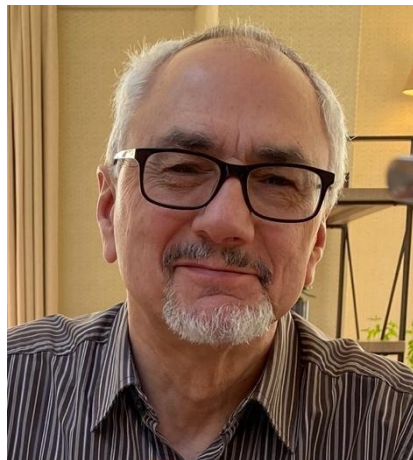


Keith Mersh – Nomination for Elder

Having been brought up in a non-Christian family, I came to faith in Jesus at DBC in 1995.

At that time, I was running two businesses in the town and was Chairman of the Dereham Chamber of Commerce but soon also became involved with local mission at DBC. Within a couple of years, I was heading up Alpha and local mission, as well as being instrumental in developing Green Pastures Christian bookshop when DBC took over its running.



In 1999, The Lord showed me to put my businesses on the market and stand back from other local involvements. In 2002, I went to Spurgeon's Bible College to study for a Diploma in Mission and Ministry, with DBC being my church placement and Gerry Pimentel as my Placement Supervisor. However, in 2004, after Gerry's sad and sudden death, I no longer had the necessary Course Supervision and Ruth and I had to leave DBC and find another church to complete my third year at college.

After two interviews for church posts leading mission or church plants, unexpectedly The Lord led us to take up the post of pastor at Toddington BC (TBC) in Bedfordshire, with the supervision of the lead minister of Stopsley BC in Luton. TBC was a small Church that had gone from a membership of over 200 to only 8 people, as a result of two church splits. Over the next four years, God used us to rebuild the church, with a few of the original congregation rejoining us soon after our arrival. We established a thriving toddler group and I did some schools work, with involvement in RE lessons and taking assemblies. Over those years, I led several people to faith, baptising them and bringing them into Church membership. The church grew to over 50 people including some children. After three years I felt The Lord show that it was time to hand over to someone who was more primarily a pastor / shepherd. We remained with the church a further year until the day before my replacement started.

During our time at TBC, as a result of a 'chance' meeting with a young man from India some years earlier, The Lord used me to start a mission work in North India, installing handpumps in support of a church planting and evangelism network. I travelled there annually to steer and develop the work we called Samaritans Projects. Over the 16 years that I headed up the charity, many hundreds in India came to faith as a result of the evangelistic handpump dedications and several other aspects of the project.

After leaving TBC in 2008, God led us in to Marcham in Oxfordshire, where we lived for 13 years, leading the small Baptist church in the village for several of those years. Ruth and I started and ran a very successful business from home, until in 2019 God showed us to sell it. Soon after, due to changing family circumstances, we made the decision to return to Norfolk to be near Ruth's family, some of whom needed practical help.

Despite unsuccessfully searching for the right house in Norwich and other areas, The Lord eventually (and contrary to my initial intention!!) brought us back to Dereham in the Spring of 2021 – to the church where I had first come to faith. We soon felt at home again and in almost no time, God made it clear that the primary reason He called us back here was to lead Love Dereham. Since then, I have served as its Chair of Trustees, helping steer the charity towards the fulfilment of the enlarged vision God has given.

I love to study God's word on a subject and then to teach on it but my heart will always be local mission, building relationships with and taking God given opportunities to lead some of those people to Christ. After being asked and after much thought and prayer, I have agreed to stand for election as elder. My intention is to use the experience and gifting God has given me to help develop mission strategy and early-stage discipleship, whilst integrating that with the mission of Love Dereham.