

Annual Report for 2009

“Its beauty is indescribable. Its power is breathtaking. Its potential is unlimited.”

This is part of a quote from a book I have just read called *Courageous Leadership* by Bill Hybels. You might be asking “What is Bill referring to?” Well believe it or not Bill is referring to the local Church.

“There is nothing like the local church when it’s working right. Its beauty is indescribable. Its power is breathtaking. Its potential is unlimited. It comforts the grieving and heals the broken in the context of community. It builds bridges to seekers and offers truth to the confused. It provides resources for those in need and opens its arms to the forgotten, the downtrodden the disillusioned. It breaks the chains of addictions, frees the oppressed, and offers belonging to the marginalized of this world. Whatever the capacity for human suffering, the church has greater capacity for healing and wholeness. Still to this day, the potential of the local church is almost more than I can grasp. No other organisation on earth is like the church. Nothing else comes close.” Bill Hybels - *Courageous Leadership* p23. Zondervan

The fact is, the Church is one body made up of many parts (1 Corinthians 12). The stumbling block is that churches (that is all of us 1 Corinth 3:16,17) generally operate with an individualistic mindset and not a corporate mindset which means when we consider only ourselves, or our own congregation, in terms of our capacity to help or serve, we are limited by what resources we are able to influence or acquire. For most of us then, church congregations included, whilst operating with that mindset, the potential resources available for us to pursue our vision will always be limited and therefore our potential will always be limited...unless we change how we think.

Thinking Kingdom not Church

To help explain the difference, consider this. There are 12 local Christian Churches operating in Nerang, some Pastors of those churches are only part time, most of the Churches are small congregations (less than 60 people) and virtually all are stretched with limited resources trying to fulfill the call they believe God has for them. The capacity of each of those 12 congregations is really fairly small. However, put them together (one body with many parts) and the picture changes.

Those 12 congregations, together, potentially have:

- 8 x Buildings
- 2 x Commuter Buses
- 5 x Youth Pastors
- 15 x Youth & Children’s Workers
- 100 x Volunteers
- 1000 x Potential Donors / Financial Supporters
- 50 x Musicians
- 30 x Dancers
- 5 x Event Coordinators
- 20 x Drama People
- 10 x Public Speakers (bringing a Kingdom message)
- 20 x R.E. Teachers / Presenters
- 5 x Fundraisers
- 10 x Camp Coordinators
- 20 x Student Mentors
- 40 x Business Owners

Fairly impressive don’t you think? As one body, the Church of Nerang would be by far the biggest ‘community service’ group in Nerang. Further more, we are not on about short term fixes either...we are on about eternal matters with eternal consequences.

My vision for Seeds of Hope is that it would be an effective community outreach vehicle for the local church; not just for a church but for the whole local church. I continue to build bridges across denominational lines and I continue to try and find partnership opportunities not only with churches, but also with existing community service organisations, in order to see that vision take shape and to see the Kingdom of God influence and transform people’s hearts.

In the mean time there is also the task of ‘*looking after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*’ (James 1:27). So 2009 was again full and busy helping and serving the Nerang community.

A quick summary of what Seeds of Hope was involved in through 2009...

Breakfast Club at Nerang Primary School – We provided a free breakfast one morning a week at the primary school for students who come to school without breakfast or who are still hungry. The food provides the students with the energy to actively engage in their education and the life of the school. A big thank you to the team; Bill Ungerer, Rod Jones Sue McGovern, Dawn Callan, Gwen Ramsay, John & Karen Nash and Doug & Lee Thomas.



“We have observed a significant improvement in behaviour and focused learning time due to the initiative covering the needs of children who may have missed out on having breakfast. Large numbers of children are accessing the program (up to 20 - 30% of all students) and the teachers have reported how much more settled the students are to begin a new school day.” **Rod Kirkland – Principal NSS**

White Goods Bank – We collected and distributed fridges, freezers, washing machines and occasionally other furniture to people or families who for various reasons, were in need of them.

“Many thanks to you for your kindness to my neighbours in providing them with a lounge room suite to sit on for Christmas. They were very pleased when the furniture arrived. So thanks for being an expression of God’s love to them, you brought great joy” **Kevina Mackechnie - Nerang**

“You have once again come to the aid of a family in need in this area, something you never fail in assisting me with. I am overwhelmed with the generosity of your congregation and their eagerness to help out and give so generously.

May I extend a sincere ‘Thank You’, not only to yourself, but to all those who gave so willingly to help the family with whom I have been working. The family, to whom all the goods were donated, also would like to thank those involved. The gift of giving is truly a blessed past-time. ‘Thank You’ seems almost inadequate.” **Nerang Child Safety Service Centre – Dept of Child Safety**

Blanket Bank – We collected bed linen, blankets and pillows to people who had been living on the street and have now secured their own accommodation and needed these basic supplies. I would like to thank the Mudgeeraba Op Shop and Hazel Hartley who helped source and supply additional items when required. Another good partnership in place.

Homeless Back Packs – We provided emergency supplies in easy to carry backpacks that were distributed by a team of people working with homeless people on the Gold Coast. Many of the people supported, have mental health issues and are unable to access support themselves. A huge thank you to Michelle Powell for coordinating the collection and presentation of all these packs. We have now distributed over 50 back packs. A big thank you also to those people who have been giving financially in to this program.



“I am writing to thank you for your support again this year with the emergency backpacks. It is so helpful for the team to be able to give them out to people that will have to stay on the street and have very little or nothing to their name.

For the team too, it is a witness to the love of Jesus Christ and for that I thank you. I am limited in what I can do and say, but the witness of the Christian Churches on the coast has spoken volumes to the team.

Thank you again for partnering with us in this very practical way”. **Team Leader – Qld Health**

Chaplaincy in our local schools – Partly funded the work of Nina Jordan (Nerang Primary School), Chris Perry (Nerang High School) and Kees Berghuis (Worongary Primary School) who are providing support, guidance and encouragement to the young people in Nerang who are struggling with life, education, and family relationships. This is predominantly an active early intervention role that reduces the chances of young people disengaging from school and / or entering the juvenile justice system.

Nerang Social Services Directory – I have collated and maintained an extensive data base of social service and community service organisations who provide help and support to the Gold Coast Community. This material is presented in an easy to read directory and is distributed to these organisations as a ready reference.



ITAVA – 'It Take A Village Approach' Community Dinner - I organised and hosted another Community Networking Dinner that was co-sponsored by Cr Peter Young – Gold Coast City Council and The Benevolent Society. There were over 40 organisations represented with 67 attendees. The guest speaker was Matt Carrodus from the Gold Coast Primary Care Partnership Council and the focus of the evening was on building and strengthening connections between community service stakeholders (Government, Non-Government, Health, Community, Business and Churches) to help increase the quality of support provided to the community. I believe that it all works better when we all work together.

Giving Tree – Nerang Celebrates Christmas – As part of my role in the Nerang Celebrates Christmas Committee I organised the Giving Tree Project which was an appeal to the community to provide some real and practical support to those in our community who needed it over Christmas. This support was offered in two ways. Firstly, Christmas presents for Foster Kids that would be presented to them at a "Kids in Care Christmas Party" and secondly, Food Parcels for the hungry.



The photo of the food was taken at the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre with their Food Bank Volunteers standing behind the tables. This team packed up the items in to Food Hampers and along with their regular suppliers they were able to distribute over 120 food parcels to families the week before Christmas.

The Christmas present shot shows the total gifts wrapped and placed under the tree ready for the 'Kids In Care' Christmas Party. The two ladies standing beside are Robyn and Kristy and they were instrumental in pulling the party together. Both ladies were so excited and overwhelmed by the generosity of all involved.



No or Low Interest Loan Program – The Loan program offers safe, affordable loans to people and families on low incomes. These loans are small – in the region of \$800 to \$1,000 – and are completely free of interest and fees. They are designed to help people and families purchase essential household items such as fridges and washing machines. In addition, we will be working towards providing borrowers with financial mentoring to help them develop savings and budgeting skills. This is a type of micro credit program.

Jeremy & Linda D'Arcy will be exploring the establishment of this program this year (2010) but late last year we offered our first Loan as a pilot project. A fellow was given \$635.00 to purchase a bed, table & chairs and a fridge to set up his new house. It was a tremendous blessing for him, since without the money he would not have been able to make the move.

Transport – We again have arranged a few trips for the residents in the Dementia Wards with Melody Park Retirement Village to take them out with carers on short day trips. From all reports it has been very much appreciated. Whilst the van is a wonderful resource to help link people together we found that it is still underutilized. We have now formed a partnership with Volunteering Gold Coast for them to use the van as part of their Community Transport Service.



We continue to work towards more stable, and financially sustainable, long term options that will enable us to use the bus to bring people together to build relationships.

Food Bank – The Food Bank service that we started in 2008 and later moved to the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre is now distributing 80 – 100 boxes of food per week. A big thank you to Diane Monroe and Angie Grabbe-Clare-Nazar for their efforts in helping to consolidate this service and turning it into a quality community resource. Thanks also to Rosemary Johnson who is still collecting food from Brisbane most weeks.



*The Nerang Neighbourhood Centre
29 Martin Street, Nerang*

P5 Parenting Courses - We ran 3 P5 parenting courses through 2009 with 15 families participating. Thanks especially to Jenny Murfet and Sue Hutton for organising those and for Mary-Ann Lush and Evelyn Swain for your help in presenting.

Food & Friends on Friday – This has been a great opportunity to reach out to people with an invitation to a good value meal. It has been super to see the variety of people who have joined us for lunch, some have stayed on and become part of the congregation and joined the youth group, others have received prayer and healing and others have just enjoyed a great meal. A really big thank you to the team of Vicki Hansen, Carol Harvey, Lyn McGregor and Sue McGovern who have been instrumental in providing and serving a meal each Friday.

What's In Store for 2010 and Beyond?

There are 3 areas of focus for Seeds of Hope as we move into 2010 and beyond and they are;

1. Consolidate Existing Outreaches

With the number of projects and outreaches that have now been established, we now need to consider:

Which Projects to Focus on? The challenge is to keep seeking God's input on which ones we are to pursue. I have found that there are many needs in our community and trying to fill them all is impossible. Already I have had to discontinue some projects simply because I didn't have the resources and I felt that it was not what God was asking of me or the Seeds of Hope team.

Relationship or 'Works'? The other challenge is not to get so task orientated that we actually forget about the people we are there for in the first place. The focus of all our projects is on building relationships with the people we work and link with. This year will be a year of building those relationships; since it is in building those that Seeds of Hope are truly planted.

Sustainable or Susceptible? For many years now Genesis has been subsidizing the activities and projects of Seeds of Hope. There is no way I/we could have achieved what we have without that support. However each outreach, I believe, needs to be financially sustainable and so this year I will be working on building a solid base of financial sustainability for each project.

2. Build Stronger Families

With the links that are now in place with Playgroup Qld, Dept of Child Safety, Nerang Early Years Centre and our Local Schools we are doing all we can to partner with them to provide quality and practical support for the families in Nerang who need it. We will be offering Parenting Support, Parenting Training, Men's Support, Mum's groups and Financial Support through the No or Low Interest Loan Program. We are also in the process of establishing an after school activity program for the kids living in one of the key disadvantage community locations in Nerang. Stronger families build a stronger sense of Hope in their children; we will do all we can this year to build those families.

3. Build Stronger Communities

The Kingdom of God is the perfect community. God by His very nature is 'Community Personified', Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bound together by Love, Respect and Honour. We have been created in His image, created as relational beings who can only be 'made whole' when we find our place in 'the body'. We can only do that as we begin to operate in Love, while respecting and honouring those who are also in the body and in our community, our neighbours. Building community then is a very practical expression of building the Kingdom of God.

Through Seeds of Hope I will continue to build relationship with key stakeholders. I will continue to build the bridge and therefore close the gap between 'secular' and 'sacred'. I will continue to find ways to link people together and to build partnerships across denominational barriers. I will continue to build the Kingdom of God in our community.

The Future: Seeds of Hope is getting stronger each year. God's vision for this ministry is becoming clearer each step I take. I also firmly believe that we are not only laying an incredible foundation for effective local mission but we are also pioneering new ways for 'the Church' to engage with their local community.

Thank You: We would like to thank all those people who have donated money and sponsored programs through Seeds of Hope. The breakfast program at Nerang Primary School and the Homeless Backpacks could simply not be offered without your financial support. Thank you also to those who have been praying for Seeds of Hope and have given so generously. Your belief in me and Seeds of Hope, and your support has encouraged me at times when I needed it the most. Thank you.

With Love,

Brett Lush

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"...In a very real way the future of the world rests in the hands of local congregations like yours and mine. It's the church or its lights out. Without churches so filled with the power of God that they can't help but spill goodness and peace and love and joy into the world, depravity will win the day; evil will flood the world. But it doesn't have to be that way. Strong, growing communities of faith can turn the tide of history. They can! Don't bother looking elsewhere, the church is it." Bill Hybels - Courageous Leadership p21 &22. Zondervan