



*Network for Revival Prepare Issue 45 – July 2023*

## **We live in an age of deceit – an incentive to pray for Revival**

We live in an age of widespread deception. We need to be alert to this and to pray and work against it. I have written an article about 10 different areas of current deceit, giving some up to date evidence in each one. Here is a very brief summary:

**Deceit in politics:** This has been obvious in British politics, both in England and Scotland, and also in US politics.

**Deceit in policing:** HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary says police are facing one of the biggest crises in living memory.

**Deceit in modern sexual practice:** Society and several main Church denominations are seriously undermining the biblical teaching that sexuality is to be fulfilled in heterosexual marriage.

**Deceit over climate change:** There is fairly widespread climate change denial despite the very strong scientific support for it.

**Deceit of conspiracy theories, false prophets and fake news:** It would be naïve to think there is no possibility of trends towards an elite or world government. But we must avoid paranoia and incredible ideas. I go into this area in some detail.

**Deceit through Artificial Intelligence:** Recent news has conveyed a great deal of concern, including on the part of those involved in using AI, about the dangers inherent in it. The possibility of widespread deceit is part of that concern.

**Sexual deceit in the church:** There has, of course, been a large amount of evidence revealed about sexual abuse amongst clergy and other church leaders. This deceitful behaviour has done enormous damage to the church.

**Theological deceit in the church – Liberal Theology:** I give ten brief criticisms of liberal theology which is leading people unwittingly into harmful beliefs and practices.

**Deceit in the C of E Bishops' statement about their decision over gay marriage:** Despite the ambiguous statement put out by the House of Bishops, it is clear it amounts to de facto approval of gay marriage.

**Deceit of antisemitism and negativism towards Israel:** Jewish people are no more perfect than Gentiles and Israel fails, as do other countries. But the NT is clear: God still has a purpose for the Jewish people and Israel. To deny this is to misinterpret the NT. Antisemitism can only be explained as an unwitting attack on God's purpose.

**How to avoid and overcome deception:** I give 11 brief points.

**Conclusion:** It seems that some Christians are unaware of growing deceit in the world, which is a sign of the End Jesus predicted, and so they can easily be deceived. However, other Christians are very aware of the threat of deceit, becoming somewhat paranoid and vulnerably naïve about it, and so they become deceived, believing what is clearly untrue. Such is the power of the deceit. Either way, people are deceived.

You can read the full article at [We-live-in-an-age-of-Deceit.pdf](https://www.networkforrevival.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/We-live-in-an-age-of-Deceit.pdf)

## **The Lynchburg Revival shows we can pray for local revival**

As part of seeking to prepare our church for major revival, it is encouraging to remember that God can come in brief local revival, as he did in Lynchburg University, Virginia in October 1973. So, alongside our efforts to encourage our church to be radically biblical in the power of the Spirit, we should pray for **local** revival. This is what happened one evening.

The prayer meeting had finished some time ago. But people were still in the building chatting at 10.30am. Suddenly, a university student walked up to the pulpit, weeping and confessing sin. This deep repentance caught the attention of the other people there. Someone started singing. Another person started to play the piano softly. People fell on their knees around the altar and the front pews. Someone else went to pulpit confessing sin. Others followed.

Two hours later phone calls were made to the church leaders. Church members woke up in the night and hurried to the church. There was a strong sense of the presence of God. People stayed at the church from Wednesday night to Saturday morning. No one wanted to leave.

Sometimes many people publicly confessed their sins together. At other times there was a great deal of quiet prayer and weeping.

This short Revival was a taste of the Revival God wants to bring today. It needs to focus on repentance and holiness. The story also shows how we can pray for and expect a “mini-revival” which could have a profound spiritual effect on a local church.

## **Preparing for a church which is radically biblical in the power of the Spirit 5: The Function of Ministry Groups**

In the last edition, we looked at the formation of Ministry Groups, for churchmembers who have completed the discipleship course associated with the church’s biblical vision and have committed themselves to seeking to put that vision into practice by the grace of God. We looked at the Ministry Group as a context where the members seek to prayerfully discern the spiritual gifts of each member. Now we look at how these gifts can be exercised in the Ministry Group.

### **Roles in Ministry Groups**

Paul makes it clear that the church is not to have one “omnicompetent” leader, yet this is the case in many churches. He teaches that the church should have a team of differently-gifted leaders – “Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:11-12). So, it is important for the Ministry Group to have a leadership team: a leader; a teacher; a pastor who encourages care for the members and for local people outside the group; an evangelist who encourages group evangelism; an intercessor who leads the monthly intercession evenings; an administrator and a social organiser. The leader may also be the teacher but this is not always the case.

It is helpful if the church leadership oversees which group a new member joins and keeps a check on the numbers in the groups and on the balance between sexes and age groups, etc. However, there needs to be flexibility in discussion with individuals. The groups are responsible for prayerfully discerning the spiritual gifts of new members and for conveying this information to the elders.

### **Functions of Ministry Groups**

It is good if groups can meet weekly for Bible teaching, fellowship and prayer.

In our Anglican church we gave each group its own mini-parish, a clearly defined area of the official parish, which they were to look after. Obviously, this can be done when there is no formal parish by simply deciding

which local area a particular group should look after. They need to look out for opportunities to care for parishioners outside the congregation who are in need.

They should also be active in evangelism - praying for their neighbours; watching out for new arrivals; contacting neighbours who visit church; distributing leaflets and invitations. They can visit families who have been bereaved or who request Baptism or who are in special need. We asked the groups to have a regular open evening - a normal meeting to which anyone including non-Christians can come. They can also hold evangelistic evenings which can include a talk and discussion, an evangelistic film or DVD, or a book party. There needs to be good communication between the groups and the church leadership about the effects of such activities.

You will find a lot more advice about Ministry Groups on pages 22-28 of [MinistersGuidetoChurchDevelopmentStrategy.pdf](#)

God bless you,

Tony

In Network for Revival God has called us to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." This includes:

- Encouraging people to seek holiness and true biblical discipleship.
- Encouraging people to major on prayer for Revival.
- Encouraging churches to be radically biblical in the power of the Spirit (see [Church Development](#) for information and resources).
- Encouraging people to "Watch!" for the return of Jesus (Mk 13:32-37 – see [Eschatology](#)).