

Crossroads Church



Associate Pastor, Kurt Risley



Senior Pastor Tom Burgess

The purpose of the study was to identify transferable principles and practices used by churches that have been successful in attracting and assimilating unchurched people. The following is a summary of a leadership interview, three new Christian interviews, a survey of printed materials and an on site visit.

Question #1. What principles and practices used by these churches have been most successful in attracting and evangelizing unchurched people?

Crossroads Church enjoys good visibility and accessibility by being located on NE 102nd street near the intersection of Interstate 205 and I-84. Every week someone drops by the church just because of the location and its visibility. The church offers Bridge Building events like picnics and concerts by top national Christian recording artists in their 1000 seat auditorium that boasts a state-of-the-art Bose sound system. Even though the church has visibility and accessibility, they have found that “word of mouth” remains one of the most effective ways that new people are attracted to Crossroads. To help with this, members are asked to complete a “Hi-Five” list by identifying five people that they can invite for next Bridge Building event.

The church also reaches out to the community through service. Their active Food Bank, staffed by church volunteers, serves needy families in the Northeast Portland area and is linked with the Oregon Food Bank. A second community service that attracts newcomers to the church is Crossroads Christian School. The school offers pre-kindergarten through eighth grade classes. Parents who attend the church find that they are able to reach out and build relationships with unchurched parents through the connection that their children bring through the school. Finally, small groups in homes throughout the area provide a source of outreach by serving as Light Houses for their neighborhoods.

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Crossroads Church does not have a specific target group that they seek to reach. However, they attract what they have the most of which is people age 30 to 50. The remainder of their people are split between young people and those over age 50. They offer two worship services—one traditional and the other contemporary. It is interesting to note that most of the elderly attend the contemporary service.



Senior Pastor, Tom Burgess, provides an opportunity for people to hear and respond to the gospel at end of his sermons. Seekers can come forward to pray but they don't have to. Instead, they may choose to indicate their spiritual commitment on a communication card. Then they will be contacted one-on-one by a phone call. The caller may walk them through the presentation of the gospel on the phone or they will invite them to the next Membership Class 101, which is offered monthly, where they will also hear a clear presentation of the gospel.

Question #2. How do these churches welcome and follow-up unchurched visitors and new converts?

Crossroads Church makes a real effort to help seekers feel loved and accepted. They station a set of greeters at every door and provide a greeting time during service to help make a warm, friendly atmosphere. An information table is strategically placed in the foyer and is supplied with information about the church and current events. Members are also trained to talk to visitors after service. Pastor Tom Burgess explains, “At the end of the service we train our members that there is a three-minute moratorium where they cannot talk to people they know. We try to train them to go talk to visitors.” The church must be succeeding because the non-Christian spouse of one new member stated, “Everybody has embraced us, from Pastor Tom to the greeters. You don't feel like an outsider you feel like a family member. It's not just talk. I think that's very important.”

Visitors to Crossroads receive thorough follow-up. Guests receive a welcome letter from Pastor Burgess with an anonymous response card enclosed for them to

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provide feedback on their experience. First time visitors also receive follow-up calls from ministry leaders who provide information requested on the communication card. There is also someone who calls all the first time visitors whether or not they have asked for ministry information. The visitors can end up receiving several calls within a short period of time. Guests will also be added to the special “Bridge Builder” event mailing list as well as the monthly publication mailing list. Finally, they are invited to the Membership 101 class up to three times.



If return visitors submit a prayer request or special need on a communication card, it will be sent to the most appropriate ministry leader for follow-up. The same leader will continue to receive future communication cards. Burgess explains, “On the response card there is a place for remarks and prayer requests. We have a staff meeting every Tuesday where we literally pray for every prayer request that is written down. Then there is a letter that goes out confirming to the person that we have prayed for their prayer request. That’s an ongoing thing.”

New believers have multiple opportunities for learning and growing in their new faith at Crossroads. In addition to Membership 101, C.L.A.S.S. 201—Discovering Spiritual Maturity, is a second 4-hour seminar that is offered monthly. Kurt Risley, Minister of Maturity explains, “In 201 we are going to talk about some specific spiritual habits. One of the spiritual habits is fellowship and small group involvement. So it is at that point that I would give them a list of the small groups and encourage them to attend. Also, for the new convert we have a new believers class that is also 4 hours that would happen at the same time as our other classes but is offered about once a quarter. The Maturity class would take them through some basic spiritual beliefs and apologetics—why the Bible is true, Christ, the resurrection, etc.—the basics.” On Wednesday nights the church offers what they call a “believer’s service.” Risley adds, “We would definitely encourage new converts to come Wednesday nights to continue in the teaching, worship and prayer. We also have what we call Sunday Seminars—classes that will help new converts in biblical knowledge and application. So we try to make sure we plug them into those.”

Question #3. How do these churches provide an opportunity for new people to gain a sense of belonging?

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Crossroads has two primary means of connecting in vital relationships each week. First, newcomers are encouraged to get involved in a small group. There are small groups located throughout the eastside as well as special groups for just men or women. Risley states that “in small groups we are able to build relationships, minister to those in need, and learn more about God’s Word.” The second weekly opportunity for newcomers to make new friends happens prior to the believer’s service on Wednesday nights. “Wednesday night is ‘family’ time,” states Risley. “We start at 5:30 PM by offering a meal for a very reasonable cost. It’s a time where we fellowship together and then go straight up to the service. The meal has ended up being pretty important in developing relationships.” Finally, newcomers have often gained a sense of belonging and formed important relationships by finding an entry-level ministry in which they can volunteer. Christine Okazaki is a newcomer who has gained a sense of belonging at Crossroads, “I had never known what a true church family meant. I had heard people speak about it but I didn’t know and now I do. Crossroads has just been great.”



If a newcomer wants to join Crossroads Church they must attend Membership 101 and sign the Crossroads Membership Covenant. Pastor Burgess clarifies, “First of all, we do make the statement that ‘We never expect more than what the Bible expects of a Christian.’ In a light-hearted but serious way at some point in time during the 101 class I point out to the folks that if there is a good time for a person to leave a church it is before they become a member. In other words, we want you to know who we are and ask whatever questions you have. We’d rather have that cleared up ahead of time rather than have them become a member and then say ‘well, now I’m here to change the church.’ We are not totally inflexible but at the same time we do believe we have a purpose for what we are doing and we want people knowing what they are doing, knowing what decision they are making.”

Question #4. How do these churches see that people are disciplined into fully devoted followers of Christ?

Crossroads has a clearly stated purpose and strategy for helping disciples become mature and grow in their faith. Their purpose is “to bring people to Jesus and MEMBERSHIP in His family, develop them to Christ-like MATURITY and equip them for their MINISTRY in the church and their MISSION in the world, in order to

MAGNIFY God’s name.” Each of the five major focuses of their purpose and strategy is represented within a diagram of a baseball diamond. Moving toward first base represents “knowing Christ.” Class 101 leads people to a commitment to membership—knowing Christ and being part of the Crossroads Church family. Class 201 is the base path for “growing in Christ.” This seminar helps people learn the habits that will help them grow spiritually and sustain that growth. Here they are introduced to the value of on-going small group involvement. At the end of the class participants are challenged to sign a covenant to maturity which affirms a commitment to personal Bible reading and prayer, tithing 10% of their income to God’s work and fellowship with believers in a small group. Third base, Class 301, supports commitment to ministry by equipping people with skills for service. Class 401, home base, is designed to enlist people in the worldwide mission of sharing Christ. The pitchers mound represents the central focus of worship or magnifying the Lord. In addition to these purpose driven seminars, Crossroads offers three ongoing ministries for spiritual growth of their members: small groups called “Life Groups,” Sunday morning adult classes and the Wednesday night mid-week “believer’s service.”

Someone who has been fully assimilated into the life of Crossroads will likely be attending a weekend worship celebration, be a member of a small group, have an involvement in a ministry, practice regular spiritual habits, and be seeking to reach the lost and help them grow. Pastor Burgess summarizes the expectations of Crossroads members, “We talk in terms of four things. First, guarding the unity of the church--we don’t gossip or slander, we resolve our difficulties. We share responsibility, and that includes the responsibility of inviting and welcoming the unchurched—acting as though this isn’t a surprise that somebody came into our group. Then serving in ministry—we do that by developing a servant heart and by discovering what your gifts are, which we help them do in Class 301. Finally, we emphasize supporting the testimony of the church by living a godly life. We also plant a seed there that this includes financial responsibility and commitment to the church, which is dealt with more specifically in Class 201.”

Question #5. How do these churches help people take up the responsibility to serve in personal ministry?

Except in positions of leadership, newcomers are encouraged to consider serving in the church as soon as they feel comfortable and have been able to identify a ministry that gives them fulfillment and that they can work comfortably with. Pastor Burgess explains, “With regard to being in a leadership position in ministry they need to have gone through 101 and covenanted there and in 201.” People are not required to be a member to participate in ministry but they are required to be members to *lead* a ministry.

Newcomers have several opportunities to become exposed to ministry opportunities. Each year Crossroads presents a ministry fair in the gym. Class 201 challenges people to become involved in ministry if they haven’t already done so in Class 101. “We get information from them in the 101 class about past involvement’s, interests and hobbies,” explains Burgess.

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Sometimes people will indicate that they envision a ministry that the church doesn't have, but could. “We will respond by suggesting that perhaps the Lord is calling them to do that ministry,” states Burgess. “We provide several sheets of questions that we use in order to start a new ministry. The form helps them think through how the ministry would be organized, how much money it would take and if it fits with our overall purpose. That process actually generates entry into ministry for some people.”

At Crossroads, those who serve also receive training or support in various formats throughout the year. Pastor Burgess explains, “Our philosophy is that the staff are hired to be leaders who recruit, motivate, encourage and train others and not just doing it themselves.”

Map/ Photos:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name Crossroads Church Region NE Portland
Street Address 2505 NE 102nd Ave.
City Portland State OR Zip Code 97220
Phone 503-257-9193 FAX 503-257-9284
Web site www.crossroadscofc.org

1. Denomination non-denominational
2. Date church was founded 1910
3. Founding Senior Pastor _____ Years in this church _____
4. Current Senior Pastor Tom Burgess Years in this church 28
5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 675
6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 30
7. Current Membership 700
 - Adults 500
 - Youth 75
 - Children 125
8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 50
9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 100
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) 50
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) 50
10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 4 Weekly attendance 125
 - # of Youth Classes 4 Weekly attendance 50
 - # of Children Classes 6 Weekly attendance 50
11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 20 Weekly attendance 150
 - # of Youth Groups 2 Weekly attendance 20
 - # of Children Groups _____ Weekly attendance _____
12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry 4 Weekly attendance 75
 - Children Ministry 4 Weekly attendance 50
 - Women's Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Men's Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry 200 Or approximate % 40%
14. Number of core lay leaders 25 Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 6
15. Number of churches planted by the church 4
16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
 - Middle class, urban blue/white collar, primarily Anglo-American