



Harrogate Deanery Synod

27th June 2024

Washburn Heritage Centre, Fewston, HG3 1SU

GUEST SPEAKER:

The Revd Ben Askew, Pioneer Minister, Kairos Network Church

One Attempt at Reimagining Ministry

Purpose of presentation:

To inform synod members about the Kairos story – how it was formed and how it is different.

What is Kairos?

Ben started by saying, if you know us, you might know us as:

- The church with the funny name
- The people opposite the disused church
- The place where you, your child or grandchild, got a bike.

Ben described Kairos as a 'teenage re-plant / re-boot of a 200 year old church'. He said their story is one of:

- Reimagining in the mixed ecology
- Leaving and seeking
- Death and new life
- And looking at what God does with endings that create beautiful new beginnings

Leaving and Death: the inability to keep 2 churches open

Kairos, which is 13 years old, evolved from two older churches.

- St Mary's was originally built in 1822, but was declared unsafe and closed in 1903
- In 1916, St Mary's was rebuilt in Westcliffe Terrace, but twenty years later in 2007 it was closed again, as it required a complete rebuild
- All Saints, Harlow Hill was built in the 1860s to meet needs of the expanding town but in 2009 it too was closed due to structural problems.

Seeking and New Life: the journey to a different model and structure

- There followed nearly a decade of seeking something new and different
- What emerged was the idea of a Church as God's people
- They started to think of themselves as a **network church**
- A network of followers of Jesus, coming together in households, communities and larger gatherings.

Kairos Communities

Kairos Communities are the 'bedrock' of the Church. They are small units/groups of 10 – 40 people who share life and practise discipleship around a shared purpose e.g.

- Adopting a particular neighbourhood e.g. Fairfax neighbourhood
- Participating in a shared passion i.e Res Bikes – doing up bikes and selling them to raise money for charity.
- Engaging with different groups of people e.g. shared life stage or focus i.e. Kindle.

Kairos Communities are Lay led, by trained teams of people who embrace different forms of worship:

- Some host events not a million miles different from traditional worship e.g. Messy Church or Forest Church
- Others run smaller events
- All events, however, are ordered around worship, community and mission
- All provide places where worshippers can learn from, and with others, how to better follow Jesus
- These 'shapes' are not taken because they think they are special, but because they feel that this is the shape and call that God has given them to find and inhabit

Bishops' Mission Order (BMO)

Kairos is allowed to do this, because it is licensed under a Bishops' Mission Order, a piece of legislation passed in the noughties, which gives permission for new models and shapes of churches to evolve, i.e. fresh expressions of church.

A Fresh Expression of Church

- Kairos has between 120 – 150 people
- You'll never see them all together
- They meet in many different ways throughout the week
- They only hold their big gatherings twice a month: when 70 – 90 people come together
- But on other Sundays they leave gaps to allow people to do different things in smaller groups
- They leave gaps because gaps lead to creativity

Discussion Questions 1:

- Can you tell the story of your places mission?
- What's your mechanism for trying new things?
- What have you deliberately stopped or chosen not to do, in order to focus well?

Worship Post Pandemic

After the end of Lockdown, there was a strong desire to:

- Return to face-to-face worship as soon as possible
- Focus on discipleship in mid-size welcoming communities
- Invest in children and families – getting a brilliant curate, Jen, and employ a children's worker was a blessed coincidence just as they were coming out of lockdown

New ways of worship

Ben shared some new ways of worship which take place at Kairos:

- Forest – outdoor worship for those who love God and creation
- Springboard – a welcome and orientation community which ensures anyone who is new to the church feels welcome and can get involved as quickly as possible with church life
- Relaxed – a quiet and free flowing morning worship for young neurodiverse families
- Messy – in conjunction with an associated parenting course
- Warm spaces – designed to be multi-generational

Partnering and Partnerships

Ben explained that there is a desire within Kairos Communities to develop partnerships with other churches who are doing things really well e.g.

- The Youth at Kairos connect with the young people at St Mark's, St John's and St Luke's
- The Revd Jen Bradly, Curate at Kairos, has been successfully developing 'Worship Local', a worship and prayer night alongside churches in Knaresborough
- Kairos regularly works closely with Netmakers as they connect Christians and Churches. This enables Kairos and Netmakers to work together on things which would otherwise be hard to do on their own.

Loss

Ben said that not everything has survived, and that loss has been part of the Kairos story. He reported that two communities have ended; one due to illness and grief being at the heart of that community. Ben explained that this has been hard but stressed that giving things a good ending is also really important.

Children and Families

Ben shared that they have been trying to focus on the next generation and wish to recruit a Youth Worker to help the next generation evolve. Ben explained that they have enjoyed partnering with the Diocesan Internship Scheme and emphasised that this is one way to create energy, vigour and an experience at the heart of the Church.

The Rhythms of Grace

Ben pointed out that because life is sometimes hard, Kairos has created ways to help people talk about how to keep going and growing. 'The Rhythms of Grace' are used by the Kairos Communities when they get stuck.



Focus on Disciple-Making

In addition to this corporate approach, Ben explained that it is also important for people to individually measure how they are following Jesus.



These statements provide a benchmark. They are shown regularly, and people are urged to assess themselves against them in terms of how they think they are growing in these areas. Ben informed that he is very encouraged to see people actively engaging in this process and growing in their Christian faith.

Discussion Questions 2:

- What do you pay attention to?
- Do you have ways to measure disciple-making?
- What do you use to help people 'keep on track'?

Greenhouse

Ben concluded his presentation by saying if you like the idea of reimagining how things can be done, he and Jude from Barnabus run 'Greenhouse'. They meet three times a year:

- 1) 10th October 2024
- 2) 13th March 2025
- 3) 26th June 2025



Greenhouse provides an opportunity for people to who want to start, dream of, or cultivate, something new to reach the people who are not currently being reached through traditional methods. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions/what-greenhouse>

If you are interested and would like to know more, please talk to the **Jen Bradley** jen@kairoschurch.net or **Sam Corderoy** sam@netmakers.org.uk