategy, for example:

- 26% of non-Christians would go to Google search as the place to find out about the Christian faith closely followed by reading the Bible or speaking to a friend that they know is a Christian.
- Growing up in Christian family was the most common route to faith (34%), followed by reading the Bible (24%), and attending a church service (19%).

- Non-white ethnic minorities make up 25% of practising Christians.
- 40% of Christians found the biggest obstacle to sharing faith was fearing difficult questions, whilst 42% reported that a barrier was not knowing non-Christians well enough to share Jesus with them.
- While many non-Christians perceive the church as hypocritical and narrow-minded, many perceive their Christian friends as caring and friendly, good-humoured, and generous.

How have things changed since 2015?

This research, that was first undertaken in 2015 commissioned by the Denominational Leaders' Summit, enables us to look over seven years and see trends that will help us strategically with church growth, for

example:

- Practising Christians make up 6% of UK adults; this is a similar percentage to 2015.
- One in three non-Christians, after a conversation with a Christian, want to know more about Jesus Christ – up from one in five in 2015.
- 53% of non-Christians know a Christian of whom 35% said this is a friend, 33% a family member. This 53% is down from 68% in 2015 but where 4% of people in 2015 said the Christian they knew was a neighbour this has risen to 8% post-pandemic.
- 4% of Christians came to faith through seeing Christian content on social media, a higher percentage than in 2015.”

CONNECT CONFERENCE – SAVE THE DATE

The FCC Annual Delegates Conference that we call Connect will take place on **Saturday 5th of November** at our FCC congregation in Corby. We will be in touch with churches to ask you to appoint your delegates. We expect to be welcoming more congregations into FCC as well as ordaining a number of ministers at the same event. Please note the date in your diary now.

RESPONSES TO THE CREATE LEADERS CONFERENCE

As we mentioned in the May and June editions of the Connections newsletter, **the CREATE Leaders Conference** was held in Northampton in May of this year. A number of those who were present were asked to reflect on their responses to the conference. Watch the video below (or click [here](#)).



VACANCY FOR THE ROLE OF FCC NATIONAL SECRETARY



Lynda Robinson will be standing down from the role of FCC National Secretary in the next few months. We are seeking someone with good people skills, IT skills and administrative gifts to replace her. Lynda will mentor the new post holder for a few months in order for them to learn the tasks involved. This is a part time role (approximately 15 hours a week). At this stage we are looking for expressions of interest. A person specification and a job description will be available soon. If you are interested in the role or if you know someone who has an interest in the role, please contact Lynda at lynda.robinson@mission4.uk

REACHING OUT TO THE TAMIL COMMUNITY

Over the last 15 months, Martin Robinson has worked closely with a leader in the Tamil Community, Chrishanthy Sathiyaraj, together with trainers from other networks, to train existing pastors and evangelists to be more effective in their community. A commissioning and ordination event was held in London earlier in July to recognise the training that they had received. Over 400 people, mainly but not exclusively, from the Tamil community, gathered to worship and celebrate this landmark achievement. See some of the photos below.



TIME4CHANGE: BIRMINGHAM CELEBRATION

Over the last few years, a number of leaders in the West Midlands from black majority churches, white majority churches and multi-cultural churches, have been meeting to improve friendships, connections and working partnerships across the area. That led to a major worship event last year at Birmingham City football stadium. A further event is planned this year and it's called "**Birmingham Celebration**" See the promotional video below (or click [here](#)).



Following on from last years highly acclaimed Birmingham Churches Reconciliation Service at the Blues Ground, we are delighted to announce that there will be a similar Worship & Prayer Celebration **Event this autumn - Sunday 16th Oct - 4pm.**

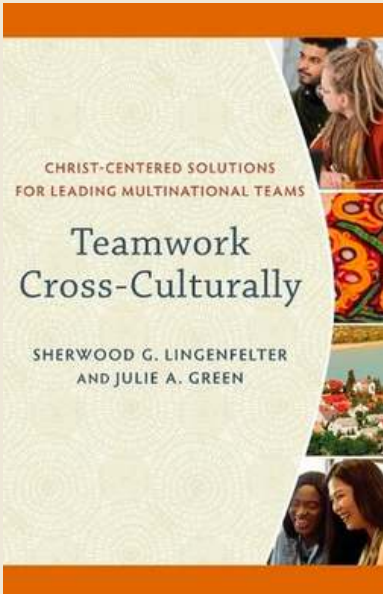
Venue: New Testament Church of God, Lozells Rd

We are following the Godly command to **come together** and **stand together** for the blessing of Birmingham from all parts of the Church, from all parts of the City, and across the Generations.

BOOK THE DATE | SHOW THE PROMO VIDEO (before the summer break) | PUBLICISE ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA | COME AS A CHURCH

[Download the Promo Video Here](#)

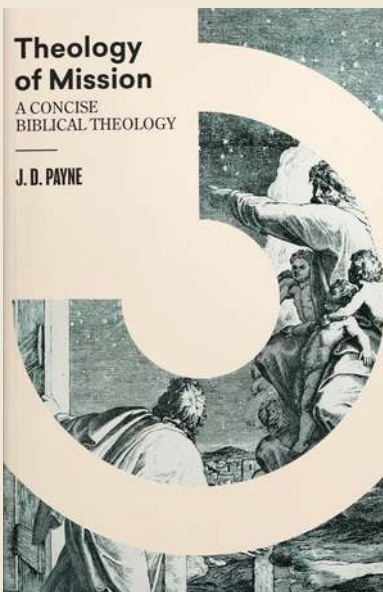
RESOURCES



Teamwork Cross-Culturally: Christ-Centred Solutions for Leading Multinational Teams (2022)

by Sherwood G Lingenfelter and Julie A Green

"[This book] casts a vision for how teams made up of diverse peoples can serve in unity as the body of Christ despite the complicated problems that arise. The book equips leaders to respond to divisive issues so that multinational mission teams can do the work of ministry in ways that honour God."



Theology of Mission: A Concise Biblical Theology (2022)

by J. D. Payne

"[This book] traces the theme of mission throughout Scripture. Payne shows that God's mission is on every page of the Bible and is foundational to the church's own existence. With reflection questions following concise chapters, all readers can consider their place in God's work."



Operation World, and the Joshua Project, two organisations many readers will be familiar with, have teamed up to produce 52 short weekly prayer guides "to help churches around the world see the big picture of how God is moving in our world today, cultivate greater awareness of global missional needs and opportunities, and mobilise prayer and loving action." They seem ideal for use in church newsletters, bulletins, magazines, emails etc. They really have made it so easy for us!

Until the Autumn...

Lynda and Martin Robinson

On behalf of FCC