

Mission Enabled: Hospitality

What does it mean for a church to be hospitable? Apart from a warm welcome from members upon entry, the facilities can facilitate hospitality.

Crossway Baptist Church had grown significantly on its new site from its earlier identity as Blackburn Baptist on Holland Road, Blackburn but was finding the facility under stress. It had a main auditorium seating around 1050 and a chapel seating 250 with the staff and children's facility housed on the lower ground floor. The church community had seen tremendous growth since its relocation 15 years earlier. However, in 2008 the foyer was very small and did not encourage people to stay and talk to one another.

Rather than encouraging people to stay after services, Dale Stevenson, senior pastor, says about the old foyer, "the foyer said – "go home !"".

The new cafe, second staircase, lift, creche and children's centre entry together with the enlarged foyer changed all that. People now have the invitation, either before or after services, to meet friends over good quality espresso coffee or have a meal. There is now space for people entering or leaving between each of the three morning services and families can get back together with their children around a cafe table, learning about their experiences in children's church.

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Crossway Baptist's foyer cafe designed by Studio B Architects

The cafe is located by the entry point to the foyer encouraging people to use it. Location is very important.

Having fellowship is also a way of confirming the worship that people have just done together; grounding its importance in everyday life as people talk about their week.

A byproduct of this is the use of the cafe during the week: it is open until 3pm each day. This forms a valuable hub for the staff and visitors to the church together with nearby business park employees. All receive a welcome on church property, getting many over the threshold in a society where few are familiar with being "in church".

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