

# FCC CONNECTION

The official newsletter of  
The Fellowship of Churches of Christ

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## CONNECT

### DELEGATES CONFERENCE

THEME:  
GROWING TOGETHER



**Denise KK Mapfumo**  
Host



**Rev. Tony Sands**  
Chair FCC  
Strategic Board



**Rev. Mike Royal**  
Churches Together  
in England



**Pastor Dave Price**  
Rowheath  
Pavilion Church

## Connect Conference

Every year we hold a conference (usually in November) which draws our churches together. We call it **Connect**. This regular meeting encourages us and allows us to fellowship with those beyond our local church, to understand what is happening more widely in our network of churches, to meet other leaders and also to act as our formal Annual General Meeting.

In addition, it is the place where we welcome new churches that wish to affiliate with FCC, ordain ministers/pastors to ministry and be encouraged and inspired by keynote speakers.

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In addition, this year, FCC will be welcomed into Churches Together in England, and the General Secretary, Mike Royal, will be one of the keynote speakers.

Denise Mapfumo will act as the host for this year's event. Denise is the Administrator for her local church, Church for All Nations International. Denise also serves on the National Council for FCC.

Our keynote speakers are:

1. Bishop Mike Royal
2. Rev Tony Sands
3. Pastor Dave Price

**Mike Royal** has been in ordained ministry since 1993. He is currently the General Secretary of Churches Together in England (CTE). Before joining CTE, Mike was the Co-Chief Executive of the Cinnamon Network. He is a founding Trustee and former National Director of the award-winning charity, Transforming Lives for Good (TLG), which works with children and young people at risk of exclusion from school. He is a part-time Forensic Mental Health Chaplain with Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust. Mike has a BA in Urban Planning from the University of Westminster and an MA in Black Theology from the University of Birmingham. Mike lives in Birmingham and has been married to Vivienne, who is an Alternative Provision School Headteacher for 30 years. He enjoys walking, swimming, and listening to soul music.

**Tony Sands** is the Chair of the FCC Strategic Board. Tony has been in ministry with Churches of Christ for more than 35 years, serving churches in Australia and in the UK. Tony worked with Dr Martin Robinson to establish an MA in Missional Leadership. Many of our ministers have completed the MA in Missional Leadership. Tony is currently a member of Gracevine Church in Ilford, London.

**Dave Price** has over 15 years of ministry experience serving churches both national and internationally. He is involved in church planting and social enterprise and has a desire to see disciples of Jesus raised up to make other disciples. Dave is married to Kaz and has 3 children. As a family they have recently relocated to Birmingham where Dave is now the Senior Minister of Rowheath Pavilion Church.



The graphic features a background image of hands being clasped together. At the top left is the Fellowship of Churches of Christ logo, a stylized star. The text 'CONNECT DELEGATES CONFERENCE' is prominently displayed in white and yellow. Below this, the theme 'THEME: GROWING TOGETHER' is written in white. A yellow banner at the bottom left contains the date 'Saturday November, 11, 2023' and the time '10:00am - 4:00pm'. A 'BOOK TODAY' section provides contact information: an email address 'lawrence.kizito@the-fcc.org', a phone number '+447721358043', and a website 'www.the-fcc.org'. On the right side, a location pin icon is followed by 'Rhema Faith Ministries' and the address '48 Smith Street, Newtown, Birmingham, B19 3EN'.

# Church Planting Consultation



Following the Create Conference in May 2023, it became obvious that a number of those present were involved in church planting of one kind or another. In order to try and understand what was happening and how we could encourage further planting, the National Moderator contacted approximately a dozen people involved in planting to suggest a day consultation on the subject.

To our surprise, the news spread, and within a few weeks, we found that we were hosting a much larger event than we had initially imagined. In the end, 43 people involved in church planting attended a day consultation in Birmingham.

What did we learn? First, it is clear that there is a great deal of church planting already taking place within our network of

churches. Second, there are clearly plans for more church plants. Third, there is a vision, a hope and an ambition to do much more.

In addition, certain needs surfaced through our discussions. There is a need for basic church planting training, especially around inter-cultural church planting. Some of our planters would benefit from access to a coach and/ or a mentor around church planting.

We began to get a sense of the need for the sharing of information as to what is happening on an ongoing basis – what are we doing, where are we planting, and what do we hope to plant?

Can we find ways to plan together as well as share together? *(continued on next page)*



FCC Church  
Planting  
Conference  
**On Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of  
October!**



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CHURCHES OF  
CHRIST**

Many expressed a desire to follow up on this initial meeting with additional consultations. We want to avoid meetings for the sake of meetings, so we need to be sure that future events have a clear purpose and clear intended outcomes.

At the very least, this event will be followed up with an additional communication to inform you of our developing thinking. Doug Sembuize, from the Pavilion Christian Church, created a short video of the event, and we share that with you to use as you feel appropriate. Here is the link: <https://youtu.be/DANLuAQRX-M>

## Responding to the conflict in the Middle East

It is becoming increasingly clear that the conflict between Israel and Hamas is not going to end quickly. The results of that conflict are already spilling over onto the streets of our own land. In the midst of such a complex, ancient and dangerous situation, what can we do, in our villages, towns and cities to be a healing balm to the nations?

Jeff Fountain, who is a good friend of the FCC and who has been a key leader in YWAM over many years, has written a very helpful comment on this situation. Jeff lives in the very multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of Amsterdam. With his permission, we share his article on this issue.



The horrific outburst of violence between Hamas and Israel this week is a challenge to all followers of Jesus not to resort to knee-jerk responses: on the one hand, of blind support for everything Israel does and, on the other, blanket condemnation and fear of all Muslims in general.

Much of the world rightly condemns the Hamas attacks and stands behind Israel's right to self-defence. Yet Israel's immediate response resembles what we have come to expect from Putin's Russia. The blockade of the Gaza Strip has left many of the two million inhabitants without food, water and electricity and led to over 2000 deaths, including UN workers, paramedics and journalists.

Many European Christians are susceptible to becoming more Islamophobic after Islamic terrorist attacks. They have voted for extreme right-wing populist parties focusing on the perceived threat of the

Islamisation of Europe. I have written before about such politicians who sow half-truths and fear.

Yet we must resist polarisation among the religious communities in our cities in response to current international tensions. This week happened to be a three-day study intensive in our Master's programme, Missional Leadership and European Studies. 'Islam' was among the secular, political and religious challenges and opportunities in Europe today on which we focused. Guest lecturer was Dr Bert de Ruiter, who facilitates the Network of Ministries to Muslims in Europe of the European Evangelical Alliance.

Bert and his wife Jenny are passionate about building bridges between Christians and believers of other religions, particularly Islam – whether individuals or institutions (churches, mosques, synagogues and temples). Bert observes

that Christians and Muslims often live in the same town, neighbourhood or street, but do not necessarily interact. An average Christian does not naturally associate with Muslims. And vice versa. We tend to avoid each other rather than seek each other out. He encourages churches and mosques, as well as individual Christians and Muslims, to meet, interact and get involved in each other's lives.

He has written a book and developed a course (available online), both called Sharing Lives, which he and Jenny model in their own lives. Recently my wife and I were invited to their 40th wedding anniversary along with their family and close friends, including a good number of Muslims.

Brother Andrew used to say, 'If we don't go to the nations, God will bring them to us'. In the sovereignty of God, Bert points out, Muslims are in Europe to stay. Instead of seeing them as a threat, he argues, we should recognise the opportunity to help Muslims understand true Christianity; to break down the walls of hostility that have been built for centuries between Christianity and Islam; to show Muslims the way of the Cross, the way of grace and unconditional love; to welcome those who are seeking for the truth that they don't find in Islam, and, to see them come to faith in Christ.

We should respond to the presence of Muslims in our continent, says Bert, with:

1. **a compassionate heart:** Paul told the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:8): 'We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.'
2. **an informed mind:** We need to know who our Muslim neighbours are, where they come from, their dreams, aspirations, fears and concerns.
3. **an involved hand:** All kinds of practical ways can bring us alongside Muslims: language, work, housing etc. They can become allies in dealing with problems in our city or neighbourhood, against social abuses (e.g. abortion, drug abuse, crime).
4. **a witnessing tongue:** Once we are compassionately informed and involved, we will find opportunities to testify about Jesus in words, given hands and feet in daily life.

Bert has helped initiate several inter-faith networks in the Netherlands. On behalf of an Amsterdam network, he drafted the following public statement in response to this week's events in Israel:

*The Interreligious Network Amsterdam-Centrum, a network of churches, mosques and synagogues in Amsterdam's city centre district, has noted with horror the flare-up of fighting between Hamas and Israel, resulting in many deaths, injuries and destruction. We distance ourselves from the atrocities that destroy societies and the vindictiveness that violence evokes. We sympathise with all victims, Jews as well as Palestinians, and pray in our communities of churches and mosques, for peace and*  
**(continued on next page)**

*reconciliation, not only in the Middle East but also elsewhere in the world.*

*We profess that peace and justice are among the essential values of our faith. Therefore, as religious communities in Amsterdam Centre, we work together to prevent international tensions from alienating the harmonious relationships we are building in Amsterdam Centre. Should there be people who need a moment of silence, comfort, or prayer, do not hesitate to drop by one of the churches, synagogues, or mosques in Amsterdam Centre.*

How can we be peacemakers and bridge-builders in our neighbourhood?

## Something Is Happening in Our Land

Over the last few years, a number of leaders have sensed that there is a new hope and optimism present amongst many churches. Something positive is taking place, and it's good to be aware of all that is happening so that we can be alerted to what God is doing.

It is clear that many churches are still in decline; in the case of some denominations, very serious decline. In fact, we could go so far as to say that the leaders of some denominations are merely managing decline rather than planning for growth. That approach eventually leads to a situation where decline can no longer be managed but can spiral out of control.

But that is not the total picture. Three trends are worth noticing.

First, over the last 25 years, at least, many Christians from other continents have come to our shores and are making a positive contribution to the life of the church. The Times newspaper in the last few days highlighted the astonishing

growth of Chinese churches in Britain, suggesting that at least 70,000 Christians have come from both mainland China and Hong Kong in the last 18 months.

Second, nearly every denomination is actively involved in church planting, some more than others, and of course, a few not at all. The extent of the church planting is considerable. Much is happening “under the radar” and is difficult to track, but there are attempts to try and establish a sense of all that is happening. There is a national gathering of church leaders, which includes FCC, that has come together to encourage planting. Bishop Ric Thorpe of the Church of England chairs the group.

Third, and perhaps most encouraging of all, there seems to be a new openness to consider faith, especially by those who have very little knowledge or contact with faith communities. Openness to explore is not the same thing as rushing to join a church, but it represents a shift, and that kind of shift often precedes what some would call

revival.

Russell Moore has written an intriguing book on the subject of revival. I include a brief extract to whet your appetite. In the following extract, he makes two excellent points. First, that revivals are replays of the past and second, that revivals are often begun with remnants – or we could say, those on the margins. I can't help wondering if we are on the edge of just such a revival – might God be using the marginal, the insignificant, the unnoticed to bring a mighty change? Here is what Russell Moore has to say:

*“In lasting revivals of the past, the revivals are never a replay of what had gone before, repeating the same methods and propping up the same institutions. Nor were any of these revivals the sort of “modernising” theological pivot that some on the Left often propose, that Christianity must “change or die” by moving beyond the “outdated” fundamentals of the faith. Revivals are paradoxically disruptive of the present while in continuity with the past. For all the ways that the evangelical emphasis on the Protestant idea of the “invisible church” can degenerate into the sort of anti-institutionalism that can turn Christianity into an ideology rather than a locally lived life, key aspects of this model have proven vitalizing and regenerating of actual church structures. Those finding connection beyond their church and denominational borders often are able to return to their own communities with a renewed vision for what’s possible for the future, that the decline of existing churches or networks need not be inevitable. At the same time, genuine revival has always come through after a time of intense*

*disorientation and even what seems to be a tearing-down of the status quo....*

*A “remnant” is usually the way that God brings about revival. He usually pares a people down, clears away the field, prunes the branches, and then starts again. The pattern is order, disorder, and reorder.*

*For all the flaws of the evangelical emphasis on revival, the beauty of it is that it, first of all, doesn't give up on the possibility of God acting. God can do a new thing. What's more, a true revival, while corporate – in the sense of bringing new life to a whole body of believers – retains the sense of the personal. “Lord, send a revival,” the old song goes, “And let it begin with me.”*

Excerpted from *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America* by Russell Moore

Until next time:

Martin Robinson



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**Saturday**  
**November, 11, 2023**




**10:00am - 4:00pm**

**BOOK TODAY**

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