

Introduction

Darren Cronshaw

The church has a curious relationship with Australian society. Historically, it didn't get off to a great start. The first chaplain of the colony, Rev. Richard Johnson, got frustrated with the government's delayed delivery of the promise to build a church, so he built at his own expense. But some larrikin convicts burned it down — showing their distaste of its intent to force them into a more “orderly manner of spending the Sabbath day” that the chapel was designed for. Johnson was the first church leader in Australia, but was not the last to shake his head and wonder how to shape church in ways that fruitfully engage Australians.¹

The inspiration for this book and the origin of most of its content was the National Baptist Research Symposium “New Wineskins: Exploring Transformation in Baptist Church Life”. This was hosted at Whitley College, Melbourne, on 24 March 2014. Our theme was not a new idea. Baptists have been keen innovators in doing whatever we can — within the ethical bounds of the gospel — to make Christ known. In the lead-up to the Symposium, Darrell Jackson commented on Facebook, “Looking forward to joining a conversation that has been underway for quite some time (we can't take any of the credit for the ‘new wineskins’ metaphor!)”

Indeed, Jesus, at the end of one action-in-ministry-packed day, was asked by John the Baptist's followers why they fasted so much and he and his disciples fasted so little and ate so much, especially with certain sorts of people. In his reply, Jesus implied that there would be a time when fasting and abstinence would be more appropriate, but now while Jesus was still around it was most appropriate to focus on eating with the people Jesus loved. This is where we love Jesus' example: his imagination was not filled with spiritual exercises for their own sake, but exercises that connected with the mission of God. If that included eating, then he was all for it (I

think Simon Holt, in his recent book *Eating Heaven*, takes a leaf out of Jesus' book).²

To invite people to capture an alternative imagination for living on mission in all of life, Jesus paints a vivid image about making sure you put new wine, not into old wineskins (that would burst with the change, ruining everything), but into new wineskins ready for the new wine. Any move of God, Jesus implies, needs new forms and vessels, to bring out their flavours and make the most of them. Jesus' whole life, and this image he invoked, inspired me to ask what new wineskins might he be inviting Australian Baptists to imagine? How can we inspire and give permission for and train and empower a new generation of wineskin makers and out-of-the-box activists, and creative apostolic, prophetic, and evangelistic types? (Matthew 9:15–17).³

Many of us, and many in our churches, are convinced of the need for change, and fresh expressions and transformation — these are at the heart of the gospel. But where we are looking for help is HOW? We're convinced by the WHY, but want examples of WHAT and WHERE and HOW, to help shape and give inspiration to our own local contexts.

That is where I am most excited about the chapters in this book, and for the possibilities of our ongoing networking and writing together about our action and reflection with new wineskins and congregational transformation.

This *New Wineskins* volume comes in two parts. The first half offers eight case studies of transformation, discipleship, and missional innovation. We want to begin with stories of best practice — not to suggest these are the only or even the best ways to transform congregations and innovate in mission, but they offer wise lessons and inspiration for others.

Andreana Reale describes Urban Seed's journey of mission to people on the margins in Melbourne's inner city, and how helpful parables are for transforming and focusing mission initiatives. Urban Seed has invited

residents to live in and work from their space, started Credo Café, and responded to the heroin crisis of the 1990s. They have navigated the resulting conflicts and renegotiated space as a mission organisation alongside the church. Urban Seed's stories offer helpful clues for others to be open to new countercultural parables.

Brian Harris, Principal of Western Australia's Vose Seminary and Pastor at Large of the Carey Movement, evaluates their missional initiatives in co-locating a church and a school, both named "Carey". He celebrates the attractional and incarnational aspects of their mission, and proclamation and presence, and explains how they have embodied Bosch's idea of mission as crossing of frontiers. Harris's reflections are helpful for any church seeking to use their existing missional platforms to help overcome barriers to belief and move people towards receptivity to Christian faith.

As people have been moving back into inner-city precincts, historic inner-city churches have often continued to decline, so Malyon College Field Education Director, Peter Francis, is determined to explore what factors help or hinder city churches engage their exponentially growing, neighbouring residential communities. He offers an analytical framework that can help diagnose a church's missional engagement and identify what cultural and theological aspects of their church life need strengthening.

Also from Queensland, Ian Hussey reflects on his own experience of the successful merger and subsequent revitalisation of two Baptist churches into the North-East Baptist Church. He discusses theological background and processes for mergers, and helpfully identifies factors that led to its success and issues that almost hindered the effort. North-East's story and the lessons Hussey describes are a useful reference point for any church considering whether they might be able to foster the kingdom of God better together with another church.

An antiwar activist and pastor who is taking mission beyond the walls and normal expectations of church, Simon Moyle narrates his experience of interventional, nonviolent direct action and resulting public awareness

(and arrests and court appearances). He discusses the Swan Island Peace Convergence as a model for prophetic activism but also forming socio-politically aware and engaged disciples and communities. He appeals for a movement of churches who will “get in the way” of things that hinder the kingdom of God as catalysts for change.

This first section finishes with three specifically local church case studies in Melbourne. Robert Morsillo unpacks the new possibilities emerging in the transformation of inner-urban Moreland Baptist Church as a network of communities. Inspired by Rodney Stark and Ann Morisy, the church is offering open hospitality to external groups such as Merri Community Health Service and the Studio, and taking an adoptive interest in local community events. Their worshipping life is also growing in participatory and interactive directions, and with growing online connections.

David Wanstall describes Stonnington that became Encounter Baptist Church and their journey with the 3DM discipleship and mission system. They have downplayed the reliance on church programs, simplified church for the sake of mission and discipleship, and markedly increased community engagement. The 3DM lessons about discipleship processes, balancing rest and work, looking for “people of peace”, and hosting mid-sized “missional community” groups of 15–30 people around a missional vision are transferable for churches of all sorts of shapes and sizes.

Locally at AuburnLife Baptist Church, I explain how we have recently engaged a congregational timeline and church history mapping exercise that have helped us understand our story and values. Appreciative inquiry helped us identify that the church has been at its best as a leadership farm and multicultural hospitality space — which are the two features the church of today most wants to foster as expressions of mission. Looking at history and a local church’s story, such as with a congregational timeline, are powerful sources of inspiration for imagining a renewed story.

Part B offers seven chapters of theological frameworks and practical tools for congregational transformation and consultancy.

Melbourne-based pastor and Dean of Whitley College, Gary Heard introduces four pertinent questions to ask for leading a church into a process of change: (1) Do I love these people? (2) Do I understand my context? (3) What theology guides me? (4) What things “need” to be changed? Illustrated by his own experiences, Heard assumes the need for cultural and missional change, but argues that careful processes, a clear pastoral identity, and clear vision for the future are essential to navigate what can otherwise be a minefield for churches.

Alan Gordon advocates updating the five developmental tasks of Intentional Interim Ministries (IIM) with frameworks for “turnaround” leadership that he has found successful with IIMs. He discusses his principles and examples of how to help a church address its history, especially any conflict, exercise leadership and decision-making, discover a new identity, foster supportive and resourcing networks for a church, and commit to the future with a new pastor. Gordon demonstrates best practice of IIM and points in new directions for making the most of it.

Another proven interventional framework for congregational transformation is the client-driven and process-based Church Consultancy model developed by John Mark Ministries and used by Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT. Sydney-based pastor and consultant, Ian Duncum, investigated ten churches who have undertaken consultancies. From interviews and analysis of the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), he identified ways the consulted churches progressed in health and growth, and offers hopeful advice for consultants and churches struggling with viability.

Ruth Powell, NCLS Director, analyses the perspectives of newcomers to church life, which is 6 percent of church attenders. From responses to the NCLS 2011 survey, Powell explores what denominations they join, why they first attended, how they came to faith (often over time), how they find a church, whether they church shop (they don’t), why they stay (usually friendliness of the people), newcomers’ beliefs and experiences,

and how they get involved and belong. For example, they are less likely to attend regularly but more likely to invite others. This chapter promises to open your eyes to some surprising insights from this group of Australians: those who are new to church. Let's be prepared to hear a prophetic challenge from their experience of joining church life, and consider how their experience might challenge us about how and where we need congregational transformation.

Jeff Pugh offers a deep-level description of the influence of church culture and its capacity to subvert or foster missional transformation. He explores the art and craft of how to discern the influence of God's Spirit when culture does shift in positive directions, utilising the complementary frameworks of trinitarian theology and organisational psychodynamic lenses. Consultants and leaders need to give their best thinking to consider theoretical frameworks and their most careful attentiveness to the agency of God in reshaping congregations for mission, and Pugh models both of these postures.

Finally, following a denomination-wide review process called "Reimagining the BUV", the Baptist Union of Victoria Mission's newly formed Mission Catalyst team was tasked with articulating a contemporary theology of local church mission for our work in resourcing churches for mission. Framed around our answer to the question "of what earthly use is the church?", we explore local church mission as spiritual and attentive to what God is saying; local church mission as inclusive and embracing people of diverse cultural and other backgrounds; and local church mission as transformational resulting in peace or shalom in our neighbourhoods.

In introducing this book, we appreciate and honour that it was birthed by the vision of Keith Jobberns, National Ministries Director of Australian Baptist Ministries (ABM), to invite together Baptist leaders from around Australia who were involved or interested in research and missional strategising. Baptist Union of Victoria and our Mission Catalyst team partnered with ABM and Crossover Australia to convene the day. Whitley

College generously offered to physically host the day and allow us the free gift of their space. We appreciate the partnership of other state Baptist Unions and colleges in promoting the day, and the partnership of Global Interaction, Baptist World Aid Australia, National Church Life Survey, Christian Research Association and the financial sponsorship of Baptist Financial Services.

Part of congregational transformation is to invite our churches to imagine and advocate not just for a different approach to church, but for a different future for our world. Bono challenged people to "dream up the world you want to live in. Dream out loud, at high volume". That sets the scene about why we want to see our congregations transform. We are not just interested in church for us ourselves. New wineskins are not primarily for the "consumers" who come — or church members who have been in church for years, or even burned-out Christians who need something new and tantalising to draw them back to church. We want to ask, instead, how can we help our people not just to dream about how to change church, but how to transform society? How do we "bring heaven to Hawthorn" and our other respective neighbourhoods?

I trust and pray that this first volume in the New Wineskins series, *Congregational Transformation in Australian Baptist Church Life*, will give you fresh encouragement and ideas for cooperating in the mission of God through your local church and beyond.

Darren Cronshaw
February 2015
Hawthorn, Melbourne

Contents

Foreword	
<i>Keith Jobberns</i>	vii
Introduction	
<i>Darren Cronshaw</i>	1
Part A:	
Case Studies of Transformation, Discipleship, and Missional Innovation	9
It Started with a Parable	
<i>Andreana Reale</i>	10
Education as a Community-Creating Missional Platform	
<i>Brian Harris</i>	26
Missional Rejuvenation of Historic Inner-City Churches	
<i>Peter Francis</i>	40
Life in Community	
<i>Robert Morsillo</i>	58
Encounter Baptist Church's Journey with 3DM Discipleship and Mission	
<i>David Wanstall</i>	76
A Joining of the Ways	
<i>Ian Hussey</i>	97
The Swan Island Peace Convergence	
<i>Simon Moyle</i>	116
Imagining a Renewed Story at AuburnLife	
<i>Darren Cronshaw</i>	135



Morling Press
First Published 2015
120 Herring Rd Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
Phone: +61 2 9878 0201
Email: enquiries@morling.edu.au
www.morlingcollege.com

© Morling Press 2015

This publication is copyright. Other than for the purposes of study and subject to the conditions of the Copyright Act, no part of it in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, micro-copying, photocopying or otherwise) may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted without the permission of the publisher.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright© 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-9922755-2-5

Designed by Morling Press www.morlingcollege.com/morlingpress

Congregational
Transformation in Australian
Baptist Church Life

New Wineskins Volume 1

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Cronshaw, Darren, editor.

Jackson, Darrell Richard, editor.

Congregational Transformation in Australian Baptist Church Life:

New Wineskins Volume 1 / Darren Cronshaw, Darrell Jackson.

ISBN: 9780992275525 (paperback)

Includes bibliographical references.

Baptists--Australia--History.

Baptists--Australia--Religious life.

Congregational churches--Australia.

286.194

Edited by
Darren Cronshaw & Darrell Jackson
Morling Press

New Wineskins - Volume 1

Congregational Transformation in Australian Baptist Church Life

Edited by Darren Cronshaw and Darrell Jackson

This first volume of the *New Wineskins* series introduces the very best of current research and reflection on congregational transformation among Australian Baptists. This volume's authors share the conviction that Baptist congregations must find new ways of engaging with the increasingly secular context of Australia. Collectively, they take the view that this requires congregations to remain spiritually vital, practically engaged, missionally relevant, and theologically authentic.

The *New Wineskins Symposium* created a platform upon which our authors shared findings, made recommendations, and engaged in lively dialogue. The breadth of proposals and recommendations points to the need for an ongoing conversation. The volume's editors hope that this series will catalyse a wider conversation and stimulate practical ministries among the many church and agency leaders who were unable to attend the original Symposium.

Darren Cronshaw is a mission catalyst and researcher for the Baptist Union of Victoria, Melbourne. Darrell Jackson is the Senior Lecturer in Missiology at Morling College, Sydney. Both Darren and Darrell hold earned doctorates and are ordained Baptist ministers.

'I am delighted that the outcomes of the very stimulating *New Wineskins Symposium* are now available in this volume.'

Rev. Keith Jobberns, National Ministries Director, Australian Baptist Ministries



MORLING
PRESS

Publisher: Morling Press
ISBN: 9780992275525



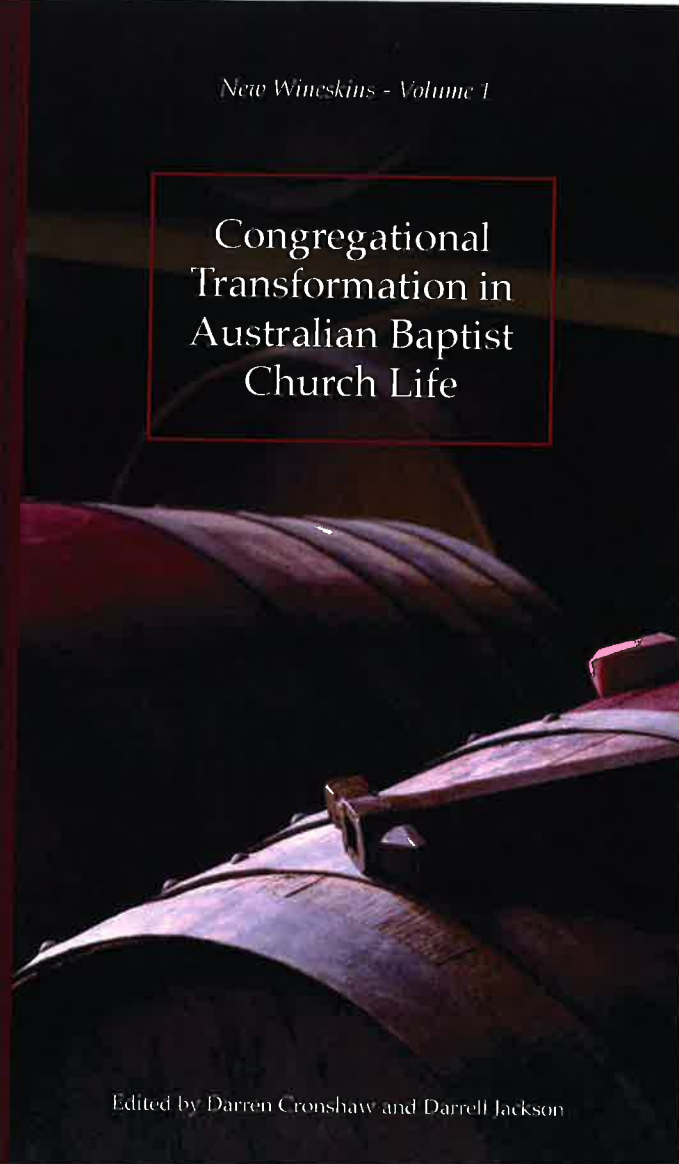
New Wineskins - Volume 1

Congregational Transformation in Australian Baptist Church Life

Cronshaw and Jackson

New Wineskins - Volume 1

Congregational Transformation in Australian Baptist Church Life



Edited by Darren Cronshaw and Darrell Jackson