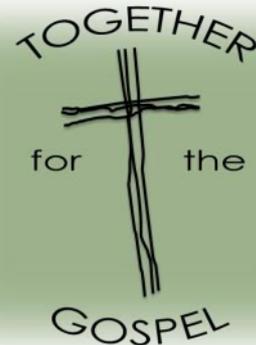




*From the FCC President,
Rev Matthew Murray*



TOGETHER FOR THE GOSPEL OUR PRESENT NEED

At our recent FCC Seminar on Church Revitalisation, we were well served by Bruce Mellor, as he shared with us some of the challenges facing congregations in all denominations. Whilst stressing the essential need for church planting, in line with the Great Commission set out in Matthew 28, he also reminded us that the Bible clearly affirms the necessity for Church Revitalisation.

What exactly is Church Revitalisation and how is it different from church planting? Here are 5 characteristics that one author lists that may be helpful to define the work of Church Revitalisation.

- 1. It is an effort to revive an established but struggling church.*
- 2. It mandates a change in direction.*
- 3. It requires patience and understanding with those there before you*
- 4. Its goal is to become a healthy, diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-generational church.*
- 5. Its purpose is to display the glory of Christ to the world.*

FCC VISION

“To be a dynamic fellowship of evangelical churches, with each Church effectively reaching its local community with the Gospel and collectively, impacting our nation and the world for Christ.”



(For further reading on Church Revitalisation, you can go <https://9marks.org/> and click on 'Journal' and select 'Revitalize')

We considered the matter of church revitalisation from the Church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:5 looking particularly at the Diagnosis and Cure.

"Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first"

Church Revitalisation is one of the challenges facing all churches, including the FCC, regardless of our size. It is helpful and encouraging to remember Paul's words at the end of Ephesians 6:17-18.

"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

Paul identifies for us the only two offensive weapons that the Christian Church has: The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God and prayer. These two weapons have always been at the forefront of Gospel ministry and must continue to remain front and center.

There has been an obvious decline in "congregational or collective" prayer gatherings in many churches and those that still remain are often poorly attended.

Whilst not wanting to minimise other prayer times in smaller weekly home groups, as well as personal prayer, there is still a place and a real need for us to pray together in our local churches.

A brief survey of the early church in Acts, will show that an emphasis on praying together is clearly affirmed.

In Acts 1:14, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles at Pentecost, it was while they were gathered in the Upper Room "devoting themselves to prayer" that the Spirit came during a prayer meeting. In Acts 2:42, as Luke summarises the regular practice of the church following Pentecost, he notes that:

"they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and



miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Harry Reeder author of "Embers to a Flame" says:

"Here is a God-glorifying, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit empowered Gospel - driven and Bible shaped church expanding, not by church growth techniques but, by an intentional commitment to a Gospel disciple making ministry as profiled in the Church at Jerusalem."

In Acts 4, after Peter and John are released from prison for preaching Christ, they return to the church. Upon hearing the reports of the persecution, they all lifted their voices together in prayer.

Likewise, when Peter was arrested in Acts 12, "earnest prayer was made for him by the church" (vs. 5), and when he was released, he found the church gathered and praying for him (vs. 12). The response of the church to crisis was a prayer meeting.

In Acts 13, Saul and Barnabas are sent as missionaries and church planters of the church in Antioch, after a season of corporate prayer where they were set apart for the work by their church.

In Acts 14:23 when the elders are ordained in the churches of Lystra and Derbe, a season of prayer and fasting was held.

Looking at Acts alone, it is clear, that almost every major event in the book was accompanied by the believers seeking God in prayer. The Spirit came upon the church as the people prayed.

Any earnest Christian knows how hard it can be to devote sustained time to praying personally, let alone with others. Yet, every true Christian knows that we are completely dependent on God and we cannot advance the work of the gospel in our own strength. Yes, we need God above all, but as adopted members of the same family, we need each other.



It was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who said, *"Wars are not won by splendid evacuations."* The answer to the present need of our churches and our communities, is neither evacuation or isolation, but prayerful expectation in the effective use of the "offensive weapons given to us by God, namely the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God and prayer."

If we are to see the Spirit working among us, in transforming our own lives and the lives of others through the gospel of Jesus, it will be in part because we've cried out to God together. Jesus himself said, "Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

The apostles and the members of the churches they planted under God, did not merely rely on their natural abilities or their spiritual gifts, personalities or planning or strategies (though these are all helpful things), but on their intimate fellowship with God and one another, as they lived out their Christian lives and served in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As the church grew, the Apostles recognised the practical needs among the people and the need to keep Prayer and Proclamation as the main thing for the growth of the Gospel. They would not neglect prayer and the ministry of the Word. These are the two great offensive weapons of the Christian Church in the world.

Whilst the public preaching and teaching of God's word has a central place in the life of the church, the ministry of God's word is not limited to public preaching. We are encouraged to speak God's word to one another as fellow believers and to share God's word with those who don't know Jesus. We need to rely on the grace and power of God, to change hearts and minds.

In every congregation week by week, there are real people who are living in the rough and tumble of the real world, with real cares and concerns, real heartaches, and all kinds of situations in their lives. They need our prayers and they need to hear a word from the Lord that will benefit their souls.

How meaningless and empty it is to preach and pray relying on our own strength! How sad it is when our hearts and lives can be so cold and unmoved about the most glorious message in the world, of Jesus' love for sinners and his desire that they come to know him and live for his glory!!



Our greatest need in the present time and at all times, is to know and love Christ deeply from the heart, and to proclaim Him passionately, in the power of the Holy Spirit to the lost communities where God has placed us. Let us cry out to our Father in heaven together with one voice and one mind for such a work to be done.

The Lyrics of this great song can help shape our praying and our proclamation of the Gospel in our own lives and in our churches.

*O great God of highest heaven
Occupy my lowly heart
Own it all and reign supreme
Conquer every rebel power
Let no vice or sin remain
That resists Your holy war
You have loved and purchased me
Make me Yours forevermore*

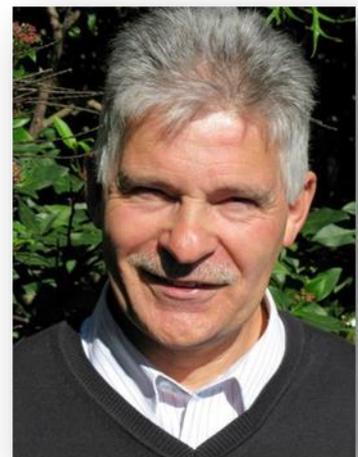
*I was blinded by my sin
Had no ears to hear Your voice
Did not know Your love within
Had no taste for heaven's joys
Then Your Spirit gave me life
Opened up Your Word to me
Through the gospel of Your Son
Gave me endless hope and peace*

*Help me now to live a life
That's dependent on Your grace
Keep my heart and guard my soul
From the evils that I face
You are worthy to be praised
With my every thought and deed
O great God of highest heaven
Glorify Your Name through me*

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Together for The Gospel ,

Matthew



*FCC President
Rev. Matthew Murray
Engadine
Congregational Church*



STATEMENT OF FAITH

Taken from the FCC website: <http://fcc-cong.org/about-us/statement-of-faith>

THE LIVING GOD

God is Almighty, Eternal and Unchanging. He is just and holy, gracious and merciful. He is the Creator and Ruler of all things, exercising sovereign power in Creation, Providence and Redemption, and is deserving of all glory and praise forever.

THE TRINITY

God is One, existing through all eternity in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

THE WORD OF GOD

God's greatness and holiness are such, that without His aid, man can neither understand God nor find the way to a right relationship with Him. In His mercy, however, God has made Himself known. He has done this partially through Creation but more fully and clearly to the people of Israel and explicitly and finally in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Word of God incarnate. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as originally given and divinely preserved, record, interpret and complete God's special revelation to us. We therefore accept the Bible as not merely containing but

Will you make a difference in the life of a Filipino child?

Pre-School Scholarships or Full Child Sponsorships for children living in poverty are available through Caring Community Inc., the social outreach arm of the National Association of Congregational Churches in the Philippines (a WECF member-fellowship), commencing from AU\$30 per quarter (Scholarship).

For more information, please contact CCI's Australian Representative, Kerrian Cartledge (Miranda), or the FCC Office, Ph: (02) 9588 5128.



being the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God written and the final and sufficient authority in all matters of Christian faith and life.

SATAN

Satan is a person, a malignant Spirit, the enemy of Jesus Christ and of the saints, deceiving mankind; and he has been condemned to eternal damnation.

MAN THE SINNER

God created man perfect, but after being tempted by Satan, man by his own free choice, disobeyed God and became a sinner. Man's whole nature is now corrupted by sin and his fellowship with God is broken.

JESUS THE SAVIOUR

God alone can deal with man's sin and bring about a reconciliation with Himself. In God's great plan of Redemption, God the Son became man through the Incarnation. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless human life and taught with divine authority. He suffered and died in the place of sinners, bearing their sin and its guilt and punishment. He thus sets free all believers from the domination of Satan and the corruption of their own sinful nature, and removes from them forever sin's lasting consequences.

GRACE OF GOD

God, by His Grace, forgives and reconciles to Himself all who turn to Him in true repentance, turning from sin and trusting in Christ's atoning death. God imputes to them the righteousness of Christ Himself and adopts them as His children.

THE RISEN LORD

The Lord Jesus Christ was shown to be the Son of God by His teaching, by His miracles and by His bodily resurrection from the dead. He has ascended in power and glory to the presence of God where He now pleads on behalf of those who call upon Him in truth.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, must work in a man before he can enter Salvation. He leads the sinner into an awareness of his sinfulness and brings him to repentance and trust in Christ. He brings to birth in him a new and eternal life and, by His continuing work, develops in this new life the fruits of love and holiness.



JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE

The Scriptures affirm that the sinner is justified by faith alone in the finished work of Christ, that is, by His substitutionary death upon the Cross and His resurrection from the dead. The works of men and the traditions of the visible Cross are of no avail in the Salvation and Justification of men.

THE VISIBLE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

God is bringing all human history to a climax which will be marked by the personal bodily return to the earth of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory.

JESUS THE JUDGE

God has appointed Jesus as Judge and there will be a final judgement. Those who are saved will be raised in a glorified body and enjoy eternally and to the full the presence of their Lord in heaven. Those who have rejected Christ will also be raised and banished from God forever in hell.

THE ONE CHURCH

All who have been personally redeemed with the precious Blood of Christ and upon whom God has bestowed His righteousness as a free gift, belong to Christ. They alone may rightly be called Christians. They alone are members of the one universal and eternal Church which is the Body of Christ.

THE GATHERED CHURCH

Each local church is a fellowship of believers gathered by Christ and under His sole, sufficient and supreme authority. Through Him, as Head of the Church, it has direct access to God and enjoys fellowship with other Congregations of His people in a unity which transcends all barriers.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Holy Spirit gives many different gifts to equip all God's people for ministry, in order to build up the Body of Christ, and He determines what is given to each believer. A gift is to be valued in the Church according to its contribution to the common good.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Every Christian is called to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love his neighbour as himself. Therefore, all are to live godly lives, doing all things to the glory of God. The indwelling Holy Spirit makes this new life a reality as they yield themselves to Him.



THE SACRAMENTS

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ as a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace. Where one who confesses faith in Christ is baptised, the sacrament is seen as an outward and visible sign of newness of life through faith in Christ on the part of the candidate.

Or

Where an infant of confessing parents is baptised, the sacrament is seen as an outward and visible sign of the Grace of God that works in the life prior to the response of faith, calling the one baptised to grow up into Christ and put on Christ.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ and is to be observed in the churches for a perpetual remembrance and showing forth of the sacrifice of Christ, the spiritual nourishment of believers and a sign of their communion with one another.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

We affirm the obligation to fulfil the Commission given to the Church by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples of all nations.

FCC DOLLAR HABIT

For FCC Ministries:

Home Mission, World Mission
and Theological Training

1 January, 2016 to 14 September, 2016

\$7,529.63

Thank you for your support!



MARY ANN MORRISON



*Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help,
whose hope is in the Lord his God – Psalm 146:5*

I grew up in North Uist. My father forfeited a stable livelihood with British Rail during the depression years to care for his ageing father or I most likely would have grown up on mainland Scotland or England; but God makes no mistakes.

My parents, being God-fearing as were most of the island people, had me christened in the Church of Scotland, sent me to Sunday School and took me to Sunday and weekly church services. I can remember, at the age of eight, sitting beside my mother in the weekly prayer meeting and being surreptitiously supplied with “pan drops” by the dear ladies behind me. One of my most treasured memories is of sitting round the fire on a Sunday evening with my family, singing psalms, paraphrases and hymns.

The Word of God was faithfully taught in school both in English and in our native Gaelic language. Our Senior Bible Class was taught by the minister, and what a precious wealth of knowledge we gleaned and retained. As we met up with the local missionary in his travels, we could expect him to question us on our knowledge of the Word of God. We were also encouraged to attend the weekly cottage meetings for the elderly and the housebound.

Later, I came to know that the Gaelic translation of the Bible is very close to the Hebrew, and, when I worked in the Middle East, I was intrigued by the countless similarities between the language and cultural habits of the Israelis and Arabs and my own.

The highlight of the church calendar was the biannual Communion, again so like the Jewish Passover, although shorter. Thursday was the Fast day when offices closed, fishermen drew up their nets and creels and only necessary work was engaged.

Visiting ministers came to preach at the services and friends came to worship and have fellowship. People used to walk for miles from the Sollas area, across hills and moors, stop with friends for refreshments and return home in the long summer evening when daylight remained until 11 pm.



Friday was testimony time, when one of the brethren shared a verse of scripture and the officiating minister would give a short exposition of the text. Afterwards there would be an opportunity given to the men present for comment and testimony.

Saturday was preparation day for "ascending the mountain" and Sunday was communion day when the people sat at the Lord's table. Monday was thanksgiving day and the descent from the "heavenlies" to work out Christian witness in everyday living. Oh, the sorrow of heart (an cianalas) as we left the "mountain top," even when I was only an adherent of the church.

As I looked at the communicants sitting at the table from my place out with the fold, my heart would be overwhelmed with a lonely sadness. I did not realise that the Holy Spirit was gently nudging me towards commitment. I had never questioned the reality of God - His sovereignty, His holiness and His righteousness. I had learned about these things from childhood at the feet of men of God. Although I new the letter of the law, I had not realised my lostness or ever understood God's love and mercy.

So I grew up, one of a family of seven, as carefree and happy as a lark, surrounded by friends and family, a happy music-loving people with simple pleasures, lots of hard work, plenty of reading material to keep us in touch with our past, our present and foreseeable future, and, unconsciously, with the Lord shaping our lives.

Not only was I born during the depression era, but, when I was ten the Second World War burst upon us. The cream of our youth had become involved and in some instances gave their lives to overcome the evil that dominated Europe and threatened the world. We who were left had to double our efforts and live with the goodbyes. Over the radio came news of atrocities and the holocaust of six million Jews. My heart wept for them. Many prayed and God in his mercy granted the victory to the allied forces.

In 1950, I married Archie Morrison, who had just completed two years of military service in Malaysia. Two years later, when I was seven months pregnant with Fiona, our only child, Archie became critically ill with a chest complaint and spent over three years in hospital. At that time he made a promise: if he recovered, he would give his life to the Lord. All I could think at the time was: "I have never done anything for God. How can I ask for His help now?" I had no conception of the unconditional love and mercy of our Lord.



As we struggled through these years, many were praying for us, loving us and helping us.

After a major operation, Archie came home in good health and we settled down to make up for lost time, recover our finances and enjoy life with only a superficial acknowledgment of the God who had made it possible. Mercifully, He had chosen us and the “Hound of heaven” was still on our trail.

In 1957, a Faith Mission team came to Lochmaddy. I had always been interested in missionary stories, the lives of the Covenanters and those who had made Scotland great, but I showed very little interest in the Faith Mission preachers, except to ensure they had the correct teaching at their children’s meetings as Fiona was attending with the village children. When Archie heard the preachers, he was probably reminded of his earlier promise and this would have accounted for his desire to have me attend the meetings.

At my very first meeting, I heard a sermon on the text: “There shall by no means enter into it, anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” (Rev. 21:27). That night, we both entered God’s Kingdom and immediately became involved in the local church.

I shall never forget the sense of God’s presence that pervaded Lochmaddy. It was an awesome presence, but there was with it a sense of security, love and joy. We had been set free but we also felt sorrow for those who were unaware of the Divine gift or their need of it. My brother, John, used to comment on how happy I looked but I was quite unconscious of my outward appearance. I was filled with love, God’s love that reached out to everyone, particularly to His people. It was a great delight to meet with them, talk about our Lord and study His Word. Prayer was effortless and tears of joy and gratitude often flowed.

I was now spiritually alive and sensitive to others in a new and caring way. It began to grieve me, as it still does, to hear God’s name and character miscalled. Secular music and worldly events now seemed strangely out of place. I had three years of heaven on earth. Communions, evangelistic meetings and prayer meetings were our deepest pleasure. Our souls could hardly contain the sense of joy and wonder. But even in the midst of all this, there was an estrangement from family members who could not understand what had come over me.

One morning in May, 1961, Archie and Donnie went out to lift their lobster



creels. Their boat was wrecked in heavy seas and they were both ushered into eternity. I had seen death before but I never knew what it meant until now. I cried out to God so many "Whys?" and each time He answered me from his infallible Word, which He in love and mercy had implanted in my heart.

I had lost not only my dear husband after eleven short years of marriage, but my beloved brother-in-law, Donnie, who had been so supportive of us. In addition to this, there was the pain of Fiona, our daughter, and Nan, Donnie's widow and the loss to Catherine and Margaret, her daughters, who were too young to comprehend it. And so I asked, "Why us?"

On the day Archie was buried, God said to me, "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24). It was years later before I could understand what God was saying to me through this scripture.

At the age of seventeen, Fiona had to leave home to do Nursing Training but she was not yet saved. She knew the Bible as I had done in my teenage years, but had made no Christian commitment. My brother-in-law was amazed at my grief on the day Fiona left. He wondered how my grief for Archie could be surpassed, but Archie had gone into the Saviour's presence and Fiona was facing life in a sinful world without a Saviour. As I prayed for her salvation, I promised God that I would do whatever He required of me. Shortly afterwards, Fiona was challenged by the gospel and committed her life to Christ.

Then the Lord spoke to me through His Word regarding the promise I had made and it could not have been much plainer: "Hearken, O daughter, consider and incline your ear: forget your father's house and your own people." (Psalm 45:10).

At that age, I could not believe that God was calling me into full-time work so I held back. I was afraid to leave the so-called security of my family and spent six barren years reasoning with God. However, His plans cannot be thwarted through our disobedience and His Spirit convicted me through a godly Faith Mission preacher.

The text on that occasion was from Deuteronomy 11:27-28: "I set before you a blessing and a curse..... a blessing if you obey, a curse if you do not obey." I obeyed, but I did so more in fear of the curse than in loving acquiescence. That came later.



In 1975, the year Fiona joined her husband in full-time Christian work, I went into Bible College at the age of forty-six. I knew a lot of doctrine but I was about to apply it personally and operationally. At the end of my first year in college, I went to India for the three months' break but God kept me there for three years!

Living in a foreign country on minimal finances is a pretty effective way of teaching a person to submit to and depend on God. It was in India that I began my defence of the Gospel and I have continued to defend it wherever God has led me over the last twenty years. What I had accepted as God's infallible Word was continually being questioned and misrepresented.

While I was in India, Fiona's first baby, Arlene was born, my sister was critically ill, but recovered, and finally my mother died. But God did not allow me to go home. I was being taught the price of forgetting my father's house and beginning to understand something of what it means to love the Lord with all one's heart. He promised never to leave me and He has kept that promise, delivering me from fear while taking me time and again into areas of political unrest and terrorism.

During my time in India, God gave me the promise that He would send me to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Sixteen years were to pass before I arrived there. I was always being taught that "obedience is better than sacrifice." In communist West Bengal and Ethiopia, troubled Ireland, militant Islamic Sudan, Egypt and Jordan and Israel's terrorist Westbank, I was called upon to defend the Gospel and try to correct erroneous teaching. Invariably the most serious stumbling blocks were in the area of leadership, where men and women were attempting to usurp the glory of God.

In each country, I have worked as volunteer in areas where I have been able to relate closely with people and have had opportunities to tell them about God's provision and plan in Jesus Christ.

Over the last three years, the Lord has led me into a work of specific intercession - a hidden work. He asks me to pour out His love into a specific situation and usually guides me to the exact location. This has involved me in the Westbank of Israel, Galilee, the borders of Lebanon, Cairo, Heiriopolis, Egypt and five and a half months in Jordon, including the borders of Iraq and Syria.



As I look at the situation with physical eyes, it seems not only improbable but impossible. But I have come to understand now that prayer is predominantly a matter of the will. It has very little to do with emotions because they fluctuate and are undependable. I have to study the Word of God and claim His promises through the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a marvellous and comprehensive textbook, so I persevere in obedience knowing that the One for whom nothing is impossible and in whose hand is the heart of every ruler, is at work.

I do not need to know the results - He is faithful who has promised and one day all will be revealed. I only know that as I pray His love into an area of need, however hopeless it may seem, my heart overflows and weeps and I begin to experience what it means to be a co-worker with God.

In the Uist awakening, we discovered the winsome God who fills people's hearts with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." But trials are part of the Christian life as well and when the protective hedge is removed, how many of us are able to say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:15).

In His graciousness, He has chosen us and given us the opportunity to follow Him into the sphere of service which He has prepared specially for us.

To glorify and enjoy Him for ever is our purpose for living, and "in all things He must have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18). I shall never cease to be grateful to the eternal and loving God for calling me to be among His chosen ones. Praise be to Him!

*Kindly used with the permission of Mrs Fiona Aiken
(Mary Ann Morrison's Daughter)*

*Taken from
"When God Came Down - an account of the North Uist Revival 1957-58"
Edited by John Ferguson (pp 77-82)*

*Mary Ann's testimony was read at the Thanksgiving Service for her life
and her witness to God's grace by her son-in-law, Rev Robert Aiken.*



PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS INTENSIFIES WORLDWIDE OPEN DOORS 2016 WORLD WATCH LIST

- ❖ North Korea ranked at number one
- ❖ Islamic Extremism the major cause of Persecution
- ❖ Persecution increased the most in Eritrea
- ❖ Religious intolerance in India continues to increase
- ❖ Indonesia the closest country to Australia in the list appears at 43



North Korea ranks number one for the 14th consecutive year in the Open Doors World Watch List, ranking the top 50 countries that persecute Christians. The Hermit Kingdom has ranked number one again as leader Kim Jong Un continues to try and stamp out organised religion in what he views as a challenge to his power.

Although North Korea tops the list, the major source of persecution identified in 36 of the 50 countries on the list, is Islamic Extremism. For this reason Iraq has been ranked second in the World Watch List. Since the late 1990's the Christian population in Iraq has shrunk from over 1.5 million to less than 220,000. Of the Christians who remain, most are displaced in the north east of the country, as a result of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The group has executed many for refusing to convert to their brand of Islam and forced many others to flee. The group still hold large swathes of territory in both Iraq and neighbouring Syria, also appearing in the list and ranked at number five.

While much attention has been given to the self-styled caliphate of the Islamic State, the world's most dangerous terrorist organisation, Boko Haram, has also impacted rankings. Gaining





notoriety after the kidnapping of over 200 school girls in Chibok, the group is responsible for more murders over the last 12 months than the Islamic State. Boko Haram's insurgency has resulted in a rank at number 12 for Nigeria, where the group is based and a rank of 49 in Niger due to cross-border attacks.

Number three on the World Watch List is Eritrea, labelled by many as 'the North Korea of Africa.' The small nation broke away from Ethiopia in 1991 in a bloody civil war. Since this time, President Afewerki, has maintained a brutal and oppressive reign imprisoning anyone considered to be a dissenter, Eritrea saw the largest score increase in this year's list. Afghanistan appears at number four and has been battling a continued insurgency from the Taliban. Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Iran and Libya round out the top ten.

While much attention is given to Islamic Extremism in the media, other forms of persecution such as Hindu extremism in India, have also risen sharply. India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has been criticised for largely ignoring violence towards religious minorities. Christians have suffered particularly through forced conversion ceremonies. Reportedly in some circumstances these ceremonies were on a scale of up to 400 people at a time, occurring in areas near the city of Varanasi. This year, India ranks at number 17.

Also of notable inclusion in the list is one of Australia's closest neighbours, Indonesia. Rising in the list this year to 43, up from 47 last year, Indonesia saw a spate of attacks on churches in October. One church was burned down while several others were closed due to a lack of proper registration. This registration can often be held up by local authorities in an attempt to curb the growing number of Christians in the country.

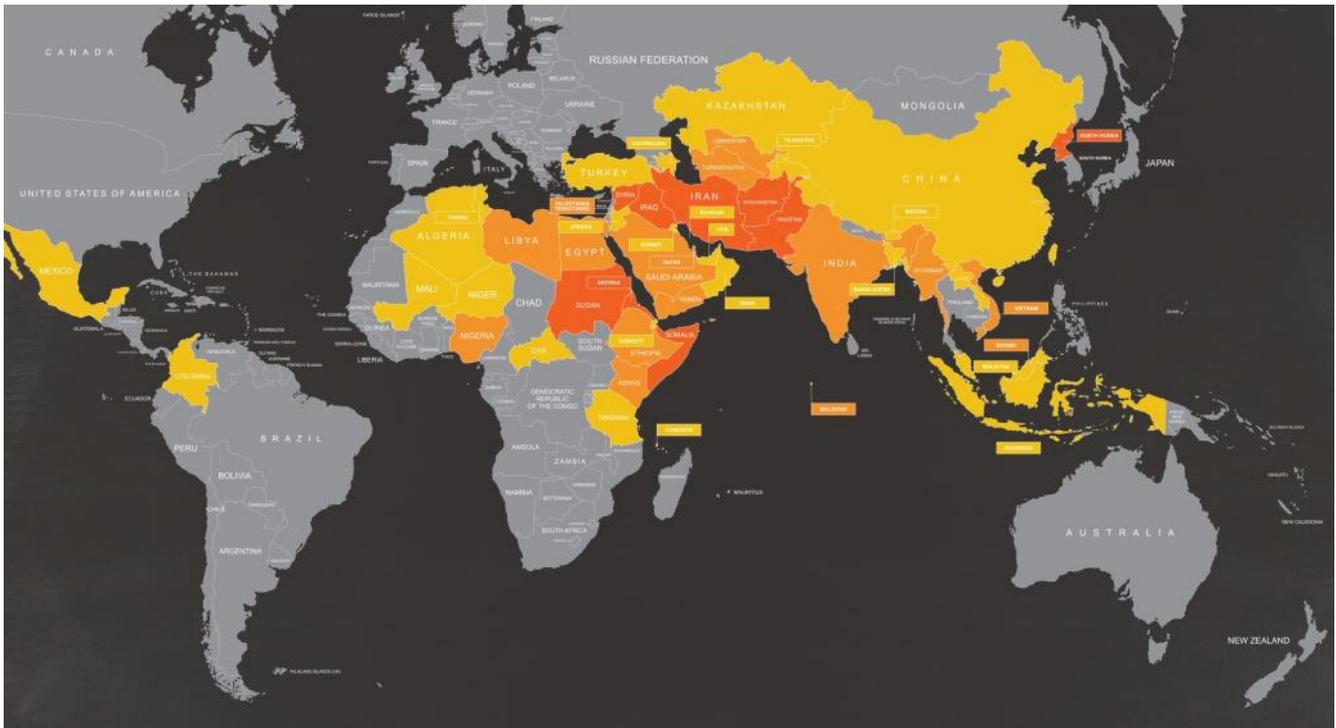


The 2016 World Watch List has also revealed a continued escalation of hostility towards Christians worldwide. Analysts working for Open Doors who compile the list have said that scores have increased on average by two and a half points while the entry score for the list has increased by three points.



They have also pointed out that while the top of the list is dominated by North African and Middle Eastern countries, persecution is rising rapidly in Central Asia. Many former communist countries who now have issues with extremists fighting abroad in countries like Syria and Iraq, have started aggressively monitoring all religious activity. This has meant increased scrutiny of Christian gatherings and a crackdown of freedom of religious expression.

The full World Watch List of 50 countries is available for free on the Open Doors website www.opendoors.org.au. Open Doors is a charity that provides support to Christians facing persecution in over 60 countries worldwide. It was started over 60 years ago when organisations founder, Brother Andrew author of "God's Smuggler," smuggled Bibles into the then Soviet Union.



OpenDoors®
**WORLD
WATCH LIST**
2016 MAP

THE 50 MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRIES TO FOLLOW JESUS.

- | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. North Korea | 11. Yemen | 21. Qatar | 31. Tajikistan | 41. Kuwait |
| 2. Iraq | 12. Nigeria | 22. Egypt | 32. Tunisia | 42. Kazakhstan |
| 3. Eritrea | 13. Maldives | 23. Myanmar | 33. China | 43. Indonesia |
| 4. Afghanistan | 14. Saudi Arabia | 24. Palestinian Territories | 34. Azerbaijan | 44. Mali |
| 5. Syria | 15. Uzbekistan | 25. Brunei | 35. Bangladesh | 45. Turkey |
| 6. Pakistan | 16. Kenya | 26. Central African Republic | 36. Tanzania | 46. Colombia |
| 7. Somalia | 17. India | 27. Jordan | 37. Algeria | 47. United Arab Emirates |
| 8. Sudan | 18. Ethiopia | 28. Djibouti | 38. Bhutan | 48. Bahrain |
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SOME REFLECTIONS



Article written by
Rev. Len Kingston

I was delighted to read the remarks of the Rev. Dr Ian Maddock, Senior Lecturer in Theology at SMBC, who spoke recently at the FCC Mission Awareness night at Leichhardt reminding those present of the 'autonomy' of Congregationalists, complemented by our 'interdependence' and that this was a part of our DNA. He used as his point, truths from two significant, historic Congregational documents, The Cambridge Platform, (Cambridge, USA, 1648) and The Savoy Declaration (UK, 1658). His reminder that we have an unchanging biblical foundation that directs

and commands our mission focus gave rise in my spirit to confirm as to why I'm glad to be belong to this part of His Church!

I'm glad first of all for the FCC's understanding of the Scriptures. In our Statement of Faith we read that,

"God's Greatness and holiness are such that, without His aid, man can neither understand God nor find the way to a right relationship with Him. In His mercy, however, God has made Himself known. He has done this partially through Creation and more fully and clearly to the people of Israel and explicitly and finally in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Word of God incarnate. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as originally given and divinely preserved, record, interpret and complete God's special revelation to us. We therefore accept the Bible as not merely containing but being the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God written and the final and sufficient authority in all matters of Christian faith and life."

I'm glad that we are committed to the Word of God as absolutely true, and we are committed to every phrase, and every verse, and every chapter, and every book as having come from God Himself. Martyn Lloyd Jones asked,

"How can we fight the devil? How can we know how we are to live? How can we answer the things we hear, the things we read, and all the subtle suggestions of the devil? Where can I find this truth that I must gird on, as I put on all this armour of God? Where can I find it if I cannot find it in the Bible? Either my foundation is one of sand that gives way beneath my feet, and I do not know where I am, or else I stand on what W. E. Gladstone called 'The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture.'"



I'm glad also for our statement on salvation that says,
"God alone can deal with man's sin and bring about reconciliation with Himself. In God's great plan of Redemption, God the Son became man through the incarnation. Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless human life and taught with divine authority. He suffered and died in the place of sinners, bearing their sin and guilt and punishment. He thus sets free all believers from the domination of Satan and the corruptness of their own sinful nature, and removes from them forever sin's lasting consequences."

The Word of God declares,

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

Sadly, it is commonly believed in our times that all religions are able to show us a path to a spiritual relationship with God. There are variations of expression and terminology in the details of this belief, but the foundational teaching is that all religions are equally acceptable to God. We point out that there is such a thing as "**absolute truth**," and that 'absolute' truth is found in the Bible and is none other than Jesus Christ, the ONLY ONE who can save from sin and set a person free from their bondage!

I'm glad for our understanding of Regenerate Church Membership. We state,

"Each local church is a fellowship of believers gathered by Christ and under His sole, sufficient and supreme authority. Through Him, as Head of the Church, it has direct access to God and enjoys fellowship with other congregations of His people in a unity which transcends all barriers."

Whilst we are more than happy to have visitors and guests at our services – and we should be actively seeking the lost, membership is only open to those who have committed their lives to the Lordship of Christ. The Church Meeting (often wrongly viewed as a 'Business Meeting') gives opportunity for members to express where they believe God is leading the church. **Each church member therefore has the responsibility to listen for God's direction not only for the church but also for themselves** and this is a Congregational Church Meeting working at its best!



I'm glad for our stand on the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual gifts dispensed by the Holy Spirit. We say,

"God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, must work in a man before he can enter Salvation. He leads the sinner into an awareness of his sinfulness and brings him to repentance and trust in Christ. He brings to birth in him a new and eternal life and, by His continuing work, develops in this new life the fruits of love and holiness."

On Spiritual Gifts the statement clearly spells out that,

"The Holy Spirit gives many different gifts to equip all God's people for ministry, in order to build up the body of Christ, and He determines what is given to each believer. A gift is to be valued in the Church according to its contribution to the common good."

Well-known reform pastor and writer, John Piper, on writing an article on "A Passion for Christ-Exalting Power" quoted Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the need for revival and baptism with the Holy Spirit as follows:

"I am asserting that you can be a believer, that you can have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, and still not be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . . The baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that is done by the Lord Jesus Christ, not by the Holy Spirit. . . . Our being baptized into the body of Christ is the work of the Spirit [that's the point of 1 Corinthians 12:13], as regeneration is his work, but this is something entirely different; this is Christ's baptizing us with the Holy Spirit. And I am suggesting that this is something which is therefore obviously distinct from and separate from becoming a Christian, being regenerate, having the Holy Spirit dwelling within you."

Without doubt we need the empowering of the Holy Spirit in these days or else we are left with a deal of dead orthodoxy. Lloyd-Jones also writing in his book, "**Great Doctrines of the Bible**" and particularly in the chapter entitled "**Further reflections on the Baptism of the Spirit**," wrote this of Jonathon Edwards – (Jonathan Edwards was a revivalist preacher, philosopher, and Congregationalist Protestant theologian. Like most of the Puritans, he held to the Reformed theology):

". . . Now Jonathan Edwards was probably one of the greatest minds – I say it advisedly – that the world has ever known. He is certainly the greatest brain America has ever produced, a



brilliant, outstanding philosopher, the last man in the world to be carried away by false emotionalism. Indeed, he wrote a great treatise on the subject, called "**The Religious Affections**," to teach people how to differentiate between the work of the Spirit and the carnality that often simulates the work of the Spirit."

So Jonathan Edwards was the last man who was likely to go astray at this point. This is what he says:

"As I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view, that was for me extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God as mediator between God and man and His wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. The grace that appeared so calm and sweet appeared also great above the heavens, the person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent and an excellency great enough to swallow up all thoughts and conceptions, which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour, which kept me a greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated, to lie in the dust and to be full of Christ alone, to love Him with a holy and a pure love, to trust in Him, to live upon Him, to serve Him, and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure with a divine and heavenly purity."

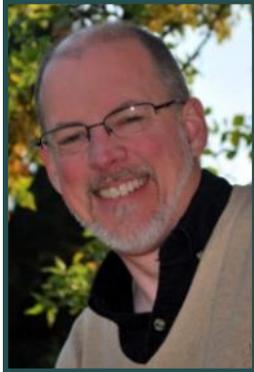
Seems to sum up that which is written in the handbook of Congregationalism by Dexter, quoting Henry Martyn, 1821-1890. He states,

"It is next noticeable that the gift of the Holy Spirit was not confined to apostles or disciples, but was shared by every member. 'All were with one accord in one place;' and 'it sat upon each of them;' and 'they were filled with the Holy Ghost.'"

Rev Len Kingston
FCC General Secretary 1982-1993



BANKING ON THE WORD'S AUTHORITY



*By John Kimball,
CCCC Director of Church Development,
CCCC USA*

The CCCC is a family that treasures the Word of God— there are no two ways about it. Many of our family members have come from different streams into the Conference, some of whom have had to fight to defend and hold to the Word's authority. I am one of those. The words of our first faith statement, "We believe the Bible consisting of the Old and New Testament, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God written," give me both great comfort and challenges me to action.

I don't know about you, but there was a season when I unwittingly flirted with some dangerous ground. I was so consumed with the articulation and defense of sound doctrine that I was becoming ineffective as a pastor. I spent more time arguing about the Faith than I did applying it— and the lack of kingdom fruit was noticeable. Then came the day when God spoke to my heart about the Word's authority, and everything changed. I'm reminded of the great quote from Charles Spurgeon, "Defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion! Unchain it and it will defend itself."

In my life, my pastoral ministry, and now my work in both Church Development and Church Planting, I have come to realize that my role is not to defend the Faith or to argue the Word as much as it is to exercise it in all its authority and let it produce its own fruit. The Word of God is authoritative. It is, as the writer of Hebrews attests, "...living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, ESV).

I certainly still respond to questions, make clarifications, and correct erroneous ideas with the Word, but I now do so in the process of helping people to



literally live out its teaching in their own lives. As I hear people espouse the Word, I've learned to listen and ask "to what end?" I've met many Christians, pastors and whole congregations that joyfully declare their allegiance to Christ and His Word, but who in the next breath express concern that they do not see people coming to Christ, can't seem to overcome conflicts, and/or are otherwise worried about the future of their churches. It is one thing to give mental assent to the Bible's truth; it is entirely another to live according to its authority. How that changes everything! We pray expecting God to answer and actively watch for it. We witness anticipating the Redeemer will draw people to himself. We preach, teach and discipline fully presuming that the Holy Spirit will align people's hearts with his own. We mediate and reconcile in the power of God-sourced forgiveness. We rear leaders confident that they will not default to a "holy board of directors" but rather will actually propel the church into Christ's harvest field. We bank on the Word's actual authority.

I am so thankful for the CCCC family and her commitment to the Word of God. But we are more than just a community that espouses the Bible's truth: we live it with full expectation regarding its transformative power. And praise Jesus – it has never lost that power!

*Permission to reprint this article was kindly given by
Rev. Dr Ron Hamilton, Conference Minister
of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference
(CCCC), USA*

Bishop J. C. Ryle:

What a mine of daily comfort there is in the thought that we have an Advocate with the Father who never slumbers or sleeps, whose eye is always upon us, who is continually pleading our cause, and obtaining fresh supplies of grace for us, who watches over us in every company and place; and never forgets us, though we in going to and fro doing our daily business, cannot always think of Him.

We have a great High Priest in Heaven who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who bids us pour out our hearts before Him, and come to Him for grace to help in time of need."



CHARLES BENSON BARNETT

“The Word is with us the ultimate and infallible authority for guidance in all conduct and belief. We hold to the whole Word of God . . . our Lord’s Word is plain and insistent, ‘Go ye into all the world’ and we desire that as far as possible our hands shall be pure from the blood of all men.” C. Benson Barnett, *Annual Report, 1916* (Brammall, 2016, p.52)



Charles Benson Barnett was born on 4 December, 1869, at Port Cygnet, Tasmania (Australia), a small township on the Huon River. He was commonly known as Benson.

His grandparents, William and Martha Barnett and their four children, arrived in Tasmania in 1833 as pioneer settlers. Although never ordained, William was soon officiating as a preacher, pastor and missionary; while he was a staunch Congregationalist, he also worked well with other independent churches.

Benson’s parents, Henry and Rebecca Barnett (nee Cane), were members of the Davey Street Congregational Church, Hobart, where Benson attended Sunday School. He was the fifth of ten children, but not all survived childhood. He excelled academically, winning scholarships to enable him to complete his education, and graduated as dux of Christ’s College in 1888 with an Associate of Arts degree (2nd Class honours). He was also a very keen and accomplished sportsman and during his final year at Christ’s College, where he was school captain, he “excelled in athletics, cricket and Australian football, being captain of both the cricket and football teams.” (ibid. p.13) As a young man, he was actively involved in the ministries of the Davey Street Congregational Church, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Christian Endeavour Union where he represented his church. These three bodies “were to become his keen supporters in prayer and finance during his missionary service with the China Inland Mission (CIM).” (ibid. p.14)

Benson’s interest in China commenced during his high school days and “as early as 1887, he gave an interesting and well-received paper at the YMCA’s gospel temperance meeting, on ‘The Chinese: Their Manners and Customs.’” (ibid. p.14)



In 1890, Hudson Taylor, the founder of CIM, toured Australia to provide information about his work and to recruit missionaries for cross-cultural Gospel ministry. Twenty-year-old Benson Barnett, recently graduated from university, attended Taylor's meetings on 19 and 20 September, and "was immediately confirmed in his thinking that God was directing him to China." (ibid. p.15)

About the beginning of 1893 he enrolled in Hope Lodge at Belair in the Adelaide Hills (which was renamed Angas Missionary Training College in 1898) for theological and cross-cultural missionary training. He developed a firm friendship with the Principal, Lockhart Morton, "and Barnett was later to emulate many of Lockhart Morton's principles for his college: interdenominational training, pre-eminence given to the Bible, rigorous preparation for cross-cultural work, serious commitment to prayer, wide-ranging practical ministry components, and unbending faith in God's financial provision, without soliciting support from others." (ibid. p.16)

On completion of his training, Benson headed to China, where he served with CIM from late 1894 to 1907. While there, he was ordained as a Congregational minister in the London Missionary Society (LMS) Chapel, Shanghai, in October, 1899. His missionary service encompassed the first Sino-Japanese War and the perilous time of the Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901), when 239 Christian missionaries (79 from CIM) and tens-of-thousands of Chinese Christians were martyred. During the latter, he remained in inland China, and with other young CIM men, helped rescue many missionaries from the hands of the rebels.



Charles Benson Barnett married Elizabeth Irvine Ferguson on 4 October, 1900, at the Seaman's Chapel in Yokohama, Japan. They had met in 1899 when she arrived in China following her missionary training in Adelaide. After their engagement, they were separated due to the Boxer Rebellion but were eventually reunited in Shanghai; Elizabeth had been moved there with others for their safety.

During his years in China, in addition to his excellent linguistic skills and effective Bible teaching ministry, Benson also developed medical and dentistry skills. He administered basic medical help and carried



homeopathic remedies (and the good news of Jesus Christ) with him. He taught himself to extract abscessed teeth without the use of anaesthetic; this treatment was in high demand and he was often preferred to the overseas dentist working in the area. His medical ministry included significant work with opium addicts, who came to him to break their habit, and he offered "basic medical help to those suffering from malaria and various other febrile diseases . . . Evangelism, however, was always an inseparable part of the therapeutic relationships he fostered." (ibid. p.27)

Benson and Elizabeth eventually returned to Australia with their children, Rita and Allan, in May, 1907, and reluctantly resigned as CIM missionaries. Elizabeth's health had deteriorated significantly after Allan's birth due to 'tropical sprue,' an intestinal inflammatory disease. Benson pastored Congregational Churches in Launceston, Latrobe, Don and Forth, Tasmania, and Brunswick in Melbourne, Victoria (from June, 1910). "The picture of Barnett's four years at Brunswick is that of an energetic evangelist, a preacher, a community activist and a supporter and strategist of overseas missions." (ibid. p.30) He served on the councils of CIM and LMS, and represented the Congregational Churches on the Victorian Alliance, a temperance and prohibitionist society. He also lobbied against increased gambling in the Brunswick area.

In 1915, he became the Assistant Director and subsequently, Acting Principal of Angas Missionary Training College, Adelaide. But despite his commitment, enrolments fell during that year due to World War 1 and before the year was out, the main college premises were requisitioned by the government to serve as an Infectious Diseases Hospital. During his time at the college, he frequently preached in Adelaide Congregational Churches and "headed up an intentionally interdenominational committee to start planning meetings for the deepening of the spiritual life, which resulted in the first Keswick Convention in Adelaide in September, 1915." (ibid. p.32)

Barnett received several calls to return to pastoral ministry, but was convinced of the need to establish a Bible and missionary training college in the Eastern states, specifically in Sydney. With very little money and none to achieve this goal, he moved to Sydney with his family in January, 1916, where they were accommodated in a borrowed house.

By mid-February, 1916, Benson had gathered a group of eight evangelicals



who shared his vision, but although his thinking had been confirmed, he had no offers, building or finances. He found a very suitable property for lease in Croydon named 'Ooma,' "a large, elegant house only thirty years old, in good repair, on a substantial piece of land, close to public transport, and available for lease from a deceased estate at a very reasonable price." (ibid. p.45) (£132 per annum) After renting for ten years, the College purchased the property for £2,500.

The new 'Australasian Missionary and Bible College' commenced on 15 April, 1916; later that year, the Board of Reference changed the name to 'The Missionary and Bible College.' It commenced with just two students - Ben Corlett (a New Zealander) and Roy Seaman (from South Australia); five more full-time students began their studies in the second half of the year. Also during April, 1916, Benson Barnett was considered for a call to pastor the Leichhardt Congregational Church. However, Canadian-born Rev. R. Stevenson was preferred, but he notified the church in August that he wouldn't be accepting the position. In September, 1916, Benson was invited to, "look after Leichhardt Congregational Church for the next nine months. He became its interim pastor and preacher, and finished up pastoring the church until 1937 - twenty-one years! Because of his longstanding principled refusal to use public transport on Sundays, a horse and buggy were purchased in February, 1917, to convey him to Leichhardt and to bring visiting lecturers from the railway station. Shortly after, the Board decided to require all the residential students to attend the Sunday evening services with their principal there." (ibid. p.56) The students fondly named him 'The Chief.'

While 1918 saw the end of World War 1, it also ushered in a serious problem for Australian churches and theological colleges. ". . . Benson Barnett was beginning to detect . . . a decreasing respect for biblical authority and a growing movement towards liberalism. This he called the 'dethroning' of the Word of God from its rightful place of pre-eminence. What was beginning to happen in Australia was the local manifestation of the rise of theological liberalism worldwide . . . Most of the mainline Protestant denominations succumbed to it to varying degrees." (ibid. p.66)

Benson and other evangelicals were greatly concerned and he urged the college's supporters to pray for its "witness to the Bible's inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency and authority." (ibid. p.67) His response included the



suggestion of a Bible Convention designed to refute unbiblical, liberal ideas – “small conferences on ‘fundamentalism’ were held as early as 1921 in Sydney, and 1922 in Melbourne.” (ibid. p.67) In 1918, he prepared a 39 page booklet in which he “made an urgent and impassioned plea for Christians, and clergy in particular, to hold the line on the orthodox, biblical tenets of the faith which were fast being eroded by modernism.” (ibid. p.67) Published by the college, it’s title was ‘Authority or Anarchy – Which?’

As liberalism wreaked havoc in denominational theological colleges, “Australian evangelicalism in the 1920s and 1930s was in many ways safeguarded by the Bible Colleges; and the long tenure of some of their principals – Barnett (SMBC) and Nash (Melbourne Bible Institute, now MST) each served for over 20 years – ensured consistent protection against anti-evangelical trends. In fact, the young college at Croydon became something of a rallying point and meeting place for conservative evangelicals, or ‘fundamentalists,’ given a vacuum of leadership from the often suspect theological colleges.” (ibid. p.68)

As the 1930s progressed, Benson Barnett’s health failed. “Thirteen pioneering years in China, followed by several pastorates and almost twenty fruitful but anxious years at the helm of the college as well as pastoring the church at Leichhardt, were beginning to take their toll on the ‘Old Chief.’ Benson and Elizabeth Barnett had poured themselves out unstintingly in loving service and discipleship, and Benson’s health was deteriorating. Exhaustion was to be expected, but now he began developing some early symptoms of a more insidious foe: Parkinson’s disease, with its progressive tremor, shuffling gait, loss of balance, forgetfulness and increasing weakness . . . by 1934, the principal, although only 65 years old, was making heavy weather of his multiple responsibilities. He made it clear that he was physically unable to continue the same volume and pace of work as he had previously.” (ibid. p.93-94)

In 1937, Benson Barnett’s failing health saw him resign from the pastorate at Leichhardt and cease teaching at the college. His illness was so severe that he moved off the campus early in 1938 to receive nursing care. He died in March, 1941, and was buried on 4 April from his beloved Leichhardt Congregational Church.



Despite difficulties at times, the college went from strength to strength with an expanding student body and the purchase of additional properties. In December, 1942, the name was changed to 'Sydney Missionary and Bible College.' Over the decades it has continued to grow and maintain its fine evangelical tradition – it is the “oldest interdenominational Bible college in Australia.” (SMBC website, 2016)

Without question, Rev. Benson Barnett was a faithful, brave, focussed and determined man who stood as a great example for his students; he continues to be an example for us today. His life in China was not easy – during their years of service, Benson and Elizabeth buried their eight-month-old son, Hal, and they both contracted potentially deadly diseases. We can be inspired by Benson Barnett's life, for we have the same Gospel, the same Great Commission and the same Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. The task might seem overwhelming at times, but like Benson, God will equip us for it. As we read in 2 Timothy 1:7, “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (NIV)



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Leichhardt Congregational Church website: <http://www.lccsydney.org.au/history>

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