

PRAC 11



**CROSSOVER**

IN THIS ISSUE

Getting to know you: do you have the facts?

God's Business or just Busy-ness?

Interview with Sen. Guy Barnett and Shayne Neumann MP

Exploring the Fringe

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From the Director

Easter will be upon us in a few short weeks and, this year, will fall on the same weekend as ANZAC Day. Crossover's Easter resources pick up on this confluence of holidays as an opportunity for people to explore further the Christian message of hope. Samples have been posted to the pastor of each Australian Baptist Church and we look forward to receiving your orders.

Good Friday is also Crossover's annual (and only!) appeal for financial support. We are so grateful for the history of support we receive from so many churches. Good Friday Offering materials will shortly be dispatched to your church and your help in encouraging your people to be generous is really appreciated.

Brian Winslade

National Director
Baptist Union of Australia



An Invitation to Lunch!

A driving metaphor for Crossover's work is that of a broker. When we come across good ideas or resources for evangelism we pass the word on. One such resource, that we think is worth a special look, is 'More To Life', a life-story based video tool for helping ordinary Christians engage with their friends and family and share their faith. 'More To Life' is the brainchild of Dennis Pethers, a British (Baptist) evangelist. Crossover is helping bring Dennis Pethers to Australia to share his heart and the 'More to Life' story with pastors and church leaders.

Check out 'More To Life' on www.mtlresources.org. We'd love you to join us for a luncheon seminar at one of the locations listed below. All we ask is that you let us know you're coming (for catering purposes) by email to events@crossoveronline.com.au.

Perth

Tue 5th April, 11:00am – 2:30pm
Riverton Community Baptist Church, 38 Modillion Ave, Shelley, WA 6148

Adelaide

Thu 7th April, 11:00am to 2:30pm
SA Baptist Centre, 35-39 King William Rd, Unley, SA 5061

Melbourne

Fri 8th April, 11:00am to 2:30pm
North Balwyn Baptist Church, 136 Doncaster Rd, Balwyn North, VIC 3104

Sydney

Tue 12th April, 11:00am to 2:30pm
Morling College, 120 Herring Rd, Macquarie Park, NSW 2113

Brisbane

Thu 14th April, 11:00am to 2:30pm
Queensland Baptist Centre, 53 Prospect Rd, Gaythorne, QLD 4051

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GETTING TO KNOW YOU...

Do you have the facts about the community you are seeking to reach?

By Wendy Francis

When Paul went into Athens, he had no population data or demographic profiles to help him. But it is abundantly clear that he took time and care to observe the nature of the community into which he took the gospel.

In the early part of Acts 17 we see him engaging the Jewish community in their synagogues. Then we see him engaging the wider secular community, reasoning with people in the market place and talking with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. He clearly had a mind to understand the worldview of the people with whom he was going to share the Gospel.

Later, as he was given opportunity to speak at the meeting of the Areopagus, he began by reflecting upon his observation of the city and the things of importance to the Athenians. His starting point for sharing the Gospel message was one with which his listeners could readily identify. He didn't begin by quoting unfamiliar Old Testament scriptures, but rather he chose to draw upon quotations from their pagan poets. This immediately gave him a point of connection and, having made the connection, he then resolutely presented the message of Christ together with the call to repentance and faith.

If we are to meaningfully engage our communities for the sake of the Gospel, we must look first at the makeup and worldviews they embrace. Understanding these things allows us, under the direction of the Spirit of God, to develop suitable strategies for meaningful engagement and presentation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.

At the City Tabernacle Baptist Church in Brisbane, we have adopted a tagline: In the city, for the city. We are continually looking to develop effective strategies to meaningfully engage our city. Demographic research on our immediate area has helped enormously in defining our ministry priorities.

Research such as that provided by NCLS has helped us identify that, within a 1km radius of our church, there are more than 10,000 people living in high-rise residential units. Given the door knock approach is inappropriate in this context, one of our initiatives has been the development of our Better City Life magazine. Better City Life is a small glossy presentation that we direct mail to all high-rise residential unit residents, giving us a way past the intercoms and locked front doors.

The statistics have also shown us that the people living within these high-rise units are from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Around half do not speak English as their first language. We know that many residents are international guests from either South East Asia or South America who have come to Brisbane to undertake short to medium term English language courses. Having this information led us to establish free conversational English classes in the church hall each Wednesday afternoon. Given the many students who live on limited income, we then extended this to provide a free community meal for those who come. Over recent years we have seen numbers of folk come to faith in Christ and be baptised. Many are actively involved in the church while others have since returned to their country of origin.

A number of other initiatives have resulted from observation of and research into our community. A regular Friday morning sausage sizzle provides many opportunities for engagement as people make their way to work. One of our young couples established a coffee cart, which operates out the front of the church. As people buy coffee and sit under the large sidewalk umbrellas there have been numerous opportunities to share the Gospel both in personal conversation and through free materials such as CDs and Challenge newspapers, readily available to patrons.

Another of our young ladies commenced "Tab Tots," a weekly playgroup for inner city mums and their young children. This met a real need in the inner city and the group has around 30 regulars, most of whom are from outside the church community.

Exactly who are the people in your neighbourhood? How is it distinctive? Is it changing and if so, how? One of the ways you can get some answers to these questions is through participation in the National Church Life Survey. NCLS can provide your leadership with a personalised Community Social Profile for your area, based on national census information, to help your church think about possible bridges you can build.

Talk to your State Union or find out more at www.ncls.org.au, e-mail info@ncls.org.au, or phone 02 8267 4394.

Wendy is the Qld State Director for the Australian Christian Lobby. She is married to Peter Francis, Senior Pastor of the City Tabernacle Baptist Church in Brisbane. They have 3 married children and 10 grandchildren. Wendy's background is in management at Griffith University and Qld Baptists. She is a board member of Samaritan's Purse/BGEA and the Queensland Family Council.



- GOD'S - BUSINESS OR JUST BUSY-NESS?

By Phil Bryant

A church I know was running a large and successful Christmas outreach programme and one of the church members involved invited her neighbour. She came along and enjoyed it and, afterwards, said to the church member, "That was a great story about the baby in a manger. I've never heard it before. Did you write it?"

In the face of such a growing culture gap between Christian churches and the broader Australian society, there are some important questions we need to ask.

Are we, in our churches, regularly interacting with unchurched people about the gospel in a relevant way? Or do we have a lot of activity directed towards – but not a lot of meaningful relationships with – unchurched people? Do our church members have unchurched friends who would turn to them when difficult or good things happen to them?

In my Church Planting and Church Health consultancy work, I have discovered that most churches are very busy with lots of worthwhile ministries. I have also found that most of these churches will fall into one of three groups. Firstly, there are churches with a range of ministries for children, youth, worship, small groups and more. Their primary focus is to meet the needs of those who are part of the congregation.

Another group of churches target both their congregation and their local community with similar ministries but also welcome local community members onto their properties through activities such as playgroups, craft groups and men's sheds.

A third and more rare group of churches intentionally target their community with activities such as concerts, barbecues in a park, and

family festivals. These churches may or may not hold services that more traditional churches would recognise.

“Are we actually meaningfully engaging with the community members who attend any of our activities? Have we got to know them in their personal lives?”

But in all these churches, amongst the busyness of church life, we often forget to ask the vital question, “Are we actually meaningfully engaging with the community members who attend any of our activities? Have we got to know them in their personal lives?”

It is not uncommon to find churches running very necessary and helpful ministries, successfully serving their local community, but no meaningful relationships being formed. Sometimes the church members who run the programmes can have great fellowship with one another as a team, but they are not connecting with the people from the community who attend.

One reason for this can simply be that church members are so busy running the program, they don't have the time or the energy to connect with their attendees. However, this vital fact gets lost amongst all the activity, which creates the illusion that great evangelism is being done.

There is a way this problem can be overcome. I know of one particular church with a large proportion of young preschool children in their congregation. Initially, they considered commencing their own playgroup but, upon reflection, realised there was already a playgroup

in their town. The ladies made the deliberate decision to join the town playgroup instead. There, they took the opportunities to build relationship with many women from outside their church. At last report, four women from the town playgroup had become Christians as a result of their relationships with the women from the church.

Another reason for a lack of connection and meaningful relationship-building can be that church members running the activity do not know how or do not feel confident to connect with an unchurched person. They don't know how to begin a conversation with them. This is something that can be overcome with some training. I have successfully used “Operation Encounter” which teaches you how to move a conversation from talking about your favourite food to spiritual matters. Another useful training tool such is “Just Walk Across The Room”.

So, what's the solution? How do we ensure all the time and energy we pour into ministry is fruitful? I would suggest that every church did an Annual Audit of how effectively their ministries really are in reaching and building relationships with the members of their local community. An audit could simply look like this: Divide the church ministries into two lists based on their primary target group (congregation or community) then ask how many people have responded to the gospel through each community-targeted ministry in the last 12 months. From there assess whether and how the ministry can be made more effective or whether it is redundant and some hard decisions need to be made.

In the last generation, the world around us has changed dramatically but the Gospel of Christ remains “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” My encouragement is that, as churches and individuals, we become strategic in how we share it.

Philip Bryant is Church Health and Church Planting Consultant for Baptist Churches of Western Australia.



PRAC INTERVIEW

SEN. GUY BARNETT

SHAYNE NEUMANN MP

Evangelical Christians believe the call of God rests on every believer. We've sometimes over-honoured those "called" to pastoral ministry or missionary service, and under-honoured those equally "called" to engage our community in its various structures and networks. PRAC recently chatted with Senator Guy Barnett (Liberal Senator for Tasmania) and Shayne Neumann MP (Labor Federal Member for Blair), both of whom are active members of Baptist Churches, about their calling to a parliamentary career.

PRAC: Tell us about how your interest in politics developed? What was it triggered by?

GB: My interest in politics developed at a young age. I wrote to Mum and Dad as a young teenager when at boarding school, that I wanted to make Australia great. I still do. I was influenced in large part no doubt by my parents who were both keen and active in making a positive difference in our community.

SN: I grew up in a household in which issues social, economic and political were discussed regularly. My father was a meatworker and my mother was a shop assistant. Labor gave us hope and the Union made us strong. I joined the Labor Party while at University studying law, politics and economics. However, it was the election of Pauline Hanson as my Federal Member and the rise of One Nation, along with my opposition to what they stood for, which prompted me to greater political involvement and which led me to become a Federal Member of Parliament.

PRAC: To what extent do you see your role as a politician a "calling" – something God wants you to do?

GB: Totally. I felt called as a young boy to be involved in Federal politics and always believed I would ultimately end up there. The interesting thing is that following the August 2010 Federal election although I lost my seat and will conclude my Senate term on 30 June 2011 I remain passionate about contributing positively to my community. What next?

SN: We live in a democracy not a theocracy. The people decide by election who should be their representatives. My belief is that I did the right thing in standing for Parliament. As a Christian I pray for God's guidance in all that I do.

PRAC: Political parties are made up of people from a range of worldviews. To some extent compromise is the name of the game. How does your Christian faith influence or affect your political career? And how do you cope when policies are formulated that conflict with your personal convictions?

GB: Like all Christians I believe our faith should influence not only our careers but our lives. It should be put into practice every day. I try and remain faithful, trusting in God, notwithstanding making mistakes and being a flawed individual. I have crossed the floor in the Senate three times and have always been prepared to follow my conscience and act contrary to the party view if required. The Liberal Party, like other political parties, provides opportunities for their MPs to express their views. I do this.

SN: My Christian faith is the compass for my life. I have been influenced by the social gospel aspects of my faith in the need to care for the disadvantaged, the challenged, the frail and those who need a helping hand. There are very few occasions when a policy may confront directly a person's individual beliefs. The Labor Party permits conscience votes in Parliament on life issues.

PRAC: Baptists were among the first to advocate for the "separation of church and state." What do you understand by that phrase?

GB: Having worked in the United States there is a very strict interpretation of the quote "separation of church and state" in that country. In Australia it is less strict and in my view far more practical and sensible. The Government does not promote any particular Christian faith and nor should it. It is a matter for the individual. The State is separated into the executive, the parliament



Shayne Neumann MP



Senator Guy Barnett

and the judiciary and the separation of each of these is vital to the proper working of our democracy. The best form of democracy is one where the people participate regularly and enthusiastically, not just at the ballot box. Accordingly, Churches and individuals generally have the opportunity to express their views on the proper role of the State but the Church does not and should not control the State. They are and should remain, separate.

SN: There is no State religion in Australia. Churches are and should be free to worship and associate as they wish without Government storm troopers interfering as does happen under authoritarian regimes. Government and Churches should partner together for the benefit of the community.

PRAC: How important is it that Christians (and churches) engage in public debate around political issues? And what do you see being the role of the church in this debate?

GB: It is vital as noted above. A proactive engagement and public debate are essential to a healthy democracy. The old adage “the world is run by those who show up” is correct. Churches should encourage their congregations to be politically active in expressing their views and demonstrating their values on a consistent basis. This should reflect their personal faith in Jesus Christ. In my view the current campaign to denigrate marriage as being between a man and woman provides an opportunity for proactive lobbying in the political process. Of course there are many other issues requiring the active involvement of Christians in the political process.

SN: Christians should join Parties, write emails and make phone calls to their representatives and even stand for

Parliament. The Church has a role to be a voice on issues also.

PRAC: From your perspective as a politician how does the Christian church come across in the world of public policy debates?

GB: Some say the church is asleep. There is definitely room for improvement. It depends on the issue. The Catholic Church has been steadfast and strong in their support for the family and many moral issues such as marriage, abortion, euthanasia. Likewise, many Christian churches have been active in supporting the Make Poverty History Campaign. The Australian Christian Lobby is an effective and influential organisation in the world of public policy debates, regularly making submissions and contributing.

SN: The Christian Churches are still respected on public policy matters but unfortunately they have been too narrow in their voice. Too often the issues raised are ones of private sexual conduct and individual behavior with a too restrictive view of what is a “family value”. Access to decent health care, rights in the workplace and good education are family values but little is said about these matters and others.

PRAC: Charles de Gaul once said: “Politics is too important to leave in the hands of politicians.” How would you like to see Christians engage in political issues that face our nation?

GB: The French President Charles de Gaulle said this at the end of World War II and he was right. Politicians do not pull the levers of public policy in a vacuum. They are constrained by the opinions and influences at work in the public arena across the community. Christians and Church communities should demonstrate their faith

and values in a practical way to influence these levers. Christians should build relationships, for the long term, with their federal, state and local politicians encouraging them and thanking them for their service to the community. Write a letter, or send them an invitation to a forthcoming event, whether it be at Christmas, Easter or at some other time. Don’t just lobby them when you need something. Try and see the world from their perspective noting the pressures on their families and on their time.

SN: Get involved. Join a Party. Write a letter. Make a phone call. Raise an issue. Stand for Office.

PRAC: What advice would you give to a Christian who was interested in exploring a career in politics?

GB: Go for it! They should be community minded and aware of local concerns and issues. I would encourage them to get involved and be an advocate for their community or organisations which they support. Join the political party that suits. They could meet with their local MP to learn more about their role and how government works. They could read my book! Make a Difference: A Practical Guide to Lobbying includes chapters on how government works and the role of an MP.

SN: Former Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was asked that question. His response was to the effect: join the Labor Party or the Liberal Party because no one else matters. In other words, if you want to effect change join a major Political Party because only these Parties can form government and effect real change.



EXPLORING THE FRINGE

By Stan Fetting

Kate is a young mother who attends a playgroup at a local Baptist church. She has two young kids, a broken marriage and she is struggling with very few friends in her new community. She is interested in God but is too scared just to walk into church on a Sunday morning. The playgroup leaders are friendly to her but nobody has asked her about her beliefs in the six months she has been going along.

Scott and Lauren have two teenage boys in the youth group. They drop them off and pick them up every Friday night and have often wondered what the church service was like. They have had very little contact with any church people and would be open to finding out more, but they are too reserved to initiate contact. Is this your church?

Churches readily send missions teams to the end of the world to find people with whom they can talk about Jesus, while, on the home front, scratch their heads trying to come up with new ways to connect with people who need to hear the Gospel. Quite often there's a ready harvest field on the edge of the church that gets overlooked, and each church has one. It's called *the fringe*. People on the fringe are connected to the church in some way but are not a part of its worshipping core. They are the children, teenagers, adults and family members who attend church-run activities like children's groups, youth, playgroups, craft groups, and so on. By virtue of the fact that they are connected to the church, their openness to spirituality is above average.

This year's NCLS Survey provides churches a new opportunity to look at church life through the eyes of the people who make up the fringe.

Learning more about the people who occupy what is often a twilight zone can help churches understand the perspectives, yearnings and opportunities to be found amongst this group.

The Community Contacts Survey is a confidential online survey for adults. The Survey explores aspects of the demographics, the spirituality and the church connections of those at the edge of your church's life. NCLS gives your church the online survey address and its own password to give out to prospective participants. Participants have three months to go online and complete the survey using the church password.

In addition to learning about the people who occupy the in-between-church-and-community space, churches can also benefit from the NCLS Community Social Profile (CSP). This Profile is a 32-page colour report that contains census information about a defined local community area. Using maps, pictures and tables, it shows the social make-up of your community, how it is distinctive and how it is changing. By going beyond guess work, and developing a more detailed knowledge of the people both connected and disconnected to your church, churches can plan and strategise with greater wisdom and insight and take advantage of the opportunities unique to its setting.

The Apostle Paul would have marveled at this rich treasure trove of intelligence as he was planning his missionary strategy. Mind you, he didn't do a bad job with the Athenians as it was! (Acts 17).

Find out more at www.ncls.org.au

Stan Fetting has been a Baptist Pastor for 15 years in both Darwin and Brisbane. He is married to Julie and currently works as Communications Manager for Crossover Australia.