

P R A C 10



WORSHIP

**CROSSOVER**

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You Bring Them, We'll Save Them



FROM THE *Director*

Firstly, I would like to offer a huge “thank you” to all the churches that participated in this year’s Crossover Good Friday Appeal. Funds have been streaming into the Crossover office and we are so grateful for the partnership we share in stimulating missional behaviour across Australian Baptist Churches.

And secondly, have you seen Crossover’s new website? We have a new website address - www.crossoveronline.com.au - and we have changed our static, information-based site into an interactive site with regular updates and a growing library of articles, reviews and media. You’ll notice we are now a ‘.com.au’ address and we hope that will make it easier for people to remember our website URL.

SPREAD THE WORD

We would like to help fan the flames of mission by including more than just church pastors and leaders on our website. We want our website to be a place where all missionally minded people in your church can connect, learn and contribute.

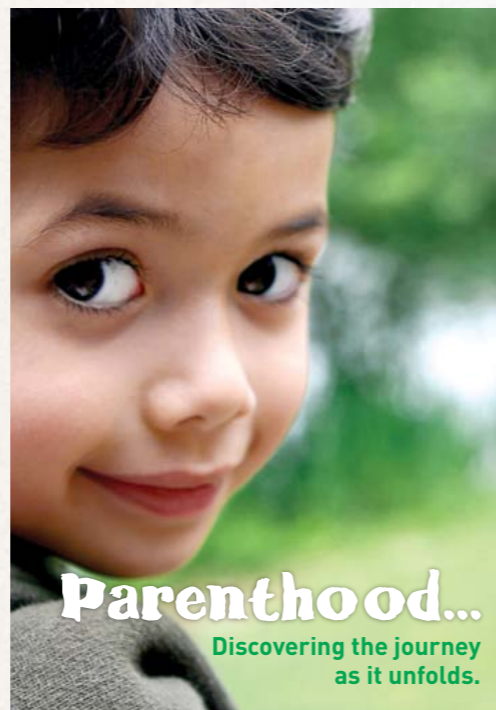
We’d love you to drop by, have a read and leave some comments. Please share the website with people in your church who you think could benefit from continual encouragement in outreach.

JOIN OUR EMAIL NETWORK

We are trying to build a database of current email addresses so that we can be in conversation with missionally minded people in our churches. To make this easier we have a simple process on our website where you can add your name to our list. Go to www.crossoveronline.com.au and click on ‘Newsletter sign up’.

STOP *Press*

Crossover’s newest resource release is a pamphlet entitled “Parenthood – discovering the journey as it unfolds.” It is aimed at new parents of young children, and designed for use in community contact ministries like “Playtime,” “mainly music,” “MOPS” and “Toddler Jam.” Samples and an order form have recently been sent to Baptist Church pastors around the country. We look forward to your orders. Check it out on www.crossoveronline.com.au.



Parenthood...
Discovering the journey
as it unfolds.

CHECK IT OUT The new website has four key categories

BRIGHT IDEAS

Designed to ‘unearth’ brilliant ideas that churches have come up with to reach beyond the walls of the church.

THOUGHT LEADER

Designed to capture the thoughts and opinions of people who can help us think strategically and prophetically.

CONNECTED CHURCH

Designed to provide advice and resources in church communications, web and social media.

STUFF THAT WORKS

Designed to feature great resources that churches have found helpful in reaching people with the gospel.

-  crossoveronline.com.au
-  facebook.com/crossoveroz
-  twitter.com/crossoveroz
-  youtube.com/crossoveraustralia

CASE STUDY

HERE I AM TO SING

By Simon Kennedy, with thanks to John Gynther



It’s late on a Sunday afternoon. I’m early, but not the first one there. I can make out two shadowy forms behind the glass doors – no doubt the rostered greeters. I pull into my customary spot close to the entrance, grab my guitar and leads, nod and smile at the greeters as I push through the doors and walk into the main auditorium.

The chairs are in clusters around coffee tables to facilitate conversation. A small group of older ladies sits at one of the few occupied tables. They’re regulars, often here before things get started, presumably to show their support. Cynicism battles affection as I ponder whether they’re all out of options for things to do this afternoon or their enthusiasm simply burns brighter than the local youths’. A brief hello as I walk past, mentally filtering my set list for songs that might appeal to their age bracket.

More people drift in as I set up but I can tell it

isn’t going to be a big night. Could be the rain, or it could be the day/nighter on TV. I stand at the mic, deliver my welcomes and introductions, and launch into the first song. The amplification on my voice drowns out anyone else but I can see a few lips moving and bodies swaying through the lights. I’m satisfied.

In the early days I preferred to engage with the lyrics but lately I struggle with familiarity-bred contempt. I’m in danger of becoming like a watered down cappuccino with far too much froth. Occasionally it comes too easily. Mistakes slip in - more from wandering concentration rather than challenging music. But people tend to prefer sing-along songs rather than dazzling musicianship. Besides, they only notice the big mistakes and I’ve mastered the quick recovery. Still, tonight there are a few songs that lift our communal spirits, and draw us along with their rhythm, melody and lyrical enchantment.

The night proceeds as usual – a group of disparate people in a small corner of the world, joining

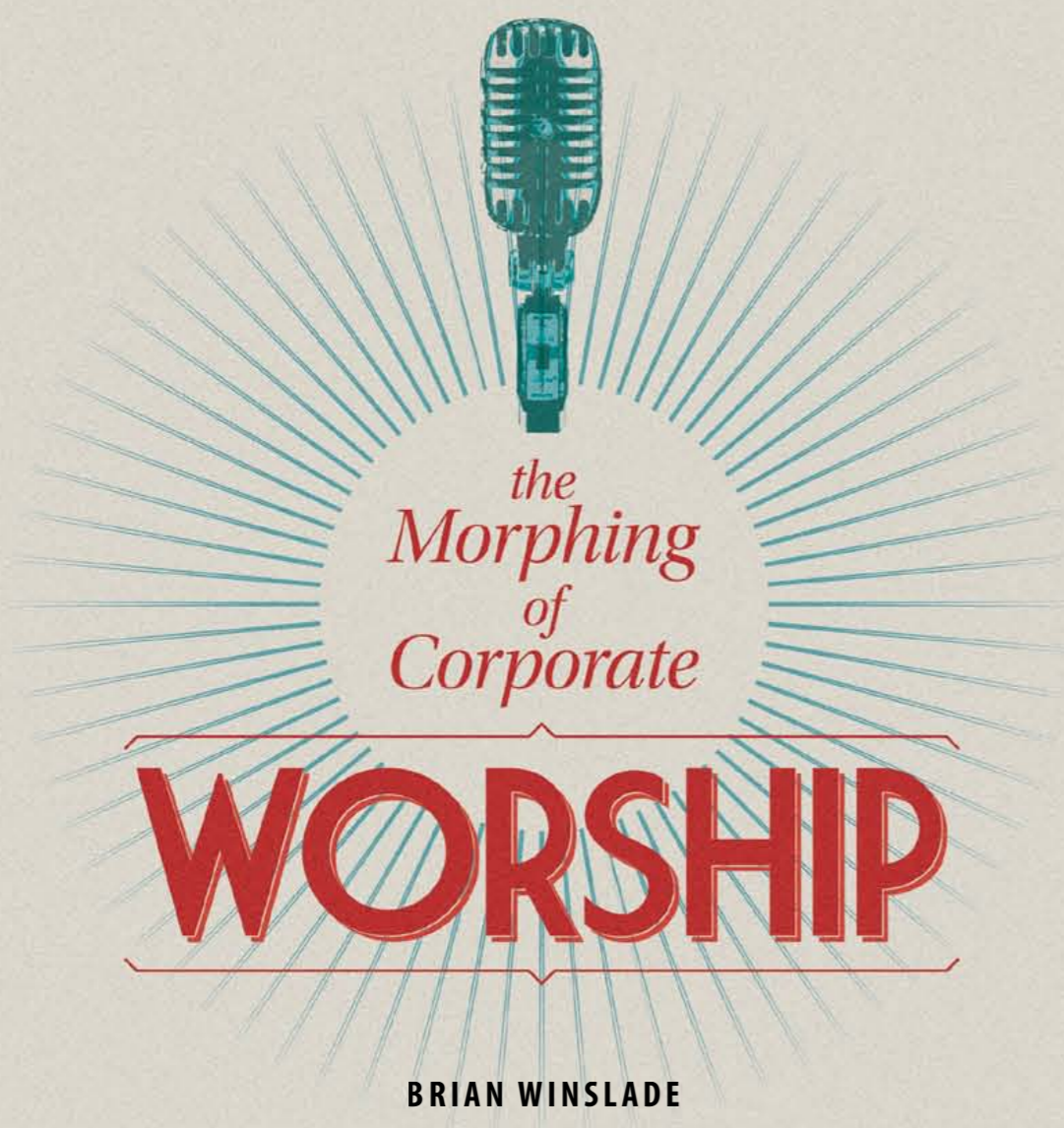
together in bread, wine and song to rise above the concerns of daily life – and I’m glad to use my gifts to help others find temporary emancipation from the mundane.

The lights come up with the final notes. People consider their options. Is it time to go home already? A few approach the stage to offer their thanks or their suggestions. I pack up as they speak, contributing nods and minimal prompts. In the past I’ve expected people to open up about their lives but time has taught me they just want to talk about the music.

I carry my gear out to the car. The job’s done and people are happy, but for how long? Time’s tenacious march will bring Monday’s reality with it and I know there are some who will rejoin Thoreau’s mass of men living lives of quiet desperation. Perhaps the effects of next Sunday night would be longer lasting as I repeat my act, albeit with different songs, at my local church. I reflect on this as I head home, the neon lights of the RSL club fading in my rear-view mirror.

MY HOPE —is that this story will raise some questions and spark your thinking. Perhaps you could re-read the article and think about what strikes you most. Is it the similarities between the club setting and your church service? Do you find this disturbing? Do our services mirror the world too closely? Do we rely too heavily on content rather than style to distinguish us? How much of your church’s activity on a Sunday is driven by culture? Do you find the similarities encouraging? For the average un-churched Australian, could these points of connection be useful in easing their discomfort in a church setting? Are there parallels to draw between “Brown Eyed Girl” and “Here I Am to Worship”, the cash normally fed to the pokies and a tithe, or the routine bottle of Chardonnay and a sip of communion wine?

SIMON KENNEDY —is, at the time of writing, the worship pastor at North East Baptist in Brisbane. He plays guitar and sings most weekends in pubs, clubs or corporate functions around South East Queensland. He often performs as a duo with John Gynther who was worship pastor at Rivers Baptist in Brisbane for three years.



I am a product of what is euphemistically called the charismatic movement that swept through a number of Western countries in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s. Along with my first steps as a follower of Jesus came wind gusts of renewal, blowing through the branches of the Christian family tree. It was a great time to come to faith: a rediscovery of biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit's contemporary activity in the life of every Christian, empowering and enabling them with spiritual gifts (charismata) for service. Ministry was a prerogative of all, not just the professional clergy.

A number of bi-products emerged from the so-called charismatic movement. One notable change was a new model of corporate worship and an associated shift in the personnel leading services. Instead of the Minister directing everything that happened, from hymns to prayers to bible readings and sermon, a range of people began to participate. Commentators continue to debate the relative merits of contemporary worship liturgies in comparison to those of previous generations. We now sing fewer

third-person theological statements and more first-person expressions of emotion, to God rather than about Him. While I don't propose to jump into that debate here, there is an aspect of the contemporary worship style typical of many Australian Baptist Churches that I think is calling for a discussion. If you are reading this article as a corporate worship leader, this is an open letter to you. If you're not a worship leader, you might consider putting this article in front of those who are.

Before going any further let me answer this question: why write about worship in a publication aimed at stimulating evangelism and missional thinking? The answer is simple. Full-orbed proclamation of the gospel includes introducing people to the household of faith, and the Sunday gatherings of believers for the past 2000 years remain (and likely will remain) the church's primary shop-front. As a result, what we do when we gather together needs to make sense to both seasoned insiders and "seekers" after the Truth. Our ecclesiology needs to have a missiological edge. Certainly, mission must go beyond our Sunday gatherings, but it will never be divorced from it. Indeed, what we do on Sunday will help it or hinder it.

As noted, in the old days, the Minister of a local church did virtually everything. Everyone, including the Minister, expected that he or she was the one to bring sound theological reflection to each aspect in the order of a service. The contemporisation of worship brought a refreshing change to all of that. Out the window went predictability, stodgy formalism, the four-hymn-sandwich and stoic singing of theological propositions. In its place came opportunity for the expression of love and emotion, and the utilization of contemporary music genres. Organs gave way to keyboards, guitars, drums, mini orchestras, and multiple vocalists. Faces in the congregation lifted upwards to read words from a screen, rather than looking down into a book.

The rediscovery of spiritual gifts shifted the how and who of service leading. Power in service planning was handed to lay people with the musical ability to select songs and lead the singing. Again, it was a refreshing change. People were encouraged to use their gifts and a variety of faces (including women) were seen leading in the church. It was a pendulum swing that began, I believe, with a divine push.

But like a lot of pendulum swings, has it gone too far? Has this era reached a point where it needs to be reviewed?

In too many churches today, the liturgy runs the risk of becoming boring. There is a new form of predictability that is less than engaging, especially for men who find emotive singing an uncomfortable experience. There is also a (not so) subtle desire to uncritically emulate the liturgy of a high profile church in the Northern suburbs of Sydney as the new universal benchmark of contemporary orthodoxy.

Pastors still play a central part in preaching and teaching, but in many churches the rest of the service is entirely in the hands of a worship leader, who might have limited experience in

theological reflection. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Being led in worship by those who are seasoned worshippers and who demonstrate intimacy with God can be fantastic – they are our modern day Levites – but the choreographing of contemporary service segments can sometimes seem disconnected, especially to those still exploring Christian faith. Songs chosen more for their musical meter and catchy tune rather than their theological depth may have a legitimate part to play, but in its more extreme expression, theologically grounded leadership and thoughtful engagement is pushed to the fringes of the corporate worship experience in favour of shallow sentiment and emotionalism.

The question of authority and accountability must also be examined. An ugly power struggle can emerge over who has the leadership mandate for the gathered church in worship. I know of a situation where the worship leader told his pastor that when he was leading a service he was accountable directly to the Holy Spirit, and therefore his actions or style ought not to be questioned. In another church the worship leader declared he was led by the Holy Spirit in leading worship and should the Lord "show up" (a questionable theological proposition given God's omnipresence) preaching was dispensable. In another situation, a pastor and elders sought to address a worship leader's performance and the subsequent formation of opposing camps of support almost split the church.

These exaggerated examples don't represent the many worship leaders who do an excellent job and are more than willing to be accountable. And a more pertinent question might be whether those with oversight responsibility in the church are offering the necessary direction and accountability? The fact is, every office of leadership is accountable and open to critique, and something as important as leading the church gathered for corporate worship is no exception.

There is a new trend emerging in corporate worship that is worth considering. It's a move away from personality driven worship leading – where those leading speak a lot and introduce the songs that are sung. In its place congregational songs are left to speak for themselves and those leading do so with a degree of anonymity. Leadership is still very necessary and the careful choreography of a service requires time and effort, but the dominant personalities on the stage are less visible and different people take turns to deliver introductions or comments. Indeed, if the lyrics of a song require a lot of introduction, that might be an indication about their appropriateness for corporate worship.

When the worship leader is gifted in communication, worship can be enhanced by their words of reflection. When they are not gifted to speak (or to pray in public) it can be awful. A pastor friend of mine in a very large American church has an agreement with his worship team – he won't sing if they won't preach! Worship in his church is clearly led and prepared in concert with the Holy Spirit during the week, but on the day it is not easy to tell who is the actual leader of the team. Without the dominant personality of a leader, the focus of worship shifts to Jesus.

One final thought: A few years ago, in the church I pastored, we identified a small change that made a significant difference. For years worship leaders had been responsible for closing our services and many struggled to do it effectively. Leading congregational prayers is quite a unique task but done well, it can be a most powerful element of corporate worship. I'm reliably informed that pilots spend as much time learning how to land an aircraft as they do getting it up in the air. Similarly, how a service closes is as important as how it begins. We resolved that the conclusion of a service was actually an important pastoral leadership moment as the gathered church prepared to go back into the world to serve in the name of Jesus. In recognition of this important moment, we asked our pastor(s) to close our services as part of their spiritual parental responsibility. A benediction became a thoughtful prayer of commissioning for the mission tasks to which God has called us.

To pastors and those who exercise oversight of local churches, please don't abdicate your responsibility for the shape and genre of our worship services. Leadership abdication is as much a sin as being overly dominant. You have a responsibility to be involved and to hold those who serve accountable for their performance. And to those who serve so well in leading the "body" in worship, be open and willing to listen. Receive feedback and advice well. Together we will bless the Lord and see the church become a safe place for worshipper and "seeker" alike to meet with the Lord.

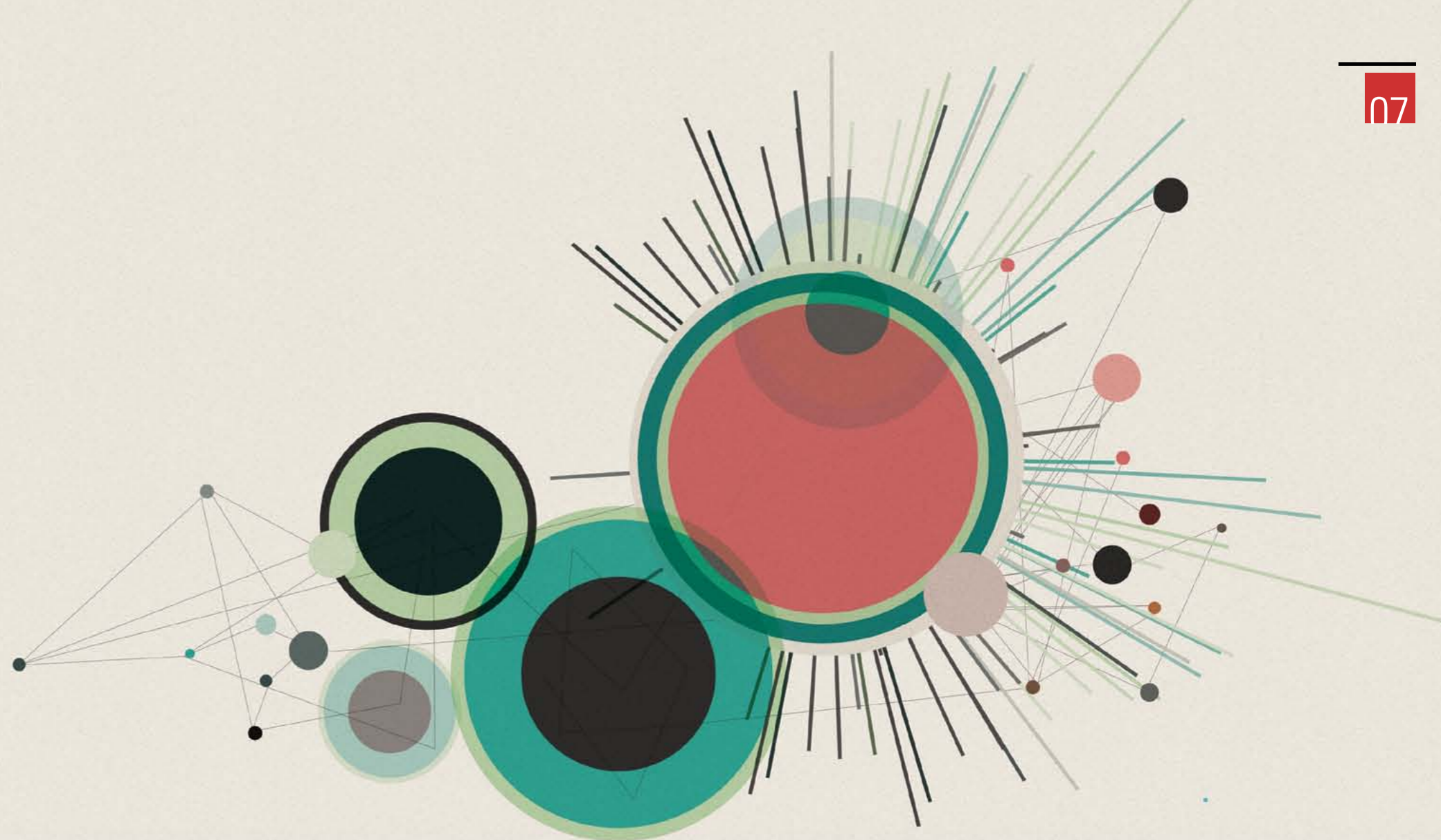
Brian Winslade is married to Liz and lives in Brisbane. They have three adult children. Brian serves as National Director for the Baptist Union of Australia, combining the roles of National Director of Crossover, and CEO of Australian Baptist Ministries.

PRAC INTERVIEW WITH

Daniel Harding

The missional church values connection to people and the potential hyperconnectivity offered by social media should be something that we harness for our benefit. The most prevalent social media platform in the Australian context is Facebook and currently on our website, we are running a series of interviews with 'Facebook Pastors', who use the medium to great effect in their ministry.

One such pastor is Dan Harding, Executive Pastor of City Life Christian Church in Brisbane. We spoke to Dan about the integral part Facebook plays in the life and ministry of City Life.



To get started, tell us a bit about your church and what you do.

City Life Christian Church started roughly six years ago as 5 people praying in a bedroom that their friends would come to saving faith in Jesus. We now have a morning congregation consisting (mostly) of young families. We also have two night congregations meeting on university campuses consisting mostly of 20-35yr olds.

How long have you been using Facebook in ministry and why did you start?

We have been using Facebook since around mid-2007 – whenever it opened up to non-US college students. It was a natural way for us to connect with the people in our church and those we were trying to introduce to Jesus' message of grace.

How does City Life use Facebook as a mission tool?

Facebook provides an incredibly consistent and personal connection with friends and networks. Regulars in our community can stay in touch with what's happening and can easily invite their friends to events. For some of our events, people in the church have sent out over 6,000 Facebook invitations!

What percentage of your target group are Facebook or social media users?

About 30-40% of our night congregations have iPhones, so our target group is highly connected. Rough estimates would put our morning congregation at about 50-60% Facebook users, and we would be shocked to find anyone at our night congregations who is NOT on Facebook!

If Facebook was to shut down overnight, would social media still be an integral part of your ministry?

Definitely. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, Bebo) seems increasingly to be integrating into the way we do life. Because so much of our community's life is integrated with social media (conversations, relationships, events, parties), it is naturally a part of everything we do.

Is Facebook an effective missional tool? Do you have any success stories?

Absolutely. While it is by no means a replacement for other missional tools, it is a new (albeit experimental) medium to connect, communicate and care for a community.

Tim (not his real name) invited his friend to an outreach series on Facebook. After sending out the invitation, a friend responded to Tim via Facebook to ask questions about the series and the Gospel. After explaining the message of forgiveness through faith in Jesus, Tim invited his friend to repent and become a Christian online. He led him through prayer and the guy became a Christian...on Facebook!

A number of people have come to our outreach series purely through clicking on a paid advertisement on their Facebook page. Others have been interested in exploring faith, have found us online via our website or Facebook and have invited themselves along. They could check out the details of the event, see who else was going and "get a feel" for us before attending on their own. It breaks down the initial "I don't know anyone"

feeling that newcomers typically experience.

Have you found any downsides?

There are privacy "risks" in using Facebook, but other than the odd person (usually a Christian) defaming our Facebook page, we have not experienced any downsides as a mission organisation.

How many people are connected to your Facebook?

We currently have 555 people in our Facebook Group, City Life. More importantly, however, the combined total of unique friends connected to our pastoral team is approximately 2,500.

Daniel Harding is Executive Pastor at City Life Christian Church. For more information or to contact Daniel visit www.citylifechristianchurch.com or www.facebook.citylifechristianchurch.com or email him dan@citylifechristianchurch.com.

You bring them, *we'll save them*

{ IS THERE MORE TO EVANGELISM THAN GETTING PEOPLE THROUGH THE DOOR? }

STAN FETTING

Throughout my time as a pastor I regularly encouraged my congregations to invite their family and friends to church. Most didn't... or wouldn't... or couldn't. Those who did, more often than not, used to wait for a special occasion. They would warn me prior to the event and apply some not-so-subtle pressure, making sure I prepared an "evangelistic" sermon and "seeker friendly" service.

It was as if getting the "unsaved" family and friends through the church doors was the pinnacle of evangelistic endeavour. Once inside, it was up to the pastor to "get them saved." And this primarily involved an evangelistic sermon peppered with good side-slapping humour plus a strong finish with the obligatory altar call, or at very least "the sinner's prayer."

Truth be told, there were many weekends when I hoped that such people wouldn't come to church because I knew that the content of the service would have little relevance to them, and would

perhaps come across as esoteric. Sometimes the need for teaching, worship and prayer ran counter to the hopes and dreams of congregation members who brought someone along to be zapped with the Gospel.

Since stepping down from being a pastor I am free to follow my own advice, inviting and accompanying non-Christians to church. When I bring people to church, I experience it as if I were a non-Christian. I try to imagine what each part of the encounter is like for my friends. This hyper-awareness of what they are encountering starts in the car park and ends as we leave the property. I find the experience similar to having a hot curry: I'm very uncomfortable and breaking out in a sweat as I anticipate what is coming next and how my friends will relate to it.

The primary context of my current missional engagement is the athletic community in which I am a coach. My friends are open enough to me to accept my invitations to selected church services

and I try to choose both churches and services that will be relevant. I have quickly come to the conclusion that given where some of my friends are at, inviting them to a church service would be the worst thing I could do! Even churches that have a reputation for being missional are still pretty much like any other church. You still find the terrifying invitation to greet someone you don't know, the indecision amongst guests regarding whether or not to participate in communion, and the often confronting issue of worship.

Amongst my friends the thing that causes the most concern is worship, and in particular, people raising their hands. One friend remarked, "I just don't know how they go from the car park, straight into the building and then into such a state so quickly." Whilst this caused consternation, it did provide much topic for analysis during the debrief session afterwards. The invitation to meet and greet always causes a degree of discomfort as well.

The Great Evangelistic Cop Out

As both a pastor and an evangelist, my assessment is that the goal of inviting someone to church and expecting someone else to wave a magic wand isn't good enough. In fact, it's a cop out and the thinking behind this simplistic picture of the conversion process needs to be challenged.

We need to roll up our sleeves and accept the deeper commitment required for truly missional living. It costs a lot more than simply inviting someone to church and expecting fireworks. Whilst it is true that God can use any occasion to bring about road to Damascus type experiences, evidence shows that most people's journey towards faith is long and requires the substantial commitment of those who invite them on that journey.

Church Within Church

My personal solution is to create a first encounter with church that is smaller, less culturally confronting and more sensitive to where people are at. This is typically a small group consisting primarily of non-Christians. The group is gathered around a study that exposes them to the claims of Christ (there's plenty of good material around for this, I'm currently trialing Simply Christianity from Matthias Media). There is a greater degree of trust in a smaller environment, and I don't have to sit with my heart in my hand most of the time! There is more time for questions, which helps a great deal when

people are trying to understand both theological questions and cultural differences.

Within this context I invite people to accompany me to "normal" church, but I check carefully before choosing which occasion and always ensure time for a debrief afterwards. Once a new believer is strong enough to navigate the sometimes confusing (and potentially faith crushing) cultural landscape of the more traditional church expressions, they don't need the services of a spiritual chaperone any more.

One of my friends is an alcoholic and he remarked to me recently, "You seem to have a lot of opinions don't you?" I reflected on this and realised that I needed to spend more time listening to him rather than calling him on some pretty obvious issues in his life. I have since tried to recalibrate my approach to him. It would be so much easier if I could simply invite him to church and get the pastor to save him, wouldn't it? Instead I need to walk with him on a much longer journey, with more patience and grace, whilst keeping a strong evangelistic cutting edge. Sometimes it's hard work but this is our calling.

Paul spoke of the cost he was willing to pay to help people along the journey of faith when he said, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible." (1 Corinthians 9:19)