



THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

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WELCOME

Jesus said: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment.

The second most important commandment is like this one.

And it is, Love others as much as you love yourself."

Matthew 22:37-39 (CEV)

Thirty years ago, in April 1993, Littlehaven Fellowship (LIFE) was born. In the years that followed, LIFE would become LIFE Community Baptist Church, meeting on the grounds of The Forest School in Horsham. LIFE has changed much in those thirty years, but God's faithfulness has been constant. And it is God's unfailing love and boundless grace that are at the heart of the gospel which we live by and strive to share with those we meet in our everyday lives.

This booklet contains just a small snapshot of the main events that have taken place over the history of the church. As we look back at the journey of LIFE so far, we look forward to what lies ahead and commit ourselves to following Jesus, wherever He may lead us.

Rev Pete Dibdin

Minister at LIFE since January 2019

The 25th Anniversary Edition of this booklet was created by Anna Pisani and Julie Shimizu. This edition was revised and updated for the 30th Anniversary by Anna Pisani and Pete Dibdin.

1991-1992

Brighton Road Baptist Church, Horsham is getting full and a church plant, in another part of town, is being considered.

A steering group met together to plan this working group and a community survey done in the Littlehaven area of Horsham. Support groups were established for the new location and a planting team of 28 adults and 28 children is formed.



1993 - LAUNCH DAY

April sees the launch of Littlehaven Baptist Fellowship (LIFE) at Littlehaven School, Hawkesbourne Road.

The mission statement is 'To establish a church in the community around the Lambs Farm Road and to bring the Good News of Christ to the people of that area. To disciple Christians in the way of Christ and provide fellowship to all who join the church'.

● SEVEN WEEKS LATER...

A progress report looked back on those first few weeks of LIFE:

"It was 10.25 a.m. and a number of us were entering the staff room to pray before the service began in five minutes time. As we looked out on the assembled congregation they were all familiar faces and there was no sign of visitors. We knew then what it meant to cry out to God! As we came out for the beginning of the service the numbers had swelled considerably and something like ten to fifteen visitors (including children) were present. At that moment it was not difficult to praise God and to realise that this was confirmation that the church plant was of him. This was a moment to treasure; after months of preparation and a lot of hard work we were seeing the fruit of our labours and many of us could have sat down and cried with joy as we experienced this very real blessing from God."

"The services have certainly had an evangelistic slant and after only two weeks we gave out an invitation for people to come along to a just looking group where they could find out more about Jesus in a relaxed and non-pressured environment. We felt a bit disappointed that nobody responded at the end of the service but then perhaps we had been a bit too optimistic. Three days later the Lord was to surprise us again because two people contacted us saying they would like to know more about Christ and we have just completed three weeks of a Just Looking course. The verse which states that the Lord will do more than we can ask or imagine sprung readily to mind."

1994

In August, Julie Shimizu is officially inducted at Brighton Road Baptist, sharing her time between working as an evangelist and developing the church plant.

1995

The 'Toronto Blessing' movement of God's Spirit reaches thousands of churches internationally, bringing a renewed passion and zeal into the church. There are leadership changes, but the church draws in people from the local community and grows to about 90, with half under 15 years old! With the blessing of our parent church, preliminary preparations begin to become an independent church.

1996

Alongside the leadership team of the time, seven coordinators are appointed to coordinate various areas in the ministry of the church and LIFE takes on responsibility for its own finances. The new constitution is established, and the decision is taken to seek membership of the Baptist Union.

Trevor Withers starts a course at Spurgeon's College with LIFE as his placement church. There are discussions to refocus the church under the 'Cell Church' concept with a greater emphasis placed on the ministry and fellowship of small groups during the week.



1997

The decision is taken to invite Julie Shimizu to work full-time at LIFE, with Trevor Withers working part-time.

Littlehaven Infant School is becoming too small for the growing church, and after research into available local venues the decision is taken to move to Forest School. LIFE is welcomed into the Baptist Union.

1998

The church moves Sunday services to Forest School in January, officially becomes an independent church and has a name change to *LIFE Community Baptist Church*.

The first of three LIFE trips to Israel (the others occur in the years 2000 and 2010).



1999

Trevor Withers moves to St Albans and Bernard Brown is appointed as Ministerial Assistant to work with Julie.

● 2000

On Palm Sunday most of the congregation hears an angelic voice saying 'Prince of Peace' during the service. We are awestruck.

Julie visits Moldova and a relationship begins with the Baptist church in Malcoci. Subsequently, financial support was raised to build the church and provide a well.

We go through sad times as despite fervent prayer, we see two deaths in the autumn of this year, Ray Elliott and Michelle Reeder.

● 2001

Julie revisits Moldova to dedicate the church in Malcoci and we have a mission visit from a Brazilian Team who lead an away weekend for us and liven us up with meetings during the week!

● 2002

Scott Carr is invited as Assistant Minister and Andy Downes as part-time Administrator for a year. Bernard Brown steps down to focus on his ministry to Scandinavia. 12 people from LIFE make a trip to Malcoci, to work with the children and also help practically with decorating the new church.

LIFE reaches a peak in church membership of 92.

● 2003 - THE 10TH YEAR

LIFE celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Julie and Scott go on a mission trip to Kenya and an ongoing support programme is developed for two orphanages and for training pastors. This is the first of eight yearly trips to Kenya.

LIFE men make their first of ten yearly trips to the Mandate event, held in Belfast.



● 2004

This year begins with a 24/7 prayer week. Scott Carr and LIFE make a joint house purchase and the Flyers youth group make their first of several yearly trips to a Moldovan youth camp in Romania.

The five values of Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Service and Outreach are emphasised in church teaching.

● 2005

A congregational survey is conducted and Outreach and Fellowship given a teaching focus,

● 2006

The church decides to now opt out of the formal cell church structure, but retain a focus on the values. Discipleship and Service are emphasised this year.

LIFE makes a weekend Winter Retreat to Ashburnham in January and ongoing yearly trips to Moldova and Kenya.

● 2007

The value of Worship is a focus this year. Many members make trips to Spring Harvest and ongoing trips to Moldova, Kenya and Mandate.

From 1998 to 2007 there are on average 6 baptisms a year.

Eileen Howell goes to glory this year.



● 2008

Scott Carr leaves for Toddington Baptist Church and Anna Pisani is employed as part-time Admin Co-ordinator.

This year has house sale problems, LIFE Ladies make a two-day retreat to Holmsted Manor and eight people make a mission trip to Benidorm.

2009

February sees a venue move to the Business and Enterprise Centre (BEC) of Forest School; the house sale is completed and a new constitution for the church is approved. One of our members, Tony Potter, sadly dies unexpectedly. An Interim Advisory Group was convened to work for a period with the leadership in seeking God's will for the future of the church and how best to organise church life to fulfil the church's purpose summarised by:

*Encountering God
Growing in Faith
Making a Difference*



2010

Our support for one of the orphanages comes to an end due to administrative frustrations and procedural reservations.

● 2011

As a church esteeming the Word of God, this year took on the E100 challenge in Sunday teaching and LIFE Groups for a better understanding of the big picture of the Bible. In September, we experience a sad time with the death of Eileen Gray.

We recognise the need to take stock of where we really were as a church; we look afresh at Nehemiah who wept to see the walls of Jerusalem broken down (Neh 1:3, 4) and did something about it. We take time to Review, Reflect and be Re-envisioned. We undertake a month of prayer and the leadership team sense we should be more visible and look for a venue to help facilitate this. Various venues were looked at as possibilities. Ben Sheldon is appointed 10 hours a month for a year as a youth worker.

● 2012

Julie goes from working 6 days a week to 4 days. Tom Fletcher succeeds Ben and is appointed for a year to work with our young people. We have a 'favourable' visit by the Mystery Worshipper! We face up to the reality of the unhealthy situation we are in as a church for various reasons and the September Church Members Meeting is designated as a time for Re-envisioning and Recommitment for those who have the heart to continue to serve God at Life following this difficult season and the several lean years we have been through.

God reminded us of the mandate he had given us in 2006 to 'Dig around the tree' and refocus afresh our mission on the local area. During the course of the year two venues on the Forest site become available to us – The Youth Wing and the Phoenix Club. Messy Church is officially launched in April and Tea and Chat at the Phoenix Club in September.

2013 - THE 20TH YEAR

After a long life, Pat Bradshaw goes to be with Jesus. Through no fault of our own, the church becomes liable for a significant pension debt. To protect our trustees from this liability in case of closure, the church begins restructuring as a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation' (CIO). Though we received legal advice pro bono, little did we realise the amount of work, time and legal process it would take to achieve that status!



In September the Church celebrates its 20th Anniversary with an Awayday at Dalesdown and invites special guest speaker Trevor Withers who demonstrated a very practical 'Potter & Clay' rendition and illustration of Jeremiah 18 and 'God the Master Potter'.

September was also a time of recommitment to the work at LIFE. Brian, Anna, Caroline Gray and Beth Hodge visit Moldova.

2014

Julie takes a month's Sabbatical which includes a trip to Japan to write an autobiographical, evangelistic book, 'With Candles On My Shoes', which was published later in the year.

Ray White moves to Somerset, but continues to help with the process of the church transitioning to a CIO, using conference calling for leadership team meetings!

July Moldova Trip, Brian, Anna, Michelle & Emily go for Nastea & Victor's wedding. In December Brian goes back for Cristina and Illie's wedding.

The monthly Lunch Club is launched in the Phoenix on 26th September. Those who come seem to love the food and the time together. And in November, Julie and George make a weekend visit to a church in Barcelona.

● 2015

On the weekend of 11th – 14th May, the Leadership Team attend the 'Sustainable Power conference' in Bedford.

After three years (it is thought that might be a record!) the process of becoming a CIO was complete. It had involved dissolving the existing Charity and drawing up a new Constitution into which all operations, assets and liabilities were transferred on 26 June 2015. At the first AGM in September, all the elected Charity Trustees excluding the Minister retired and a process of re-appointment needed to be undertaken.

The year got even busier when Julie moved house on 12th August which meant the church had a new church office address. Julie and Anna go to Moldova to lead a Ladies conference in October.

This year we also shared John and Maureen Coleman's great sorrow in the death of their precious daughter, Jasmine, on 4th June.

● 2016

In August Brian, Emily Howell, Amy George and her friend Samantha take a trip to Moldova.

On 15th October, Neise and Martin were married in Germany, the wedding service was led by Wally and a small number from Life go over and also attend the celebrations.

29th October, more great sadness for all at Life and incredible loss for Maureen and John when Melissa Coleman went to be with Jesus and joined her sister Jasmine.

● 2017

This was a year of consolidation, unity and stability. The highlight of the year was our Church Weekend Away at Ashburnham. Mike Williams and his team from Reigate Baptist Church led worship, took our children's sessions and taught us. It was a special time and God met with many of us in a tangible way confirming His love and grace.

As we are the only church in our locality, the mission challenge continues to 'dig around the tree' (see 2012) and continue to seek God for ways to reach into the community surrounding Forest School.

Messy Church comes to an end, and the Fun @ The Phoenix is launched as part of the Sunday children's work programme.

Two much-loved friends at LIFE go to be with the Lord: Colin Allen on 20th September and Marie Penberthy on 31st December.

Julie and Anna lead another Moldova Ladies conference. There is also a summer trip by Brian, Emily Howell and Ciara McMullan.

There have not been so many baptisms (9) in the last 10 years as in the previous years but they have all been powerful testimonies to the grace of God in rescuing and transforming lives young and old. People have been baptised in a hired baptistery, in other churches, in a swimming pool, in a birthing pool and in the lake at Southwater Country Park - wherever we could find water for them to publicly testify to their faith!

2018

With Julie Shimizu retiring at the end of the year and intense prayer for a vision and a way forward, God led us to the formation of the Wider Leadership Team making 11 in all – Julie Shimizu as Minister, Wally Fahrer and Hilary Smith as elders plus the Wider Team of Anna Pisani (church secretary), Karen George (Treasurer), John Milborrow and the newly elected Julie Capas, Abigail and Renzo Salvador, Maureen and John Coleman in June.

In September, the church members called Rev Pete Dibdin to be the next minister at LIFE. Later the same month, the church then celebrates its 25th anniversary with a weekend away at Ashburnham, led by Mike Williams and his team, reflecting on the theme of "Passion for Jesus".



2018 CONTINUED

The year closed with great sadness as on 19th November, Jenny Tuck went peacefully to be with Jesus. A great flurry of events in December included a baby dedication, a baptism and on 23rd December, at Julie Shimizu's emotional retirement service, 'Journeys', the BEC auditorium was packed with people, with some old and familiar faces from the past in attendance.



In this year of transition, we thank others who have served on the Leadership Team over the years: Trevor and Pam Withers, Neil and Sally Maclaren, Adrian Exell, Alan Cruickshank, Margaret Boorman, Rob Allen, Paul Stacey, Ray White, Tim Jackson.

● 2019

The baton - both literal and metaphorical - was handed over to our new minister as we welcomed Rev Pete Dibdin, his wife Naomi and their son, Caleb. The induction service for our new pastor was led by Rev Stuart Davison (Regional Minister in the South Eastern Baptist Association) who reminded us that we are all called to be faithful servants of Christ. The newly appointed Head of Forest School brought greetings from the local area.



A great sadness on 27th January as John Ross went to glory.

The leadership transition continues, as Hilary Smith and Wally Fahrer retire from the eldership, and John Milborrow steps down from leadership.

2019 CONTINUED

Pete shared a threefold vision from God around three "areas of fruitfulness" to explore in the coming years. The first was to deepen our relationship with the Forest School. The second was to draw the church family together through shared meals and social gatherings. The third was a focus on Whole Life Discipleship, the equipping and encouraging of one another to live missionally in our everyday lives.



A new logo and website are designed by Renzo Salvador, with a "tree of life" design that incorporates a worshipper gazing in awe at the outstretched arms of Jesus upon the cross and represents the concept of being fruitful together as the family of God.



2020

We entered into a new decade with a focus on reaching out into the local community. On 23rd March, the UK entered a national 'Coronavirus Lockdown'. History will talk of 2020 as unprecedented times, the year that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world. With the strict requirement to cease all onsite gatherings, we gathered for Sunday services, Life Groups and all other meetings using Zoom video conferencing and YouTube livestreaming. Our musicians adapted from live to recorded, eventually recording one hundred worship songs on YouTube. Alongside this, the church launched a Facebook page too. Throughout these long and difficult months, we encouraged one another to truly "love your neighbour as yourself".

Our Life Groups continued to be a key part of church life during 2020 and into 2021. The groups all met online over Zoom video conferencing while social restrictions were in place. Some groups resumed meeting in homes while others chose to continue online. In both ways of gathering, Life Groups are at the heart of our church family, and a key source of support and fellowship during the pandemic.

Renzo Salvador stepped down from the Leadership team in September.

With great sadness, John Muggeridge went home to be with the Lord on 23rd October. The funeral was led by Pete during the COVID-19 restrictions, meaning many people who wished to attend were unable to do so.



2021

This was a challenging start to the year, with the lockdown restrictions continuing and Pete suffering a relapse of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Thankfully, Rev Michael Hogg from Brighton Road Baptist Church journeyed alongside us in the role of supportive moderator.

With the final lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown in July, LIFE restarted onsite Sunday services in the newly extended and refurbished Phoenix Club, which is on the grounds of the Forest School. However, we were still socially distancing and wearing facemasks until the end of the year!

This was also a year of a significant transition in the makeup of the church, as we earnestly sought the Lord's guidance about what the future held for LIFE. For various reasons membership reached a low of 29. In October, we began a new chapter, with God leading us forward as a church family with a renewed leadership team and the assurance of Home Mission grant from the South Eastern Baptist Association.

Within the Trustees Team, both Abigail Salvador and Karen George stepped down, and Anna Pisani completed her term as Church Secretary and relinquished her part-time paid Administration role. Three members stepped forward to join the Trustees: Patrick & Sarah Hill and Sarah Williams, with Sarah Hill taking on the role of Church Secretary and Julie Capas becoming Church Treasurer. The new team subsequently renamed themselves "Stewards", reflecting their role in collaboratively guiding the church in the direction that God is leading us.



2022

In the Spring of this year, as we talked, prayed and envisioned what this new dawn for LIFE could look like, we set forth with renewed purpose and focus on:

- Being Intentionally Relational, as a family of God,
- Nurturing one another for Whole Life Discipleship, and
- Releasing people into their Frontline Mission

This led us to the exploration of new ways of gathering on Sundays, inviting others from our frontlines and settling on a new rhythm throughout each month. The first Sundays of the month become our 'LIFE in the Community' Sunday, meeting in a local cafe for Table Talk conversations or heading out for a Walk, Talk & Prayer in the local area. From October, the third Sundays become a 'Sharing LIFE Meal' at The Phoenix; hosting conversations and communion around the meal table. Other Sundays remained the same, though with a more intentional whole-life discipleship focus.

This was also the year the church joined Horsham Eco Churches and attained the A Rocha UK's Bronze Eco Church Award, recognising a church's commitment to caring for God's earth. As part of this, we set up a recycling collection point at the Phoenix and the children created a bug hotel!



● 2023 - THE 30TH YEAR

And so, as we reach this significant 30th Anniversary, the story of LIFE is full of ups and downs, twists and turns. But the Lord has remained faithful and we trust in Him for what the future may hold. As a church, we continue our journey of following Jesus as whole life disciples – being good news wherever we are, whatever we are doing and with whoever we are with. And we pray that in the years ahead, we will all continue to stand on the finished work of Jesus Christ and commit to making Him the centrepiece of our individual lives and of Life Community Baptist Church.

“When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.

Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.”

(Ephesians 3:14-21 NLT)



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