

# A life worth imitating

ANNUAL REPORT  
2014

“

BE IMITATORS  
OF ME, JUST AS  
I ALSO AM OF  
CHRIST

”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1



# "Great days lie ahead of us as we walk forward trusting Jesus."

It is an enormous encouragement to be part of the Crossway community of faith. God is at work and we give all praise to Him. As a church we have continued our journey in building a discipling culture. Pastor Tim Piesse provides the strategic lead for our discipleship ministries. Midweek Bible intensives continue, and training towards discipleship huddles and missional communities continues to roll out. New Missional Communities were launched. Both 3DMarts and ARK were officially recognised. We now have 9 missional communities in Melbourne and Praxeis has a further 50 across Australia. Last year 219 people put their trust in Jesus for the first time and 117 people were baptised. Every one of those people are precious to God and we celebrate with them. Additionally, Praxeis saw 100 new disciples and a further 32 people were baptised. We praise God for them.

Crossway LifeCare continues to see people in tough places flourish. There were 82 people who graduated from the COACH programme. So many achieved substantial goals in their lives. 80-100 people are discovering community through B-Together and Back on Track and the LifeCare Women's Centre bless very vulnerable people. Well done to all who are involved.

I would like to honour the efforts of the Generational Ministry team so ably led by Pastor Margaret Spicer. There has been a big transition in Youth Ministry in 2014 and they have settled well into 2015. Additionally, Kidspace is having record attendance as we realise our value of Church and Family partnering together. Our Young Adults are living missionally and partnering with Red Frogs and others in the universities.

All of this would not be possible without the professional support of Leong Looi, our Director of Operations and Administration. The Executive Team are regularly in awe of Leong's capacity, integrity, professionalism and heart. Together with his team of staff and volunteers, Crossway has substantial support and excellence in our increasingly litigious world.

On a personal note, 2014 was a unique year as Edi and I took long service leave. After 25 years as a Baptist Pastor and in my 7th at Crossway it was time for a break. Crossway graciously allowed Edi to have


leave without pay for the time beyond her normal leave provisions. We had a wonderful and very refreshing break.

Earlier in the year Edi graduated with a Masters of Arts in Church Practice. I am very proud of her for doing this part time which was part of her ordination process. Congratulations Rev Edith Stephenson. On that front I wrote a book while I was away which I am yet to release. I was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity by MIU in conjunction with Asia Pacific Seminary. I hope to release the book in 2015.

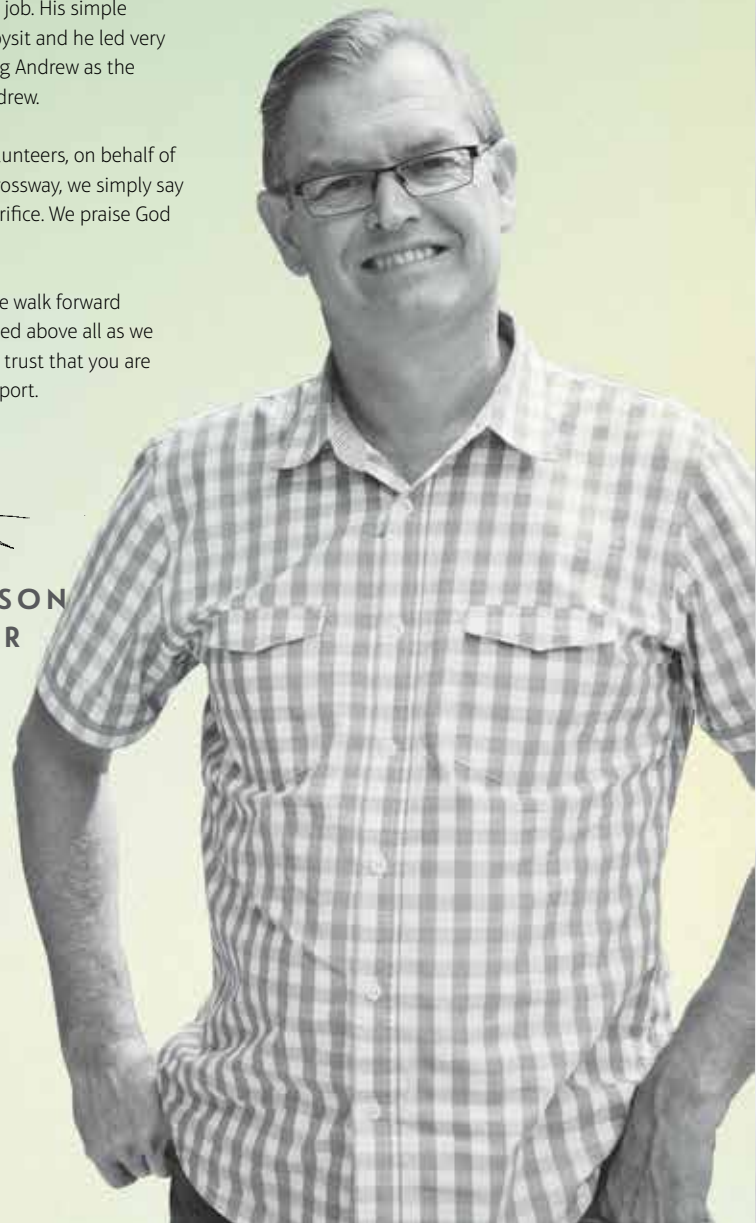
Pastor Andrew Hill was acting Senior Pastor in my absence and he did a great job. His simple instruction was to lead not babysit and he led very well. This led us to repositioning Andrew as the Executive Pastor. Well done Andrew.

To our Board and over 1200 volunteers, on behalf of the broader congregation at Crossway, we simply say thanks for your service and sacrifice. We praise God because of you all.

Great days lie ahead of us as we walk forward trusting Jesus. May He be pleased above all as we move forward by faith in Him. I trust that you are encouraged as you read this report.



**DALE STEPHENSON**  
**SENIOR PASTOR**



# 585

## NEW VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE

## VOLUNTEERS MEL'S STORY

When I moved to Australia in 2009, I felt very alone as my family were still overseas and I hadn't lived in Australia since primary school. At the beginning of 2010 I joined Kidspace, as I desperately felt the need to connect and be part of something bigger than myself. Over time I realised that there is so much more to Kidspace than meets the eye.

Kidspace has become more than a volunteer job for me. It's like my second family, a place where I can be myself and no matter what happens during the week, I know I will be encouraged and refuelled for the week to come. As I've gone deeper, God has shown me that it's not just an opportunity to minister to the children, but a precious chance to journey with a team of amazing volunteer leaders.

This year we're really trying to embrace discipleship – so everyone on the team gets mentored by someone while they in turn mentor someone else! It has been so powerful in my own life to discover that I get just as much joy from encouraging my younger teammates as I do from being encouraged myself. The team ends up growing so much closer, and the kids benefit too as their leaders grow in confidence. Everyone wins in a culture like that. It's so true what Jesus said – "it is more blessed to give than to receive"!

Something I love about Kidspace is how different people are impacted in different ways. Small group is my favourite part of the service, where a group of kids and a committed leader connect to explore faith. I've seen kids wrestle with their God questions, take their first steps towards praying out loud, open up about their personal lives, and make friends with peers they never used to talk to. I love seeing people impacted by our times of worship, too (including me!). There's this one song, 'Your Love', that kids and leaders alike keep naming as their favourite, telling me that every time they sing it they encounter God's love and draw closer to Him! It's such a joy being part of worship times like that.

Belonging as a volunteer has sustained me through many hard times. I find I'm heaps more fulfilled in life when I'm serving – there's something in me that resonates with God's heart, making me come alive when I'm on an adventure with Him. God seems to have wired us to be so much fuller when we're sharing His blessing, not keeping it to ourselves. Perhaps the more of it we pass on, the more we get to experience!

“

IT'S SO TRUE  
WHAT JESUS  
SAID - "IT IS  
MORE BLESSED  
TO GIVE THAN  
TO RECEIVE"!

”





It felt like home  
from the moment  
we stepped into  
the building.”

## FIRST TIME COMMITMENTS

### WILLEM'S STORY

I was brought up in a non-Christian environment and remained a non believer throughout my 40 year marriage to Susanna, my wonderful Christian wife.

Overall I have had a good life. For many years I knew that I was missing out on something but it just wouldn't come together for me. I only went to church on special occasions like weddings and funerals, however, I did enjoy the company of Christian friends and they, like Susanna, seemed to have found that special relationship in their faith, one that I just couldn't see.

Then, on the 23rd June 2014, on the way to a check-up for my cancer (a version of lymphoma), God whispered to me and gave me very clear directions, much like a shopping list;

1. Get good test results,
2. Go to church,
3. Read the Bible.

Well, I did get excellent test results. That evening we downloaded an electronic version of the Bible and I started my daily reading with the help of a reading plan. The next Sunday for the first time in my life I went eagerly to church at Crossway. It felt like home from the moment we stepped into the building.

Susanna and I completed Alpha together, which was wonderful as a lot of my basic questions were answered. Alpha, plus the ongoing guidance from pastors, helped me understand and the Christian faith finally clicked into place. I realised that walking with Jesus was the way forward and I said yes to the Lord on 26th October 2014.

One of His commands is to be baptised – one which I was very keen to follow – so at the Christmas Eve service 2014, at the ripe age of 63, I was baptised by my wife Susanna and Pastor Andrew. The experience of baptism was happy and exciting beyond measure, one that made me look forward to following Him and being part of the Crossway family.

Since I have opened my heart and begun actively seeking Jesus, I am much more positive about the future and at peace within myself. I have a longing to learn more and grow my relationship with Jesus and follow His way and His commands.

117  
BAPTISMS

219  
FIRST TIME  
COMMITMENTS

## SUSANNA'S STORY

I was born in Rhodesia and raised in a loving home with good Christian parents. At the age of 19 I met Willem, who did not serve the Lord. With some resistance from my father and our church, we were married five years later. Two days after our wedding, we left my home country for Australia and arrived with no family, friends or possessions.

In a new country and feeling very unsure, I did not go to church for many years, but never lost my faith in God and always read my Bible. It was not until 1986 that I was baptised. Even though I was serving the Lord and involved at church I had a deep loneliness because I wanted my husband to fellowship with me. The Lord showed me Luke 15:4-7. Prayer became my life as I felt the urgent need to know more and pray effectively in order to lead my husband and others to the Lord.

In June 2013 we received the devastating news that Willem had cancer. With a broken heart I cried to the Lord and spent longer hours in prayer – and the Lord gave me a peace in my heart. Difficult times and treatments followed and God kept reminding me “He is our refuge and our strength” and that “He will never leave us nor forsake us.”

After Willem came home, I prayed silently over him for his total healing every night. I visualised the tumours melting away. God reminded me that “If we believe that for which we ask, we will receive it” (Matt 21:22) and that nothing is impossible with God. Friends became very scarce during this time, but Jesus became my very best friend and my relationship with Him grew closer than ever.

I talked with Willem often about the Bible and his response would be, “Yes it is a good book, but I can't see what you see.” There were many times of disagreement between the two of us over the years, about the Bible, but I continued praying for his salvation. Without his knowledge I had been praying that the Lord would lead me to a church where we could worship together. I had chosen Crossway, and God was faithful in answering my prayers. One day on our way to get blood test results from his cancer specialist, Willem said, “I want to come to church with you, where are WE going?”

This year Willem and I will have been married for forty years. It has been a journey of patience, trust, obedience, perseverance, faith and constant prayer. Praise God. Amen.

“  
GOD WAS  
FAITHFUL IN  
ANSWERING  
MY PRAYERS  
”





If the Lord has called  
you for a purpose,  
he will equip you.”

## LIFE GROUPS

### NIRANJAN'S STORY

I come from a Catholic background and have always attended church on Sundays, but did not have a relationship with God through His son Jesus until a change of circumstances about ten years ago. Miraculously, I was led to Crossway about the same time. I did the Alpha course, followed by a few others, including Facilitator Training. About five years ago, I put my hand up to lead a Life Group.

We started with three others and myself, and over this period our Life Group has grown to nine. Our members come from diverse backgrounds. We have an accountant, a businessman, a social worker, a police officer, a psychologist, an electronics engineer and a medical receptionist. One of our members is currently serving in Vietnam with Engineers Without Borders.

By journeying with the group I have grown as a Christian. I asked the Lord to use me for His purposes and He began to put certain thoughts into my heart. With a background in hospitality (I am a chef by trade), we started organising social gatherings with guest speakers – and of course, food – and encouraging our members to bring a friend along.

To wind up 2013 we held a jazz night. In addition to singing Christmas carols, members were asked to share what Christmas meant to them. In July last year one of our members, Fred, organised a praise and worship night. Pastor Bill Malcolm gave

a wonderful message about sheep going astray and how the shepherd has to rescue them over and over again. In 2014, we had Hume and Heather share their experiences of spreading the good news in a South East Asian country. Howard shared his story about teaching English in Asia, and Connie talked about her mission trip to the outback. Another member of our Life Group, Lesley, shared her experience in Thailand with Destiny Rescue, an organisation committed to rescuing girls from trafficking. In November we had Christian life coach Corey Payton speak on living life to the full, based on John 10:10. And Steve's BBQ on Christmas Eve 2014 was not only a great way to celebrate the year but also to meet fellow Christians from other churches.

So far, the highlight of being a Life Group leader was to witness one of our members being baptised on Easter Sunday last year. She comes from a non-Christian background and has been in the country for about two years.

To start the new year, Sheena and David organised a BBQ by the beach. In February, Lesley and myself hosted a singles' party with the theme "Zero Expectations." Participants were encouraged to share an inspiring story where God was glorified. David and myself have put out a DVD to reach out to non-Christians of an Abrahamic faith.

One thing I have learnt is that if the Lord has called you for a purpose, He will equip you. It's a matter of trusting in Him and being faithful in little things. It's been a wonderful journey, an honour and privilege to be hosting such a great bunch of people. I am awaiting instructions for the next step.

221  
LIFE GROUPS



18  
NEW  
LIFE GROUPS  
FORMED

# MAKING DISCIPLES

## GERMAINE'S STORY

He had a great smile and was happily engaged with his young daughter in the pre-school indoor play area. He caught my eye since we didn't have too many dads participating in the Mainly Music program. I remembered his face and slowly recollected that I had seen him before on several occasions on the Sunday in the toddlers' room, with his daughter.

I found out later, during a conversation with a Mainly Music leader, that his wife had considered attending a Mainly Music outreach games and dinner night. Even though she didn't make it to the event, her name had popped up as someone 'soft-hearted' towards the gospel.

It didn't take long before I asked the Lord to bless my conversation with Mary. I asked if she was attending Crossway, explaining that I had seen her husband with Isabella in the toddlers' room before. She replied in the negative, offering more information about her minimal involvement in another church previously. Somewhere in the conversation she also mentioned that she owned a Bible. I asked if she would be interested in reading the Bible with me, to which she replied in the affirmative.

During our first Bible reading based on the 'Disciple One' program, it was established that she hadn't asked Jesus into her life because she didn't seem to believe that there was a good reason to. And yet, she came to read the Bible with me and appeared to enjoy it. When we discussed our thoughts on God, she would give all the seemingly right answers, that is, all you need to do is believe in Jesus, and that Jesus is powerful. Mary has experienced God answering a pastor's prayers to heal her mother and is grateful for His grace.

I don't know if she will ever ask Jesus into her life, but I know a couple of things for sure: God starts faith and the Word of God is powerful and life changing when you read it. When Mary and I aren't able to meet, she tells me that she will read the Bible on her own. I'm guessing that God has been at work in her life for a while and I'm part of this journey to be encouraged and to watch Him at work.

“

THE WORD  
OF GOD IS  
POWERFUL  
AND LIFE  
CHANGING

”

134

“DISCIPLES” IN  
DISCIPLE ONE





# MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

## JANET'S STORY

The homeschool co-operative was formed in 2012 out of a need for homeschooling mums to share the teaching load and give their kids more opportunities to do group activities. There are many mums who believe that homeschooling is best for their family, but it can be lonely being at home and carrying the whole curriculum. When I asked the church for a room or two, I didn't know that this would become such a strong community and a wonderful ministry to so many families. After hearing a few of the mums' stories I realised that this co-op meant more to the mums than just teaching and curriculum.

Currently, 91 kids and 36 mums are meeting each week. On a typical day, I see different groups of mums talking about their marriages, parenting and life. There are also faith talks, prayer and healing happening in different corners of the room. A number of Christians have re-connected with church and their opinion of community is being re-defined. The children look forward to their Monday co-op as they get to learn wonderful skills in drama, dance, science, art and history. The teens have completed a Cert III in Business and Cert III in Graphic Design. But more importantly, they serve and encounter God as a family.

One of the mums in the co-operative shared with me about what it means to be part of a missional community:

"This group saved us when we first moved from overseas. We had left our whole network and knew no-one here in Melbourne. My son found it very hard to make friends and this was the thing that he needed. We were accepted and embraced and it is now our extended family. The group involves

the whole family and not just the children. My husband feels just as much a part of it as we do. Each family, as a whole, has to buy into the ministry. We help set up, pack down and share ownership of the group. I love that we are embraced right where we are on our journey. It is very attractive to us because it is accepting. You don't have to believe or behave a certain way to belong. We are informally introducing pre-Christians to the good news each Monday."

Some mothers are now moving from being discipled to discipling others within the community. I am so encouraged to see that the homeschool co-operative is a safe place for them to make this faith step.

A family who had been antagonistic towards the Christian faith have been engaging weekly with other mums in spiritual discussions. She said, "Thank you for accepting me right where I'm at in my journey."

We prayed for a pre-Christian lady's husband who had been struggling with many years of unemployment. The next week she arrived at co-op full of thankfulness and joy because her husband got a job that week.

Some mums are barely making ends meet and we have started a nourish box where we bring luxury items for a family to bring them a little joy in their week. We also have monthly encouragement nights where the mums get together to eat, learn, cry and laugh. Once a year we have a weekend retreat called Nourish which, again, is a time of refreshment and laughter.

# 9

## MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

# 4

## NEW MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

“

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT THIS WOULD BECOME SUCH A STRONG COMMUNITY AND A WONDERFUL MINISTRY TO SO MANY FAMILIES.

”





"We count it a joy  
to be involved  
as God leads"

## MEMBERSHIP



### GEORGE AND NANCY'S STORY

'There is your pastor.' These words rang in my heart as my wife Nancy and I sat in a morning service for the second time at Crossway Church. We were listening to Dale Stephenson, the senior pastor, as he expounded the word of God faithfully. After the service, Nancy and I talked about the good service and in particular about my impression, which I believed was from the Holy Spirit. We agreed that this was a significant confirmation of our recent thinking.

Our background for over sixty years was in a Pentecostal fellowship, the Assemblies of God in Australia where I served as a pastor in local churches for fifteen years and then as director of missions for our fellowship for thirty years. This took me to some thirty countries, many of them on multiple occasions. Nancy and I count our friendship with hundreds of missionaries and national church pastors as a great privilege. Since our retirement I have written a series of books on my experiences and observations. A highlight in this stage of retirement was teaching in a missionary training course in USA and Malaysia for several years.

When we first came to Crossway Church we were looking for a new spiritual home for practical reasons of travel and convenience. We had heard good reports about Crossway and at that time our youngest daughter and her husband with their three youngsters started attending Crossway. We saw good spiritual development in the teenagers' lives. This naturally led to our visits on Sunday mornings. As a retired couple we soon came to love the quality of worship and the moving of the Holy Spirit as the word of God was faithfully preached. We also appreciated the activities and outreach to senior citizens.

Our commitment to ministry with a different Christian fellowship meant that for us to transfer our commitment to a Baptist Church was unusual. However, we rejoiced in the preaching, the worship and the fellowship and found Crossway church to be all that we hoped it would be. The acceptance we found at Crossway greatly encouraged us. To now apply for membership in this significant church is to us a real privilege.

Under the leadership of Dale Stephenson and his quality ministry team with the vision and focus of this church on winning the lost, together with the range of ministries to families, seniors, youth, children, community care and missions, we count it a joy to be involved as God leads.

**68**  
NEW MEMBERS

**1,752**  
TOTAL MEMBERS

# NOTICEABLE GROWTH IN MINISTRIES

Measured by average weekly event attendance

IGNITE	93	↑ 30%
CONNECT WORSHIP (SENIORS)	55	↑ 13%
KIDSPACE	694	↑ 8%
INDONESIAN CONGREGATION	72	↑ 6%
CHINESE CONGREGATION	385	↑ 2%

# ATTENDANCE

EASTER PERIOD ATTENDANCE	5,493	↑ 8%
CHRISTMAS PERIOD ATTENDANCE	6,671	↓ 1%
OVERALL ATTENDANCE	3,817	↑ 1%

Measured by average weekly attendance of all events including year-on-year inclusion of Easter and Christmas period attendees

# MISSIONS

# 8

COMMISSIONED  
AND SENT OUT

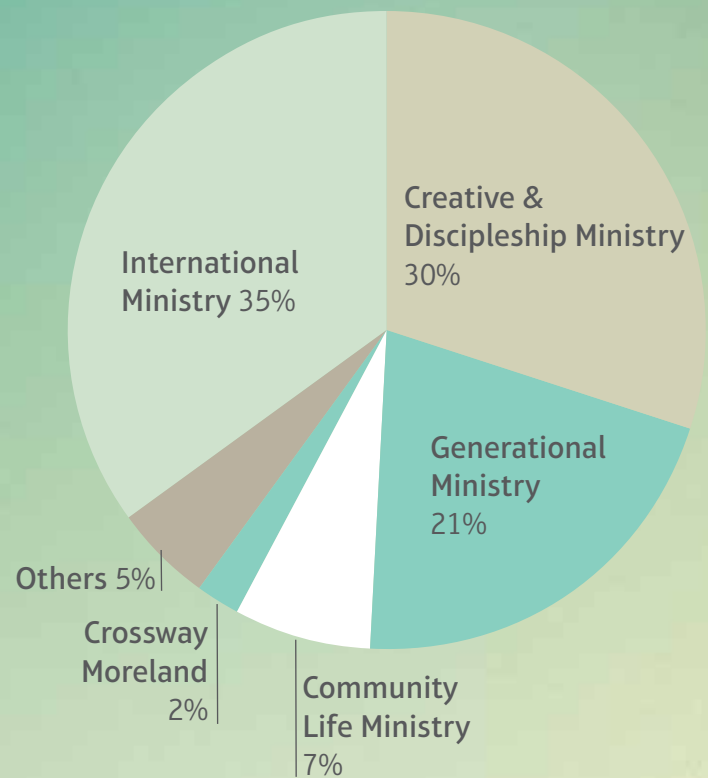
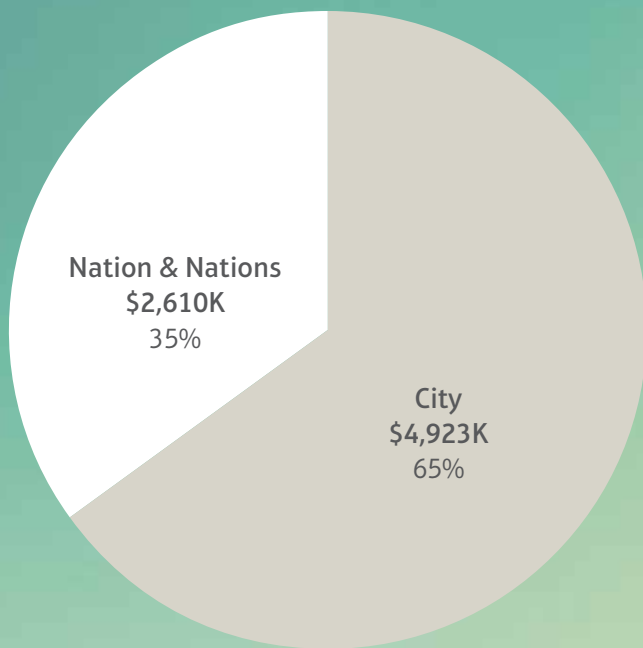
# 75

MISSIONARIES  
SUPPORTED

Including Praxeis



# FINANCES



**\$98,069** ↑ 5%  
AVERAGE WEEKLY TITHES

**\$214,195** ↓ 23%  
CHRISTMAS APPEAL GIVING

**\$8,574,781** ↑ 17%  
TOTAL REVENUE

# Vision

TO SEE OUR CITY  
NATION  
AND THE NATIONS  
BECOME DISCIPLES OF JESUS

# Mission

LOVING GOD  
LOVING PEOPLE  
MAKING DISCIPLES



[WWW.CROSSWAY.ORG.AU](http://WWW.CROSSWAY.ORG.AU)