



**Media Release  
22 March 2018**

## **Wayside Chapel announces new CEO/Pastor**

Wayside Chapel is celebrating the continuation of its mission as the role of CEO and Pastor passes from Rev Graham Long AM to Pastor Jon Owen.

The Wayside Chapel Board publicly announced Pastor Jon Owen as the new CEO and Pastor today, 22 March 2018 after informing a gathering of staff, volunteers and the many people who visit Wayside for support yesterday.

Graham is retiring from the role of CEO and Pastor after 14 years of service to the community. He passes on the baton to Jon Owen, the current Assistant Pastor at Wayside Chapel, who will officially take up the role on 1 July 2018.

Pastor Jon Owen, who has spent some 20 years building community in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Melbourne and Sydney, successfully won the role as Wayside's next CEO and Pastor after a robust, international search of over 100 potential candidates.

Wayside Chapel Chairman, Ian Martin AM, said "Graham has shown phenomenal leadership in the 14 years that he has been both Pastor and CEO of the Wayside. While we will miss him, he and we are thrilled that Jon will be our new Pastor and CEO.

"Graham's articulation of, and unwavering commitment, to Wayside's vision of "love over hate" and mission of creating a community with no "us and them" has been a beacon of inspiration to us all.

"You only need to spend some time with Graham amongst the visitors at Wayside or walk down the streets of Kings Cross with him, and you get to see what makes him special: he genuinely connects with people.

"Graham often talks about the importance of meeting Wayside's visitors rather than "working on them"; and of seeing them and connecting with them on a personal level rather than treating them as "problems to be solved"; of making a genuine connection; of building trust; and of treating the homeless and marginalised with dignity.

"And that is exactly what he does. He engages, he listens, he loves, and in so doing, by his own actions, he is instrumental in giving back hope to people, who often, have all but lost it.

"And that too is what makes Wayside different, why it has blossomed under his leadership, and why it enjoys a special place in Sydney's heart.

"Through the Inner Circle, a weekly email Graham sends to a distribution list of more than 13,000, he also manages to convey the stories of many of the people he meets, reminding us all that there is a fine



line between success and failure, and that many of the socially marginalised fell into that category through little or no fault of their own.

“When Graham joined Wayside 14 years ago it was only a shadow of its current self. Our building was decrepit and much of it actually condemned, there was less than a handful of staff and its finances were such that its future was perilous.

“The contrast with today is amazing: its mission has been revitalised, its new building is a vibrant hub of community activity out of which a number of programs tailor-made for the social disadvantaged are run, there are close to 100 staff members who in turn co-ordinate more than 700 active volunteers, and Wayside also now operates in Bondi as well as Kings Cross.”

Mr Martin said the Wayside Board was unanimous in the decision to appoint Jon to the role of CEO and Pastor.

“We went through a robust and independent recruitment process to ensure we were placing the future of Wayside in the safest hands.

“Jon lives and breathes the Wayside mission and has the rare combination of experience, vision and heart.”

Graham said that he was delighted that Jon was the successful candidate from a list of over 100 potential candidates from around the world.

“Having known and respected Jon for well over a decade I can say he is the real deal. He is someone who has devoted his life to making connection with people from all walks of life. He’s comfortable in the streets and he’s comfortable in the boardroom.

“What could be more satisfying after Wayside’s 14 years of remarkable growth than to know our beloved community will be entrusted into solid, real and reliable leadership.

“I can see that the next decade will be even more astonishing than the last 14 years. I’m deeply satisfied knowing that our next CEO and Pastor is a truly inspiring person. It makes my heart soar to anticipate the good that will come to this city and this country through this much-loved leader and much-loved organisation,” said Rev Long.

From 1 July 2018, Graham will continue his involvement with Wayside Chapel as Pastor Emeritus and will provide support to Jon during an extended transition period. After a well-deserved break at the end of the year, Graham will be back at Wayside in early 2019 to teach courses in philosophy and leadership.

Jon has spent over 20 years building community in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Sydney and Melbourne. He is a qualified social worker and was previously a member of a religious order dedicated to living amongst the poor. During this time, he lived in a housing commission suburb in Mount Druitt (Bidwill), where he shared his family home with those seeking asylum, refugees, people in recovery and ex-prisoners. He brings to Wayside a wealth of experience supporting people who have fallen through all the gaps and have nowhere else to turn.



Mr Owen said it was a great honour to be chosen to follow in the footsteps of Graham.

“What a privilege it is to have been selected to represent and lead Wayside Chapel into the future.

“Under 14 years of Graham’s leadership the Wayside Chapel community has flourished. We now look forward to the next phase with a sense of hope and anticipation. It has been a joy to become a member of the Wayside family. We will continue to build community and provide the nourishing and strengthening care that our visitors need.

“I have always found myself surrounded by people who saw the best in me. It has been my life’s mission to likewise see the beauty in others and to call it out.

“Wayside’s mission is to be there when people need us. People facing social isolation, homelessness, addiction and mental health issues on a grand scale. Striving to provide a community of no “us and them” is in the best interest of every person and all can play some part in this grand mission.”

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For further media information and interview requests for Graham Long AM, Jon Owen or Ian Martin AM contact Janine Huan, Marketing and Communications Manager, on 0409 887 797 or email [janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com](mailto:janine.huan@thewaysidechapel.com)

#### About The Wayside Chapel

*Wayside Chapel has provided unconditional love, care and support for people on and around the streets of Sydney since 1964. Today, under the banner of ‘Love over Hate’, Wayside runs two community services centres, youth space and outreach service, mental health program, two community cafés, and Aboriginal Program. All programs are designed to ensure that the most marginalised members of our community have access to essential health, welfare, social and recreational services, as well as a judgment-free place where people are welcome just to ‘be’.*

For more information see [waysidechapel.org.au](http://waysidechapel.org.au)