

The History of Calvary Chapel in South Africa

Introduction

The first family to plant a Calvary Chapel in South Africa was Kirk Cottrell, his wife Lucinda and their three children. They came as missionaries from Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale (Florida, USA). They are the founders and pioneers of Calvary Chapel in South Africa so we will look closely at their work in particular. Then we will look at the other church plants since then.

The Story of Calvary Chapel Kommetjie – Kirk & Lucinda Cottrell

- **The Early Days**

Kirk had started a surf shop in Florida and from as early as 1981 believed that God was going to use the shop to support them on the mission field one day. Kirk got involved in ministry in 1989 when a local church asked him to be their Youth Pastor. Kirk accepted the offer and began working with the youth. Some of the youth who surfed could not make it to church on Sunday mornings and so Kirk started a home 'Surf Bible Study' in the evenings. With a desire to learn the Bible, Kirk and the family began attending the 7:45am service at Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale, as here they were teaching systematically through the Bible (a distinctive of Calvary Chapel), and then they would rush back to attend the 10:00am service at the other church where they were members. Eventually Kirk decided that God wanted them in fellowship at Calvary Chapel and they moved across to the church in Fort Lauderdale permanently. The surf study continued at their house and soon became the young adults group of Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale, sometimes having up to 90 people attending.

In 1992 Pastor Bob Coy, the senior pastor of Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale, asked Kirk to lead a youth mission's trip to Guatemala. Kirk took 20 teenagers and the

whole family, this became the first of many missions trips, and by the end of this first trip Kirk knew that he was been called into missions full time. At the same time Kirk maintained his surf shop and began also using it for Christian outreach. In 1995 Kirk hosted a Global Missions team in San Jose, Puerto Rico for 3 months. On return from this trip he planned his first trip to South Africa.

- **The First Trip to South Africa**

In June 1995 Kirk headed off to Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa, testing a possible call to ministry in South Africa. He met with the Son Surf ministry in Jeffrey's Bay and by the time he left he felt that the local Son Surf ministry was doing a great work and there was no specific calling for him to South Africa. While on this trip he met Johan Gericke while sight seeing on Table Mountain in Cape Town, a meeting that later played a major role in both of their lives.

- **The Conference in Hawaii**

In October 1995 Kirk attended the Christian Surfers International Conference in Hawaii, before going he and his family spent six weeks traveling through the USA and seeking what the Lord's will was for them. During the second day of the conference, Demitri Nikiforos, the National Director for Son Surf in South Africa, asked for prayer for the ministry as there had been some changes within the surf ministry and they needed someone to come and teach the Bible to the surfers in South Africa. Part of the idea was for a 'Surf Missions School' in Jeffrey's Bay. Kirk responded immediately, he began discussions and built a friendship with Demitri, another meeting that would later impact both of their lives. Demitri was with a local church in Cape Town and had just finished studying Engineering. He had traveled to Australia with the Christian Surfers ministry and then to the conference in Hawaii. While Demitri was in Hawaii he looked for a church to attend and ended up in fellowship at a local Calvary Chapel church, Calvary Chapel North Shore Christian Fellowship, his first contact with Calvary Chapel, and he immediately loved what Calvary Chapel was about.

- **The Second Trip to South Africa**

In February 1996 Kirk came with the family to South Africa again, this time to visit and see Jeffrey's Bay, as this was possibly where Son Surf wanted him to teach a discipleship program. After returning to the USA from this trip, Demitri went and stayed with Kirk in Florida, USA, to learn more about the Calvary Chapel movement.

- **The Third Trip to South Africa**

After attending a mission's conference in August 1996 in Austria, Kirk and a team headed back to South Africa to have another look at the land, this was now Kirk's third trip to South Africa. It was during this trip that Kirk thought that his mission would be more than just a surf ministry, but also the idea of a church plant first arose. While in Cape Town the team spent some time with Johan Gerricke, as Kirk and Johan had kept in contact since their brief encounter on Table Mountain. This time Kirk left some Calvary Chapel teaching material with them and Johan began to learn more about Calvary Chapel.

On returning to the USA Kirk was contacted by Demitri again, this time the news was that Demitri was getting married, that he and his wife were going to attend the Calvary Chapel Bible College in California for two years, and then he asked if Kirk would come and live in Cape Town and run the Son Surf ministry while he was gone for the two years. Kirk discussed this with the Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale missions department and Bob Coy and they were encouraged by to go to South Africa and plant a church as well as run the surf ministry.

- **The First Calvary Chapel Church Plant in South Africa**

On the 15th of February 1997, Kirk and his family flew into Cape Town. A week before Kirk and Lucinda left the USA, Demitri and Karen Nikiforos left South Africa and arrived in the USA for Bible College. On arrival in SA, Kirk and the family stayed with Johan Gerricke, what was meant to be a 2 week stay while they found their feet turned into 3 months. During this time they also traveled around South Africa

visiting and meeting the Son Surf ministries. As they stayed with the Gericke's the two families began to have fellowship together on Saturday night, they soon moved this to Sunday morning. Kirk eventually found their own home and the morning service moved to their new home in Kommetjie.

Kirk's daughter, Lindsey, made friends with Abbi and David Richards and she proceeded to invite them to come to 'church' at their house. Johan and his family then went away on holiday and Kirk, feeling unsure of how to proceed, prayed, "God, if you want us to keep doing this you will bring another adult during this time". The next Sunday they were joined by Richard Hall (Bongo). For the three weeks that the Gericke's were gone, Bongo came faithfully to the meetings. Then the last Sunday before the Gericke's were due back, Abbi and David's mom, Sue Richards, came to the meeting, and then their dad Wayne joined them too. Kirk had also started a Son Surf bible study meeting on a Thursday night and this continued to grow as local surfers, young and old joined this study.

On the 4th of July Kirk was asked to do an interview on a local Christian radio station, CCFM, he was interviewed by Julian Duguid. The next Sunday, after being attracted by the way Calvary Chapel taught expositionally through the Bible, Julian and Monica joined the fellowship in Kommetjie. Julian Duguid was doing an Honours Degree in Theology at George Whitfield College in Muizenburg. Also from the time that they moved into the house, Kirk started a Son Surf bible study meeting on a Thursday night and this continued to grow as local surfers, young and old joined this study. Julian was later to play a major role at Calvary Chapel Kommetjie.

- **Outreach to Simons Town & Red Hill**

In 1998 Julian and Monica began ministering under Calvary Chapel Kommetjie in the Red Hill Township and the Simons Town Maritime School, both were lively ministries. Simons Town started as a weekly afternoon Bible study with hostel students in their dining room at the school. After they built a hostel out of containers above the school Julian was asked to do Sunday morning services in the hostel, meeting at 9.00am on Sundays. Monica also did a weekly 'Girls Bible Study'

in the Hostel and Julian did the weekly 'Men's Bible Study' in the afternoon. The Red Hill church began in a shack at the top camp of Red Hill and slowly grew with adults and children. The community leaders later gave Julian permission to use the community hall, an 'RDP hut', for Sunday morning services. Calvary Chapel Red Hill services were held at 10.30am in Afrikaans and 12:30pm in Xhosa. Kasril Hawkins interpreted for the next 5 years and then eventually took over the church. Calvary Chapel was the first evangelical church in Red Hill and opened the door for other churches to enter this community.

- **Growth and Tragedy**

In 2001 Calvary Chapel Kommetjie moved from Kirk's house into a classroom at Kommetjie Primary School, and in June 2001 an office was rented in a local house opposite the school. By 2001 Kirk had an Assistant Pastor (a missionary from the USA), a full time Worship Leader (also a missionary from the USA), a local Youth Pastor, and another four Elders. The church continued to grow and eventually moved from the school classroom into the larger school hall.



On July 10th 2001 Kirk went surfing at the Cape Point reserve with two others. During the surf there was an accident and Kirk drowned. The family, church, and community were in shock. The assistant pastor continued to pastor the church but after a few months returned to the USA. After this the remaining elders shared the teaching for a few months.

In January 2002 Julian Duguid moved from Red Hill to take over as Pastor of the church in Kommetjie, while still maintaining full time secular employment. Calvary Chapel Red Hill was taken over by Kasril Hawkins but this church later closed, as did the ministry in Simons Town. In June 2002 Julian left his secular job and began full time as Senior Pastor at the church in Kommetjie.

- **Growth & Expansion**

The church then purchased the house they were renting for office space, renovated it, and changed it into a church building. On the 30th of November 2003 the church moved into its own premises.

Subsequently the eldership has changed, deacons have been put in place, and there are various people

leading the various ministries. The surf ministry at the home closed for a few years but has begun again, now run by a few men from the church. The church in Kommetjie has continued to grow since then.



The Story of Calvary Chapel Cape Town – Demitri & Karen Nikiforos

- **Early Days**

In 1997 Demitri and Karen moved to California to study at Calvary Chapel Bible College, Murrieta. In 1998, whilst still at College, the Lord called them back to Cape Town to start a Calvary Chapel. It was an extraordinary concept as their original intention was to be involved in Youth Ministry, not plant a church. But the Lord had called them and put a burden on their hearts that Cape Town needed a church where His Word would be boldly proclaimed.

They moved back to Cape Town in 1999. They spent the first few months settling back in and seeking from the Lord as to how to go about planting the new church. One day in July 1999 while driving through Sea Point their hearts were caught by all the prostitutes that were standing along the road. They both felt a burden to reach out to these people. They began by going to them two nights a week, handing out hot food & coffee and sharing the love of Jesus with them. Over the weeks they established relationships with some of them, having opportunities to share the gospel with them and even visiting them at their brothels, to share more about Christ. Before long they met another outreach ministry also reaching out to the prostitutes, called "Straatwerk" (street work).

Straatwerk soon offered them to use their "Coffee Room" to start their first bible study on Sunday evenings. In the beginning the group was small, but slowly the Lord added and they had many opportunities to minister to the people. Later, while helping someone find accommodation, they made contact with a night shelter called Moira Henderson. When the manager heard that they were starting a church he allowed them to do a Bible study there during the week. They were there for many years and they still have some of the men from there attending the church, and even some of them are in leadership now.

- **Growth & Expansion**

Slowly the Sunday night group grew and they moved the meeting to Sunday afternoon. They hired the hall of St Andrews Presbyterian church, on the same property that they were having the evening Bible study. Over this time they had a lot of involvement in Woodstock and a lot of children started coming to the children's programmes that they put on. They were in that venue until the end of 2002 when they moved to a Sunday morning service, hiring the Disa Conference Centre in Orange Street, Cape Town Central. For the first year the growth was slow and they had some students from Calvary Chapel Bible College, Murrieta, California come and do some internships with them.

- **Church Established**



By the end of 2003 the church was growing and Calvary Chapel Cape Town was officially established. Still keeping contacts in Woodstock they established a weekly Children's

outreach, using the College students to assist. They were at the Disa Conference Centre from 2003 to April 2006. The Lord saved many people in that venue, established a strong children's ministry, and raised up a strong group of people who were committed to the vision of Calvary Chapel Cape Town. The church had grown

from 20 people to about 120. But the venue was being sold and they had to move out by the end of April 2006.

They prayed and sought the Lord but no door was opened for a venue. The Lord then provided a large sum of money for them to purchase a property. They had a building that they were interested in and put an offer in, but the deal fell through and they were left without a building at the end of their time at Disa. It came to the last Sunday in the Disa, and they still did not know where they were going to have their service the following week. That last Sunday they did all that they could, they got every ones cell phone number, and promised to tell everyone where the next Sunday service would. That week they searched the City for another venue to hire. Many doors were closed, and they didn't have many leads. It came down to Saturday and people were calling to ask where the service would be the next day, but they did not know. On Saturday night they cried out to the Lord, tired and confused about where they would have church in the morning. Rising early on Sunday, the Lord showed them to have the service on top of Signal Hill, a mountain just outside the city.

Until then they had always used pre-recorded worship music, but this would not work out in the open on top of the mountain. At the last minute they arranged for one of the young men to lead them in worship, since that day he has been one of their worship leaders. The service on the mountain was an awesome experience and had a great attendance. The following week they were able to make arrangements with Jan Van Riebeeck Primary School to hire their school hall for meetings. Since being in this building the Lord has added to the church again and many ministries have been firmly established. Also during this time the Lord has brought alongside them faithful and godly people who serve Him so faithfully in His church. Currently they are seeking the Lord to lead them to a venue where they can settle down and call the home of Calvary Chapel Cape Town.

More Church Plants in South Africa

- **Calvary Chapel Johannesburg**



In January 2007 missionaries from Calvary Chapel First Love (California, USA) arrived in South Africa. Chad and Heather, with their four children, have planted a church in Randburg, Johannesburg.

- **Calvary Chapel Paarl Valley**



In March 2007 another family arrived, missionaries from Calvary Chapel Tustin (California, USA). Mike and Misty, with their one child, and together with worship leader and assistant family Anson and Joy, with their one child, have planted a church in Paarl, Cape Town.

- **Calvary Chapel 1000 Hills**



In March 2008, a local South African family were sent from CC Kommetjie to plant a church in Kwazulu-Natal. Shaun and Gail, with their four children, have planted a church in Waterfall, KwaZulu-Natal.

Calvary Chapel Africa Conference

In 2006 Calvary Chapel Kommetjie and Cape Town started and hosted a Calvary Chapel Africa Conference. This conference has continued each year and has been instrumental in introducing Calvary Chapel African mission workers, encouraging those in missions, and stimulating further Christian work under the auspices of Calvary Chapel in both South Africa and Africa.

