

# FCC CONNECTION

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## How Times Change – Reflection on Half a Century of Ministry

Martin Robinson

In a few months' time, it will be exactly 50 years since I began a student ministry as part of my training for ministry. In the last few days, I have been reflecting on how much has changed in our churches since then.

When I trained for the ministry – beginning in 1971 – there were around 4 students in training. It was a four-year course and so on average only one person a year was entering ministry in our group of churches. When I was ordained, I was the only person being ordained that year at the Conference. Last November, FCC ordained 11 candidates and there is a steady stream of ministers entering into ministry with FCC.

At the time I began ministry only two of our churches were growing. One was the church I led and the other had a team of 6 American missionaries working there, supported from the USA. There was not a single FCC

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congregation that had anything close to 100 people in worship. In fact, I think there was a view around that such growth and such numbers would be impossible to achieve. How times have changed!

Today, many of our churches are growing, and a good number of congregations exceed 100 in worship week by week. At the CREATE Leaders Conference, we regularly meet with 100 or so leaders. There is a new mood of optimism and enthusiasm as we survey the future.



## New Minister for a Pioneer Work in Liverpool

John Ross Gwaze and his wife Lisa have recently arrived in the UK to work with Harvey Kwiyani in Liverpool. Harvey, working with Johnson Afrane-Twum of Freedom Church in the West Midlands, has pioneered a small group that has the potential to become a church plant. Harvey's other commitments are such that he needs some help and so John Ross and Lisa have agreed to come from South Africa to take the work forward. John Ross and Lisa have been brought up in South Africa, their parents having originally migrated to South Africa from Zimbabwe.

It's early days for their ministry and we hope to bring you occasional reports of their progress.

# John-Ross & Lisa Gwaze

John-Ross Gwaze, the founder and senior pastor of Spirit Life Ministry, is a devoted servant of the Lord whose journey began in Harare, Zimbabwe, and extended to the vibrant city of Johannesburg, South Africa. From a tender age, John-Ross felt the unmistakable call to dedicate his life to serving God's purpose. His unwavering commitment to creating spaces where individuals can encounter the profound love, movement, and presence of God has been the driving force behind his ministry.

Currently pursuing theological studies at the esteemed South African Theological Seminary (SATS), John-Ross remains steadfast in his pursuit of deepening his understanding of God's Word and His ways. Alongside him stands Lisa Gwaze, a compassionate advocate for the empowerment of women and teens, guiding them towards discovering their true identity and freedom in Christ. With over a decade of ministry experience, John-Ross and Lisa are genuine and relatable conveyors of God's

message, focusing on fostering values that cultivate a life-giving community where the love of God is tangibly felt, and individuals are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live purposefully.

Their commitment to serving extends beyond the pulpit as they initiate impactful projects like substance abuse clinics, food hamper drives, sanitary pad drives, soup kitchens, school fees & uniform programmes and provide ongoing support to numerous families monthly.

Together, as pastors and parents, John-Ross and Lisa are blessed with three remarkable daughters: Tehillah, Shekinah, and Shiloh. Their family embodies the values of love, faith, and service, inspiring countless others to walk boldly in their faith journey and experience the transformative power of God's grace.



# Create – Empowered Together



**FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST** 2024  
**CREATE**  
CONFERENCE  
"Empowered Together"

13th -14th May 2024 | Kings Park Centre,  
Northampton, NN3, 6LL

Full Conference - **£125** | Day Visitor - **£50**  
Couple Ticket - Full Conference - **£188**

SCAN TO BOOK



The annual FCC leaders conference – Create – will be held in a few months' time in our usual location at Kings Park. We are lining up an exciting programme. Most attendees tell us that the real benefit of the event is the opportunity to meet, share, pray and worship with so many other leaders from across the Fellowship.

We realise that cost is always an issue and to help people attend we are offering a 50% discount for spouses that attend with their husband or wife. In addition, we have a small fund that will enable us to offer a 50% bursary for leaders who have real difficulty raising the conference fee. If you would like to apply for a bursary, please apply through your local church and send your request to Lawrence Kizito at [lawrence.kizito@the-fcc.org](mailto:lawrence.kizito@the-fcc.org)

More programme details will follow shortly.

# Learning From Others

I sometimes receive visits from American church leaders who come to the UK with the conviction that what the UK has experienced in terms of the dramatic decline of Christianity is a foretaste of what will happen to the USA. They desire to learn from the UK story.

That is an understandable perspective but, to a large extent, it is not actually that helpful. There are many ways in which the USA is so different from the UK that any potential lessons are not really transferable. Likewise, there is a long history of British church leaders seeking to copy methods that have proved helpful in the USA and apply them in the UK. They have not usually met with success.

However, that does not mean there is nothing to learn from one another. In particular, both the USA and the UK are encountering some trends that are global in scope. Recently I read an account of the growth of Southern Baptists in what is known as New England. That caught my attention for two reasons.

First of all, the Southern Baptists managed to buck the trend in terms of growth and decline amongst the historic denominations in the USA for many decades. Unlike many traditional denominations they grew and in fact became by far the largest Protestant denomination in the USA. However, recently that growth has ended, and decline has set in.

Imagine my surprise to discover that their general decline was being reversed in one particular part of the USA – New England. Historically that part of the USA had been known as one of the toughest areas in America for churches of any kind. Curiously, in terms of culture and general outlook, New England is the closest to the UK of any part of the USA. So, what is taking place in this traditional graveyard for church growth? The article made these points:

Southern Baptists have flourished in this spiritually parched region for several distinct reasons including intentional church planting, innovative community focus, and

an enthusiastic embrace of growing immigrant populations.

This growth is the fruit of work Southern Baptists cultivated for years. Rather than throwing together large and trendy, seeker-friendly churches, they've been dedicated to small, organic church plants with deep faith and staying power based on bottom-up community growth and a focus on discipleship.

Other denominations should take note of such long-winded dedication.

Since 2010, Southern Baptists have planted over 10,000 churches nationwide with a heavy focus on less churched areas. These efforts clearly resonate in New England, a spiritually dead wilderness experiencing resurrection through the prayer and diligence of Christian New Englanders who refuse to give up.

The importance of Southern Baptists' vision for planting lots of small, targeted churches cannot be overemphasised. It is the primary reason we're seeing a revival there.

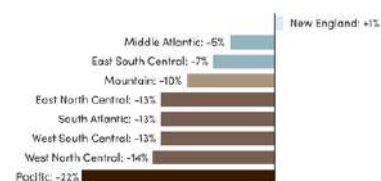
Studies show that new church plants always attract a higher population of de-churched people. Lifeway Research reports that 42% of those attending new church plants were previously unchurched. The fresher and more hyper-localised, the more unchurched people show up. It's a template that every denomination should begin following — and expect for it to work.”

These three themes are frequently experienced in the UK. Networks or denominations benefit from an awareness of migration patterns, an intentional approach to church planting and a strong investment in community-based outreach.



Only one region of Southern Baptist churches grew in the past five years

Analysis by Lifeway Research of the Southern Baptist Convention's Annual Church Profile





# New Churches Joining the Fellowship

## **HEBRON APOSTOLIC & PROPHETIC CHURCH** **823 WANDSWORTH ROAD, LONDON, SW8 3JL**

Hebron Apostolic & Prophetic Church is led by the elders who have a calling from God for all pastoral responsibilities. Trustees steward the church in relation to its charitable status.

**Our Vision** is the transformation of our community and throughout the world resulting in people experiencing an encounter with Jesus and God's Kingdom.

**Our Mission** is the Great Commission. Our task as the gathered body of Christ is to make disciples, by bearing witness to Jesus Christ the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God.

We believe the Church of God is ONE, so we consider joining the FCC network the right direction and the fruit of the Ministry. We were especially attracted to the network because of its church planting focus.

## Recently Ordained Ministers

In this edition of Connections, we highlight a further two ministers who were ordained at Conference in November. On this occasion, both candidates are from the same church – Rowheath Pavilion Church in Bournville, Birmingham. Dave Price is the newly appointed Senior Minister, and although he has been in ministry for some years, he had not previously been “ordained.” Doug has been at the Pavilion for some years as the Associate Minister, and he also had not been formally ordained. Their stories are below. Dave has chosen to introduce himself using a short video – see below.

## Dave Price



## Doug Sembuuzze



Doug was born in Uganda and moved to the UK in 2007. He has been involved in Christian mission and has held different roles for over 20 years with at least three different churches prior to serving at Rowheath Pavilion Church as the Associate Minister. Doug completed his Masters Degree in Missional Leadership with ForMission college and was recently ordained with FCC.

Over the years, Doug Sembuuzze has pioneered mission projects aimed at engaging the different communities in which he has served as a youth and/or community minister. He is married to Bex Sembuuzze, and they have 3 boys. Doug also serves on the FCC National Council.



# 12 Signs You're a Spiritual Entrepreneur (Apostle)

by John Bond

## **INTRODUCING JOHN BOND**

*Those who know the Australian Churches of Christ well, will be familiar with the name John Bond. For many years, John led a large Church of Christ in Perth. Eventually the time came to retire and as you will realise, few ministers actually retire – they just shift their field of operation. Over the last few years, John has worked with a church planting training organisation, serving in a number of Asian nations such as Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam. Their goal has been to train church planters and the results have been amazing. Last year, they trained 7,840 leaders which gave rise to 13,640 new churches. In turn that has led to 545,598 new believers. This is just an indication that there are many fruitful fields in the world today. Throughout many parts of the world the church is growing. Recently, I read an article on leadership written by John and you can read it below.*

## **12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR (APOSTLE)**

So you're building your team—you're even assessing your personal gifting for everything that lies ahead in ministry. What's the gift set you're looking for in a leader (or in yourself) that will really help move your mission forward, reach new people and prepare for everything ahead?

At some point at the senior leadership level of your church or ministry, you're going to need a handful of what I call spiritual entrepreneurs. Often these people are misunderstood in the church. For the most part, pastors, shepherds and chaplains have run the church. I'm not saying we don't need shepherds or that we don't need chaplains in the right place. Not at all. We do. But what happens when all you have are shepherds and chaplains?

Here's what happens: the kind of radical change that both the church and the world need doesn't happen.

Instead, leaders hold the hand of a sick church and often comfort it while it dies. I know that sounds harsh but look around you. Isn't that mostly what's happening in many existing churches and ministries? I also know enough great pastors, shepherds and chaplains to know that they find the hand holding of a dying church deeply frustrating and frightening. They don't want their church to die, but there aren't enough leaders around them with the gift set or mindset necessary to turn it around.

Too many church leaders today merely hold the hand of a sick church and comfort it while it dies. Without doubt, the missing gift set in the church is spiritual entrepreneurship—something the New Testament calls *apostleship*. It's the kind of radical determination, innovation and fierceness the Apostle Paul showed.

As I write here, the church today is filled with pastors and shepherds, to the point where they are perhaps over-represented in church leadership. What we need most as we navigate new waters in a post-Christian culture is not more

shepherds, but spiritual entrepreneurs.

Whether you call it spiritual entrepreneurship or the gift of apostleship, what we need is a new generation of Apostle Paul's who forge out in new directions, experiments boldly, and dares greatly. These are the kind of leaders who will find tomorrow's solutions when most leaders can only see today's problems.

In a marketplace that's in love with start-ups and new ventures, we need some leaders who are inclined to spend their lives in the marketplace who will take their God-given talents and energy and throw them full time behind the mission of the church. My conviction is that many with the gift of *apostleship* end up in successful business ventures because the church (and its leaders) have been too small to release them in kingdom life.

Are you called to it? As I write about here, the fact that you have the gifts might be enough of a sign that you're called. So what does spiritual entrepreneurship/apostleship look like? What are some of the characteristics of leaders who can forge fresh ground in the church?

And how do you know if you might be a spiritual entrepreneur?

We need a new generation of Apostle Paul's who experiment boldly. Who dare greatly.

As I meet church leaders who are actually reaching unchurched people in massive quantities, here are the qualities I see among the leaders.

### **Spiritual Entrepreneurs / Apostles**

#### **1. THINK BIG**

Too many churches die of small thinking:

- We don't have enough
- It won't happen
- Stop dreaming
- That's plenty for now
- Who will pay for it?

Leaders who serve an infinite God should never have their imaginations deadened by small thinking. Spiritual entrepreneurs aren't. They think big. They dream of what could be, not what is, and they see the opportunity in every obstacle.

#### **2. BELIEVE GOD CAN**

We serve a God who created amazing things out of nothing. Why do we think he won't do the same for his church?

Spiritual entrepreneurs believe he will. And they see him do it. They would agree with Henry Ford who said, "Whether you believe you can or whether you believe you can't, you're right."

Before you dismiss this as positive thinking nonsense, remember Jesus *couldn't* perform many miracles in his hometown because of people's lack of faith. Then, moments later, he walked on water and fed 5000 because people in those communities had faith.

Spiritual entrepreneurs believe God can. And they see him do it. God created amazing things out of nothing. Why do we think he won't do the same for his church?

#### **3. SEE ABUNDANCE, NOT SCARCITY**

Spiritual entrepreneurs see abundance, not scarcity. Give a dying church \$10,000, and they'll think they're broke and need to conserve it.

Give \$10,000 to a spiritual entrepreneur, and he'll see it as seed money to start something big. To a dying church, 5 leaders is defeat. To a spiritual entrepreneur, it's a start. Same facts. Different mindset. Attitude is everything.



#### 4. THINK VISION FIRST, RESOURCES SECOND

So what comes first? Vision, or resources? Spiritual entrepreneurs are very comfortable with the reality that vision precedes resources.

Casting a big vision (a solid, on-mission vision) will often lead to significant resources down the road. Waiting for big resources so you can have a vision is a recipe for death.

#### 5. INVEST IN PERSONAL AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Spiritual entrepreneurs aren't crazy spenders, but they see a key distinction between an expense and an investment.

They realise that going to conferences, networking with other leaders, buying books and doing whatever it takes to make themselves and their team better is an investment.

Sure, there are limits, but smart spiritual entrepreneurs will often spend a minimum of 10% of all the money they receive making themselves and their team better.

Spiritual entrepreneurs see personal and team development as investments, not expenses.

#### 6. BELIEVE THIS IS BIGGER THAN YOU

Of all the criticisms levied at spiritual entrepreneurs, the most common is often that they have big egos and it's all about them.

- Sometimes that's true.
- But most often it's not.
- Big vision does not automatically equal big ego.
- The best spiritual entrepreneurs humbly submit to God and are committed to a vision that is so much bigger than they are.
- Personal humility combined with big ambition for the mission fosters incredible leadership.

Think about it this way. The reason we're talking about Paul 2000 years later is that Paul's work wasn't about Paul; it was about Jesus and the mission of the church. If your vision is all about you, it will die with you.

True spiritual entrepreneurs know that.

#### 7. Start FIRST, IMPROVE LATER

Perfectionists make terrible entrepreneurs.

If you haven't started on your vision yet because you're waiting for ideal conditions or the perfect result, you'll wait forever. People have often talked

to me (usually after going to a conference hosted by a large church with lots of resources) and ask whether a new building or better lighting or a move to a portable location will help them grow.

I always tell them it won't (here's why). Big churches never started big. They usually started very humbly. But because they are led by spiritual entrepreneurs, those entrepreneurs at every stage made the most of whatever they had.

A spiritual entrepreneur can launch a growing church in a dying building with little money. Then they make all the improvements later as facilities and resources grow.

#### 8. ARE FINE WITH AMBIGUITY

Ask a spiritual entrepreneur how they're going to do it, and the #1 answer is "I don't know. We're just going to do it."

There's something powerful in that. If you have it all figured out before you launch it, your vision isn't big enough.

#### 9. WILL RISK IT ALL WITHOUT GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS

Too many leaders hope for some kind of guarantee.

Risk brings no guarantees because it's risk. Spiritual entrepreneurs are okay with that. Most spiritual entrepreneurs want to die trying. Usually they don't die trying, but the fact that they're willing to is crucial.

Ironically, if a spiritual entrepreneur has a solid plan that's on mission, they usually don't fail. But you have to be willing to fail to succeed. Risk brings no guarantees because it's risk. You have to be willing to fail to truly succeed.

#### 10. NEVER WAIT FOR CONSENSUS

Too many churches will only move forward if there is consensus. That's a critical mistake. Consensus kills courage. By the time you have consensus, ideas are so watered down they are worthy of the committee that put them together.

Spiritual entrepreneurs rarely act alone (at least the smart ones don't). But they're ready to move ahead with a group of early adopters knowing most will eventually buy into whatever is being proposed once they see it working.

#### 11. LET THE CRITICS TALK WHILE YOU ACT

The critics will always talk. Spiritual entrepreneurs know this. They don't

get weighed down by critics who criticise what others do and do little themselves. How do you respond to the critics? By acting. Just act while the critics talk. You'll accomplish something. They won't.

## 12. BREAK RULES

Quite obviously, you should never break biblical rules. And the great spiritual entrepreneurs never do. Their character is solid. But you're going to absolutely need to break some human rules if you're going to disrupt the status quo. Innovation always breaks rules. Why? Because innovation never asks for permission. It just innovates. Despite a leader's best intentions, often leaders who start things don't know how to scale things.

In our first ministry, I had to learn

the hard way, and have led our church past the 100, then 200 barrier right through the 1000+ attendance barrier with multiple locations. These are barriers that, despite best intentions, 98% of leaders never pass. Surprisingly, the reasons most leaders don't scale their ministries aren't spiritual—they're structural. It's the same reason over 99% of businesses stay small—the issues are structural.

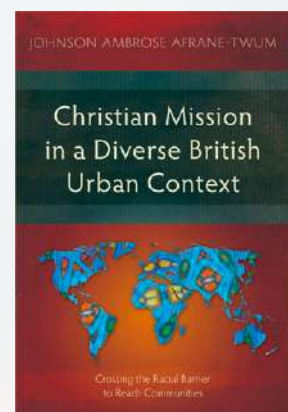
Well, I hope you've got some food for thought here! If this is you, make sure you are investing your God given gifts in the church as well as your business and be open to the new opportunities the Lord may lead you into!!

Sincerely Yours in Christ

John Bond

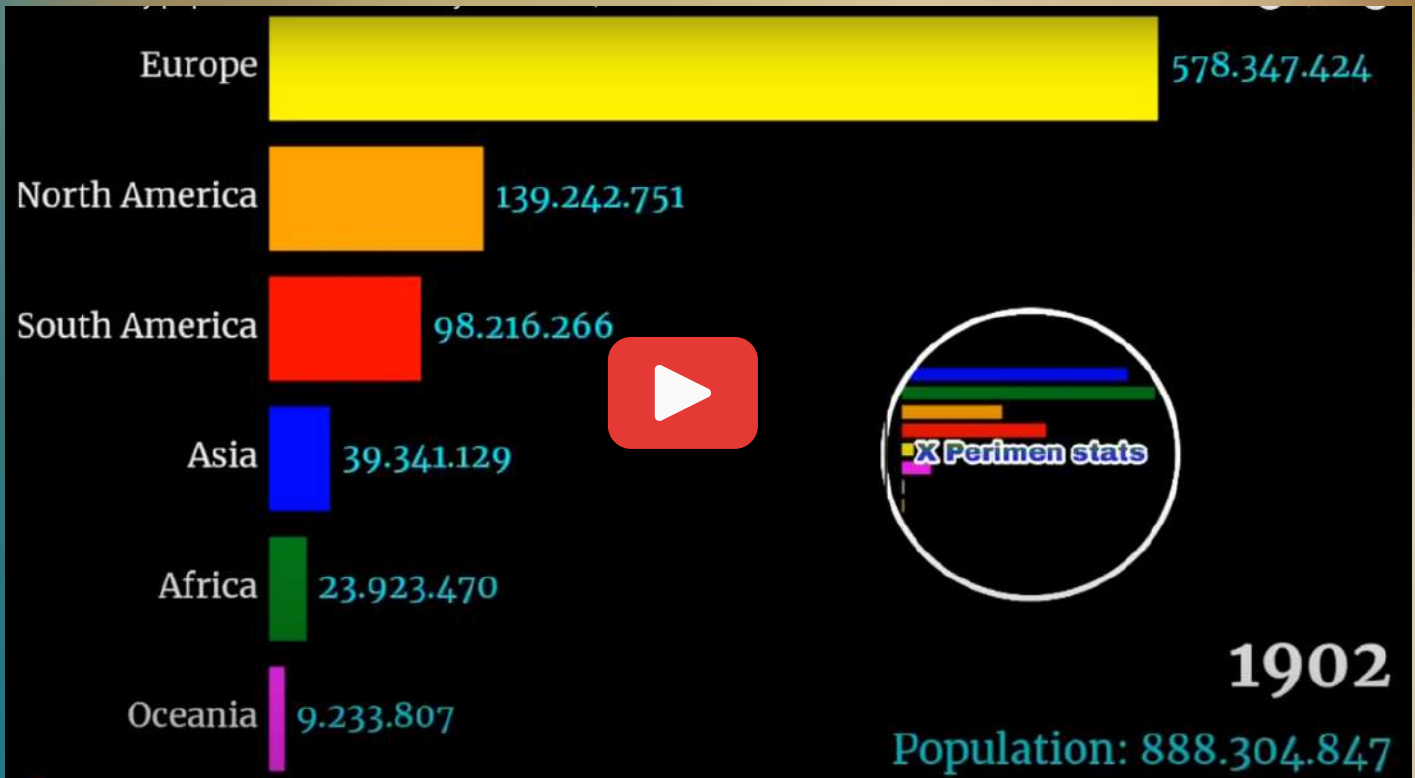
## A New Book on Mission in the UK!

We have many creative leaders in FCC and a number express that creativity through writing. Dr Johnson Afran-Twum who leads Freedom Church in the West Midland completed his Doctoral research on the challenges of mission in an urban setting in the UK. He has put pen to paper (or finger to computer) to produce an excellent book on this subject. You can purchase a copy through Amazon.





# The Astonishing Growth of Christianity



In 1910 the mission agencies from the various European and North American nations gathered together in Edinburgh to consider how missions could be more effective. At that time the overwhelming number of Christians were located in Europe and North America, with very few in Africa and Asia. Since then the pattern has changed to an unprecedented degree. It is clear from the figures that the west is the new mission field.

Below you can see a video presentation that shows the changes in the distribution of Christians across the last 120 years and projects growth up to 2100. It's worth watching!

[Christianity population in the world, by continent \(1900-2100\)](#)

This is a 8-min video (but you can watch it double speed or just flick through it decade by decade) showing the size of each continent's Christian population over 200 years (projected through to 2100). The difference from the start to the end is astonishing. Imagine going back in time and showing that to someone in 1900.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Connection.  
There will be another edition in the near future  
detailing changes in personnel.

Martin Robinson

