

# The History of the Base Church Harare

## The founding of the Church ... *as experienced by Ken Clark*

The church was planted in the year 2000 by Ian and Bernie Weeden. They had both lived in Zimbabwe previously, in Masvingo and the surrounding areas, but had moved to South Africa shortly after independence. In South Africa they were on eldership in a church called Cornerstone Church in Bedfordview, in Johannesburg. From Cornerstone Church they planted out into Kempton Park in Johannesburg, but then felt called to plant a church into Harare Zimbabwe. At the time they had two children; Shane and Faith, neither of whom made the move up to Zimbabwe with them.

They arrived in Zimbabwe in 2000 and took part in the "March for Jesus" and P.J. Smythe of River of Life church introduced them to the Church community. Following on from this, they brought up from South Africa a play called "Heavens Gates and Hell's flames" which was hosted by Northside Community church. Ian & Bernie's heart was to plant all the converts from this production into the other city churches to show the church community that they were here to work with the churches in Harare.

One of the first families to join in the new church plant was a couple called Kevin and Cheryl Gaynor with their two children. They had been running a church in Raffingora, that they then handed over to Scott and Trish Brown. Another family to join the plant in the initial phase were George and Pat Bushney along with their children.

They had decided to call the Church "**Gateway to the nations**" as they hoped to build a church where people would be focused on taking the Gospel out into the nations. They had their first service in July 2000 at "Fishing Unlimited" on 6 Brompton Road, Highlands, HARARE and began to meet in the lounge at this venue.

Janette and I started attending Gateway to the Nations within that first month that the church was founded.

The church grew and we moved onto the veranda of the main house at Fishing Unlimited and then moved into the dormitory at those same premises.

As a church we were so excited to see growth and new people coming to know Jesus!

Ian and Bernie would often go and visit the farmers in surrounding areas to pray with them. As they were dispossessed by the internal politics of the country many relocated to Harare, they started to become part of the church.

The church moved again to Conquernor House hall and at the same time Joseph and Nosi Dhlamini started a church at Fishing unlimited with some members that did not move with us. Janette & I came onto eldership during our time here.

Over some months we ran into some logistical problems at Conquernor House as the hall did not want to open up on a Sunday and did not want children running around the hall and so we looked at moving again. On the Sunday we were to be out of the hall we made an arrangement with Wikus & Terry-Ann Botha of a UAFC church to share the school hall they were meeting in, which was at Alex Park Junior School. We divided the preaching between the two churches and would preach on alternative weeks. We also took up two offerings. Wikus and Terry-Ann felt they needed to close their UAFC congregation due to dwindling numbers and a decision was made to amalgamate the two congregations. At this time Norman and Jenny Rich became elders.

Ian and Bernie had been running the church now for nearly 7 years when they felt they needed to make their stay permanent by applying for a residence visa. This was delayed and they were given short notice to leave the country. They went to Johannesburg and awaited the results of their application. After some months, when they heard nothing, they were approached by Marcus Herbert of Cornerstone Church in Bedfordview in Johannesburg and offered to go onto eldership there with them. With a heavy heart they accepted and at this point their visa finally came through. But Ian decided to honour his commitment to Marcus and stay at Cornerstone. Janette and I were set in place as the lead elders of the church.

At this time there was an election followed by a lot of violence in the rural areas. The church had just become the custodians of the Fishing Unlimited property in Highlands, where we had first started! This was turned into a safe house for victims of the violence where people could recover from their wounds. At one time there were as many as 80 people in this house on mattresses on the floors and all the rooms were full to capacity.

Rae Ries was employed by the church to do the church admin and accounts, she worked at Fishing unlimited, now called the Mission Base.

Joseph and Nosi brought their church congregation into Gateway church as well.

Adrian and Melissa Lister moved to Australia and Alun and Debby Hart were brought on as elders.

The church began to do work on a property it had acquired at 100 Enterprise road.

Les and Sheree Hobbs were now brought onto eldership. Our building project had begun and soon the structures needed to build a tobacco barn were used to build a church hall and an old dilapidated house was converted into a church office.

Stan and Margaret Tembo were brought onto elder ship.

Christmas 2010 we celebrated our first church service on our own site and in early 2011 the church moved fully onto the property and changed its name to ***The Base Church***.

The church continued to grow and was used for many NCMI and various other church functions in Harare. The leadership changed with Stan and Margaret planting out and Norman and Jenny moving to South Africa. Three new eldership couples brought on were Quintin and Via Fick, Frank and Wadzi Kurebwa and Talent and Ange Maphosa.

In 2019 after leading the church for 12 years Janette I moved to the UK with the ultimate goal of planting a partnering church there and Alan and Debby Hart were put in place as the lead elders.