This coming autumn will mark five years since Grace Baptist Partnership was approached by the trustees of an almost vacated church building on Wimbledon Broadway, to formally ask whether there was a willingness to commence a church plant there. It was an obvious open door strategically located directly on a busy road. One would think it a relatively uncontroversial "win" for gospel witness, not least when in walking distance there are church buildings now housing a pharmacy, a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, and a Hindu temple. Regrettably not all were enthusiastic: some publicly voiced "concerns". Others were more publicly welcoming but shared their real views in private to people not involved.

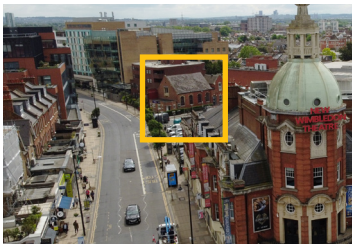
Thankfully, the local response among the people the church is seeking to reach has been much different. The church was planted with a small initial core of people largely sent from the churches in Dunstable, North Watford, and Angel, with further and continuing support from a wider group of partner churches. They officially constituted as Wimbledon Baptist Church, joined a likeminded association of churches, and through regular worship and consistent witness have been blessed with growth. Most of the congregation are local people, many of whom have heard the gospel through the church and responded with faith, then being baptised as believers. Elders and deacons have been recognised and a pastoral trainee appointed. They have developed a healthy partnership with Wimbledon Korean Baptist Church, with whom they meet regularly, and have taken on responsibility for revitalising and then replanting the church in Chilworth (featured earlier this month).

In January of this year, Barry King - who was sent out by Dunstable Baptist Church to lead the plant in Wimbledon - gave supporters of the work a glimpse of what God is doing:

"Just over 100 people from almost 20 different countries filled the church building at Wimbledon this morning. I preached from Haggai 1:12-15. We heard eight testimonies from people from six countries ranging from their late teens to their late fifties. They all then followed the Lord through the waters of baptism in front of a joyful congregation. This is why you sent us out and have supported us from the beginning until now. Praise the Lord for all he has done through you for us."

Praise God for the work he has done and is doing in Wimbledon. Pray for the continuing growth of the church in every way as they seek to honour Christ. The building they have been blessed with from the beginning was handed to them in a state of significant disrepair, and a new stage of works is planned for this year: pray that these will not distract from the big picture of church life, but also that what needs to be done will not be neglected and will have all needed resource.

Grace Baptist Partnership helps churches identify open doors for church planting and encourages them to obey Christ's call to enter them. Through your prayers and gifts, we can better resource those who answer that call, without adding obstacles to the ones they will certainly face.



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