

Café Church@ Genesis

Bray Park Goes Multi-Site

by Jack De Vries and
Marelise Matthysen

A good cup of coffee, some good food, and a relaxed atmosphere are all part of the strategy to reach the lost for Christ. Bray Park Community Church (BPCC) has been blessed with a growth in numbers. So during 2010 it was decided to “expand the walls” of BPCC to another venue.

There are many different ways to plant churches and expand the church’s influence in the world. Some churches release a segment of their congregation to begin a new church in a different part of the city or region. The Kingston congregation in Tasmania has been doing this effectively in planting new churches in the Bay area, Summerleas, Margate, and most recently in Huonville.¹

Other churches begin gospel communities or house churches. The 1st century church used this model as we read in Acts 15:42: *“Everyday they spent time in the temple and in one home after another. They never stopped teaching and telling the good news that Jesus*

was the Messiah.” Here we see the simplicity of Christianity as the church comes together in homes for worship, teaching, and fellowship. Crowded House in Sheffield, England has become a model of how these gospel communities can work.²



But there is not one model of church planting which fits all. Churches do well to become innovative in attempting to reach the lost for Christ. Elmer Towns, a church planting expert, points out: “When culture changes, adjust your methods or you will lose your effectiveness... but never change your message or your principles! When methods no longer work, don’t blame the harvest as being unreachable; instead ask God if it is time to change your methods.”

When Bray Park explored what model of church planting would work best in their unique situation, they decided to launch a satellite congregation on the very same campus which they share with Genesis Christian College(GCC). The College had just built a new administration building and the staff room at GCC seemed to be the best option. It would encourage connection by offering a smaller more intimate venue for people. It seemed to be an ideal setting for “Come and See Evangelism” by providing a

¹ Check out Kingston vision and strategy of planting churches all over Tasmania:
http://ministryformation.com.au/attachments/107_vision-100.pdf

² To learn more about Crowded House, check out <http://www.thecrowdedhouse.org/>

less formal environment where friends could be invited to, while offering the same teaching and children's programs as the mother church next door. Marelise Matthysen, a key leader of this satellite congregation, admits: "I never



Marelise Matthysen

imagined such a perfect location. It made me realize that years ago God used the church to bless the community by building a school, and now we're being blessed by God and the same community by using their facilities. We've truly been blessed by blessing others, through God!"

Bray Park had some distinctive goals for this new campus church. This congregation would provide an alternative venue where people can worship God. It would encourage connection by offering a smaller, more intimate venue for people, where they can experience community and worship God. It would provide a venue with an acoustic style of music. And it would encourage "Come and see Evangelism" by providing a less formal environment where friends can be invited to – to reach unbelievers.

The church set some boundaries for this new outreach. It would have the same teaching as the mother church. This would be achieved through video messages. There was some initial discussion whether these video messages would come via a live-feed from the main sanctuary or using previously recorded messages. The launch team opted for recorded messages. Their research showed that recorded messages allows for control over timing in the



The church and college campus on Youngs Crossing Road, Bray Park

video venue. Also, with recorded messages they would not be at the mercy of the live worship service schedule. Recordings also increased the flexibility for programming. They could add special music, announcements, and the like without worrying about syncing up with the timing in the main sanctuary.

Bray Park's Vision, Mission & Strategy

VISION

To be a biblically functioning community of believers so that Christ's redemptive purposes can be accomplished in the world.

MISSION

To love and honour God so that our neighbours become fully devoted followers of Christ

STRATEGY

Winning people to Christ - Building them up in their faith - Sending them out.

There was no need to duplicate children's ministries since families would access the same children's programs at Kid's Church. There would be live worship with a somewhat different style from the mother church. There also would be the same over-arching vision, mission and strategy as the mother church.

Bray Park designed this new congregation with their target audience in mind: (1) People who prefer an informal setting with an acoustic style of music. (2) The Genesis College Community. (3) People who were previous church-goers, but who became unconnected. (4) Believers who have fallen away, to bring them back to the church. And (5) Unchurched friends of the congregation.



Elder Gunther Matthysen leading the worship service



Great Food
Great Coffee
Great (Worship)Service



Café Church @ Genesis: A Place to Connect

There are many benefits of growing a church through a satellite congregation. For Bray Park this new campus church would have a small church feel with all the programs and amenities of a large church. John Hoogenhout, senior pastor at BPC, stressed that “a café atmosphere is an ideal setting to make connection with people.” And he is right. Think of the many cafés which dot the Australian landscape. As one of the franchises, **THE COFFEE CLUB**, knows so well – a café is a great meeting place! Their slogan is: “Where will I meet you?” They pride themselves with having “great food, great coffee, great service.” Provide great food with great coffee along with a great **worship** service and you have a winning combination.

People will begin to connect with each other, and ultimately, they will connect with God at Café Church.

Before Bray Park went public with this campus church, Café Church @ Genesis, they had a number of pre-launch services. The first one was held 7 November 2010 with 3 others following on 5 December, 9 January, and 6 February. On 27 February Café Church began weekly services. Already new people have begun attending the weekly services at Café Church – seeing this congregation as *their* church.

In their book *11 Innovations in the Local Church*, co-authors Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird suggest 13 advantages of a church becoming multi-site:

- It brings the best aspects of larger churches and smaller churches
- It increases the number of seats during optimal worship times
- It overcomes geographical barriers when a church is landlocked or tightly zoned
- It enables untapped talent to emerge each time a new venue or site is opened
- It mobilises volunteers through an added variety of ministry opportunities

- It increases options of location and worship style
- It assists in reaching friends and family unwilling to travel a great distance to church
- It accelerates the climate for diversity, creativity, and innovation in ministry
- It improves the church's stewardship of fund and resources
- It helps a congregation see evidences of the larger Kingdom mission
- It models and trains people for church planting elsewhere
- It provides a pipeline for the development of emerging leaders and future staff ³



Great coffee - great conversations!

Sitting in their first pre-launch service on 7 November 2010, Marelise shares how she felt “overwhelmed by God’s goodness and greatness.” The vision of a campus extension was becoming a reality. People were beginning to connect with each other and with God. Through this multi-site congregation, more communities and people are being reached for Christ as Bray Park centralises its resources and leverages them for the gospel. What happened in Acts has the potential of happening through Café Church: *“And the gospel spread like wildfire all through the region.”* (Acts 13:49)



Connecting around tables



The Administration Block at GCC – the venue for Café Church @ Genesis

³ (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007) pp. 73-74