

From Ian...

Moving ahead

Hi everyone,

I thought it would be a good idea if I wrote to you again. There are so many things happening in the life of our church, that I'm forever trying to think up ways to make sure that we're all on the same page, aware of the awesome things that Jesus is doing in and through us. Creating new Sunday Services, purchasing buildings, taking on new staff, reworking structures. It's an exciting church to be a part of, and these Pastoral Letters of mine are one way to help us all be able to celebrate the brilliant adventure we're on together. So go and get a coffee and enjoy the read!

CRC Churches Update

Last year we put belonging to CRC Churches on the agenda. It's been a big move for us as a church, given that we're approaching our 25th anniversary. I've had heaps of feedback from the church, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive in support of where the Elders and Ministry Leaders of the church feel the Lord is leading us.

If you've somehow missed all the discussions, or want to refresh your mind on the background, my last Pastoral Letter and FAQ page are still online on our website. Throughout the whole process, we've wanted to go slow to give everyone the opportunity to have a voice and think through the implications. Make sure you get back to me, Sarah, or any of the Elders if you have any further questions or comments.

I've recently put forward a number of the team here to set them on the Pastoral Credentialing pathway within CRC Churches. That's our next step – to get our key ministry people formally recognised. The NSW State Credentialing Team have interviewed Sarah Merrick, Caroline Dennis, Ashleigh Sheehan and Duncan Clarke, and they speak very highly of them.

After having talked it through at length between the Elders and Ministry Leaders, we're proposing that we formally enter relationship with CRC Churches International in May. That way, we can celebrate the event in conjunction with our 25th Anniversary. May just seems to be built for that kind of celebration with our Foundations emphasis. We'll invite Bill Vasilakis (National Chairman) and Trevor Murphy (NSW Chairman) to be a part of the celebration.

Old Man Valley

Here's an update on the Land... Most of you are aware that late last year I took part in the negotiations that Hornsby Shire Council had with the general public in relation to future use of the Quarry/Old Man Valley site. Following those meetings, Council put together a process inviting Expressions of Interest for use or development of the site. We enlisted the assistance of a Town Planning Consultant who advised us to submit multiple Expressions of Interest, though she did counsel us that outside a total God given miracle, she can't see that any proposal of ours would be seriously entertained by Council. The deadline for the Expressions of Interest was late January. We ended up putting in three.

One was a joint venture with Pacific Hills Christian School, who may well be interested in developing a Creative Arts focussed Christian School. The submission basically envisaged a School precinct, multiple playing fields, and a church worship complex. It takes up the lion's share of Old Man Valley.

The other two proposals were submitted solely under our own name. In it, I cast the vision of a worship centre, an outside amphitheatre around a landscaped pool for baptisms, surrounded by publicly accessible gardens with walking tracks, picnic areas, etc. One (my preferred option) situated at the southern end of Old Man Valley, behind the swimming pool; the other in the old Quarry Crusher Plant site.

Council got back to me requesting further details – how much land we wanted for buildings and carpark, how much we would be prepared to offer for such land if it was fully serviced, how much land the gardens would require. They didn't ask for what we'd offer for the gardens land, as in our proposals we suggest that Council may wish to maintain ownership of such land and lease it out to us at a nominal amount. What do you do with questions like those, though? So I let them in on my dream... buildings and carpark – 3ha; gardens – 3ha; for serviced land we'd be prepared to negotiate up to \$1M per ha (up to \$3M). In the proposal, we looked at our historical growth rate and proposed a timeline for land acquisition and building stages. I could see the final project completing around 2015 if we keep going the way we have over the past 5 years.

Hey, none of this is a done deal. And I tell you what, I'm amazed our name's still in the ring. Even if we don't get any further with Council, I still have no question that the Lord has his plan for us and our future building needs. I wouldn't even regard a negative response from Council as a long term "No", even over that site. It would simply mean that we'll be dealing with a different owner further down the track.

But it's an exciting time nonetheless, don't you agree!?

Finances

I've just had word from Marty Wardle, who looks after our Finances. He advised me that our loan is down to under \$100K. How awesome is that. We started our Foundations midway through 2003 when we embarked on our \$1M building project with The Bridge. Not five years down the track and we're almost ready to start getting capital together for the next opportunity the Lord will put in front of us.

I want to commend all of you for your faithful giving over the years. Honestly, you've done it with hardly any reminders or prompts from my part – and that speaks so highly of how committed we all are to see Jesus' Kingdom make a serious impact in our community and beyond. Keeping people up-to-date with the financial state of the church is a weakness of mine – one that I'm not proud of. All of you deserve to get regular updates to help us all keep on the same page. But at the same time, even though I drop that ball, I am so excited that CCH people obviously see the big picture, and continue to give week by week, obviously as a part of their personal worship.

I LOVE this church!

Some Key Portfolio Changes

One thing really is for sure around this place... nothing stays the same for too long! We've got some changes that will take place in the next few months in some of our major ministry portfolios.

Treasury – Marty Wardle has been doing a great job looking after our accounts and reporting regularly to our Board of Elders and the Church Ministry Leadership. But come the middle of the year, Marty will be stepping out of that role to finish his Ministry Degree studies with Tabor College. Marty's role is one of the most behind-the-scenes ministries of the church, yet it carries one of the greatest responsibilities, and I want to commend Marty for all that he's brought to our team. He's been a great unsung hero of the church.

Youth – After seven years in Youth leadership, Ashleigh Sheehan is stepping out of the Youth Pastor role. Our youth ministry is remarkable, with many exciting things happening and an exciting bunch of young people. It's a great training ground for future leaders and Ash has developed an inspiring group of shining lights around her. We can't commend Ash enough for the tireless efforts she's put into our Youth Ministry, and the energy and creativity that she's inspired in so many. Well done Ash! We look forward to seeing what the next stage of your ministry development looks like amongst us. Of course, Ash will leave a noticeable hole in our Staff at CCH, and we're working together to see an exciting next stage unfold in our youth ministry Wildcats.

Wrap it up Miller!

What a cool journey it's been for the Millers since we teamed up with CCH! You know, that was less than six years ago. There's been SO much that's happened in that time. Praise the Lord for all of it. We've seen the church prosper, ministries birthed, leaders raised up, new people come to faith, faith reignited in others, everyone on fire with a vision to impact communities for Christ. Of course, we've had to re-invent ourselves about every six months, and I want to say this to you... I speak to so many pastors who struggle with convincing their churches to embrace change in order to move forward. I want to tell you all how brilliant it is to be the Senior Leader of a group of motivated change agents like you. I'm seriously starting to wonder whether or not I shouldn't be recognising Positive Pro-active Change as a Core Value of CCH people. This is an AWESOME church to lead, and I thank Jesus for including me in on the adventure.

And it's NOWHERE NEAR over yet!

We're right now in the middle of working out how to become increasingly multi-cultural in our ministry. There's a city to reach, and nation to influence, a world to win. We're ambassadors for Christ, and I wouldn't want to be anything less.

Hold on to your hats. We're quarter way through 2008.

Let's see what God's got in store for us round the corner...



Ian Miller
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