

April 2009

FEATURE ARTICLE

RISE UP AND BE COUNTED!



RISE Magazine was launched online in 2008. After a few months 'testing the water', so to speak, we are very pleased with the response.

Our subscriber base grew to almost 1,000 and we were excited to publish contributions from a range of people from all walks of life who could give us a perspective on things we knew nothing about, or

thought we actually knew something about but didn't really.

We met interesting people finding their passion and their purpose in everything from making coffee to making movies, and watched some amazing people working faithfully in a variety of mission fields.

We at RISE learnt much, and no doubt will continue to learn things that will help us to refine our approach to this electronic magazine.

One thing we are convinced about, is that there are many stories in South Australia that deserve telling, and many experiences worth sharing. We don't want these stories to go untold.

RISE aims to transcend denominational boundaries and bring followers of Jesus together in an online community of supporters who care about this world we live in. Those who are looking for more out of life, those who are looking for their purpose, and even those (perhaps) who are looking for God.

RISE believes that the more we draw from others' experiences, the richer our lives are and the more effective and purposeful our own mission can become.

We can get bogged down in pointing out things we don't like or don't agree with, we can tell ourselves that no-one can add value to our already awesome ministry, improve our 'got it all together' type of Christianity, or be relevant to our disciplined religious lifestyle - or we can step back and look at what we

all have in common and move forward together to make a difference.

The one thing we do have in common is Jesus Christ. RISE chooses to move forward and invites you to join us in making a difference.

"How?" you say. Here are some ways you can do this.

- * Email RISE magazine's link to all your friends and family – particularly those in your church circle, but let's not limit ourselves!
- * Subscribe and encourage others to do the same.
- * Send us story leads and ideas – or (and how about this!) write a little piece yourself. We would love to publish it.
- * Give us feedback every now and again – if it's negative, please balance it with a positive.
- * Tell us what you would like to see here.
- * Pray – often it's the least we can do and the most we can do.

April 2009

RISE inside

Letter from the editors

As is usually the case when we put RISE together, once completed we find a theme has been woven through the articles which we never anticipated when we first began. This month we find the theme is all about "being heard" or "getting our message across".

You may know the book by Bill Hybels called "Just Walk Across the Room". Some churches may have done the studies or heard the messages. It is all about taking that first step, quite often relying on God's strength rather than our own, and putting ourselves in a position where we can communicate God's love to other people. This will often take place outside of our comfort zone. And sometimes it commences merely with building a relationship, perhaps taking years for that relationship to get to a point where we can openly share about Christ.

This month we share examples of how some people are walking across the room with a view to being heard.

Rachela Leo has just released her first single called "Hear Me". Her heart is to bring messages of hope to young people through her music. It is a step of faith to walk into the secular music industry with a passion to be heard above the din of negative and destructive messages. Read about Rachela in RISE People.

BIG is an initiative of a group of Adelaide people who are passionate about communicating the message of the Bible to our youth. They have invested a lot of time and money in producing DVDs and Bible study material based on the first 17 chapters of Genesis.

And in Smart Living we read about ways we can communicate effectively to a society which is used to being bombarded by an excessive number of visual and audio messages.

Spotlight on the Nations is a simple call to prayer and support for people who are walking across the world, not just across the room. As we anticipate the commencement of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, these people are really going outside their comfort zone and into a different culture where a different language is spoken, governed by quite different views on human rights and religious freedoms. But all are passionate about sharing the love of Christ to people who may never have heard the Gospel message.

This month, let's all look for ways of walking across the room.

Sincerely
Edi, Molly and Wendy
Editors
RISE Magazine

April 2009

RISE people

RACHELA LEO



HOPING TO BE HEARD

RISE Magazine talks to a new musical light on the horizon, Rachela Leo.

Article by WENDY RUSH

I once heard someone claim that 70% of the contestants on Australian Idol come from churches. I'm not sure whether this figure is accurate, but it wouldn't surprise me if it was. Music is an integral part of worship

and singing is a way that many of us choose to praise God. Some of the best known singers found their voice in church. It's a great training ground, not just on technique but also on the source of the gift. It's impossible to praise God without believing that he's given you the voice that utters those praises.

Many of us choose to use whatever musical talent we may have within the church (that is, the greater body of Christ), sharing Christian music that builds up and encourages other Christians. Always, of course, there is a hope that people outside the church might hear, connect, and believe as a result.

Some artists, however, have a calling to share their faith to the wider world. Not an easy task as lyrics containing overtly Christian messages are usually shunned by mainstream broadcasters and music marketers. I admire musicians who try to tackle this dilemma by weaving into their contemporary sounds, messages of hope and redemption that swim against the tide of negativity and destruction we so often find on the airwaves.

Rachela Leo is one such artist. Her heart is to reach young people through her music and communicate to them the truth, giving them hope that there is a better life than the one they are living.

Her first single "Hear Me" has just been released. The song came about as a result of her meeting Sandy Clark, a local film producer. Sandy was looking for someone to write songs for DVDs she was producing on Christian healing. "Hear Me" became the soundtrack to "Rebel Boss turns to Jesus."

The smooth R&B sound gives emotive expression to the heartfelt lyrics "I need you to help me, I need you to save me; somebody told me you cared, so I'm calling."

Sandy and Rachela met through a regular prayer meeting they attended. Their meeting turned out to be an answer to prayer for both of them. Sandy needed music for her DVDs and Rachela needed an outlet for her music, but mostly she needed encouragement and guidance.

Rachela started writing music at the age of 13 and 10 years later she is fine tuning her first album. She sings every Friday night at the Stamford Grand Hotel in Glenelg, South Australia. While she performs covers in a range of styles including jazz, swing and dance, it may not be long before her audience is requesting her original material.

As is most often the case, music was a family affair when Rachela was growing up. One of five girls and one boy, all are musical. Rachela learned piano and violin as a young child then later started singing in church every week. While R&B is her style, she says that operatic training has helped her to extend her range. Her inspirations include Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey and Kirk Franklin.

"Funnily enough" she says "my opera training has helped me to sing more like Whitney."

"I try to express my faith and values through my music, to bring hope to people. Some songs are about lessons I've learned, or about something that's happened. Or they could be an example straight from the Bible. I've also put Psalms to music."

"I've seen friends who have got themselves in a mess. I write songs aimed at communicating a message to them that may help them in their circumstances."

It is difficult for a young person to keep their principles in a world that applies so much pressure on a constant basis. Sandy agrees and says "I admire her greatly for her Christian values."

Another song she has written is called "No-one, No." It encourages young women to stand up for what is true and right and good and to walk away from relationships that are abusive or destructive.

"I went to school with a friend whose boyfriend was treating her badly. I wrote 'No-one No' as a message to people like her, to tell them don't let anyone treat you that way".

April 2009

RISE people - continued

RACHELA LEO

Australian guitarist Tommy Emmanuel once said that when you play music, something happens in your spirit and in the spirit of the people listening. Rachela would agree. She says "words stick with you more when it's to music."

When you get the right music and the right lyrics, sung with the right attitude towards God and towards your audience, you can't help but believe something special happens. The Holy Spirit has been known to move in mysterious ways.

While Rachela is not short on offers to perform around town, she has been very careful to assess the opportunities against where she believes God is calling her. "I haven't just taken jobs to get out there and sing" she said.

In fact, she approached the Stamford Grand a year ago and they loved her so much she is still there. "It's not about the money. I have to feel that God is behind whatever I do."

Sandy is taking Rachela's recordings to the US to look for opportunities, talking with the CBN and TBN networks (TBN is the world's largest religious network), amongst others. God willing, they will respond the same way that Mike Gravatt of Hawaiian radio station 95.5 The Fish did when he first heard Rachela's music. "I listened to the CD and loved it" he said. "I love her voice and the song sounds great! My favourite track is the extended R&B mix and I think it's awesome!...I look forward to hearing more about the successes (she) WILL have."

Heaven knows the world needs more uplifting songs of truth, love and hope. Heaven might just have positioned Rachela to be a leading light in a music industry that is too often shrouded in darkness.

Rachela's music can be found at Dillon's on Norwood Parade and at www.eternityfilmhouse.com.au. She's also online at YouTube and MySpace.

April 2009

smart living

Getting Heard above the Clamour



Businesses, ministries and churches all have one thing in common. The desire to communicate their message effectively to their community. RISE Magazine highlights the challenges we face in getting that message across.
Article by WENDY RUSH

We live in a world where there are many competing messages. Before we even leave the house we are impacted by radio, television, magazines, newsprint and packaging. And when we do walk out of our front door the barrage of messages expands with advertising, information and images on the side of buses, on billboards, bus stops and shop fronts. And that's just the beginning.

Our letterboxes are filled to overflowing with catalogues and fliers and carefully personalised letters that almost fool us into thinking the sender knows us. Even our telephones are no longer quarantined from the marketing hype, with landlines and mobiles subjected to the occasional recorded phone call or text message.

If we are in business, leading a church or running a ministry, we know we have something important to say. But when you have something important to say, how can you be sure that people will listen? How do you get noticed above the clamour?

One of the key things that will help you to communicate your message to your community is a strong, discernible, professional image. Yes, even ministries and not-for-profit organisations can, and should, have a brand – an image that is clear and consistent. We all recognise the Uniting Church's fiery dove, the Salvation Army's shield and World Vision's star. The symbols portray a story about who they are and why they exist.

Logos, stationery, brochures, signage and your website should all be designed to complement each other. From the brand will flow all your other promotional requirements, including the look and feel of your website.

Avoiding a tangled web

Let's consider websites briefly. When it comes to an online presence there are two schools of thought. One says that we all should have at least one – the other says that the world doesn't need any more of them. But if you are offering some kind of product or service and you don't have a website are you serving your existing customers as well as you could? And can potential customers find you easily?

The first thing people will do when they want to find you or find out more about you is to 'Google' you in the hope of locating your website. So if you don't have one and your competitor does, customers will find them before they will even bother looking for you.

But wait...before you jump in feet first. Constructing the right site for you and more importantly for your customers is not a "one size fits all" scenario.

You firstly need to come at it from your customer's perspective. How will they use your site? Will it be a loyalty generating site, an e-commerce (or internet sales) site or merely a source of information to help them find you and to remind them about your products and services?

The one golden rule when designing a site is to put yourself in the shoes of your customer at all times. Who are they and where are they? Demographics, geographics and psychographics (who they are, where they are and how they view the world) will determine how often and how easily they can access the internet. If they are corporates located in the metropolitan area then you can afford to experiment with more functionality like audio, video and flash graphics.

If they are your ordinary consumer or are located in a regional area you might find they rely on dial up connections, which means you need a simpler framework, fewer graphics and forget the video.

Easy navigation is extremely important. How many websites have you visited, looking for information you know is there but you just can't find it? Make it simple, make it logical and try it out on some "test dummy" users before you launch it. If your friendly test dummies get confused or frustrated, then your customers certainly will.

Be seen – and be heard

And be prepared to take a step back if you don't have your branding established. If you don't have a logo or an image that can be used effectively across all your marketing and promotional activity then the first step is to invest in developing your brand. Take time to work through a brainstorming process with your colleagues and, if possible, some of your customers. Think about who you are trying to reach, the messages you are trying to convey and how your customers view you (or perhaps how you would like them to view you). Identify anything about your organisation that stands out as symbolizing the work you do or the vision you have.

This process will inform the development of your brand. And if you have trouble relating to the word "brand" because it sounds too secular and too much like marketing jargon, try thinking of it more along the lines of a way that people can identify you, an image or similar that tells a story about you, something that – at a glance – tells them who you are. With the right brand (or whatever you want to call it) it is possible to quietly rise above the clamour and be seen. Once you are seen, you will find people are more likely to listen.

Article courtesy of Two Fish Media Pty Ltd.
www.twofishmedia.com.au

April 2009

inside out

Companion planting: how the right relationships can help you grow



I don't know much about companion planting in a gardening sense, but I have come to know a bit about companion planting in terms of relationships.

Relationships, whether intimate or at arms length, can have a huge impact on how well equipped we are to follow our dreams and, as a consequence, how well we live our lives.

Negative relationships can leave us feeling drained, empty and insignificant. Positive relationships can boost our confidence and help create a self view that is healthy and productive.

Most of us don't tend to put a lot of thought or effort into managing our relationships to our benefit, or to the benefit of others. But getting up close and personal with the right people can help us get ahead in life. I don't mean that we should pick our friends based on their wealth or influence. I have known people who pursue relationships purely because they believe it will help them advance their career, introduce them to the right crowd or bring them business opportunities. No, what I mean is that we should ensure we allow into our lives those people who can help us become who we were meant to be.

I know that plants do not do so well when they are planted on their own, with no other foliage around them. They grow more slowly and need more care than those that are planted amongst other vegetation. But if they are planted in the wrong position or alongside plants that are incompatible, they will suffer.

Like plants, we all differ in what it takes to make us grow. Some varieties do better in the shade while others love the sunlight. Some are hardy enough to cope with frost, but others suffer in the cold. Just like plants, we should ensure that we are planted in the right place alongside the right people if we really want to flourish.

There are a lot of Jacaranda trees where we live. The Jacaranda tree is a native of Brazil but grows prolifically in Australia. Its leaves are frond-like and leading into Spring it puts on a beautiful display of purple, trumpet like flowers. But there is one particular tree a few streets away that never has the opportunity to show its true colours. There is a vigorous vine that has grown up the trunk and taken over its branches, to the point where it is difficult to recognise it as a Jacaranda. When we should be enjoying its blossoms, its spindly branches are strangled by the vine and unable to bloom.

But just down the road is a large fig tree. Now fig trees don't have flowers, but every year the tree puts on a magnificent display as it drips with huge clusters of purple Wisteria blooms. The tree actually looks like it is flowering, and the growth of the tree appears unaffected by the Wisteria vine hidden beneath its branches.

In life, as in the garden, there are some relationships that strangle us and hinder our growth. Like the vine on the Jacaranda, they inhibit our ability to be ourselves and to express our own unique personality. Relationships that are defined by stress, fear, abuse, one-sided giving or simply a lack of affection can stunt our emotional, spiritual and creative growth. We will be confined to a space that restricts our capacity to learn, explore, discover and grow.

The really valuable relationships are those that add something special to who we are. Like the Wisteria vine that lives in the fig tree, they don't stop us from growing into the person we were designed to be and, in fact, they allow us to develop characteristics and accomplish things that go beyond what we could achieve on our own through encouragement, inspiration and positive reinforcement.

Now, this doesn't mean we should discard all those relationships that don't quite measure up in terms of what we expect from them. But we should certainly make sure we have a balance in our lives. After all, life is as much about what we give back to others as it is about what we receive from them.

How do your relationships measure up in terms of companion planting? Are you constantly in someone else's shadow, or do you have a friend who allows you to shine from time to time? If you are not able to cope with pests and diseases, are you planted near someone who shields you, helping you resist those things that would otherwise do you harm? In a powerful storm, are you supported by someone who is bigger and stronger and who can protect you from serious damage?

It is good for us to reflect from time to time on our relationships, understanding which ones are beneficial and which are detrimental. Spend more time in the company of those who allow you to grow and less time in the company of those who diminish you.

And as you grow, be mindful that you may well be the companion that enables others to freely pursue healthy and productive lives - the Wisteria vine that gives the fig tree the ability to flower.

"A man's growth is seen in the successive choirs of his friends."
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." (Jesus)

Article by WENDY RUSH, courtesy of Ignite Life.
www.ignitelife.com.au

April 2009

spotlight on the nations

One World, One Dream

The theme for the 2008 Beijing Olympics is "One World, One Dream". Christ's theme, if we can call it that, is "One World, One Truth". Since the announcement of Beijing's successful bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, the media has drawn attention to China's human rights records. The Olympic torch relay was marred by protests and the Games that are meant to signify world peace and unity have been presented as

quite the opposite before they have even begun.

How the Games will play out is yet to be seen. But what we do know is that Christians from all over the world are descending, or have already descended, on Beijing and surrounding areas with a view to communicating Christ's love and truth to the Chinese people and to international visitors.

Below is a selection of resources that might be of interest to those who are keen to know more, and to help us pray in an informed way for those taking the "walk across the world" – reaching out in and around Beijing during the Olympic Games. It is also a time when we should be making a concerted effort to remember and pray for Christians in China.

This is by no means a comprehensive list. Readers are encouraged to seek out other sites and other publications.

The Heavenly Man

The story of Brother Yun. A fantastic insight into a Chinese Christian's faith in the face of extreme persecution. The Heavenly Man can be found at Koorong and WORD bookstores.

http://crossroad.to/Excerpts/books/faith_under_fire/heavenly-man.htm

China's Millions

Firework celebrations lit up the Beijing sky on July 14, 2001. China had been named the host of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Crowds cried for joy at hearing the news. In the years since, China's Olympic preparations have been estimated to be the most expensive ever.

http://www.chinasmillions.org/issues_frameset.html

Select from Menu: Modern Day – then 2008 Olympics

Christian Today (Australian Edition) 19/6/08

China will allow tens of thousands of Gospel booklets and Bibles to be printed especially for athletes at the Beijing Olympics in August, the Bible Society involved in the printing process recently announced.

<http://au.christiantoday.com/article/china-approves-gospel-booklets-for-athletes-at-olympics/3940.htm>

Australian Christian Lobby 26/4/08

In the midst of all of the Olympic buildup, a British-based charity, Harvest Fields Commissioning International and its movie arm, OLI Productions, have just completed production of the film "China: Reflections from Heaven," filmed entirely in Beijing. In the process of filming the movie, OLI Productions interviewed a number of church, ministry and business leaders.

http://www.acl.org.au/act/browse.stw?article_id=21113

Catch the Fire Ministries 14/4/08

Christians throughout China fear tough restrictions on their freedom to worship in the coming year following the launch of a government crackdown ahead of the August 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing

<http://catchthefire.com.au/blog/2008/04/14/chinese-authorities-crack-down-on-rights-ahead-of-beijing-olympics/>

Christian Today (Australian Edition) 8/10/07

Mark Tronson who assisted in the development of International Olympic Committee's 'Religious Services' protocols in February 2000 while a guest of the IOC in Lausanne Switzerland, says there is much confusion among Christians in relation to expressions of faith in the 'Olympic village' for the upcoming Beijing Olympics next year.

<http://au.christiantoday.com/article/beijing-olympics-of-faith/3330.htm>

ABC Radio National 8/8/07

They're counting down in Beijing to an even friendlier Olympic games, and they've already started breaking records for the largest number of Christian missionaries expelled from China since 1954.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2007/1998728.htm>

The Christian Post 18/5/07

They worked the crowds at Olympic Games in Athens, Sydney and Atlanta. And, even though China outlaws what they do, they will be on the ground next summer in Beijing as well.

<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070518/christian-groups-plan-for-olympic-harvest-in-beijing.htm>

April 2009

feature article #2

BIG is definitely Better



What can ordinary people accomplish with an extraordinary God, unity, and hard work? A local cross denominational group shares their story.

For generations people have struggled to read and interact with God's word. The Bible Society and Scripture Union wanted to create a resource addressing this need specifically for the young people of today. In 2007 they gathered together with SA youth representatives from seven different denominations as well as other interdenominational groups, and the Bible to Youth Consortium (BTY) was formed. (www.bty.com.au)

The BTY Consortium decided to produce a video resource that encouraged reading and interacting with the Bible, and partnered with HISOWN (www.hisown.com.au) - a local company who produce multimedia resources that focus on building the Kingdom of God. With a lot of teamwork, *Twentyfour* was produced - a video study resource on the 24 chapters of Luke. Young people from around the state were filmed sharing about themselves, reading a chapter of Luke, and asking thought-provoking questions. Viewers received a journal booklet to follow along and respond in. The project was a success, with over 2500 youth benefiting.

Students at my school were enthusiastic about the idea of reading through a slab of the Bible at the same time. And once they saw the quality of the whole production, it really captured their imaginations. A handful of students took a pack home out of curiosity. For five bucks, it made for a fairly inexpensive evangelism tool. The video footage provided an extra level of interaction. Several students would come to Bible group each week with their booklets full of big questions. Now they've seen the sneak preview of *Big*, their even more excited!" Jeremy, CPSW Seaview High School. On using *twentyfour*

Encouraged by the results, the BTY Consortium met once again to work out a project for 2008. They decided to bring the first 17 chapters of Genesis to life. Aiming even higher than the year before, they wanted to produce a DVD that is visually captivating, as well as engaging the viewer emotionally and spiritually. They delegated this massive task to a project team, consisting of HISOWN and a representative from both the Bible Society and Scripture Union. Rev. Dr. Stephen Raisin, principal of Bible College SA and Old Testament expert, came alongside the project to lend his knowledge and facilities.

"The creation of this DVD resource, while involving a lot of hard work and late nights over several months of production, demonstrates what a dedicated team led by the same passion can achieve". Grant Hull, Director HISOWN.

The project was such a big undertaking, sharing about such a big God in a big universe in order to have a big impact, that it was aptly named *BIG*. Bible Society volunteered to provide funding.

The project team decided to use high quality animation to captivate the audience, with the concept of making the room in which the young reader was sitting come to life. Animation illustrating the words being spoken would play out across the walls behind the reader and within the 3D space of the room itself. To achieve this they filmed the readers in high definition in front of a green-screen. The green-screen was then removed and the animation was painstakingly created and incorporated. Filming took place over a two week period at Bible College SA during holidays. Some of the animation was actually created by filming live actors and then reducing their images to silhouettes. An atmospheric soundtrack was also added, enhancing the viewers' experience all the more.

The readers themselves were real youths from local churches, suggested by the BTY Consortium, sharing their own struggles and triumphs with the bible. Two Christian pastoral support workers volunteered their services to provide explanations of difficult sections of the text and practical applications. Additional resources such as *BIG* journals, the website and group studies were also created.

This massive project took the project team seven months and many late nights to complete. Throughout this time they met with the BTY Consortium regularly for feedback to fine-tune the product. The final result is absolutely unique and remarkably engaging. Incredibly, a study pack which includes the DVD and journal is sold at just \$5, so that no one has to miss out. Over 4000 youth are expected to benefit within SA alone, and both national and international interest has been shown.

So what can ordinary people accomplish with an extraordinary God, unity, and hard work? The answer is *BIG* results.

BIG is available now. Visit the website www.big.bible.com.au or your local Bible Society shop to order.