

KERITH COMMUNITY CHURCH



ORIGIN:

In 1881 seven local Christians from the Bracknell Congregational Chapel met for the first time as a new community which formed Bracknell Baptist Church and became part of the Baptist Union. A famous Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, became the first treasurer for the church's building project and also donated money. Their present home, The Kerith Centre, was completed in 1989 and opened on the 31st November. The cost of the project was £3.1 million, 98% came from their own congregation of 400. They are now an Independent Evangelical church and finally left the Baptist Union about 5 years ago. They hold services every Sunday morning at 10am and every other Sunday at 4pm and 6pm.

The name Kerith comes from the name of the Kerith ravine where God provided for Elijah (1Kings 17 v1-6). The name was chosen to represent the miraculous provision of money to build the centre.

One notable leader was Ben Davies 1964 to 2007. Since leaving the Baptist Union women are able to become leaders.

What follows is taken from the Church's Blog.

“We started as Baptists”

Our church has just celebrated its 141st birthday! We read in our records that “*on Sunday 6th November in the year 1881 seven local Christians from Bracknell Congregational Chapel met for the first time as a new community*”.

That new community formed Bracknell Baptist Church, which, from its early days, was a part of the Baptist Union.

A vision to dream big

This connection with the Baptist Union had an early impact on us as a church. Charles Spurgeon, a famous Baptist preacher of the time, became the treasurer for the church's first building project.

Here is a letter he wrote to the church ten years after it started:

"Metropolitan Tabernacle,
March 20, 1891.

Dear Friends,

I intend to give £50 to your scheme at Bracknell as soon as you raise £250. If you will carry out the plan proposed I will give another £100 rather than have it cut down.

God helping us this work can be done and will be -

Yours heartily,

(Signed) C.H.SPURGEON."

It's so great to see this historical letter in the flesh, don't you think?

Spurgeon persuaded them to buy a bigger plot of land than the one they were considering at the time and was offering to help them pay for it. I believe that at that moment, a big vision was sown into the DNA of our community.

Our first full time minister

Our connection with the Baptist Union also resulted in students from Spurgeon's Bible College visiting Bracknell Baptist Church each summer to preach. One of those students – Ben Davies – felt a call to the church and in 1964 became our first full time pastor.

The Baptist Union helped to pay Ben's salary, covering the full amount in the first year, which then reduced over the next six years. Without that help, the church at the time would never have been able to afford to employ Ben and I am certain that we wouldn't be the community we are today.

Into the charismatic and Newfrontiers

Ben brought radical change to the church, heavily influenced by both his visits to large Baptist churches in the US and his experience of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. The church moved towards being leader led, embracing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, having a desire for excellence, and believing God for big things. It was an exciting period of change.

In the late 1970's, Ben connected with Terry Virgo, the founder of what is now the Newfrontiers family of churches, and in time became a member of Terry's leadership team. This had a major impact on Ben's ministry with him leading the network of Newfrontiers churches in our local area. He was investing in churches all over the UK and travelling extensively overseas – in particular to Kenya and Germany.

It also had a big impact on those of us in the church, primarily through our church's attendance at the Downs Bible weeks and then Stoneleigh Bible weeks, where many of us were exposed to what God was doing in the nation and the nations.

A new leader, a new era

In 2007 I took over leading the church from Ben. I didn't really know any of the key Newfrontiers leaders, which meant that when Terry Virgo stepped down in 2011 – and each church was encouraged to join one of the new 'apostolic spheres' – we ended up being 'sphereless'!

For a while, Steve Tibbert from King's Church in South-east London gathered together the leaders of the larger churches which hadn't yet joined a sphere. I found this incredibly helpful in the early days of leading Kerith and am very grateful to Steve for his input during that time.

However, eventually those gatherings stopped and that, combined with the ending of Stoneleigh Bible weeks, left both myself and the senior leadership team wondering what it would look like if we were to continue to be a part of the Newfrontiers.

There were still some connection points with Newfrontiers – for example, our input into the Newfrontiers churches in Albania and David Devenish (one of Ben's great friends in Newfrontiers) serving as one of our external advisors (something else that I am very grateful for). But it didn't feel like we were properly engaging as part of the Newfrontiers family.

Finally, this growing disconnection from Newfrontiers came to a formal close when we decided to affirm women serving as elders in the life of our church in 2021 – something which is sadly a 'red line' for them.

With that said, I still have a number of really good friends within Newfrontiers and as a church we continue to help, serve and learn from many churches in the movement. We also officially left the Baptist Union about five years ago. In reality, during the time I've led Kerith, I've never once met or been contacted by anyone in the Baptist Union, so this felt far less significant for us.

So what's next for Kerith Community Church?

Although we are now not formally a part of any other body or denomination, it doesn't feel to me like we are an orphan! We have friends in all sorts of places.

On an official basis, we have our external advisors – Lucy Peppiatt, Stuart Bell and Sola Osinoiki – who we invite to input into us and would come to our aid if we ever got into a difficulty that we couldn't resolve on our own.

And on a less formal basis, we have trusted friends all over the place. The likes of John Kirkby, Pete Greig, Krish Kandiah, Tim Morfin, Tim Hughes and many others.

That said I do sense that in time it would be good for us to formally be a part of something bigger. I was recently over in Ireland and spoke at a conference for the 24-7 Prayer churches there.

It was a vibrant, faith filled time of leaders getting together to encourage one another, to pray and prophesy over one another. It was a great space, to support one another, to learn from one another and to do things together that the churches couldn't do on

their own. The 24-7 Prayer churches have a rhythm throughout the year, with times where they get together, both as leaders and as churches. I think we could all really benefit from being part of something like that.

There's no doubt that the seemingly obvious choice for us would be to join the 24-7 Prayer church community, where we have a growing involvement and series of relationships. A group of us were recently over in Belfast for their annual gathering, which was superb, and many of us have attended Wildfires and use their resources such as Lectio365. We are also hosting a European conference for them at the end of January. Their core values of prayer, mission and justice resonate strongly with us.

However, we aren't in a rush, and I am keen to see what emerges over the coming months. What I do know is that whatever we do has to be based on good relationships, not only between me and key leaders in whatever we join, but hopefully for all of us who are part of Kerith.

So there you have it – my attempt to answer the question people have been asking Google! Hopefully I have given a sense of how being part of a wider movement has been a blessing to us in the past, and what the future might possibly look like for us. If you'd like to know any more, then please feel free to ask by asking me questions in the comments.

Credits: This blog was edited by [Wild SEO Agency](#)
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