

1774

1776 USA
Declaration of
Independence



1774 Mr and Mrs Woodward gain a license to use their mill house and yard (on the River Misbourne) as a place for preaching and gathering as a group of followers of Jesus. Their faith-filled decision to 'leave' the Church of England and explore the Bible for themselves was costly, but it started a church that God would use to impact so many lives over the next 250 years.

Soon after the license was agreed, Mr Payne, a carpenter from London built a chapel in the Mill yard. Mr Williams from Marlow led most of the services and would occasionally be supported by students from Lady Huntington's Connection.

We believe the exact location of the mill house was opposite Grassingham Road.



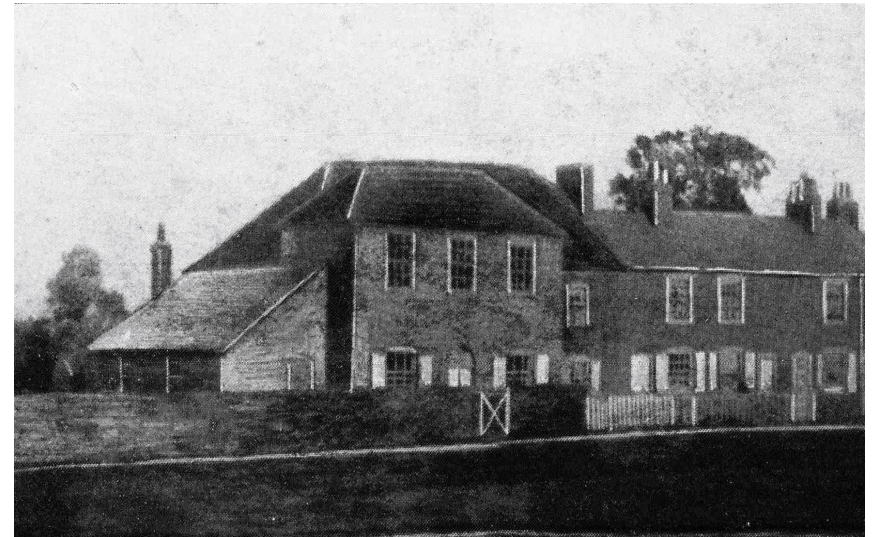
1784



Six years after the church was launched they appointed their first minister/pastor. His name was Mr Allen (1780-1786). Things weren't all positive at that time though as Mr and Mrs Woodward's sons, who didn't share their parent's faith, planned to turn the chapel that had been built in the Mill into a kennel for dogs. The church family began gathering in a house near the Gold Hill Common clock tower around this time. To support his family, Mr Allen ran a little school from that building.

By 1786 when the next pastor (Rev Scaife 1786-1799) started in post, the church had 26 members. It would almost double in number in the next 3 years.

1794



Between 1790-92 Mr Thomas Kean felt it right to use his own land and resources to build a 'House of Prayer' at the top of Gold Hill Common. The church would meet on this land for the next 230years.

When Mr Kean was building he ran out of funds and the local community were invited to contribute towards the completion of the site. Due to the generosity of the community at the time sufficient funds were raised to complete the building and offer reimbursement to Mr Kean.

It is important to note that 16 years after the establishment of the church there was a calling and desire to be/have a house of prayer. This calling and desire remains on our church.

1804

Whilst Europe is flooded with the Napoleonic conflicts, the church continues to grow with Mr William Moseley becoming pastor in 1799 until around 1805. In 1807, the same year that the Slave Trade was abolished in the UK, Gold Hill Baptist Church was officially formed. Mr Henry Perkins was pastor at the time before Mr Daniel Dossett a member of Chenies Baptist Church was called to be the next pastor the same year. A typed-out version of the declaration document is provided below. Do take time to read and absorb something of the commitment that the members were making to one another and to God.

The Church Book of Gold Hill
begins May 22nd
1807

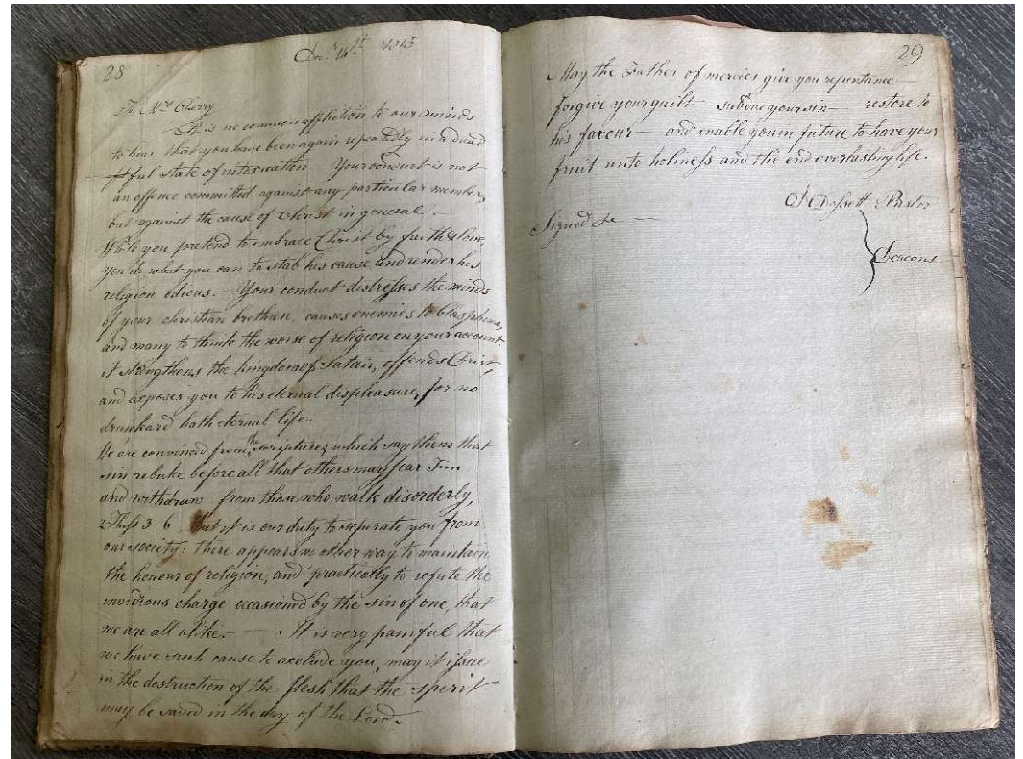
We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, deliberately, solemnly, and in the fear of God, have formed ourselves into a Church, giving ourselves up to the Lord and to each other by the will of God and intend through grace to walk in Christian fellowship according to the Rules of the Gospel, hoping to watch over each ^{other} in the Lord for good to reprove, caution, exhort & admonish as circumstances may render necessary, and to endeavour instrumentally to confirm & establish each other in the faith of the Gospel strictly regarding all the order and ordinances of the Lord's house according to Scripture testimony, holding Christ to be only King in Zion

We agree to receive none as members with us, unless he, she, or they, give an Experience of the Lord's dealings with their Souls: which experience shall be approved on by the major part of the Church: with this shall be connected a good report of their moral conduct. But after all, none shall be considered as members until they are baptized or immersed in water upon a due

1814

Within 10 constituting the church there were periods of growth and decline. The membership were added to through people transferring from other areas and churches and also through people from the community coming to faith in Jesus and being baptised. There were also occasions where, after many attempts of 'restoration' and 'correction', some members

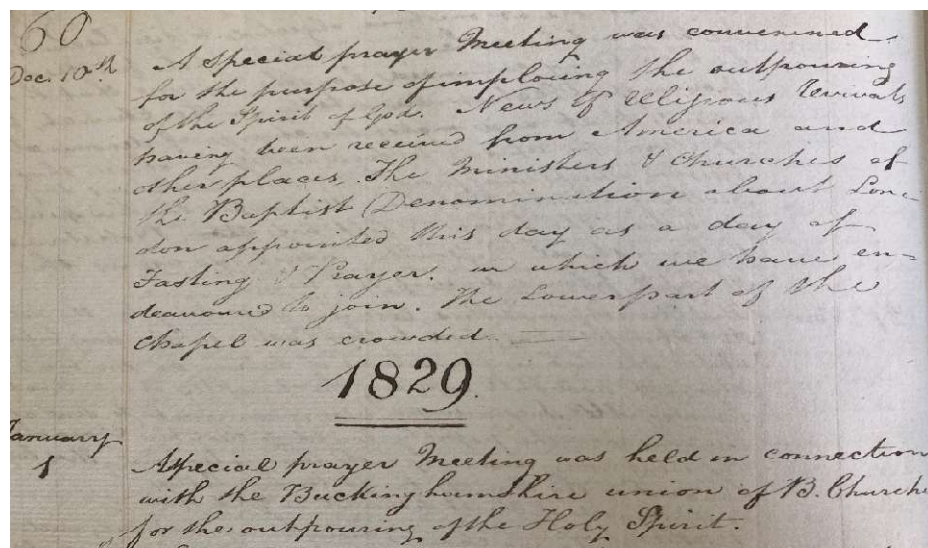
were removed from the church family due to their conduct. The record books contain a number of letters from Mr Dossett (pastor) to members calling them to purity and living according with Scripture. This example of one of those letters is to a Mr Cherry in December 1815 who was repeatedly intoxicated and as a result behaving in a very unruly and un-Christlike manner.



1824

In 1827 a young 22-year-old Mr David Ives became the new Pastor of the church. The church was called to humbly and intentionally increase times of prayer; praying and fasting that God would pour out His Spirit in a mighty way in this community and draw people to himself. The people of the church prayed and God answered. Within seven years, the church had grown by 153%, mainly through new believers.

One significant example of this partnership with God took place in 1828/29 Special Prayer meetings for a move of God in this village. God answered these prayers. One evening service at the church a few months later had so many people (not from the church) seeking to get into the Sunday service that they feared that the building would collapse. Thankfully only a few stools and a window were broken.



1834



1837 Queen Victoria starts her reign

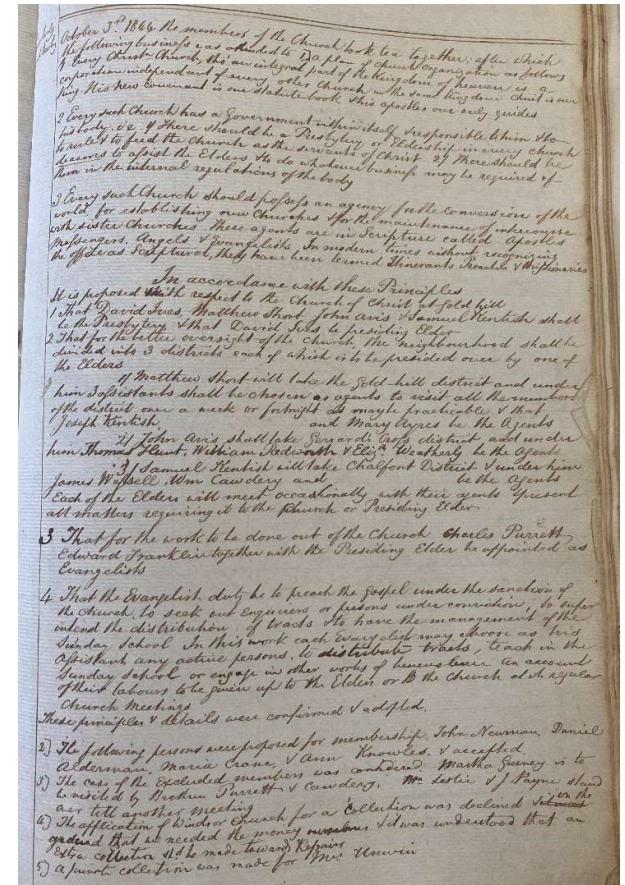
This season of unusual growth was clearly God moving amongst this community in response to His people praying. Prayer gatherings were springing up in people's homes, as well as the regular prayer meetings at the chapel.

There were many reforms taking place in society and reforms were being called for within the Church. Mr Ives writing in 1838 *"They are stirring times in which we live and while political society is awakening to its true interests and vigorously shaking from its garments the dust and corruption of ages it becomes the Church of God to examine anew its principles and customs. We hope to make Biblical principles, more than ever the rule of duty and pray that we may be less influenced by the prejudices of custom."* As well as a praying church, this growing church was returning to Scripture as their foundation rather than being swayed by societal fads.

1844

In October 1844 Mr Ives and the Elders called a church meeting to agree a structure for growth both numerically and in disciplining those who were already part of the church. Taking principles from Exodus 18 they separated the people of the church into groups and appointed an elder/leader to oversee them pastorally. Mr Ives did this geographically as this both helped with the practical aspects of pastorally visiting people in each area, and with the missional aspects of the new strategy.

Each area had an elder and with their support, they appointed and commissioned evangelists to take a lead on missional activities within that location. This involved preaching the Gospel, seeking out those who were enquiring about faith or showing signs of conviction and oversee the distribution of Gospel leaflets.

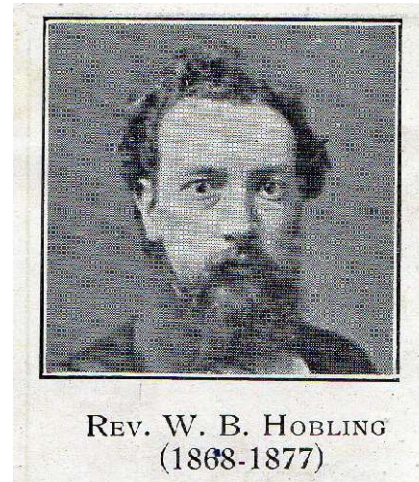


1854

In 1855 Mr Ives died whilst still in post and was buried under the old chapel. He remains the joint longest serving pastor of Gold Hill Baptist Church and during his leadership the church saw great growth and renewal. There was also much division and disagreement though, with heated debates taking place over some of the changes and reforms that were proposed by Mr Ives and the Eldership. The final straw seems to be the suggestion that the pulpit was moved to a different location in the chapel. Incremental shifts in culture of the church, in accordance with biblical patterns and principles seemed to work best. More overt alterations were too often met with challenge.

After 28 years of Mr Ives leading the church and a year of vacancy, Mr Henry Dunn took the reigns in 1856 and led for 10 years.

1864



In 1866 Mr Joseph Curtis became the pastor of the church and proposed the development of a new building. Sadly, he only stayed in role for one year due to the ill health of his daughter. In March 1868 Rev William Burnard Hobling accepted the invitation to be pastor and took on the vision for a new building. Under his leadership they sought 'to build a larger chapel than their present requirements' and prayed that future generations would 'overtake its accommodation'. Mr Hobling believed that this growth would come through only if the church was 'led in strict accordance with what it says in the Bible'.



In 1871 the newly built chapel (costing £900) was opened. (The commemorative cushion of this opening is on display in the corridor). The new building was financially supported not just by the members of Gold Hill Baptist Church, but also by other Christians from across the region. One of the more significant contributions and financial support came from Mr John James Smith of Beechen Grove Baptist Church, Watford. Mr Smith was the great-great-uncle of the children's author Dick King-Smith.

1874



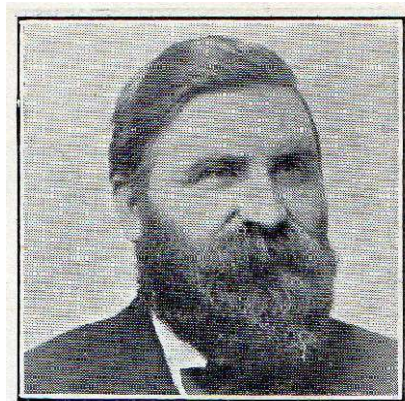
1878 Thomas Edison invented the electric lightbulb

Rev J Thomas became pastor in 1877 (1877-1881). On Jan 30 1878 evening service – *“a meeting that will undoubtedly be long remembered. The friends say that it was one of the most interesting and successful meetings ever held at Gold Hill. Surely, we had the presence of the Master with us, and all the brethren spoke as*

though they had been endowed with power from on high.”

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1884



REV. J. H. GRANT
(1882-1895)

During Rev Grant's time at the church the Baptist Union went through a challenging time. Some within the denomination were questioning the infallibility of the Bible, the deity of Jesus and other fundamentals of the Christian faith. Charles Haddon Spurgeon boldly spoke out against these heresies and the church wrote to him in support for the stand he was taking. Spurgeon replied expressing his gratitude and heartfelt prayer that churches within the Union 'will shake off the dust of error and unite in the truth of God.'

Westwood
Rural Hill
Upper Rowood,
Feb/88

Dear Friends

Very readily do I thank you for your loving words of sympathy. It came at a time when I was peculiarly refreshing. Had I not been fully persuaded that a great evil had to be dealt with, you may be sure that I should not have brought down such a storm upon myself, what had I to gain? I put off the day of retribution as long as I dared & now that I have spoken my mind is relieved but my heart is burdened. Let us wait upon God for guidance. I believe there is so much soundness in the Baptist Church that they will shake off the dust of error & unite in the truth of God.

I thank you & your beloved pastor & beg to be daily remembered in your prayers

yours very heartily

C. H. Spurgeon

L. Miles
Sec

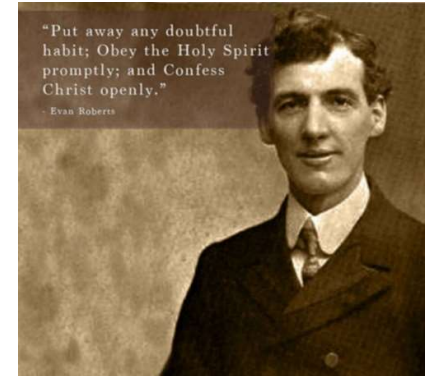
1894

In 1896 Rev Thomas Davies from Pembroke Dock (South Wales) became pastor of the church. In the anniversary service the year after he began at the church there was a call for people to live their lives wholly for Jesus and make Jesus known to others; a prayer for '*a revival of pure religion in all our churches*'. This desired revival was recognised to be only possible through the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. "*...apart from the presence of the Holy Ghost in our work, all our labours are spent for nought.*"



REV. T. DAVIES
(1896-1921)

1904



In 1904/05 God moved in mighty revival power in Wales. It began with God using a man called Evan Roberts and resulted in hundreds of thousands of people turning to God in repentance as God's Holy Spirit touched their hearts. Like with lots of things God does, the revival started to spill over and spread to other areas and nations. In 1905 Gold Hill Baptist Church gathered together to pray and share Jesus with the community. They wrote *"The Mission will be remembered for many years to come. It has been the means in God's hand of reviving the Spiritual life of the church and people, and has given us hope of encouragement for years to come. Truly we can say of the mission 'It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. So widespread was the revival spirit that people came from all the neighbouring villages and in cases took salvation back with them."*

1914

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

J. Boddington

W. J. Feltham

H. Blake

W. Carter

A. Lane

L. Sills

J. Bunce

G. H. Mills

C. Feltham

J. Freeman

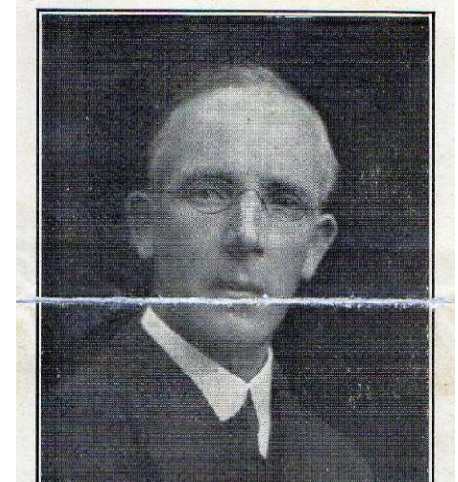
W. H. Hill

1924

Rev T. J. Longhurst is described in the archives as 'an outstanding preacher, but, owing to his increasing deafness, did not stay for more than five years. He was followed by Rev Hayden who resigned after four years due to his ill health. (He returned to the church in his retirement and was very active during the Second World War in providing care for families of local service men and writing cheering letters to the soldiers).



1934



Rev John Hayden 1928-1932

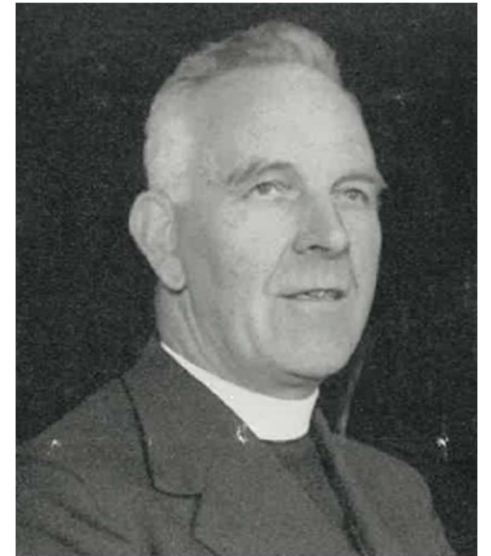
After 4 years in the role Rev John Hayden retired and the church called the appropriately named Rev Leader from Forest Hill, London, as the next pastor of the church (1932-1942). In early January 1935 Rev Leader prayed, *“Lord, make me a better Christian, and help me to win one [person] for my Saviour this year.”* He encouraged the whole church to pray the same prayer and see how God responded.

1944

Rev Argyle continued to lead the church from 1943 to 1950. For the first time in many years the Manse was filled with a young family. In 1950 the church said farewell to Rev Argyle as he took up a position in Regents Park Bible College. It was during this period that the Boys Brigade group started at the church.

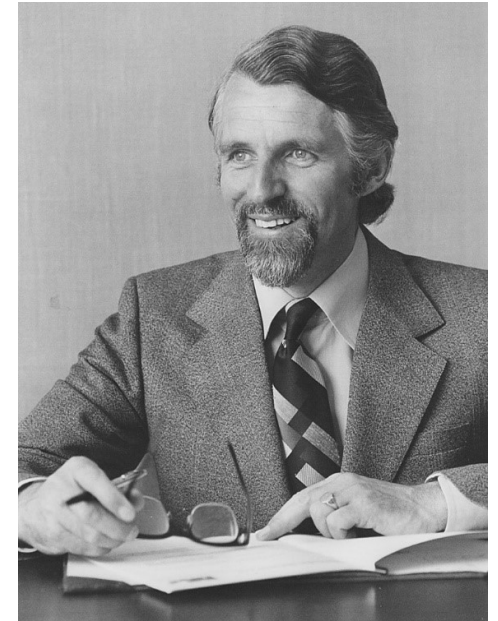


1954



Rev William (Bill) Reece became pastor in 1951 and lead the church for eight years. During this time he worked closely with the Parish Church in an endeavour to reach people in the village more effectively (especially those who were new to the expanding community). Though relations with the Parish Church had been friendly, this was the first time that members of the Baptist and Parish Churches had gone out together on such an errand.

1964



Rev David Pawson was the leader of the church 1961-68. One of the 'experiments' that Rev Pawson introduced (and subsequently stayed) was to reverse the running order of a Sunday gathering.

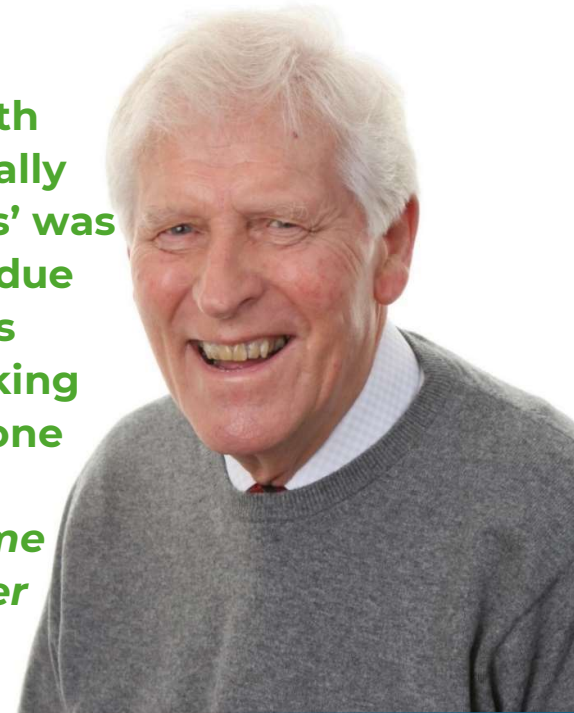
'...taking the Word before the worship...' was the concept. He wrote, '...this was the order of service that Jesus knew and is still practiced in every synagogue today...'

The same year that Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the Moon (1969) reports came from one of the church's Mission Partners in Timor of the Holy Spirit's work: *"...revival and great manifestations of the Spirit – six people were raised from the dead, thousands miraculously healed by Jesus and on four occasions water turned into wine prior to communion services."*

Rev Jim Graham became pastor in 1968 and led the church for 28 years.

1974

During the 70s the 'reach' of God through Gold Hill was expanding with people increasingly being sent to serve God locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. 'We will tithe our people and not just our finances' was the mindset of Jim. This increase in 'sending' though was not merely due to a leadership dictate but due to the move of the Holy Spirit. God was moving powerfully in gatherings with many healings and miracles taking place. The 1973 weekend away at Hildenborough Hall Weekend was one such occasion of encountering God. *"During the weekend one senior leader prayed a prayer of deep personal repentance. It was at this time that we felt the Holy Spirit was with us, in a way many of us had never known before, the room was filled with His tangible presence."*



1984



God was on the move in a powerful way. On the 4th July 1979 (exactly two months after Margaret Thatcher became British Prime Minister) a consultant Paediatrician was healed by Jesus from multiple sclerosis during the evening service.

During this season ministries like the Myrtle Tree (which became the BreadHouse and Unique Like You) were launched and Pop-in (Jugglers Café/Toddler Praise) continued to expand.

In 1984 a prophetic word was given to the church calling us once again to be a 'house of prayer'. *"My hand is upon this house to make it a house of prayer, a house of intercession. Therefore, I require that it be submitted to Me yet again for this purpose. I purpose in this place to bring forth from your spirit such mighty cries that I may respond to them and do wonders in this place not done before. I require this place to be thoroughly clean that I may dwell here in comfort. I look around all those here and form my body in this place. I intend to deal rigorously with you and I will make you an army, a danger to the wicked one... Recall Mr Thomas Kean 1790s vision to build a house of prayer. God was reminding His people of one of the callings on this church family.*

1994



The Church that had started in the Mill House was now over 600 in membership, with a list of regular attenders also running into the hundreds. In 1996 Jim Graham retired from ministry and Rev Stephen Gaukroger took on the reins. He continued the tradition of faithful Bible exposition. A huge achievement was mobilising the whole church into the local community. Greater connection with local churches and community officials and dignitaries resulted in a higher respect for the church locally and as a result the Gospel as well.

Ministries like 'The Sharing Project' and growing a partnership with the Chalfont St Peter Youth Centre were central to the church's desire to serve and bless the community and not just the church family.



2004

Following a successful joint churches Big Tent event, Timebreaker holiday club was launched. A ministry on Gold Hill Common that would run each summer for a number of years. In August 2007 God spoke significantly to the church family calling the church back to Himself in greater purity and consecration. *“Church. It is time to arise, it is time to stand; and it is time to kneel down. For the Lord Jesus, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, maker of heaven and earth is coming to call His church back to himself; He is awesome in majesty, awesome in power, awesome in might, awesome in holiness; And yet He is full of compassion, and altogether lovely, and altogether sweet; Take off your shoes, take off your hats, change your garments, for I am coming back to restore...”* Following this prophetic word ministries across the church family paused for a season in order to pray and respond appropriately to God.



2014

In 2010 Rev Malcolm Duncan (2010-18) became senior Pastor at the church and continued the wonderful Bible teaching ministry that had been a norm for our church for many decades. In addition to wonderful times of encountering God and continuing to serve the community through initiatives like CAP, the church agreed in 2013 for there to be female Elders. Up until this point in the church's history, it was believed that senior leadership within the church was to be male. Joyce Gledhill and Rev Jackie Buie were appointed as the first female elders of Gold Hill Baptist Church.

christians
against
poverty

CAP



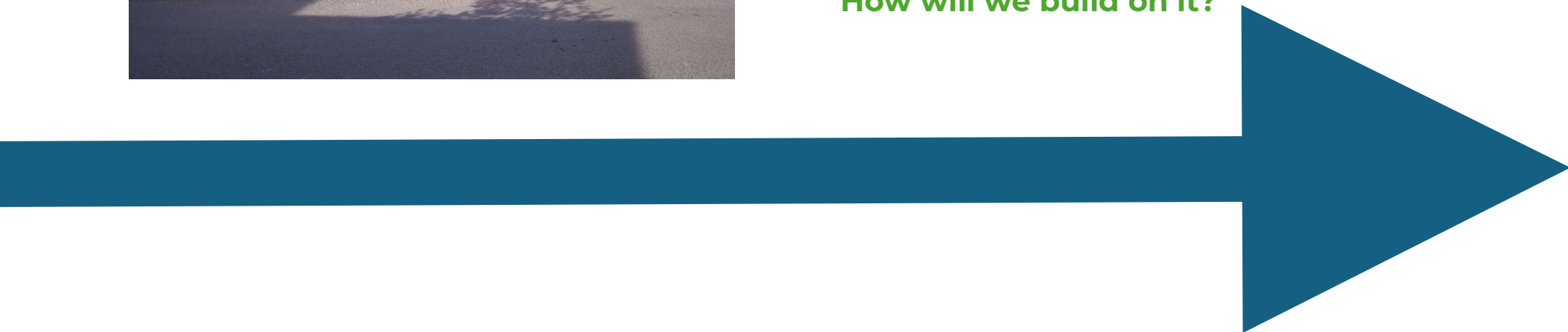
2024



In 2021 we returned to almost where the church started towards the heart of the Village. The Hub provides a venue for lots of aspects of community life and is also a home for our church family.

It is a place, like the Woodward's initial chapel, where the Word of God is opened in freedom and for people to explore it for themselves. It is a place that, like Mr Thomas Kean's building in 1790, seeks to provide a place of prayer and space to encounter God. It is a place where Jesus continues to transform people's lives and equip and send them to share His Good News around the world. Our first 250 years have laid a faith-filled foundation.

How will we build on it?



Jesus

christ

is the

same,

yester

day,

today

and

forever