

P R A C T I C E



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CROSSOVER
a passionate commitment to evangelism



Case Study: Flying Solo

From the Director



Crossover is pleased to announce a new edition to the team! From 1 February 2010, Stan Fetting will commence as Crossover's Communications Manager, based in our office at the Queensland Baptist Centre in Brisbane. Stan has a passionate commitment to effective communication of the gospel and will bring a wealth of experience to the role.

Originally from South Africa, Stan served as a Youth Evangelist with Campus Crusade for Christ in the UK before coming to Australia in 1995. Stan began his time in Australia as a pastor at Darwin Baptist (NT) and a military chaplain (Navy and Army) before taking up the role of pastor with South Pine Community Church in Brisbane (QLD). We have featured Stan in our interview this edition so be sure to check it out.

In his role as Communications Manager, Stan will be responsible for producing effective evangelism tools and resources, as well as re-developing the Crossover website so that it is the "first choice" place to look for missional resources and new-media interaction. We also want to share Stan's expertise in the realm of website and social-media development (Web 2.0). Look out for seminars run in your area offered by Crossover around local church website potential.

The redevelopment of the Crossover website a few years ago provided us with the platform to explore this ever-expanding world of online communication but we've yet to maximize its capacity. It feels a bit like having a late-model high spec car sitting idle in the garage!

Well, this is about to change. During 2010, you can expect to hear and see a heap more resources, opportunity for dialogue, and provocative social-media interface through the Crossover website. We want it to become the first place church leaders turn to for strategic thinking about evangelism in Australia.

Sadly, Crossover is also saying "farewell" to Chris Ellis who has managed our resource orders and general administration for nearly two years. Chris joined us when the Crossover office relocated to Brisbane and we have greatly appreciated her contribution.

And finally – need I mention it – Christmas is just about here. I pray that this Christmas would be a wonderful opportunity for your church to reach out and connect with the people around you as we celebrate the gift of life and hope that Jesus brings.

*Brian Winslade
National Director
Baptist Union of Australia*



www.crossover.net.au



Stan Fetting

"I joined the Flying Solo Group at Rowville Baptist Church about 18 months ago. Being a single mother returning to the area, I found that I was isolated and lonely. I needed support and companionship. This group is the highlight of our week. The wonderful volunteers take care of our children, give us morning tea and are always there to support us. I have made many new friends from this group and enjoy the various different activities that are organised for us each week."
—Elizabeth

"There is a real need for more Flying Solo support groups. I found the support I needed, it helped my self-esteem, my legal needs, my children's special needs and more. The group also led me to the Lord Jesus and his enduring love. The women give great advice. They have gone through similar situations and give immensely of themselves with dignity and compassion. This type of group needs to be established in other areas."
—Nicole

There are many parents doing it alone these days. What are churches doing to support them? Sandy Taylor from Rowville Baptist Church explains one way to go about it.

Our church was looking for a way to give something to our neighbourhood. After our initial idea of a community fair failed to get off the ground, we sought God looked for an area of unmet need around us. Single parents screamed out.

Parenting is an important and challenging role. To do it on your own is really tough. We wanted a way to tell single parents they were significant and loved, more than they could imagine. After all, it was for the wounded and broken hearted that Jesus came.

Our first step was to set aside two days a year to bless the single parents in our community. This was their day. They would be cared for and pampered while their children were occupied with crafts. We served cappuccinos and snacks, provided a massage chair and hand massages, and offered a listening ear. Anglicare and Knox City Council gave us information about relevant services.

We received very positive feedback but we sensed there was something more we should be doing. Several times we talked and dreamed about providing a regular support group for single mums. We couldn't quite see how to make it happen but the dream was still there. Then, out of the blue, Anglicare approached us with a proposal. If we established a weekly group, they would provide a trained worker and speakers. Here was our answer to prayer!

Flying Solo has been operating for two years now and we have seen wonderful things happen. Most of the women who attend this group are not Christians and yet each week they walk through our door knowing they will be cared for, accepted and listened to. Last year a number of women accepted Jesus into their life after an ALPHA course run specifically for Flying Solo.

Sharyn, Flying Solo coordinator, says, "Many single mothers feel isolated and alone. Some have come out of traumatic situations and are looking for acceptance and safety. Others struggle with ongoing health complications, children with special needs, custody issues and financial matters. We are privileged to walk with these women in the hard times and rejoice with them in the good. We see them blossom into confident women able to put plans in place for the future. If your church is interested in exploring a similar type of outreach, we would be happy to talk to you."

We continue to run our Pampering Days and the two ministries feed into one another. Mums from Flying Solo are our best promoters. We still sense there is something more that should be done. Solo Dads have expressed their needs to us too. We have no way forward as yet. Do you?

Sandy Taylor is the Outreach Team Leader at Rowville Baptist Church.

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Feeling *Foreign*

Cutting down the Christian culture shock

This Christmas, you are likely to see some unfamiliar faces at your church events: people for whom "church" is a foreign experience. What will they experience? How welcome, how comfortable will they feel? I grew up inside the Christian "club" but a few years ago, my own taste of a foreign church culture made me much more sensitive to the experience of newcomers or "seekers" who might attend a church like ours.

The local Catholic Church had just installed a baptismal pool and were about to baptize, by immersion, several new converts – just like we Baptists do! This was something I wanted to see and so I went along to the service. It was amazing. Five new converts testified to faith in Christ and were baptized by immersion.

After the baptisms, the crowd, myself included, wound our way into the auditorium. This second-generation Baptist boy found himself in the midst of his first catholic Mass. I was completely flummoxed! I had no idea when to sit or stand or kneel, or where to look in the Prayer Book. I didn't know which parts the priest said and which parts were for the congregation. Everyone around me seemed to know what to do, but I felt thoroughly out of my depth.

Putting ourselves into the shoes of a newcomer is a worthwhile exercise. In fact, why not have a discussion amongst fellow leaders about how "seeker friendly" your church is? Where would you plot yourself on a scale of 1 to 10?

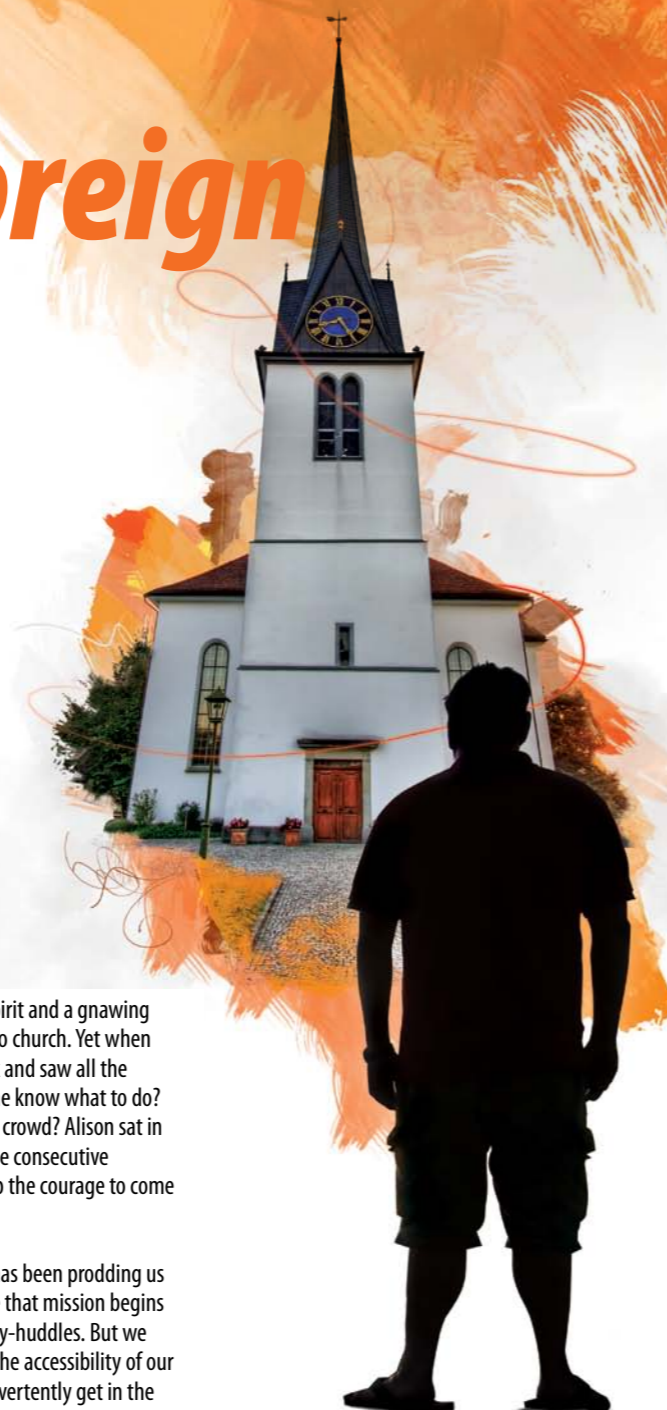
To those who have grown up in the church, or been around for a while, all we do and say makes perfect sense. We understand the local dialect. To those who are already initiated into the church culture, we may be the friendliest group in the world. But is that how we come across to those who are still on a journey of discovery?

Today, Alison is a fully devoted follower of Jesus and a member of my church, but she wasn't always. A few years ago she was gently being

worked over by the Holy Spirit and a gnawing spiritual hunger drew her to church. Yet when she drove onto our car park and saw all the people, she froze. Would she know what to do? Would she stand out in the crowd? Alison sat in the church car park for three consecutive Sundays before plucking up the courage to come inside.

To be sure, the Holy Spirit has been prodding us in recent years to recognize that mission begins outside of our Christian holy-huddles. But we would do well to consider the accessibility of our church culture lest we inadvertently get in the way of a person's journey to faith. The process of becoming a disciple, at some point, brings a new believer into Christian community. What are the things we can do to make our church culture more accessible toward those God is saving?

I had another formative experience not so long ago that has radically changed my approach to welcoming new people who come amongst us. Our second morning service had started and I was alone in the church foyer. A man walked in displaying the difficult-to-disguise body language of a newcomer, so I went over to welcome him.



"You look like you might be here for the first time," I said. "Can I help you find what you're looking for?" He ignored me and looked through the glass wall separating the foyer from an exuberantly worshipping congregation. I found this a bit strange so I got into his line of sight and extended my hand.

"Hi, you look like you might be new around here. I'm Brian, the pastor of the church. Can I help you find what you're looking for?" I thought this was a fairly innocuous and friendly line until the man turned to me and in a gruff voice said, "Look, I'm here for the first time. I'm looking for God and I find that (pointing through the glass to the congregation) really scary. Have I done something wrong to make you accost me?" With that he turned on his heels and walked out.

I felt stunned. And sick. I was supposed to be good at this kind of thing, and yet I had just driven a "seeker" out of the church. To my relief, the man returned a couple of minutes later and apologized for being prickly. He reiterated that he was there for the first time, that he was looking for God but found the crowd of demonstrative worshippers intimidating. Then he said something I will never forget, "Do you think you could give people like me a little space when we first come along?"

Typically, we have tried to make newcomers feel as welcome as possible by making a bit of a fuss. The service leader might invite them to raise their hand, even to stand and introduce themselves. Our reasons for doing so are understandable, but what if our well-meaning motive is the exact opposite of what a newcomer actually wants? What if they wanted to just slip in quietly and watch the proceedings? Must we blow their cover?

Since that event, I've deliberately altered the patter I say in welcoming people to our church.

Rather than embarrassing or exposing visitors I invite them to stay as anonymous as they would like, until they are ready to let us know who they are.

Perhaps there's a research project every church could undertake. Retailers employ a "secret shopper" to visit their store and report on their experience. What if we recruited a "secret worshipper" to reflect back their experience of coming to one of our services?

Begin with the front door greeting. What is it like for someone with no church experience to be confronted by a person at the front door who insists on shaking their hand? When was the last time you attended the movies and the guy taking your ticket shook your hand and welcomed you effusively? Might that not appear a tad unusual, possibly a bit creepy? Door greeting possibly has become a specialized area of ministry that requires a combination of two strategic spiritual gifts: hospitality and wisdom. It takes wisdom to know when to make a fuss and when to back off.

Then there's the "meet and greet" time that is common in church services, which I do think is an important element in corporate worship. These occasions can be excruciatingly painful for the first time visitor so a couple of rules are worth considering. Firstly, keep it short and sharp. A long time to meet and greet is great for those with lots of friends, but very intimidating for the new person. Secondly, don't assume that people know naturally how to do this. Every now and then I parody the process of what to say and do when approaching someone you don't know.

I recently attended a service where the worship leader welcomed those who were new and invited them to give a little wave of their hand. When she saw that no one waving, she said, no doubt with a tinge of embarrassment, "Excellent! No visitors here today!" I know what she meant,

but couldn't help thinking what this phrase conveyed to the first-time visitor. Maybe they thought they'd made a mistake in coming.

We need to watch the in-house humour and communication that means something to the initiated but leaves the uninitiated feeling excluded. We sometimes speak in the "christianeze" dialect in church without recognising how confusing it can be. Like the announcement, "All those interested in coming to the church dinner should sign up with Margaret after the service." All well and good, but who is Margaret? There are lots of other ways to make the culture of our church friendly and welcoming to those who are new. No doubt your mind is already listing a few more.

Imagine I were to invite you to attend my family reunion this coming weekend. What would it be like for you? I know my extended family well. They are warm and friendly and would love to make you feel welcome. But despite their best intentions you would know that you're not really one of us. You're an outsider. Could it be that the person who is new or "seeking" after God feels like they're attending someone else's family reunion? With the best intentions, we Christians can sometimes project an image that gets in the way of God's redeeming work.

Of course, it doesn't have to be this way...

Brian Winslade is married to Liz and lives in Brisbane. They have three adult children. Brian serves as National Director for the Baptist Union of Australia, combining the roles of National Director of Crossover, and CEO of Australian Baptist Ministries.

PRAC Interview with Stan Fetting



“A running club... is the most natural way for me to build relationships with people outside the church.”



Meet Stan Fetting, Senior Pastor of South Pine Community Church in Queensland and running coach. While pastoring this church for the past eight years, Stan has developed an interesting missional sideline based around his passion for running. And we're not talking about the occasional jog here...

PRAC: Key us in to Stan Fetting the person. You originally hail from South Africa, but lived for some time in the UK. How did you end up in Australia?

The short story is that when I was working as an evangelist in Portugal, I met someone who married an Australian and moved back here. When their church was looking for a pastor they contacted me and that's how the interesting journey began.

PRAC: Tell us about your ministry experience prior to coming to South Pine?

I started off in ministry working as a youth evangelist in the UK with Campus Crusade for Christ. We moved to Australia in 1995 and spent our first six years pastoring in the beautiful Northern Territory. We then moved to Brisbane in 2001.

PRAC: You've developed an interesting sideline ministry to long distance runners. Where did the impetus for this come from?

I have benefited so much from belonging to a running club and I wanted to start one in our region of the city. A club gives runners and walkers the safety and motivation of training together. It is the most natural way for me to build relationships with people outside the church.

PRAC: Running is obviously a personal passion for you. How important do you think it is to for pastors to have a personal hobby or even a missional outlet outside of the local church?

My first 'boss' in ministry said, "In this movement, only practitioners will teach!" It has always stayed with me. It's no use me encouraging my congregation to live missionally if I'm not modeling it on a daily basis. I can choose to run alone or I can do it in community with others and achieve a missional purpose.

PRAC: Tell us about the running group you have established. What are its objectives?

We started the group three years ago with a dual purpose: Firstly, to establish a credible runners and walkers club that would be a community asset; secondly, to create an environment where believers could connect with people from our community and intentionally go about establishing relationships.

PRAC: How do members of your running group relate to you when they find out you're a pastor of a Christian church? What kinds of conversations do you have?

Most are surprised because their first understanding of me is as a coach and fellow athlete. Most have never known a pastor, and find it strange that I'm "normal." Some never go near the topic but others allow me into their lives for counseling, care, advice on almost anything, and in-depth spiritual conversations.

PRAC: How do people in your church respond to your extra-curricula activities? Does it ever raise any questions?

Some people have found it difficult to understand because the dominant leadership paradigm of the pastor is a shepherd and teacher operating within the walls of the church. However, most people respond very well to the fact that their pastor has a missional dimension. This situation frequently highlights the issues that missional transformation is throwing up.

PRAC: For many people, Sunday is their primary recreation day, yet we want them to be in church. Has this ever created a tension for you in your running group?

On any given Sunday at least a quarter of our people are not at church for a range of reasons, so it's not an issue that congregation members are away with the club. But it has been a difficult issue for me both as a pastor and as a coach. I cannot always be in church on a Sunday morning and I am not able to be at most of the running events I coach people for.

Our church schedule conflicts with the lifestyle of this particular group we are trying to reach. We need to create ways in which we don't force an either/or option on them if they want to engage in our worshipping community.

PRAC: Is there a correlation for you between spiritual fitness and physical fitness?

The Apostle Paul says physical training is of "some" value, but within reason because godliness trumps it. I try to combine fitness with godliness. Running gives me a time in my day, before most people have woken up, to commune with God, be blessed by His creation, reflect on my day, burn some serious calories and help both myself and others prepare for our next adventure! Ultra-distance running has enabled me to have many amazing experiences, and to connect with lots of beautiful people to whom I am a living letter of Christ. In a wider sense it keeps me very healthy, which has plenty of benefits. Hopefully I am an example to my congregation and the wider community.

PRAC: How do the people you run with view the church? What can we do about our corporate image and is it getting in the way of the gospel?

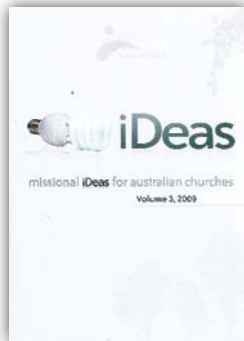
Many people are surprised because the athletic realm is not one in which they expect to encounter the church. Their perception of Christians is that they live in their own world. Once they've worked out that the running club is not a crafty honey trap, they open up and begin to share their lives more deeply with you. Credibility seems to be a big issue.

Some of this stems from constant appearance of the sins of the church in the media, some comes from the negative experiences people have had in church-based education. The only way to build credibility is through building relationships and establishing trust, yet Christians on the whole seem happy living behind the safety of the church walls.

PRAC: What has your personal interaction with people outside of the church taught you about the mission we're engaged in as followers of Jesus?

It's not as hard as we think; it just takes a lot more time. We don't need to be expert apologists or theologians. Long-term relationships earn you the permission to speak into people's lives: there are no shortcuts. Normal church life is the biggest barrier to us taking up the Commission because it keeps us behind the church walls, busy with what we imagine is "kingdom business." There's nothing quite like helping people encounter Jesus.

iDeas: how about Alpha?



If you could access an evangelism resource that has been accepted by the community at large and used by 14 million people worldwide, that shows measurable outcomes in terms of people coming to faith, and that is easily facilitated at local churches of all sizes, would you want to know about it?

The Alpha Course is such a resource. From humble beginnings in a local London Anglican Church (Holy Trinity Brompton, Knightsbridge), Alpha has spread all around the world. Churches "Down Under" have been using Alpha since the early 1990's and around 300,000 people in Australia and New Zealand have attended a Course.

The concept is simple. Christians with not-yet-Christian friends or family invite them to attend a ten week course that explores the implications of Christian faith. Sessions include a meal or light refreshments, a video presentation of the gospel in bite size pieces, facilitated discussion groups

where no question is deemed to be out of place, and an invitation to consider committing to Christ and encountering the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The latest edition of Crossover's iDeas DVD (sent to your Pastor in October) highlights the Alpha Course as a credible evangelistic tool for churches like yours.

Perhaps you've already tried Alpha and feel like you've "fished your pool." Perhaps. Crossover encourages you and your leadership team to watch the latest iDeas DVD and to have a fresh discussion about where it might fit in the evangelism strategy of your church.

Want to know more? Watch the iDeas DVD or get in touch directly with Alpha Office:

Web www.alpha.org.au

Tel 1800 811 903 or 03 9899 8050

Post PO Box 10 Kerrimuir VIC 3129

Some of the missiological principles behind the Alpha course

Alpha is respectful of people's ideas and journey

Alpha courses are designed to treat people with respect and provide a safe place to explore spiritual truth. People aren't dogmatically told what to believe, they're pointed in the right direction and invited to discover the truth about Jesus.

Alpha provides opportunity for hospitality

From its earliest days, Christian gatherings have enjoyed hospitality and the sharing of food. There's something quite special and disarming about breaking bread with people. Sharing a meal or dessert and coffee helps break down barriers and sets a great pattern for those who come to faith and join the church.

Alpha courses are an of experience community

Alpha discussion groups can be a place for new friendships to form as people wrestle together with spiritual truth. Alpha is not an impersonal impartation of information. Groups often stay together within the wider church community long after the course has concluded.

Alpha challenges people to make a response

Alpha has a clear and decisive objective in mind. Without putting people under pressure, Alpha unequivocally invites people to respond to God's offer of salvation. Knowledge about the Bible and education as to the nature of God or the human condition is one thing, but this alone does not save people.

Alpha introduces the person and power of the Holy Spirit in the process of conversion

The third member of the Trinity is sometimes left out of evangelism processes, as if he's someone to encounter down the track. Alpha recognises the Holy Spirit as the agent of the Godhead at work in the conversion process and invites people not only to meet God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also to experience connection with the Holy Spirit.

Alpha is user-friendly

Alpha courses are not complex or difficult to run and will suit churches of any size. They don't have to be staffed by seasoned evangelists or people with theological degrees. The resource includes a video presentation, re-prepared discussion questions, and a heap of other training resources.