



CHRISTMAS IN TROUBLESOME TIMES

by Dr Dwight D Swanson

There is one particular Christmas of my childhood that comes to mind every year. I must have been 12 or 13 years-old that year of multiple Christmases. Going 'home' for Christmas, for my family, meant a 400-mile journey on pre-motorway roads. So, we would have our family celebration the night before, and pile the seven of us plus gifts into the car, and head to the grandparents. My memory tells me we drove through snow most the way; but the reward was a week-long snow-time, and the gathering of both parents' clans. But, what stands out in my mind is sitting alone in a darkened family room, just before the trip, with only the lights of the present-laden tree glowing, with feelings of great warmth and anticipation. That moment is my definition of the feelings of 'Christmas spirit'.

Now the 'run-up' to Christmas starts earlier every year, it seems. Store decorations can be seen by September. Most of us probably wouldn't notice if it were not for the 'Christmas Watch' brigade who informs us, with disgust, of these early sightings. Then begins the raging debate on social media about when it is acceptable to start playing Christmas music. This, like so much of today's public life, is polarized between those who will not allow it before the First of December and those who proudly begin the music in October. Whatever the case may be, however, it *must* be Christmas when the department store Christmas adverts come out!

At whatever point the preparations are allowed to begin, the goal seems to be to invoke those warm and comforting feelings of cosy fire-side Christmas spirit. In troubled times such as ours the temptation to escape into this comfort-zone is great. It is likely that many who have read this far will be saying to yourselves, 'Where will such cosy feelings come from for me? Where is the comfort-zone?' Good feelings are hard to come by in these times.

But at this season of the Christian year it is precisely the troubled feelings of the first Christmas that we need to remember. It was a time of political upheaval, military occupation, and economic hardship when Joseph and Mary made their journey to Bethlehem. Joseph was coming to terms with the pregnancy of his fiancée; Mary with unexpected pregnancy. The journey would result in a flight to a foreign country for refuge from persecution. And, while there may not have been deep snow, the circumstances were far from comfortable.

We recall these feelings, and mark them as our call to prayer for those in our cities and land and in so many hurting countries around our troubled earth, facing all these hardships and more. Recall; pray; but do not despair.

Let us feel the sorrows deeply, yes—while we also hear again that which was proclaimed by angels as 'good news'. Into the depths of darkness and despondency God's action in Jesus is the announcement of 'peace on earth', and 'great joy for everyone', because 'God is with us'. Indeed, 'nothing is impossible with God'.

Whatever the politicians may say about the days ahead, for good or for ill, the word from the Father of Jesus Christ is Hope.

Dr Swanson is the Co-Director of the Manchester Centre for the Study of Christianity and Islam and a Senior Research Fellow at NTC, Manchester.

Following on from 'Dare to Dream' (2015) and 'Dare 2 Dream' (2017), 'DARE TO GO' is the latest in our series of national conferences. After inspirational gatherings around the theme of dreaming together, we believe the time is right to arise and step out in faith.

Sponsored by the Church of the Nazarene in partnership with Nazarene Theological College DARE TO GO will take place from Thursday 7th May to Saturday 9th May 2020. Sessions will be held in Altrincham Baptist Church - Altrincham is located in Greater Manchester to the South West of the city and is easily accessible by train and tram. For full entry to all 3-days the cost is £50, entry to either Friday or Saturday £30. Full details and registration forms are available on the website - www.daretogo2020.com

Featuring speakers of an international caliber, times of worship, seminars and breakout sessions to dig-down deeper, DARE TO GO is not to be missed.

DARE TO DREAM:

DARE TO GO

Manchester 7-9th May 2020

Dr Tanya Walker is the Dean of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA) and an apologist for RZIM (Ravi Zacharias International Ministries). Tanya speaks internationally as an apologist and raises up future leaders and apologists through OCCA and broader training events.



Dr Tanya Walker

Dr Philip Zimmermann is a social entrepreneur, pastor and church planter and is CEO of Kirche in Aktion (Church in Action) in Germany. Philip has spoken in leadership conferences around the globe to diverse audiences on the subject of leadership, city transformation, marketing, missional church planting and organisational development.



Dr Philip Zimmermann

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Over 500 from nearly 40 countries attended the "Invisible World" Regional Conference held 15th-18th November in Kyrenia, Cyprus. Countries represented included the UK (approx. 50 attended from the UK), Ireland, Norway and Denmark to the West and Russia, Kazakhstan, and Serbia to the East - and many places in between (and also India and Bangladesh). Simultaneous translation was provided in Arabic, French, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Romanian and Russian and main speakers included pastors from Hungary and Nepal. Also taking part were Dr David Graves (General Superintendent - who will be with us in 2020 at our District Assemblies) and Dr Verne Ward (Global Missions Director). Musicians from across the region led in the worship sessions, and workshops and seminars were held dealing with a broad range of topics. Everyone was assigned to a 'Family Group' numbering about 8 people for fellowship, sharing and prayer. The Eastern part of the Region will hold its conference 25th-29th January 2020 in Hyderabad, India. Regional Director, Rev Arthur Snijders - who was one of the main speakers - and his team did a great job in organising the conference and we express our thanks to them.

(Pictured: UK Delegation)



"My first Regional Conference - wow! What an amazing array of people and countries represented; such a diverse range of worship, testimonies and powerful preaching."
Rev Dennis Braham (Gillingham).

"It was a privilege to be able to attend the Conference - a little taste of heaven...meeting brothers and sisters from so many countries...I was blessed, encouraged, and challenged. The wonderful testimonies, God-inspired messages were invigorating...I was challenged watching the videos of those who live in areas where they face persecution and even death because they love Jesus."
Rev Lorraine Bell (Belfast).

"It was amazing to learn from our persecuted brothers and sisters how we might surrender literally everything, and to then focus on building the Kingdom with whatever means are now available. Their passion and wholehearted dedication are inspiring and contagious."
Michelle Dubbledam (Ashton).

"The Conference was a great blessing and I loved meeting the members of my 'Family Group', hearing their amazing testimonies and stories, praying for them and learning to love them. I called them 'my boys'!"
Kath Queen (Carlisle).

"The Regional Conference was an excellent opportunity to bask in the diversity of cultures that make up our church. To witness the Licensing of Ministers from 'Creative Access' countries was a humbling privilege and reminded us of the gravity of our calling to serve."
Rev Carl McCann (South District Superintendent).

"...of all the things I remember perhaps the greatest was in our times of worship when we praised Jesus together with one heart and voice but a multiplicity of languages (cf Revelation 7:9ff). The other parts of the conference were excellent...I am so grateful to be a part of a truly global denomination and would encourage you all, if you ever get the opportunity to join with those in our church from around the world you should grasp it."
Rev Jim Ritchie (North District Superintendent).

PERTH TRINITY PASTOR, Rev Jim Ritchie, reports, "The plan for the new building is to create a 400-seat worship centre which will then be linked to the current building with a glass atrium which will be a reception and fellowship area. The existing church will be fully renovated for children's, youth and community ministry including a new industrial kitchen for the many outreach ministries we have. The vision is to create a first class worship space to serve the church and also to make more room to serve the local community with the love and good news of Jesus.

PERTH NEW BUILDING

"Our current facilities cannot cope with the people and ministries we have, so we believe that God is indeed expanding our tent. We also know this will give us opportunity to do things that we have not yet dreamt about as God will increase and enlarge our future vision too.

"The work is progressing very well and we now have the main steel structures being put in place and by Christmas there really will be a clear picture of what the building will look like as the main frame will be completed by then. It's difficult to have a final completion date; however, we are anticipating that by the summer of 2020 we should either be in or nearly in. All of this will be facilitated and provided for by the grace of God and the faithfulness and generosity of His people."



CAROLS AT COSTA

The Uddingston and Viewpark Church of the Nazarene held a 'Carols at Costa' night on the 9th December. This was well attended by both congregations and by members of the community, with over 45 people hearing the songs and story of the real meaning of Christmas.



GRADUATION

An estimated crowd of nearly 500 attended this year's graduation ceremony held 5th October in The Whitworth Hall of the University of Manchester. A total of 52 graduates were listed which included 5 PhD's, 19 MA's (which is probably the largest group of MA graduates in the history of the College), and 21 BA's. There were also a number of diplomas and certificates awarded. The graduation speaker, Dr Carla Sunberg, is a graduate of NTC and one of the 6 General Superintendents in the Church of the Nazarene. Special recognition and honour was given to Dr Kent Brower who has served the college over the past five-plus decades as Lecturer, Bursar, Academic Dean, Senior Research Fellow, and Vice-Principal. Dr Brower now holds the title of Director of Research. Dr Peter Rae adds the title of Vice-Principal to his existing role of Academic Dean.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIVING

The College continues to celebrate its 75th Anniversary - "75 years of Equipping the Church - 1944-2019". We are part way through the anniversary year and to date over £25,000 has been raised. The goal is to raise £75,000 - there is still some way to go. Please remember the work of our College in your giving and prayers.

Dr Carla Sunberg's academic work completed at NTC "The Cappadocian Mothers" was published in 2018 - with a foreword by Dr T A Noble

THE CAPPADOCIAN MOTHERS
Dedication Exemplified
in the Writings of
Basil, Gregory, and Gregory

CARLA D. SUNBERG
Foreword by T. A. NOBLE

GLOBAL CONFERENCE

NTC-Manchester participation was in evidence at the meetings of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature held 23rd-26th November at the San Diego Convention Centre, California, USA. This is the world's largest gathering of scholars interested in the study of religion with more than 1000 events taking place and with an attendance of some 10,000 scholars. Dr T.A Noble (NTC & NTS) chaired a group session devoted to the theology of T.F. Torrance who was Dr Noble's professor at Edinburgh University, Dr Jacob Lett, who recently completed his doctoral studies under Dr Noble at NTC-Manchester, and is now on the faculty of MidAmerica Nazarene University, read a paper in one of the sessions, and Dr Geordan Hammond chaired several sessions organised by the Manchester Wesley Research Centre based at NTC-Manchester.

GLASGOW LEARNING CENTRE TEAM

DR BRODIE MCGREGOR

serves as Academic Dean at the NTC-GLC and has 4 degrees including a PhD from the University of Edinburgh where he studied under the supervision of Prof Oliver O'Donovan. His thesis title was 'Suffering and Political Thought: A theological consideration of the propriety of suffering as a category in political thought'. Originally from the East End of Glasgow, Brodie's first career was in construction as a quantity surveyor. After deciding to study Theology he completed a BA in theology and then served as a youth pastor in his local Baptist church on the South Side of Glasgow where he continues to worship and is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

DR WES WHITE grew up as a missionary kid in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo where his parents were medical missionaries. He holds a number of degrees including a DMin, and a PhD from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA. After serving as a pastor for 15 years he and his family came to Glasgow to be a part of a church plant. Wes now leads a ministry among refugees and asylum seekers called Upper Room Church. Wes is part of the teaching team for Forge Scotland, at NTC-GLC he teaches Biblical Studies and is the course leader for the MA Theology (Urban Studies) heading up Neopolis - the Scottish Centre for Theology and Ministry in an Urban World.

PAM MELLSTROM serves NTC-GLC as Placement Manager working closely with students on placement throughout the central belt of Scotland and with their placement provider. Pam has BA degrees in Educational Studies and in Informal and Community Education, a SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) in Supervision Studies, and a post graduate certificate in Urban Mission from NTC. For 15 years Pam was involved in community work based at Linlithgow Young People's Project and has held youth work roles in St Michael's Church of Scotland in Linlithgow. She is currently a board member of The Hot Chocolate Trust (a Youth Work organisation) in Dundee.

ALASTAIR FRASER contributes to the GLC as Library Volunteer. He has been faithful to the work for the College in Glasgow over a number of years - during the transitions from International Christian College, to the Scottish School of Christian Mission, and now as the NTC-Glasgow Learning Centre.



Pictured: l-r. W White, A Fraser, P Mellstrom, B McGregor

CHURCH NEWS

80 YEARS IN GILLINGHAM

It was in February 1939 that local businessman and his wife, Mr & Mrs Hales, invited Rev Maynard G. James to lead a campaign in Arden Street, Gillingham. In September 1939 the Calvary Holiness Church was established taking over a Methodist Church on Nelson Road, in which the church has met to the present day. Some 17 pastors have served the church over the years - Rev James M Bell served the longest (1959-1972) and the current pastor is Rev Dennis Braham who has been pastor for the past 5 years.



The 80th Anniversary programme included a Saturday evening banquet at which greetings were brought from Rehman Chishti MP and Rev Carl McCann (DS). (Rev McCann was the preacher on the Sunday).

The programme of the church includes two Sunday services, two mid-week Bible Studies, two weekly coffee mornings, a weekly drop-in serving meals to homeless and vulnerable people, and a night-shelter running from January to March. The church is also home to an African fellowship and a Chinese Church. We thank God for all who have served the Gillingham church over the years - "and the end is not yet!" (Pictures - some of the Gillingham congregation and, group picture (l.to r), Rev Carl McCann (DS), Rev Dennis Braham (pastor), Pam Grunwell (Church Secretary), Rehman Chishri (MP for Gillingham)).



SHANKILL ANNIVERSARY

The Shankill (Belfast) Church of the Nazarene celebrated its 40th Anniversary over the weekend 14th-15th September with special speakers, Rev Lorraine Bell (Belfast) and Rev Albert Griffith (Lisburn). The Salvation Army Belfast Citadel 'Kids Alive Band' (which the pastor, Philip Evans, and his two sons are a part of) along with Aaron Graham (soloist) brought messages in music and song.

It was in 1979 under the leadership of Rev Fred & Evelyn Edgar that the Shankill Road Mission became the Church of the Nazarene. The Edgars were followed by Rev Ron & Betty Thomas when rebuilding work took place. After a 6-year ministry in Troon the Edgars returned to the Shankill in 1988 giving leadership until Rev Edgar's home-call in 2012. Pastor Philip Evans, who had been in fellowship with the Lisburn Church of the Nazarene, became pastor in 2012 and his wife Sharon and their two sons, became part of the Shankill work.



Over the years the Shankill church has been involved in many areas of outreach, and today there is a focus on praying for the community - with a Community Prayer Text Line, and a Community Prayer Hub. We thank God for the leadership and ministry of the Church over the years and for the ongoing work of the church. Pastor Evans says, "We look forward to what God has in store for us as we continue to remember that we are saved to serve the Master." (Pictured: Anniversary Cake and Saturday event held in 'The Spectrum Centre', Shankill Road).

LONGSIGHT TEAM

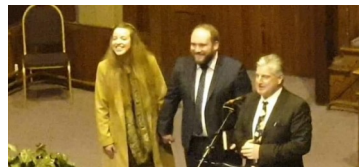
MEGAN INDUCTION

ERSKINE INDUCTION

LISBURN 'KNITTING CIRCLE'



The Longsight (Manchester) ministry team was commissioned and dedicated on Sunday 15th September. The Team, led by Dr Steve Birkinshaw, is responsible for a wide variety of programmes held at the church which include, in addition to the regular ministries, the "Crossroads" Community Café, a 'Memory Café' in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Food Bank, Community Ministries, Youth Work, Discipleship, Prayer, Allotment, Family Ministries, English Lessons, Arts & Crafts and EcoChurch. A recent addition to the programme has been a weekly Night Shelter operated in partnership with Boaz Trust especially for destitute Asylum seekers.



Following an interim ministry and a unanimous call Pastor Sammy Robinson was Inducted to the Megin Memorial Church, Belfast, on Saturday, 23rd November by Rev Jim Ritchie (DS) who also brought the message.

A number took part in the service including Pastor Ben Goodwin (Worship), Rev Tommy Goodwin MBE (St Matthew's, Paisley and RN Chaplain), Rev Danny Rankin (Minister of Strand Presbyterian Church); also taking part, representing the local church, were Gillian Heenan, Karen Porter and Iris Balmer (founder member).



The Erskine church was well filled for the Induction of Rev Jacob Morris on Saturday, 9th November. Led by the District Superintendent, Rev Jim Ritchie, those taking part included Renee Anderson (Church Secretary), Rev Ian Stewart (Port Glasgow) and, Major David Wing (Commanding Officer, Erskine Salvation Army).

Pictured with Rev Ritchie, Rev Jacob Morris, and Dorothee Morris with Hannah. (the Morris' have 3 children, Elias, Miriam and Hannah.)



Part of the Lisburn Church's Oasis (Silver Liners) and monthly missionary group, have been busy knitting - and filling - pencil cases for boys and girls in Romania in support of the 'Project Romania' missionary work of Rev Norman & Linda Patterson. The knitting takes place at home and friends and neighbours are encouraged to be involved. They have also knitted scarves, gloves, socks and hats. This is part of an ongoing ministry for missions which started with the group collecting spectacles and baby clothes for Africa.

Pictures for Longsight & Megin l-r
1. Dr Steve Birkinshaw (Team Leader), Rev Nicole McConkey, Nic Healer (Youth Pastor) Rev Louise Kenyon, Rev Carl McCann (DS)
2. Chloe Robinson, Pastor Sammy Robinson & Rev Jim Ritchie (DS)