

A HOUSE FOR HIS GLORY

The Church In The City



COLIN SHAW

A HOUSE FOR HIS GLORY

© Colin Shaw 2007

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TC
BOOKS

Thanks, Colin. You have given us wisdom and practical insights that can only come from years of walking and working with many others who share the same heart and vision. I believe it will be a tremendous tool for both those who are just developing a burden for their city as well as for those who have labored for years. It is realistic enough to help us see we have a long way to go and also idealistic enough to keep us moving forward. I found myself amen-ing, rejoicing and gleaning as I read. As it is read widely and applied deeply, Jesus will be both pleased and glorified.

**Dennis Fuqua, President International Renewal Ministries,
Portland, Oregon, U.S.A.**

Colin has captured the essence of something that God is doing in regards to His church, His one church in the city. This is a timely book, and one that I believe will help to answer a lot of questions, and raise a few more that we need to wrestle with in the places we live. Reading this book gave me help, hope and a needed framework to process things, and to believe that what God has started in my city He is willing and able to bring to completion. Well done, Colin!

**David Dishroon, Senior Pastor Living Hope Church,
Tauranga and Chairman of Willow Creek Association., New
Zealand**

There is no better source for insight and understanding about the purposes of God for the church than the ones that have come from the marriage of biblical revelation and miles of experience. Colin Shaw has written a book that is the product of that marriage. The reader will feel the heart of someone who values the presence of God and His Word. You will also see the marks of someone who has sat with, prayed with and encouraged Christian leaders for hours and days at a time. Whether in India, the Philippines, Pacific Islands, New Zealand or at home in Australia, Colin's power

to listen and then to speak has been a precious gift to the body of Christ. This book is the distillation of those experiences. Everyone needs to receive what he has to share.

Brian Medway, Senior Pastor Grace Fellowship, Canberra and Chairman of Crosslink Australia

I have been privileged to walk and work alongside Colin Shaw in Australia, New Zealand, India and the U.S. Colin is an authentic, real-deal city-reacher, an in-the-trench servant endowed with prophetic insight and practical wisdom. “A House for His Glory” unveils the essence of all city transformation endeavours, opening the doors of our hearts and the gates of our cities to our awesome God’s life-changing presence. With a balance of biblical light and real-life models, this book is a must read for practitioners, prayer warriors and market place leaders, serious about building a house where the Lord is pleased to dwell.

Tom White, Frontline Ministries, America’s National Prayer Committee, member of the International Prayer Council and City Coach with the Mission American Coalition

“A House for His Glory” is a must for church leaders. It deals with the strategic, albeit often misunderstood, truth of the church of the city. It is all too easy, in the consumeristic, self-focused society of today, to forget that God has targeted cities, regions and nations as keys for His kingdom purposes. Colin has highlighted these great truths for us. Thank you for your perseverance across Australasia with these truths.

Seth Fawcett, Senior Pastor Hope Centre, Lower Hutt, New Zealand

Colin Shaw is a man with a passionate belief in the city-wide church. His practical experience in facilitating Pastors Prayer Summits and leadership of roundtables has given him an insight that few others have into how to develop and maintain a city-wide united church that is an essential prerequisite to transformation. This is both a practical book but also one full of revelation and biblical insight. Readers with an interest in transformation of cities through a city-wide church, will glean many pearls of wisdom to encourage them on the way.

Brian Pickering, National Coordinator Australian Prayer Network

I have a deep conviction that the church of the city is the hope of the world. Colin Shaw's "A House for His Glory" explains why this is so with a lively mix of biblical revelation and well-illustrated stories from cities around the world. The reader is left in no doubt as to why every Christian should work with energy to end hundreds of years of scandalous division. The church of the city, as the author indicates, is God's plan to transform communities and ultimately nations.

Ian Shelton, Senior Pastor Toowoomba City Church and leader of Christian Leaders Network, Toowoomba

I was excited in my spirit as I read Pastor Colin Shaw's book. The insights shared resonated with me and gave me new enthusiasm to invest in the 'church in the city' and be part of the construction team for the 'House of His glory'. As a long-term minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ I am well aware that our current efforts are not getting the transformation job done. We would do well to take on board the insights that Colin has so eloquently expressed. I recommend Colin's book for your serious consideration.

Rev. Herman Ruyters, Senior Pastor Rangeville Community Church, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

Dedicated to pastors of the
church in Toowoomba,
without whose fellowship and
commitment, this book would
never have been written.

Toowoomba pastors on 'dwelling together in unity'

Unity with our city's fellow pastors has provided me with support, guidance, accountability, a sharper focus on kingdom ministry and a more biblical perspective of Christ's church.

Rev. David Millican, Wesleyan Methodist Church

The unity of believers bound together by prayer and worship has given me a deeper reality of Christian love and life. I have been inspired and strengthened by it.

Rev. Roland Sondergeld, Senior Pastor Christ Life Presbyterian Church

When I was unable to minister to my congregation for health reasons, a number of pastors stepped in and enabled the ministry to continue through their personal involvement (preaching, pastoral input to me personally and the church's leadership). I am very grateful.

Rev. Herman Ruyters, Senior Pastor Rangeville Community Church

I have been amazingly blessed by the fellowship of the pastors and the unity of the churches. I have received personal support through the difficult times, have been encouraged in the good times and have at other times been challenged to new heights by the ministry of others in the wider body. I have been able to participate in city-wide ministries that would have been impossible in isolation and I believe that these have also enriched our congregation.

Dale White, Senior Pastor HumeRidge Church of Christ

We are blessed with the unity we have experienced in Toowoomba. Unity of the Spirit is birthed out of relationships that bind together our diverse strengths and open the way for God to work in transforming a community through His family – the body of Christ.

David and Hazel Blair, Senior Pastors Vision Community Church

The unity developing in the city of Toowoomba over the last fifteen years has been a great delight to me because it signals a beginning manifestation of Jesus' prayer in John 17. The trust developed has given great security and encouragement to many of our fellow labourers in the gospel.

Leslie R. Holmes, Senior Pastor Christian Outreach Centre

Meeting with other pastors each week to worship and pray together has meant getting to know people from many different churches and learning from each other. We are accountable to one another as the churches of the city meet the needs of the city. Unity in Toowoomba is growing closer to God as we grow closer to each other.

Rev. Richard Harris St Bartholomew's Anglican Church

I have been humbled by the experience of unity among Toowoomba church leaders. The rich expression of faith in our combined meetings has taught me so much about my own theological blind spots. I learned again that according to the Bible, agreement in doctrines is not a precondition for church unity but is the result of it.

Rev. Dr Edgar Mayer, Senior Pastor Living Grace, Lutheran Church

To know that I am part of something much bigger, that I am part of a family that together lifts up the name of Jesus, is a great blessing.

Brendan Kelly, Senior Pastor Spring Street Christian Church

Single local congregations can sometimes make achievements on their own, but when they dwell together within the city-wide body of Christ, a fertile soil of unity is formed from which great things will grow. I have witnessed first-hand the blessings that overflow from a united city-wide church and I thank God that He cares enough about our city of Toowoomba to unite us together for His purposes.

Isaac Moody, CEO Easterfest (formerly known as the Australian Gospel Music Festival)

Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to . . .

. . . Grace, my precious wife. Thank you, Honey,
for your insights, support and encouragement.

. . . Ian Shelton, a friend and mentor, who, in
believing for a city (and a nation) for over three
decades, has wholly followed the Lord.

. . . the many friends around the world who share a
common passion for His house in their cities
and towns.

. . . the wonderful staff of T.C.C.

. . . all the people who have graciously and
enthusiastically contributed to the writing of
this book, especially Deryck and Nancy
Thomas who have laboured tirelessly.

Unto Him be glory in the Church.

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PREFACE

Having embraced charismatic renewal and gained a deeper appreciation of the body of Christ in the 1960s and 1970s, many of us began anticipating even greater things ahead. Christians from all sectors of the body of Christ were coming together to worship and exalt Jesus. Ministries to the body of Christ generally, especially teaching ministries, were bringing fresh revelation and edification. There was a new found liberty and joy as people fellowshipped with brothers and sisters from other churches.

The years following, however, did not seem to bring any real fulfilment of expectations. In the 1980s the spiritual hunger and excitement seemed to dissipate. In many places Christians were settling back within the four walls of their particular church or denomination. Then in the early 1990s we began to hear a new sound, a sound that captured a fresh understanding of the church as the body of Christ and its mandate to reach cities and nations. While in Canada for a time with my wife Grace and our children, I came across John Dawson's "Taking Our Cities for God".¹ For me, with its practical, faith-building and encouraging approach toward winning our cities, this book was like fresh water to a thirsty soul. Here was a book that put feet to the things we had prayed and dreamed about. Not long afterwards we returned to Toowoomba in Queensland, Australia, little realising that Dawson's book was God's preparation for things to come.

Here we slotted back into the church that had sent us to Canada and after a short time I joined four other pastors in weekly prayer meetings for the city and the church of the city. Since that time God has graciously widened and deepened the

¹ John Dawson "Taking Our Cities for God" Creation House 1989

fellowship amongst leaders of our city. With this has come much blessing, some of which I will recount in the pages of this book.

In many places around the world Christians are coming together to seek the way forward for the church in their city. It has been my great privilege over a number of years to travel and meet with some of these people in Australia and other places. More recently Grace and I have had, with the support of our church in Toowoomba, the joy of spending a good deal of time back in New Zealand, the land of our birth, facilitating prayer summits and round-table gatherings for pastors who are desiring to build unity and reach their city. There, as in numerous other places, leaders are discovering keys and gaining ground.

The goal is to see the emergence of a united church in each city that will represent and reflect Christ to its inhabitants. If one phrase best captures the essence of this intent it might be 'the church becoming a house for His glory in each city or town'. Not wanting to convey an expectation of utopia this side of Jesus' return, I believe - like many others through the centuries - that the church will yet rise to make His name great in cities and nations. Hopefully this book will contribute to that cause.

In some cities and towns the church is beginning to function as a single entity - one church in the city - thereby making Christ known more effectively. I have included stories from our city and others - together with principles gleaned. (All mention of cities from here on is intended to include towns; many of the cities mentioned in Scripture would today be classified as towns.) This brief exhortation is written with the prayer that what is written will bring encouragement and further insight to readers committed to reaching their city for God. It is written also with a desire to pass the baton on to the next generation.

Colin Shaw

INTRODUCTION

Like Abraham, our destination is a city - your city, my city - (remember, this includes towns) - the city that God has sovereignly placed you and me in - the city that, at this moment, God cares about and has compassion for, in the same way He had compassion for the city of Nineveh and has had for cities throughout the ages.

How do we intentionally align ourselves to hear and respond to the cry of a city? Where do we begin in order to see Christ made known, in your city, my city? How do we as His people effectively minister to the great and varied needs of our cities?

Does the church have a mandate to be light and salt to cities? Taking into consideration both the New Testament writings and the example of the early church, it would be hard to believe otherwise. How can the church of a city bring positive change to the spiritual and moral climate if it is fragmented and has a multiplicity of uncoordinated agendas? How can a divided church heal a divided city? With the many congregations that exist in our city, should we not expect that the body of Christ be a major contributor to the wellbeing of that place? What might be accomplished if even one third of a city's congregations were to collaborate and strategically focus on reaching their city?

It would seem that of recent days there has come a fresh and growing awareness that cities hold the key to the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth. It is primarily in cities where light and darkness issues are contended for. It is in cities that values and lifestyles are determined. It is cities that determine the course of nations. A nation is the sum of its cities.

This book is about God's people, together being salt and light to their city. It is about the 'church-together' and its role in, and relationship to, the city. More than that, it is about winning the war for our cities.

Could it be?

Could it be that we need to broaden our horizons and capture God's heart for our cities?

Could it be that in actual fact, our primary calling and mandate have to do with serving and delivering our cities?²

Could it be that we need to better relate to and work with other ministries God has brought to reach our own city? How often have we failed to discover the heart and passion of other ministries who have a similar mandate to our own?

Could it be that God's intention is for those other ministries to complement and enhance our own ministry as ours is to complement and enhance theirs? One of the great joys of recent days for us in our city has been the comradeship, insight and encouragement given by fellow ministers, one to the other.

Could it be that our isolated, individual efforts, well intended as they may be, are in reality short-circuiting God's plan to bring glory to His Name and salvation to our cities?

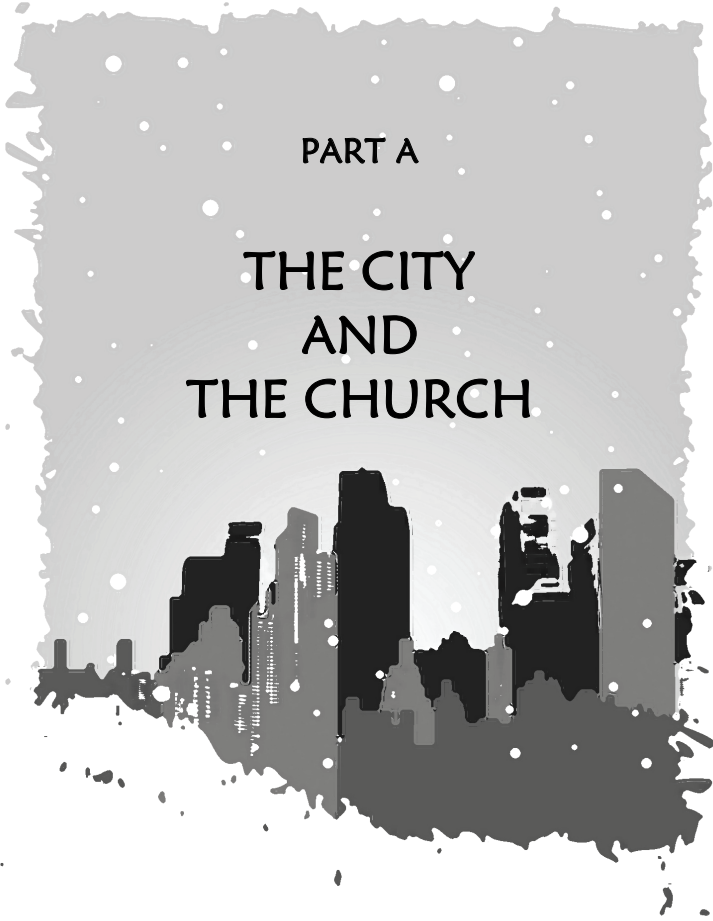
² Frank Damazio "Crossing Rivers and Taking Cities" Regal Books 1999: "Why is evangelism so difficult in our twenty-first century church? Because we are not in the city and the city is not in us – our first calling is not to the one congregation we preach to, but to the whole city God has placed us in."

Could it be that all the resources necessary to save our cities are already resident in the city-wide churches, but are not being utilised because they are being consumed on lesser, fragmented goals?

Could it be that thirty years from now our children will look back and say, “How could they have been content to stay so divided and ineffective?”

PART A

THE CITY
AND
THE CHURCH



1

UNDERSTANDING CITIES

The importance of cities

Cities were central to God's plan both for Israel and the early church. All of history has revolved around cities. So today cities play a pivotal role in the destiny of nations individually and as a whole. Examples abound in recent history. Some of the bigger cities such as London, Rome, Berlin and New York to name a few, have all been major influences in world history.

Church history has also revolved around cities. Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome and Geneva are examples of this. The mention of each city brings to mind certain impressions; pictures that are sometimes

positive, sometimes negative. Each city has a personality of its own, releasing its own particular river of good or bad into the mainstream of national and world affairs.

Cities in the Bible

There are major themes and truths running through the Bible. One of these is 'cities' which runs parallel with a sister theme, that of 'nations'. In Scripture cities have a prominent place. From Genesis to Revelation city/cities are mentioned more than 1200 times and nations approximately 600 times. Cities were inherited, built, fought over, governed, preached to, rebuked, judged, destroyed, healed. From Cain onwards it seems men were preoccupied with building cities. While cities of our day are different in many ways to cities of early history, even up to the industrial revolution, we can learn from them. Genesis sheds some light on ancient cities. First we see that, following his expulsion from the garden of Eden, Cain desired a city. Genesis 4:16,17:

*then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD...
and he built a city.*

To build cities was a common pursuit of men in pre-flood times.³

³ It seems clear to me that in the beginning men built cities with more in mind than securing a place where offspring could be raised and protected. It seems that people of ancient times sought to build cities in such a way that they might be at one with the unseen realm.

A more complete overview of cities in Scripture, post-flood, can be found in Appendix 1, but briefly, Abraham looked for a city. Joshua possessed cities. Cities fell like dominoes as nations were conquered. David brought the Ark of God's presence into a city. Jonah preached to a city. Jeremiah wept over a city. Zechariah prophesied of a city of truth. Jesus' disciples were sent to cities to prepare a way for their Master. Jesus appealed to, rebuked and wept over cities. In Acts the gospel brought dramatic change to cities. Many of Paul's epistles were addressed to the church of a city. In Revelation, John writes to seven city churches.

Cities today

How do we evaluate cities today? When we go beyond first impressions and the veneer, what do we see? Isaiah 64:10a describes cities of Isaiah's day as being a wilderness. From a divine standpoint, each one was a desert that was barren and lifeless. In the light of this we might ask, how do today's cities measure up? Our cities can often look beautiful but beneath the surface, many of our cities are plagued with violence, drug abuse, family breakdown, poverty and corruption.

Isaiah 24:10a, refers to a 'city of confusion' that is 'broken down'. The Hebrew word here for 'confusion' is 'tohu', the same word used in Genesis 1:2 to describe the pre-creation chaos and emptiness. 'Tohu' means, 'to lie waste, a desolation, a worthless thing,

unformed, amoral and spiritual emptiness, something vain, a nothingness and unreality’.

Would that be the Lord’s perspective on many of today’s cities? It is so easy for those of us who are Christians to sit within the four walls of our churches blissfully unaware of the emptiness, pain, loneliness and lost-ness that exist within our cities.

Light and salt

Have we, God’s people, neglected the divine mandate to be light and salt to our cities? Jesus told the multitudes that came to listen to Him:

*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*⁴

Where do we as the church today stand in the light of Jesus’ words? How close are we to being trampled underfoot? In some ways it is happening already! This is one side of the coin. On the other side, God is mercifully at work. God’s heart is to bring change. As I understand it, God’s plan has always been for heaven to invade our cities through the one church in each place.

There are cities world-wide which are experiencing transformation.⁵ Encouraging stories are being heard

⁴ Matthew 5:13,14

⁵ The Sentinel Group Transformation DVDs office@tcchurch.com.au

in many places as leaders humbly acknowledge their need of one another and their need to work together for the welfare of their city. Do we have hope for our city? Do we believe it can change? If cities can be possessed with evil, can they not also be possessed with light? Jesus told His disciples that they were the light of the world. What changes need to occur in us, as His body, for us to be that light? Are we willing to see long-held church paradigms challenged, if necessary, so that we together become a bright 'lamp-stand' in our city?⁶

The early church and cities

As Jesus spent His last moments on earth with His disciples, He said:

*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...*⁷

From that time on, for those disciples, 'their sights were set'; nations were the goal. For them to reach this goal, their target then became cities⁸, as was

⁶ Revelation 1:19

⁷ Matthew 28:18,19

⁸ Paul's missionary journeys focused on urban cities/towns of influence. First missionary journey : 46-48 A.D. Salamis, Paphos, Pergamos, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Second missionary journey: 49-52 A.D. Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Antioch. Third missionary journey: 53-57 A.D. Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, Troas, Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea, Jerusalem.

Joshua's as he prepared to possess the nations promised him. According to historical records, the early church did bring transformation to many cities. Professor Rodney Stark has written a definitive study of the major cities of the Roman Empire AD 1 – AD 300. In it he outlines the positive changes Christianity brought over that time to those cities. He maintains that evangelism of the Roman Empire through the Christianisation of its cities was the story of the early church.⁹

Lecturer and author, Professor E.M. Blaiklock wrote:

Paul saw clearly enough that if the Empire, of which he was, rarely for a Jew, an accredited citizen, was to be won for Christ, it must be a process initiated and forwarded by the great urban congregations. The vision is not dated. Christianise the great cities, and one is more than halfway towards the evangelism of the whole world. Lose the cities, and some today, from Calcutta to New York and London, seem poised upon some evasive brink. Lose them to violence, degradation and corruption, and the country is also lost. Gain them, cleanse their hearts, make them fit to live in, and much on a vast front is won.¹⁰

⁹ Rodney Stark "Cities of God" HarperCollins 2006

¹⁰ E M Blaiklock "The World of the New Testament" Ark Publishing London 1979

One Christian city

At the beginning of the twentieth century, author Henry Drummond wrote an essay called “The City Without a Church” that gives food for thought.

Here is a part of what he wrote:

*To make cities, that is what we are here for. To make good cities – that is for the present hour the main work of Christianity. For the city is strategic, it makes the town, the towns make the villages, the villages make the country. He who makes the city makes the world. When Christianity should take upon itself the full responsibility, the burden and care of cities, the kingdom of God will openly come on earth. People do not dispute that religion is in the church. What is now wanted is to let them see it in the city. One Christian city, one city in any part of the earth whose citizens from the greatest to the humblest live in the spirit of Christ, where religion has overflowed the churches and passed into the streets inundating every house and workshop and permeating the whole social and commercial life, one such Christian city would seal the redemption of the world.*¹¹

The church and our cities

What is God’s answer to the cry of our cities? His answer is in His church, His many-membered body, strategically located in the city we live in. It is through the church of a city that God seeks to make Himself

¹¹ ‘The City Without a Church’ essay in “Henry Drummond Collection” Old Landmark Publishing 2006

and the good news of His kingdom known. It is clear to me that the New Testament teaches that it is **by the church** that God's wisdom, love and salvation are to be made known to our cities and nations. Can a fragmented church do this? Can a disjointed body bring Christ to a city?

Jesus was straightforward when He said:

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.¹²

It would seem clear that in New Testament times, Paul and other writers of that day recognised but one church in each city. Notwithstanding that the population of some of New Testament cities would not warrant them being called cities today, there seems to be no hint of multiple 'churches' in any one city, big or small.

¹² Matthew:12:25

2

THE CHURCH AND THE CITY

Called to a city

For many years the sense of being called to a city was not part of my rationale. As a pastor, I had only a vague comprehension of any accountability beyond that of caring for a congregation. Like many others, this was the paradigm I had been taught and mentored in. Obviously it was right to diligently care for the people entrusted to me. There are severe warnings for shepherds who do not attend to the needs of their flock.

However, I began to see things a little differently. There came the realisation that I had been first called to a city and then to pastor a congregation in that city. I began to see that I was called not just to pastor a congregation but to also join with other pastors in that locality and seek the welfare of the wider community. God wanted me to identify with His heart for the city. While there was never a time when I did not carry some concern and pray for the wider community, now it was different. Now there was the realisation that I had been charged by God to pastorally care both for a congregation and, along with many others, a city.

Pastor Frank Damazio, Portland, Oregon, asks if we have prioritised the building and protecting of our churches over our concern for cities?

*Do you love your church? The answer most likely would be yes – but of course, not without pain, sorrow, disappointment, glory and gory days - but your love is real. The love for your city must be just as real and just as enduring. If God has called you to your church, He has called you to your city.*¹³

An outsider's perspective

After introducing myself to our new neighbour one Saturday morning, the conversation turned to our respective occupations. Hearing that I was a local pastor, he, not being a church-goer, spoke quietly and sincerely of how he saw the church, as an outsider looking on. When he drove through our city and

¹³ Frank Damazio “Crossing Rivers and Taking Cities” Regal Books 1999

witnessed the wide range of church names and programs being offered, it spoke to him of rivalry and competition. He saw nothing that he wanted to be part of. As I listened I felt deeply grieved. “How long”, I thought, “before our cities see a visible expression of Christ’s love through His body in each place?”

Not discounting the importance of healthy, growing, local congregations and the benefits of denominational affiliations, it is essential that we be the church of the city and together express the life of Christ to the community around us. We could draw up a long list of reasons why this is so but briefly, oneness is essential if we are to:

- benefit from each congregation’s unique contribution,
- benefit fully from the wide range of ministry gifts Christ has placed within the city,
- effectively serve and meet the needs of our city,
- effectively honour and serve civic leaders,
- effectively exalt Christ and make Him known in the city.

One church in each city

As I have argued previously, in the New Testament we find only one church in each city - anything else would be unthinkable to the early Christians. The only distinction between churches in the New Testament was on the basis of location. Christians in the same city belonged to the one church in that city. Anything else would have been a complete aberration. As Paul,

upon hearing of certain contentions in the church of Corinth, exclaimed: “*Is Christ divided?*”¹⁴

“Is Christ divided?”

The word ‘churches’ is only used in a wider regional context, for example, the churches in Galatia. We need to note, however, that many cities today need to be seen more as regions. They are made up of smaller cities. For example Melbourne Australia is home to thirty-one cities.

We cannot effectively communicate the gospel to our cities while we are divided. As someone has said:

It takes the whole church to bring the whole gospel to the whole city.

Let it be said however, that healthy parts make for a healthy whole. Strong, healthy, growing ‘local churches’ (shall we say congregations) are of vital importance to the well-being of the church in a city.

From city to city, it is becoming more and more common to hear the term, ‘one church, many congregations’. Leader of the pastors network in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, Seth Fawcett, sums up the thinking that is reflected in many places by saying that the developments in the Hutt Valley over the last thirteen years have brought churches to the point where they can declare there is one church in Hutt City with many congregations.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:13

A new bowl

The leaders of a certain small city were desperate. Their city was facing a major crisis, as are many of our cities today. In fact these leaders described their city as barren. They sought out a man who might have some answers, who might be able to turn things around. They said:

...the situation of this city of ours is pleasant... but the water is bad, and the ground barren.

The response of this man, Elisha, to their plea was a strange one:

Bring me a new bowl and put salt in it.

Upon receiving the bowl and the salt, he proceeded to the source of the stream, cast the salt into it and proclaimed the water healed. From that day the river ceased to carry death and barrenness into the city. Again, while our cities might appear 'pleasant', this little story from 2 Kings 2:19-21 portrays both the condition of many of our present day cities and the solution to the desperate need of those cities.

The leaders of that day are like leaders of our day who are seeking God's wisdom regarding their cities.

The prophet's new bowl can typify the one church of the city that has dealt with its divisions and disharmony.

The salt that the prophet placed within the bowl can speak of truth and covenantal integrity, out of which the body of Christ, the one church, ministers life and health to the city.

The local church defined

A number of years ago I came across this definition for a local church that I have referred to often.

*A local church is **the sum of believers in a given area** - one body of people irrevocably joined together for one another, without barriers of age, race or background, together expressing the life of Christ to the community around them. This does not preclude variety within and among local expressions of church, but these expressions will be facets of our local entity. **This is the local church that the Spirit is working to restore at this very moment of history.** The challenge today is that each local congregation must ask itself a fundamental question about how it views its life and ministry. Does it operate out of an independent mindset, expressing a unilateral mindset with only a secondary or optional regard for what else is going on locally? Congregational leadership must recognise that its own destiny and success is irrevocably tied with all other groups in that area, and the whole church world-wide. (Emphases mine)¹⁵*

Already one

The church of the city is the body of Christ in that locality. Being in Christ we are already one. Therefore when Paul wrote to the church in the city of Ephesus, he exhorted them to:

... keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

¹⁵ Phil and Lynne Townend The Bridge phil@thebridge.force9.co.uk

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling...*¹⁶

We are Christ's body **now**.

Romans 12:5 tells us:

... we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Of this already established oneness Dr Paul Brand writes:

Whether we accept the fact and act in a manner in keeping with the new identity is left up to us.

Drawing a comparison between our physical body and the body of Christ, Brand continues:

At its most basic level, the image of the body of Christ expresses this shared sense of belonging. We members take on His name and identity, and He asks of us the same kind of loyalty and unity that my own body's cells give to me. In Christ's body, the Spirit establishes a connection not only between each cell and the Head but also among all the cells of His body. The Spirit does not approach me in the solitude of my own soul, for that would leave me alone and unreconciled to my neighbour. Rather, He calls me to join a body that binds me in love with a community of diverse cells. Each individual cell awakens to the conscious reality of the larger whole.

Just as our physical bodies are made up of diverse cells in harmony, so Jesus prayed for an even richer experience of unity in His body. He prayed:

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:3,4

that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me... (John 17:22-23)

Brand and Yancey ask:

Do we catch a glimmer of the wonder of that unity in the church, a unity based not on social class or interest group or kinship or race, but on common belonging in Jesus Christ?"¹⁷

Could there be a greater need in the church of the city than that of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

The fullness of Christ in a city

The church can only bring life and health to a city when it has dealt with its disharmony and divisions. Only the whole church of a city can truly represent the fullness of Christ in a city.

Brian Medway, chairman of Crosslink Australia, is very direct when he writes:

We need to ask ourselves, are we representing the fullness of Christ? Where in the New Testament do you see the idea that there should be independently configured groups of Christian people not cooperating together but representing some particular aspect of the Gospel? Where in the New Testament does that ever have some kind of justification? There just isn't one. Why is blatant wall-building one of the strongest things we find in every town, in

¹⁷ Paul Brand and Philip Yancey "In His Image" Zondervan 1984.

*every city and in every part of the western world?
Where does this get power?*

One source of this power is that a movement or denomination may have begun with some prophetic significance. Back in the 17th century when the Anabaptists were emerging, there was a need that was witnessed to. People were jailed, killed and run out of town just for having Bible study in their home. I am grateful for people who made a stand. For example, a Baptist or Pentecostal would have lots of reasons why you should accept the teaching of their particular church because they represent a move of God at some time in history. But you see, that move of God was a prophetic move, it was a restoration move that was meant to restore something to the church as a whole.¹⁸

The church and the gates of hell

One way or another, a reconciled church will yet be an effective light to cities and nations. This has been the view of orthodox theologians through the centuries up to the middle of the 19th century. According to I. Murray, in his book “The Puritan Hope”,¹⁹ most church leaders and theologians, (such as Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon) saw only the emergence of a strong and overcoming church. The tares of unbelief sown into the modern day church have robbed it of its strength and vitality.

¹⁸ “Why Sectarianism Must End”. For this short study office@tcchurch.com.au

¹⁹ I. Murray “The Puritan Hope” Banner of Truth 1971

Jesus said He would build a church that would be greater than the forces of darkness. He said:

*I will build My church and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.*²⁰

The English word used for ‘church’ was the Greek word, ‘*ekklesia*’, meaning called-out ones. We are not called out to be isolated from one another. As someone has said, isolation leads to desolation. Instead we are called out to be fused into His overcoming church. *Ekklesia* also means ‘meeting’ or ‘assembly’. Its commonest use was for the public assembly of citizens. In its original usage, however, this word described the council of elders who determined what was right or wrong for their city. They gathered at the gates of their city in order to make right judgments, to keep their city from evil and ensure God’s peace and blessing remained.²¹

A place to be guarded

‘Gates’ in Scripture refer to places of authority and influence. In linking the church with the gates of hell it would seem clear that Jesus intended for His church to be *united and active* in winning our cities. This is attainable only when the church of a city is in harmony and of one accord.

²⁰ Matthew 16:18

²¹ While it is true that Lot sat in the gate of his city (Genesis 19:1), this was without effect. In contrast, it is of note that Mordecai served God powerfully in the gate of his city, to the saving of the Jewish people, even though originally he had no official capacity (Esther 2).

One word used in the Old Testament for ‘city’, which adds weight to this thought of winning our cities is the use of the Hebrew word ‘*Iyr*’.²² It means ‘a place to be guarded’.

The foundations of many of our cities are in the process of being eroded by secular, humanistic agendas. These agendas are being driven by the principalities and powers referred to by Paul in Ephesians 6:12. Let us remember that the book of Ephesians was written primarily to the church in a city, not to an individual.

The wrestle is

against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places -

and it must first be seen in a city context, not just restricted to the individual level, although it certainly has that application as well.

Concerning this wrestling, Jack Hayford, pastor and author, wrote the following:

*Something is happening among God's people
In these cities of ours
It's happening right now
Two kingdoms are wrestling for the city's soul
It isn't too late to win
If we will rise up early
Our cities deserve a tomorrow
Unable to possess their tomorrows on their own
All children of Joshua arise!*²³

²² See Strong's Concordance

²³ Source unknown

3

THE CHURCH – GOD’S DWELLING PLACE

A house for God

Before focusing on the practical aspects of being the church of the city, let us concentrate on a predominant theme in both Old and New Testaments. One of the over-riding thoughts communicated throughout Scripture is God’s love for His people and His desire to dwell amongst us - not just to dwell, but to be enthroned in our midst.

When John saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, he heard a loud voice saying:

*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.*²⁴

We ought not to think that our days on earth are to be spent wistfully waiting for something better on the other side. Just as Jesus, according to John 1:14,

became flesh and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us,

so the Lord desires to powerfully ‘tabernacle’ amongst us now.

With this in mind, we see that a major theme throughout the entire Bible is that of the temple. As we scan the Bible we find that so much of Scripture is given to instructions concerning the temple. If we were to remove all the Scriptures relating to the temple we would have a much smaller Bible. In the New Testament, God’s people are clearly described as the temple of God, both individually and corporately. Together, they are God’s dwelling place, a house for God on earth.

²⁴ Revelation 21:3

The house of the Lord in the New Testament

Paul writes to the Corinthian church:

You [the whole church in Corinth] are the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16 Amplified Version)

What comes to mind when we think of a temple? No doubt different images come to mind depending on pictures we have seen or cultures we have experienced. When we think of the temple in Scripture most of us are quite happy to think about the temple or tabernacle as a place of worship, and ourselves individually as the temples of God. (1 Corinthians 6:19) But certain epistles point to the fact that we together, many congregations, comprise a temple in our city. Paul clearly saw the Ephesian and Corinthian churches as being a temple in each of those places.

Paul said to the church of Ephesus that they were being built together to be a temple for God or, according to Ephesians 2:22,

a habitation of God in the Spirit.

The house of the Lord in the Old Testament

When Paul spoke of the temple, the Jews of Paul’s day would have reflected on the Jewish temple. The Scriptures have much to say about this Jewish temple. To get a clearer understanding of the temple and its importance regarding God’s plan for us, we need to go back to Genesis 1 and 2. G.K. Beale points out that several Jewish and other writers understood the

Garden of Eden to foreshadow the tabernacle of Moses and Solomon's temple.²⁵ These sanctuaries contained much imagery that reflected Eden and the garden within it. Jewish writings actually refer to Eden and its garden as a temple (the Hebrew for 'garden' is 'a covered, hidden place of rest'). From the garden flowed a river which parted four ways to water the earth. As Adam obeyed God and tended the garden he was to

*be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.*²⁶

In other words, from the garden, God's blessing and glory were to cover the earth. The garden or temple was a picture of God's ultimate intention for the earth.

A house filled with His glory

When Adam and Eve fell, they failed to extend the boundaries of God's Edenic temple. Despite their disobedience and subsequent removal from the garden, God's plan was unchanged. As God had previously met and communed with Adam in the garden, now He would meet with His people by way of a tabernacle or temple. The Lord spoke:

there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat (Exodus 25:22)

²⁵ G.K.Beale "The Temple and the Church's Mission - A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God" Inter Varsity Press 2004

²⁶ Genesis 1:28

The temple, or house of God, was to be the place where His glory would dwell. According to Beale, Jewish writings indicate that the Hebrews clearly understood that the temple was to be a microcosm of the earth - in fact the cosmos - filled with God’s glory. As His people remained united and faithful, they would be a holy nation reflecting God and His glory to the nations of the earth.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:5,6b)

Disobedience resulted in the forfeiture of this mandate.

The house of the Lord today

From Adam until now, the Lord has sought to dwell intimately amongst His people, His church, the people of Zion.²⁷

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation: this is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.²⁸

The main point here is that just as the Lord sought a dwelling place in the Zion of old, part of the city of Jerusalem, so He seeks to dwell with us in our cities.

²⁷ Hebrews 12:22

²⁸ Psalm 132: 13-16

As we allow Him to draw us together and be His house, we provide a place for Him to be enthroned, exalted and glorified. The church thus becomes a greater source of blessing to the city as it receives and ministers those things promised in Psalm 132.

According to Numbers 14:21, God's intention remains unchanged:

but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD -

and echoed in Habakkuk 2:14:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The temple now?

To quote afresh 1 Corinthians 3:16, (Amplified Version):

Do you not understand that you [the whole church at Corinth] are God's temple (His sanctuary) and that God's Spirit has His permanent dwelling in you [to be at home in you, collectively as a church and also individually]?

Instead of 'the whole church in Corinth', why not say 'the whole church in my city?' We, God's people in a city, in one geographical location, together comprise God's temple in that region. Again, to quote 1 Peter 2:5 we,

... as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house (temple) ...

In the New Testament we do not find reference to more than one church in any given city. In other words, the city defines the church. We are one church, one temple in a given locality. Paul saw the church in Ephesus rising,

to become a holy temple in the Lord ... a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22 NIV)

My view is that for many of us, our understanding of ‘local church’ has stood in the way of God’s plan and purpose. It is necessary that we have healthy, growing congregations, but it is equally necessary that we see these congregations together being the one church of our locality.

Important implications

Our being a temple of God in a city has important implications. It necessitates a willingness to be built together, a commitment to holiness and a readiness to sacrifice. For Israel, nearly every revival necessitated a cleansing and restoration of the house of God. Both the house and the priesthood were to be sanctified. Only when God’s stipulated requirements for the temple, the priesthood and the sacrifices were fully attended to, did God honour the house with His manifest presence.

Obedience, clean hearts and right relationships are important to the building up of a spiritual house. From these comes God-honouring worship. This in turn establishes a holy habitation for God - not just a habitation, but a place where He can be enthroned as

King. The temple is the rightful residence of the King of kings. His intention is to find a dwelling place as Lord and King in His house or temple, so filling His house with His glory and bringing healing to our cities. Again, this is not to communicate a false expectation of widespread triumphal victory over evil. There will be a continued contention for our cities and nations. Scripture would indicate the battle will become more intense as ‘that day’²⁹ approaches. Nevertheless, Haggai pronounced the promise that God would

*‘shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the LORD of hosts.*³⁰

God waits

As of old, so today, God waits to take His rightful place in our midst. As He desired to write His name, THE LORD IS THERE (YHWH Shammah),³¹ over Jerusalem, so He desires to write His name over your city and mine. Formerly the house prepared for God in the city was built with lifeless stones. Today, we, the living stones, are

being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,

²⁹ 2 Thessalonians 2:3

³⁰ Haggai 2:7-9

³¹ Ezekiel 48:35

*to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*³²

The temple, the house of God, has taken, and always will take, a central place in the plan of God. God waits for us to capture a passion for His house in our locality. Our unity, the coming together of God’s people, the embracing of His call to be His living, corporate temple, is an essential, non-negotiable step on the path towards God’s manifest glory filling our cities. In Old Testament times one’s passion for God was reflected in one’s passion for the house of God. We need the same zeal today. Our common mission and passion must be to see God’s house built in our locality.

Paul wrote confidently to the Christians in Ephesus concerning the house in their city. “The Message” puts it this way:

*We see it taking shape day after day - a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.*³³

God waits, our city waits, the nations wait, for the church to be built together as a dwelling place for God.

³² 1 Peter 2:5

³³ Ephesians 2:21,22 “The Message”

PART B

**CITY-REACHING
PRINCIPLES**

**GOD HAS A PLAN TO
REACH YOUR CITY**



4

A CITY ASSIGNMENT

Commitment

Having a heart to steadfastly love and seek God for the welfare of our city is a prerequisite to effectively reaching it. David had an obvious commitment to see the Ark and the manifest presence of God brought into Jerusalem.³⁴ A similar commitment is required if we are to see heaven invade our cities. Dark strongholds that have been allowed to develop over

³⁴ Psalm 132

generations will not be dismantled overnight.³⁵ As we commit to love and believe God for our city, we receive greater spiritual understanding of the real issues. Also, we are entrusted with a greater degree of spiritual authority. Bob Beckett in his book “Commitment to Conquer”³⁶ tells how he received greater understanding and revelation concerning his city, Hemet, California, after he sealed his commitment by purchasing a grave plot - an act that signified a life commitment to his city.

As we seek God for His mind and the Holy Spirit’s enabling, our motivation must be one of love and compassion for our city. Of recent years there has been a noticeable focusing toward cities and nations. This God-given burden and compassion for cities is evident in many places. Whether it be through recently written songs, books or conference speakers, we are being encouraged to pray and believe for our cities and nations, that God will indeed bring a new tomorrow to them. Coming in contact with church leaders from different parts of the world, I have sensed a real joining of hearts and minds as we share a common burden for our cities. Could it be that we are hearing the Spirit’s trumpet sound? Could it be that

³⁵ Cities are watched over by principalities and powers which affect the culture and spirit of the city. Spirits do not wander in desert places. They have to have some vehicle of expression, for instance, through a body or through spheres like education and the media. Paul O’Sullivan unpublished seminar 1992

³⁶ Bob Beckett “Commitment to Conquer” Baker Book House Company 1997

there is arising today, a generation that will believe and commit to reaching their cities? Is there something akin to the nation of Israel gathering on the plains of Moab in readiness to cross Jordan and possess their allotted inheritance?

Assigned spheres

Once commitment and a heart to love and seek God for our cities are evident, God assigns land, territory and spheres of influence that are to be possessed. Paul wrote to the Corinthians with this understanding. He clearly understood that he had been assigned a territory or sphere of influence.

We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us – a sphere which especially includes you.

(2 Corinthians.10:13)

The NIV Bible puts it this way:

We ... will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you.

This knowledge that we are in a sphere assigned to us by God brings with it fresh confidence and boldness – a boldness to be like those who were encouraged to bring good news, to proclaim peace and salvation to their cities.³⁷

³⁷ Isaiah 52:7

An assignment in Babylon

God desires His peace and blessing for every city. The Israelites as captives in Babylon were told to seek God for the peace (shalom) of the city they were in.

And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.
(Jeremiah 29:7)

As the Jews in Babylon were obedient and sought the peace of the city – they would first ‘increase and not diminish’. Secondly they would experience peace, ‘shalom’. This Hebrew word ‘shalom’ is a wonderful word. Its meaning is as follows:

*well-being, prosperity, completeness, state of wholeness, unity and restored relationships, absence of strife, harmony, fulfilment of productivity*³⁸

During His last days on earth, Jesus grieved and wept for the people of Jerusalem because the knowledge of this peace was to be kept from them. (Luke 19:42) In terms of this study, the richness of the Hebrew definition of ‘peace’ brings greater understanding to the concept of transformation and the term ‘transformed cities’.

³⁸ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Moody Bible Institute 1980

Transformation

Today the word 'transformation' is often used in many spheres to describe positive change. What do we mean by the expression 'transformed cities'? Generally the term connotes impact on the wider community that is both positive and measurable. It indicates that the church is becoming more relevant to society. It also indicates a greater God-awareness in the broader community and that reconciliation is occurring in and outside the church. It indicates that people are being won to Christ, criminal activity is decreasing and righteousness is increasing. In fact, the character of God in His people is being lived out in their lives and relationships so that all areas of life in the city are impacted.

Tom White, author, teacher and director of Frontline Ministries says:

Community transformation is the measurable, supernatural impact of the presence and power of God on human society, sacred and secular. In the church, this is characterised by increased holiness of life, accelerated conversion growth, reconciliation in relationships, mobilisation of gifts and callings, and an increased relevance to and participation in greater society. To this end, a catalytic core of saints typically embrace a lifestyle of persistent repentance, humility, prayer and sacrificial servanthood that attracts the favour and presence of God and

*breaks the predominating influences of the ruling power of structures of human flesh and the devil.*³⁹

(For further understanding of a transformed community, please see Appendix 2.)

A true measure

Like many others, I am convinced that it is time to re-evaluate our effectiveness. We cannot measure it by the number of people in our churches on a Sunday morning. Jack Dennison, of CitiReach International, maintains:

*We measure the effectiveness of the church not by the number of its adherents but by the impact its members are having on society.*⁴⁰

God cares for every individual in, and every sphere of, our societies. Therefore, transformation begins when we align ourselves with God's desire to minister to the needs and the needy of our cities. These include the broken, the marginalized, the lonely and the lost.

³⁹ Tom White "City-Wide Prayer Movements" Servant Publications 2001 tomwhite07@earthlink.net

⁴⁰ Jack Dennison "City Reaching: On The Road To Community Transformation" William Carey Library 1999 www.citireach.org

5

WORSHIP, HOLINESS AND PRAYER

Our central focus is not unity or even the transformation of our city. The chief reason for establishing the house of the Lord, or the one multi-faceted church in our city, is that God will be truly worshipped and more fully glorified. The bottom line is that God is to be glorified in our cities.

Worship is the central issue

When the gospel of the kingdom began to make inroads into the Ephesian community, there was

*a great commotion about The Way... and the whole city was filled with confusion.*⁴¹

The livelihood of local craftsmen was being threatened as people stopped buying silver shrines for the goddess Diana. They cried out:

*"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"*⁴²

Today idols made of wood or precious stones do not capture the corporate heart of our western cities but other things do. Joshua told Israel to

*...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve (worship).*⁴³

The people responded:

*"Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;"*⁴⁴

Sadly, before long, they had given their allegiance to the gods of other nations.

Worship, waiting and working

In one sense, every facet of life, individual and corporate, is to be an expression of worship. All that

⁴¹ Acts 19: 23, 29

⁴² Acts 19: 28b

⁴³ Joshua 24:15

⁴⁴ Joshua 24:16

we do when it is done as unto the Lord becomes an act of worship.

It has been said that worship, waiting and working are not things we do at different times. In other words, our life in Christ is not to be compartmentalised. These three things are to be integrated into our daily living. Nevertheless there are seasons when emphasis will be given to one or other of them. The people of Haggai's day were told:

Work; for I am with you. (Haggai 2:4)

The temple needed to be rebuilt. The emphasis was on work. But then, in Psalm 62:5 we find David determined to wait expectantly upon the Lord:

My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.

Moses waited for God on Mt. Sinai for forty days! Waiting and worshipping are closely linked but there will be times, or seasons, when the emphasis is on worship. Acts 24:11b tells of Paul going up to Jerusalem specifically to worship:

...it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

At other times Paul joined other leaders to worship or minister to the Lord.

As they ministered to the LORD and fasted, the Holy Spirit said ...(Acts 13:2)

Three times a year Israel went up to Jerusalem to appear before God and worship Him. (Exodus 34:23) The Psalms of Ascent 120-134 capture the corporate spirit and heart of the tribes of Israel as they gathered

every few months to worship their God. As they gathered together and worshipped as one, they were reaffirming God as King. Deuteronomy 33:5 tells us:

He was King in Jeshurun, when the leaders of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together.

Every time Israel gathered together to worship, the Lord was freshly enthroned in their midst. When one or more tribes were missing from any of Israel's three annual feasts, Israel's worship was found wanting. Our corporate worship needs to be seen in the same light; it is to be a reflection of the worship that takes place in heaven. The redeemed of heaven, from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, gather worshipping around the throne and the Lamb. How much emphasis will be given to worship in our cities?

John Piper says,

*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*⁴⁵

City-wide worship

Combined city-wide worship gatherings are important and powerful. Evenings or even whole nights given to worship can be powerful also. Our Sunday morning worship services need to be seen as part of a united, one heart, one accord, 'exalt the Lord', worship service that regularly enthrones the Lord in our city. We, in most of the Western world, are privileged to

⁴⁵ John Piper "The Pleasures of God" Multnomah 1992

live in nations where we can worship freely, without fear of intimidation or harassment. May we treasure our freedom and offer acceptable, fervent worship in the house of the Lord.

May we be God-centred, not program, work or activity centred as seems to have been the case in the church in Ephesus.⁴⁶ On the surface, this city-wide church appeared to be a model church. In fact the Christians there were commended for their hard work, their perseverance and their diligence in removing imposters. Nevertheless something was missing. Their initial, fervent love for the Lord had waned.

It is very easy to become preoccupied with the task the Lord has given us rather than the Lord Himself. The task itself becomes our master and object of worship. As mentioned, three times a year the Israelites were required to down tools and go up to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem to worship. In this way the corporate heart of Israel was freshly stirred toward their Lord. The busyness and pressures of modern day life can easily crowd out intimacy with the Lord that produces kingdom fruitfulness. Our hearts are easily enticed. We too need to down tools and allow the Holy Spirit and the Word to rekindle our first love. James 4:5b says:

“The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.”

The Message puts it this way:

He’s a fiercely jealous Lover.

⁴⁶ Revelation 2:1-7

Pastors Prayer Summits

Going away for three or four days just to worship the Lord and be in His presence together is the primary purpose of a pastors prayer summit.⁴⁷ Pastors from a variety of churches and denominations, in one city, go out of town to draw near to God, to present their hearts to Him together and to recapture intimacy and fresh vision for His work, as was the case for Isaiah when he encountered the Lord.⁴⁸

Many hundreds of these prayer summits have been held in nations around the world. They have been used of God to bring healing and refreshing as they lay a foundation for deeper city unity.⁴⁹ After a summit for pastors in one New Zealand town, one participant wrote that “the prayer summit was a great time to ascend the Lord’s mountain as hearts softened in His presence. Holy fire fell on us as we allowed God’s agenda to prevail. People were transparent and honest before God and each other as we worshipped and cried out to Him”. Recalling what the early church might have been like, this pastor got a clearer picture of God’s purposes in His kingdom. Over the four days, it seemed to him, “all present were getting a glimpse of one church, one purpose, one Spirit.

⁴⁷ For more information on pastors prayer summits contact the author colin.shaw@tcchurch.com.au or see the International Renewal Ministries website, www.prayersummits.net

⁴⁸ Isaiah 6

⁴⁹ Prayer summits have been used of God to build unity in many cities and nations such as, U.S.A., Canada, Philippines, Japan, India, Israel, Sri Lanka, Macedonia, New Zealand and Australia.

Independent structural thinking was beginning to melt away as we discovered a unity based on relationship and friendship. God has begun a new thing and I am hungry for more”.

According to the Pastors Prayer Summit founder Dr Joe Aldrich, a summit can be defined succinctly as “a prolonged, four-day, life-changing worship experience attended by a diversity of Christian leaders from specific communities whose singular purpose is to seek God, His kingdom and His righteousness with the expectation that He will create and guide them through a humbling, healing, uniting process which will lead them to a unity of heart, mind and mission, and will qualify them for the blessing of God.”⁵⁰

To worship means to set our hearts to seek God. God still looks for those who will seek Him. Psalm 53:2 says:

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

We are commanded to seek the Lord:

Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD! Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore! (1 Chronicles 16:10-11)

Could it be that as leaders come to a greater understanding of, and commitment to the church of the city, they will sense a fresh need to be in God’s presence

⁵⁰ Joe Aldrich “Reunitas” Multnomah 1994

together? Could it be that they take extended time out to worship and seek God together for His word and the way forward for the church of the city in a prayer summit type gathering?

The call to seek God

Paul told the Corinthian Christians that they were first called into an intimate relationship with Jesus. (1 Corinthians 1:9) Jesus' call to us today is no different. It is His primary call to us. We are to seek Him, both individually and corporately. It is essential that we hear and respond to this call to be intimately acquainted with Him.

Responding to this call will mean that we go ever deeper into things concerning Himself and closer to His heart. It will mean that we draw near to God in such a way that we hear His voice and are changed by His glory. Lasting fruitfulness comes out of true worship and the reality of His presence. Only from being in His presence will we receive what is needed to bring hope and blessing to our cities.

Holiness

A guiding maxim for prayer summits since their inception has been:

Worship leads to holiness, holiness leads to humility

*(or brokenness), humility leads to unity, unity leads to true community.*⁵¹

*Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.*⁵²

God is first holy. He will not dwell in defiled vessels. Whether it be ourselves as individual temples or His corporate people in a city, the house must be sanctified, set apart for Him. What remains in the house that is cause for offence? Just as Hezekiah diligently removed all the garbage from the temple, so we must do the same. Psalm 24 instructs us:

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His Holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, sitting on a throne. He heard the seraphim crying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!”

Then Isaiah cried out:

‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts’. (Isaiah 6:1-6)

This awesome encounter with the Lord in His temple must have been a major turning point for Isaiah. In the presence of a holy God he saw the true state of his own heart. Deeply convicted of both his and his

⁵¹ Dr. Joe Aldrich, Founder of the Prayer Summit movement and former president of Multnomah Bible College

⁵² Psalm 93:5

nation's depravity, he experienced the Lord's cleansing and forgiveness. Now he was ready to be commissioned, prepared by God to speak to a nation. How can we expect to minister effectively into our cities without a fresh encounter with God and His holiness? Very simply, we cannot. There can be no other way. We need to draw near to God. The promise is that as we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us.⁵³

In God's presence Isaiah found himself vulnerable and undone. The earthen vessel was broken. Dr. Larry Crabb in his book "The Safest Place on Earth" writes:

*Only when the perfume jar is broken in the presence of accepting community is the fragrance released. Everything in spiritual community is reversed from the world's order. It is our weakness, not our competence, that moves others; our sorrows, not our blessings, that break down the barriers of fear and shame that keep us apart; our admitted failures, not our paraded successes, that bind us together in hope.*⁵⁴

Tom White writes:

We can form all the leadership teams we like, set lofty goals, produce inspired outlines, hold meetings and host reputable leaders – we cannot produce transformation. We must therefore, faithfully do those things that attract the presence and favour of the Almighty, and go on praying and obeying. The hand of God must do the imprinting and impacting,

⁵³ James 4:8

⁵⁴ Dr Larry Crabb "The Safest Place on Earth" Nashville Word 1999

*not our human fingerprints. We must engage ourselves in living in humility and authenticity, planning well, casting vision, setting noble goals, and then asking and believing God himself to breathe on our brokenness.*⁵⁵

Preparing the way

Worship, holiness and prayer are the preparatory work for building the house of the Lord. King David gave his all in preparing for the house of the Lord to be built:

Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might (1 Chronicles 29:2a)

David gave gold, silver, bronze, wood and all kinds of precious stones towards this temple. He also established a priesthood that gave themselves to a new order of worship. He placed the Ark of the Covenant in a tent on Mt. Zion and the priests offered up spiritual sacrifices of praise, joy and thanksgiving.⁵⁶ This worship continued for close to forty years, preparing the way for the building of Solomon's temple. David's enemies were subdued and Solomon entered into a time of peace and prosperity that facilitated the building of the temple that God chose to be His dwelling place. A house for God was built. God was truly enthroned in Israel.

⁵⁵ Tom White "City-wide Prayer Movements" Servant Publications 2001
tomwhite07@earthlink.net

⁵⁶ 1 Chronicles 16:1-6

Heaven is waiting to be invited

We have been taught by Jesus to pray:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

What better place to pray this prayer than over our cities? Heaven is waiting to be invited into our cities!

Flying out of a certain city one bleak wintry day, we went up through dark ominous clouds and suddenly broke through them into bright sunlight and a clear sky. The clouds were spread out below like huge waves of bright, fluffy cotton wool. Seeing this breathtakingly beautiful sight, I was reminded again that just as the sun is always shining over our cities so God's heart and unchanging love are ever reaching out toward each of our cities and all individuals within them. Just as dark clouds prevented the sunlight from breaking through, so darkness in the form of principalities and powers prevents the light of the true knowledge of God from shining into the hearts of unbelievers. One of the main questions we need to be asking is: "What can we do to see the clouds of darkness dispelled, so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ may shine forth unhindered toward those that are blinded?"

Effective prayer

Following the example of the early church, one of the most effective things we can do is pray earnestly in one accord. God promised Solomon that the heavens

would respond when His people who were called by His name would humble themselves, and pray and seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways. Then He would hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14 is one of the most quoted Bible verses in relation to prayer.

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

This verse does, however, need to be quoted in context with the surrounding verses. The overall theme of this passage is the house of God, or temple that Solomon was dedicating to the Lord. Earlier, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 6:19, Solomon prayed:

*Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant is praying before You: that Your eyes may be open toward **this temple** day and night, toward the place where You said You would put your name, that You may hear the prayer which Your servant prays toward this place. (emphasis mine)*

In 2 Chronicles 7:15-16 God promises Solomon:

*Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in **this place**. For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. (emphasis mine)*

The lesson seems clear. As the house of the Lord is established in our cities, the potential for increasingly effective, prevailing prayer is great. When Christians in

one locality live holy lives, walk humbly before God, worship and pray as one people, then God promises to hear their corporate cry.

United, focused, fervent prayer

A simple but profound truth is that God has **greater access** to a city when two or more people commit to regular, fervent worship and prayer for their city. For leaders who have a common commitment to reaching their city, there can be no greater priority than regular, steadfast worship and prayer. Steadfast, believing prayer is nearly always evident wherever there is forward momentum in a city or town and souls are continually being saved.

(For some of the benefits of a prayed-for city, see Appendix 3.)

We must first **believe** that our city can change and that God can and will respond as we pray and obey.

We must be **united**: The phrase ‘of one accord’ is mentioned nine times in the book of Acts. This phrase comes from the Greek word ‘homothumadon’ (‘homo’ meaning ‘at the same place or time together’ and ‘thumos’ meaning ‘passion, fierceness, indignation, wrath’). When the church was bound together in one accord their praying led to powerful results.

We must be **focused, specific and steadfast** in our praying. A good illustration of this is found in Joshua 8:18. As Joshua steadfastly pointed his spear toward Ai the armies of Israel were able to possess the city.

Similarly our prayers are to be steadfast and focused, energised and directed by the Holy Spirit.

We must be **fervent in prayer**. This sort of prayer is more and more being recognised as an essential prerequisite to the transformation of our land. This is a pattern deeply established in both Scripture and in the history of all major spiritual awakenings. Jesus Himself

...offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.⁵⁷

Prayer in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

Toowoomba is indebted to those who have prayed steadfastly and fervently over the years. Many have prayed individually and in groups. The Salvation Army congregation has hosted a week of '24/7' prayer for several years. Combined youth groups of the city have facilitated two '24/3' prayer initiatives, after both of which there were major drug busts in the city.

Another initiative that has been functioning for over ten years is called 'round-the-clock' prayer. People have signed up to pray at certain hours of the day or night. Not that all hours are covered. At one time there were about 140 hours of each week when one or more people were praying. At the time of writing,

⁵⁷ Hebrews 5:7

there would about 100 hours when one or more people would be praying.

On some occasions prayer meetings or days of prayer have been held with a special focus, such as drought relief. Also, at the time of writing, a prayer strategy is underway that entails one congregation engaging in special prayer for the city each week. A congregation, upon completing a week of prayer for the city, is passing a prayer baton to another congregation. Not only is this bringing an increase of prayer in the city but it is enabling each congregation to identify more fully with the needs of the city.

Committed pray-ers

One prayer group that deserves special note in Toowoomba is made up of people from several congregations. This group has met faithfully every week for about twelve years. They have met specifically to pray for the city and to undergird the city-wide church and its leaders. Only eternity will reveal the true impact of their prayers. They have been led to pray in different ways and in different places. On one occasion they invited many other Christians in Toowoomba to join with them to drive iron stakes with Scriptures written on them beneath the ground at key locations across the city. This was coordinated through the local Christian radio station and accompanied by much prayer. On other occasions they have been to city entry points and prayed fervently for evil to be kept out and virtue to

enter. Places of influence such as the city council, the media and places of learning continue to be prayed for.

History researched

At one point, Toowoomba's early history was researched. Some of the city's major streets were named in connection with an assassination attempt on King James of Scotland. Certain streets in Toowoomba bear the names of both those who participated in this attempt and those who came to the rescue of King James. Knowing that many or most of Australia's early surveyors were Freemasons, and with some knowledge of their hidden agendas, people prayed for some time regarding the naming of our streets.⁵⁸

Following this prayer focus towards certain streets, the prayer group became concerned over another issue - the prolific trafficking of illicit drugs in the city and the harm this was causing. Providentially, the group became aware of the fact that over one hundred years previously, opium was grown in large quantities, picked by children and used as a form of barter. At that time, over a ten year period, about one thousand

⁵⁸ Freemasons were responsible for laying out many of the great cities of Europe and the Americas often in the form of Masonic Symbols such as the square or compass. They have followed ancient Babylonian and Egyptian beliefs that cities and sacred sites should be properly aligned with the sun's rising in the east. G.Otis Jr. "Informed Intercession Spiritual Mapping and Strategic Prayer"
www.sentinelgroup.org

Aboriginal people had died through opium abuse. With the realisation that a ‘door’ had been opened to drugs many years before, the group asked forgiveness for the sins committed on the land and prayed earnestly for God’s intervention. There is no doubt that these two issues will require further prayer but the group felt confirmed in their prayer focus when the local newspaper, unaware of what had been happening, ran articles immediately following these prayer initiatives, first on the naming of Toowoomba’s streets, then on the prolific use of opium in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

A prayer culture for each city

There are many inspiring accounts of praying communities and answered prayer.⁵⁹ There are many books and seminars on prayer. However it is important that we first determine prayerfully what prayer initiatives are right for our city and how they are to be undertaken. There is in fact a unique prayer culture to be developed in every place. This prayer culture can be determined by church leaders and other mature Christians who have a zeal for prayer in their city. Someone has said that people who change the course of history are not presidents, kings or queens, but zealous men and women who mobilise the church to pray.

(Appendix 4 shows how different approaches can be made to facilitate effective prayer in each city.)

⁵⁹ e.g. Greig and Roberts “Red Moon Rising” Kingsway 2004

6

REPENTANCE

Facing reality

In our cities questions must be asked. What positive changes have been brought about by the church? What difference has the life and witness of the church made up until now? In many places we have to acknowledge that the church has had little impact. Generally speaking, there is more social breakdown, more distress in homes, less awareness of God, more domestic violence and more promiscuity. Some would say, “What can we do? This is the way of society everywhere!” The truth is that Christ through His

people can change the moral and spiritual environment of our cities.

Author and speaker Francis Frangipane says:

The redemptive power of the Lord is released when people forgive each other. Individuals, families, churches and even the atmosphere of a city can change when pardon is released...principalities and powers are neutralised... The power released in forgiveness is actually a mighty weapon in the war to save our cities.⁶⁰

A call to repentance

“Where do you come from?” asked a visiting speaker of the person seated in the back row at a meeting in another city. “Toowoomba.” was the reply. “God wants you to know that your city will not respond to Him until the people there walk through issues that need repentance.”

This prophetic word to Pastor Ian Shelton, leader of Toowoomba Christian Leaders Network, was shared with other leaders in Toowoomba who, in turn, began to share this message on repentance and forgiveness with their congregations. Reconciliation began to take place in different spheres, within marriages, families, churches and between churches. On one particular Sunday night halfway through the year, pastors agreed to stand humbly before a good cross-section of the church of the city and ask forgiveness for a range of

⁶⁰ Francis Frangipane “House of the Lord” Charisma House 1991

issues that needed to be put right. That night, about 1400 people heard pastors, one after the other, acknowledge and ask forgiveness for things such as independence, arrogance, pride, critical attitudes and self exaltation. It was one of those powerful, milestone events in the life of a church in a city. In the next few days reports were heard of other steps taken involving repentance and reconciliation. There was a sense that unseen clouds had parted. Some of the darkness over our city had been driven back.⁶¹

Learning from our neighbours

We can learn much about repentance and reconciliation from what has been taking place over the last few years in Fiji and other Melanesian countries. Leaders in these island nations have come to rediscover important keys related to the wellbeing of their villages and towns that could be applied to our cities. These keys have to do with the three-way connection between God, land and people.⁶² Leaders have sought answers to increasing poverty, sickness and the breakdown of community life. They have come to the realisation that land is defiled over a period of time, when the people of the land sin and turn their back on God. Sin, in the form of broken

⁶¹ A DVD covering portions of this combined church gathering can be obtained by contacting office@tcchurch.com.au

⁶² The people of these places understand the strong connection between the land and the people. In fact Fijians have but one word for land and people, 'vanua'.

covenants, immorality, injustice, murder, idolatry and so on, brings the land into bondage. Crops often fail, fishing grounds are depleted of fish, fresh water can become bitter. Community life thus fragments and the village suffers. This is all in line with Scripture. Hosea 4:2 tells us that:

By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.

The good news rediscovered by leaders in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and other places is that when whole communities repent and are restored to God, the land of that locality becomes miraculously liberated from sin-induced curses. Accompanied by a tangible sense of God's presence, crops begin to flourish, fish are caught in abundance, brackish water becomes fresh, individuals find Christ, broken relationships including marriages are restored and wayward children return to their families.

The lights went on!

Pastor Vuniani Nakauyaca of Fiji had been on a journey for many years seeking transformation for his nation. He gained a deeper understanding of how land is polluted by sin when he attended a Transformation conference in Toowoomba. Alistair Petrie, one of the speakers, gave several messages that focused on healing sin-polluted land. While many of us from

Australia and other developed countries listened and acknowledged with our minds the truth of what was being shared, for Pastor Vuniani it was different. For him the 'lights went on' and he knew instinctively that he had a significant key for the wellbeing of his people. Subsequently he returned to Fiji and put into practice the transformation principles of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The healing process first took place in 2003 in Nuku, the village in which Vuniani had been raised. The water of the stream that flowed through the village was polluted and the water and banks were filled with slime. This pollution had begun forty-two years previously when Vuniani and other children saw the water suddenly change colour whilst swimming. Fish and grass on the banks began to die. As a result, the village had been suffering feuds, infertility, mental illness and social problems for decades.

The Scripture that spoke clearly to the community was 2 Chronicles 7:14:

If my people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

After hearing teaching on this and other Scriptures, village elders confessed the sins of their community and of their forefathers. Some of these defiling sins included: murder, cannibalism, idolatry, witchcraft, bloodshed and immorality. Reconciliation took place within families, then clans and finally within the whole tribe. The chief of the area led the people in a

corporate prayer of repentance and invited the presence of Jesus into the whole community. On the third day of the process, some women came running and shouting into the village, announcing that the water in the stream had become pure again. It is still pure today.

Vuniani then raised up and trained 'Healing the Land' teams that continue to travel from village to village engaging communities at the invitation of local chiefs with teaching, fasting and repentance over a two to three week period. They have witnessed whole communities turning to Christ and what can only be described as 'village transformation' in many places.

Transformation spreads

Currently, in other parts of Melanesia, whole communities are also experiencing radical change for good. Pastor Walo Ani from Papua New Guinea tells of what happened at a 'Healing the Land' gathering in Makirupu, home village of his wife, Namana, about two hours drive east of Port Moresby.

For four days there were teaching sessions and the prayer warriors did house to house visitation of all of the 126 homes in the village. The team of seven and the prayer warriors were fasting and praying for the full eight days. As a result the Lord moved in a mighty way convicting people of land disputes, immorality and fornication, fear of witchcraft and sorcery, charms, lies, gambling, stealing, marriage problems, and many other issues. Miracles of healing started from day one.

This ‘Healing the Land’ process is also taking place in Vanuatu, where Pastor Raynold Bori, chairman of the ministers fraternal in Luganville, had been on a three-year journey, seeking transformation of his town. He embarked on the ‘Healing the Land’ process with about fifteen of the pastors. He shares as follows:

In Litzlitz, a village on the island Malekula, things were not going well. There were broken marriages, drug addiction, poor crops and a host of other problems. The community willingly responded to my proposal that they engage the ‘Healing the Land’ process. The people submitted to their chief a list of things they wanted removed from, and things they wanted for, their village. When the process of repentance and reconciliation had been completed, they watched as God answered their requests one by one. Marriages were restored, drug addicts were delivered, rats that had plagued their homes were no more to be seen, thousands of snails that ravaged their gardens were found dead and a stream that had dried up began to flow again.⁶³

Repentance, a vital step

God’s presence was manifest in Jerusalem after King David brought the Ark there via the house of Obed-Edom. In a similar way God, has visited Melanesian communities with His manifest presence, bringing about sociological and ecological changes. People are apprehended with the reality that God is indeed in

⁶³ Vuniani Nakauyaca and Walo Ani “Healing the Land” DVDs/Manual
For more information, enquire at office@tcchurch.com.au

their midst. Added to this awareness, after repentance and reconciliation have taken place, there has been a heavy dew or light shower, even from a cloudless sky.

For the people of these communities, repentance is a central and vital step toward transformation. So it must be for the winning of our cities. Are these stories a challenge to us? Perhaps we should be asking: “God, what are You saying to us? What sin yet needs to be repented of together by Your church in our city? What offences remain that give darkness legal ground?”

Darkness and blindness will linger where such things as ungodly events or rites, abuse, injustice, idolatry, murder, immorality and broken covenants are not confessed and repented of.⁶⁴ Darkness lingers in many cities because the church, the redeemed community, has neither identified with nor seen the need for corporate repentance. As was the case for Vuniani, may the lights go on for us also!

Proverbs 4:18 says:

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

This would indicate that as the light shines brighter it will expose areas in our lives, both individually and corporately, where repentance is needed. The Holy Spirit has come to convict of sin, righteousness and

⁶⁴ This is not a ‘once-for-all-time act’. Pastor Vuniani emphasises the need for continual vigilance. Sin in the form of immorality, idolatry etc. may continue to pollute the land. The need for repentance and healing the land will continue until the Lord’s return.

judgment. May our prayer be: “Lord, let Your light shine in our hearts; lead us into all truth and reality for the sake of Your house, Your Name and the welfare of our cities.”

Some repentance issues for the church

Besides the sins already mentioned that are common to our cities, are there other issues of repentance that the church in the city needs to deal with?

Firstly, have our cities encountered Christ through His church as they ought? The church’s fragmentation and lack of oneness that Jesus prayed into during His last night on earth, have to be seen as the chief reason for this failure. Clearly, if by our unity and love for one another ‘all men will know’, then our disunity prevents them from knowing.

To quote prolific author Max Lucado:

*The continuous and widespread fragmentation of the church has been the scandal of the ages. It has been Satan's master strategy. The sin of disunity probably has caused more souls to be lost than all other sins combined.*⁶⁵

The late Dr Ern Baxter, well-known teacher and conference speaker, whom some of us had the privilege of listening to and sharing with on several occasions, stated that

⁶⁵ “The Pastor and Denominational Harmony” A message given at the Promise Keepers Clergy Conference, February 15 1996

the Christian community is the reprovng headquarters of the Holy Spirit. Therefore fragmentation of the body of Christ is probably the greatest sin against the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we, the church have not been good stewards of our resources, in that we have often duplicated that which others are doing. We have competed with other parts of the body of Christ in our locality rather than honouring and complementing them.

Thirdly, we, the church have not served the wider community well. Instead we have prioritised our own needs. A pastor friend was recently challenged when he realised it took ninety volunteers to run their Sunday church program with a much smaller number involved in serving the wider community.

Fourthly, we, the church have not allowed Christ to be the head of the church in the city. We have prioritised our own agendas.

Fifthly, and most importantly, we have denied Him a house where He can be enthroned and reside intimately.⁶⁶

Jesus said “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Jeremiah 10:20 “My tent is plundered, and all My cords are broken; My children have gone from Me, and they are no more. There is no one to pitch my tent anymore, or set up my curtains.”

⁶⁷ Matthew 3:2

As we have seen, in many places around the world today, significant community transformations are being documented⁶⁸ as God's people 'humble themselves, and pray and seek God's face and turn from their wicked ways'.⁶⁹ Sin defiles and pollutes cities.⁷⁰ Sin does not evaporate! Darkness lingers, often from generation to generation, because sin previously committed has not been confessed and repented of.

Local history needs to be researched with the prayer that God will bring to light deeds or events that have polluted the city. With the leading of the Holy Spirit and proper representation, corporate repentance and reconciliation do need to take place. Corporate repentance can lead to new beginnings and great blessing.

⁶⁸ The Sentinel Group Transformation DVDs office@tcchurch.com.au

⁶⁹ 2 Chronicles 7:14

⁷⁰ Isaiah 24:5

7

RELATIONSHIPS

Building the wall

It was never intended that we, as Christians, live independently of one another. Whether it is a house built of bricks or a wall built of stones, the bricks or stones are only useful when they are firmly fitted together.

Nehemiah, exiled in the city of Susa, received devastating news:

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire. (Nehemiah 1:3)

He received special dispensation from King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and restore the wall. He encouraged the local people:

*Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.*⁷¹

*So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.*⁷²

The wall that Nehemiah and his fellow Jews restored can be likened to relationships within the church of which we are all part. We are being built together as living stones.

1 Peter 2:5 says:

you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house...

Prepared stones, fitted together

Well known author, Watchman Nee wrote:

God wants a corporate church, a spiritual home. He does not want isolated, individual stones or bricks. He desires a body not just a member. He wants Christ to have pre-eminence in the church, to be her Head God's aim is the church. What He purposes to obtain is the New Jerusalem ... He takes the church, which New Jerusalem represents, and puts a unit in each city. Before New Jerusalem descends from heaven, God wants to have a miniature Jerusalem in each city. This is to say that He wants

⁷¹ Nehemiah. 2:17

⁷² Nehemiah. 4:6

to have a church in each city to manifest His eternal purpose. From start to finish, the greatest work of God is to build up the body of Christ...

Nee continues, citing the work of stone masons in Fukien, China:

Fukien is famous for its masonry work in that province. Masons there are able to cut irregular stones and put them together beautifully. Unlike the stone walls on Kuling Mountain which are composed of stones piled together, these stones in Fukien are carefully hewn and fitted compactly together. The question in these skilled workers' minds is not whether a stone is big or small, nice looking or ugly; rather, it is how this or that stone fits with the other stones? Can these stones be built into a house? ...⁷³

Relationships are building blocks

Relationships are God's building blocks for the church in the city. Building relationships can often prove to be time consuming and painful.⁷⁴ The temptation can

⁷³ "The Church and the Work" Christian Fellowship Publishers 1982

⁷⁴ A pastor known to this writer lived about two hundred metres from another pastor of a different denomination on the same street. He determined to make his acquaintance and build a relationship. The initial visit lasted two or three minutes with little to show that the other pastor was at all interested in getting to know his visitor. About six weeks later a follow up visit was made. This time after pleasantries and inquiries concerning wife and family, the ice began to melt but the visiting pastor was bid goodbye without an invitation to come inside. Another six weeks passed and again the pastor down the road was revisited. This time to his surprise, the visiting pastor was given a warm welcome and ushered into the lounge room where, (next page)

be not to bother and go it alone. Perhaps this is why the New Testament has ten times more to say about relationships than it does, for instance, about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The list is long: love one another, be devoted to one another, care for one another, accept one another, wait for one another, serve one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, among other things.

Francis Schaeffer, founder of L'Abri, commenting on John 17:21 says in his work "The Mark of a Christian":

We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians ... Love – and the unity it attests to – is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father.⁷⁵

Charles Colson, leading Christian world view author has said:

Non-Christians aren't looking so much at our tracts and rallies and telecasts and books as they are looking at us and how we behave. When they fail to see the unity of Jesus' followers - the church - they

after an extended time of sharing, they knelt together to pray. From that time on the camaraderie between the two has been strong - the 'wall' in the city had been built and strengthened a little bit more. All of us are called to be 'Nehemiahs' and build up the wall of our city.

⁷⁵ Francis Schaeffer "The Mark of a Christian" IVP Books 1970

fail to see the validation that Christ is indeed the Son of the Living God.⁷⁶

Jesus reached out to us with unconditional love; the challenge for us is to have this same love toward one another.

Jesus' amazing passionate prayer

In John 17:20-23 it is not hard to sense Jesus' deep cry to His Father for the unity of the church:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Jesus prayed that the church might be made perfect as one, that the world might believe. He prayed His church might know the same harmony and synergy sustained in the Godhead throughout eternity. As we look at the current state of the church, that has to be one of the most challenging recorded prayers Jesus prayed! Jesus envisioned His people walking together in a divinely enabled oneness. He had faith for it - do we?

⁷⁶ Charles Colson "The Body" Dallas Word Publishing 1992

Perhaps Mary is our example. When she heard that she was to bring forth One to be called the Son of God, she asked,

“How can this be...?”

She was promised:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you;”

Her response?

“Let it be to me according to your word.”⁷⁷

May our stance also be one of faith as we pursue holiness, love and the building up of the body of Christ in our cities. Not, as the writer to the Hebrews warns us:

...forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ... but exhorting one another so much the more as you see the Day approaching.⁷⁸

God’s grace and favour become more and more evident as relationships continue to deepen.

The heavenly dew

Think “unity” and then Psalm 133 is often the first portion of Scripture that comes to mind. It is a wonderful description of the attractiveness and power of unity. Unity does not just bring blessing. It allows the Lord to command a blessing! It is likened to the anointing oil that flowed down over the garments of

⁷⁷ Luke 1:34-38

⁷⁸ Hebrews 10:25

the high priest. It is likened to the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. Earlier, reference was made to the heavy dew or light shower that has fallen after each 'Healing the Land' process. Heavenly dew, a divine grace, is commanded where leaders choose to walk together as one. Scripture references to dew make for interesting reading. Proverbs 19:12 tells us that God's favour is like dew.

The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favour is like dew on the grass.

Dew brings new supply and provision. The manna came only after the dew had fallen. Numbers 11:9 says:

when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.

Dew is associated with God's protection and overcoming power. Deuteronomy 33:28-29 says:

Then Israel shall dwell in safety ... His heavens shall also drop dew. ... your enemies shall submit to you, and you shall tread down their high places.

Dew falls when all is still and the temperature drops. Is there not application here to unity and relationships? When relationships are not restful or they lack harmony, the dew will be absent. Dew is not permanent. Morning comes and the dew evaporates. So it is that relationships can never be taken for granted. They need to be constantly nurtured.

Relationships will be tested

Differences, hurtful words, offences and misunderstandings will arise. They can either be stumbling blocks or stepping stones to deeper and stronger relationships, depending upon the grace extended. Sadly a good number of promising city unity initiatives have discontinued because of unresolved offences.

Pastor Ruth Ruibal of Cali, Colombia maintains:

*Unity is not passive assent but actively refusing to be offended.*⁷⁹

Challenging relationships can be God's means of refining us. Clearly the church will continue to be refined and processed by God. Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, said:

We, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:17)

The church in Corinth was 'one loaf'. A loaf consists of individual grains of wheat, ground to be fine flour, then mixed with other ingredients and baked in an oven. We can be likened to those grains of wheat, processed by God to be His body, one fresh loaf, the aroma of which allures the people of our cities and beyond to Christ.

⁷⁹ From a message on Church Unity and Transformation given by Ruth Ruibal at Toowoomba City Church September 2001.

A bread-maker

I am reminded of the bread that is baked in our electric bread-maker. All the ingredients are placed in the bread-maker at night and the timer is set. Early the next morning, after the small oven and mixer have done their work, an appealing aroma begins to drift from our kitchen to other parts of the house. Around 7am this tantalising aroma has summoned a family to gather around a freshly baked loaf of bread!

This illustrates what the Holy Spirit is doing with us. He is enabling us to be that one attractive loaf. In any city, true glory can come to Christ only through a church that has learned to walk together as one loaf, humbly and covenantally. The issue of covenant needs to be highlighted. Walking together is not optional. We relate to God and to each other on the basis of covenant represented in the bread and the cup of the table of the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 10:16a Paul asked:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

The New Covenant

Paul was reminding the Christians in Corinth of the importance of the new covenant and the seriousness of covenant breaking. In fact he goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 that:

For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning

the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

Not discerning the Lord's body in a city can have serious implications. Conceivably, as the church in each of our cities, we are not fully mindful of being one loaf and are therefore reaping the consequences. All this is a sober reminder that obedience is the key to blessing; disobedience leads to judgment. An obedient church experiences covenantal blessing. When the church of a city experiences covenantal blessing the city in turn is blessed!

Alistair Petrie illustrates the need for Christians to be committed to one another:

In almost every example of revival throughout history, at least a few people came together in the Lord's name and asked Him to visit their land. In researching, I visited Wales and the Hebrides Islands off the northwest coast of Scotland, two areas that have experienced fairly recent revival. In both locations I asked a number of people if they believed any one particular reason brought the revivals in their respective areas to an end. The answer I heard over and over again was that the unity was lost to denominationalism, jealousy and sometimes criticism, and this lack of unity then dislodged what had been developing among the people of God.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Alistair Petrie "Transformed!" Baker Book House Company 2003

Unity is not just ‘another thing we must do’

Unity is foundational and central to the life and fruitfulness of the church in the city. This was made vividly clear to me not long after I began an itinerant ministry promoting unity and facilitating pastors prayer summits. Staying in the home of an Anglican minister, of a certain Australian city, I was preparing to speak at an early morning breakfast meeting for pastors. Not having spoken at many forums of this kind and being somewhat apprehensive, I sent up a prayer for help.

Immediately I had a picture in my mind of the Lord standing at the city’s perimeters, knocking and waiting to be invited in. With this fresh insight I saw how, by acknowledging their oneness in Christ and their need of one another, these leaders would be spreading a welcome mat for the Lord Himself! I was grateful for deeper insight into the issues of unity and for a fresh surge of faith and zeal for His house in that place.

Something to ponder

Following the Flood, men made plans to build a city and a tower within it that would reach to heaven (see Appendix 1). If allowed to continue, ‘nothing would be impossible to them.’ Here is something to ponder; what blessing might a ‘one accord’, Christ-centred church bring to a city? More importantly, what greater glory might be brought to the Lord’s name if we lived at the foot of the cross together over a period of time?

Being called and committed to a city for as long as God would have us in that place, generally means that we are there for a lengthy period of time. This is necessary as far as God's building program is concerned. Relationships take time to develop and grow. That is why a continual turnover of ministry in a city is counter-productive to the development of the one church of the city. It is interesting to watch what happens when leaders link arms and begin to walk together. In many places they are staying put and committing to the long haul. Incrementally the heavenly dew falls and the blessings become more and more evident.

8

WHAT IS THE FATHER DOING?

No formulas

There are no formulas for reaching a city or town! Otherwise we could, God forbid, do it on our own. Perhaps this is why some city-reaching ventures have fallen by the way-side. Even the phrase ‘taking our cities for God’ can be seen to have underlying tones of self reliance. As someone has said “it’s all of grace and it’s all about Him”.

Jesus said:

Without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5b)

All things, according to Paul are,

of Him and through Him and to Him. (Romans 11:36)

All that has happened or will happen in any city that is of eternal value is a work of grace. Jesus is our model for dependence on the Father's enabling. He answered the Jews:

*"the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."*⁸¹

Our prayer must be: Father, what are You saying? What are You doing in our city and the church of our city?

Every city is unique. An event or strategy that had good results in one city will not necessarily produce the same results in another city. For David, even that which brought victory over the Philistines at Baal Perazim the first time, was not God's strategy for the second encounter.⁸² Fruitful events and strategies are God-breathed ones. It is, however, very encouraging to hear the positive stories and the progress being made in certain places. These good reports should build faith and motivate us to enquire of God for His plans and strategies for our city.

The Father is always at work. Jesus said:

*My Father has been working until now.*⁸³

Where is God at work?

⁸¹ John 5:19b

⁸² 2 Samuel 5:20-25

⁸³ John 5:17

*Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain
who build it ...*⁸⁴

What is God blessing in your city? The Lord may have already gone before and opened a door, for instance into a school or some sphere of life in the community. Perhaps He has already spoken, apprehended a person or a group of people to fulfil a certain task or meet a need. Where can we find Him at work? Jesus said:

*Where I am, there My servant will be also.*⁸⁵

Grace, grace – some of the Toowoomba story

*He shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of
“Grace, grace to it!” (Zechariah 4:7b)*

It is humbling to reflect on our journey together here in Toowoomba, regarding God’s works of grace in our midst, some of which are regularly updated on the Toowoomba church website.⁸⁶ Again and again the Lord has used someone or something to get our attention over a certain matter. Many of these interventions have involved a humbling on our part as we recognised elements of pride that were hindering us from going forward.

In 1994 a number of pastors, nearly all Pentecostal or Charismatic, were meeting weekly for prayer. On one particular morning a visiting ministry shared with us

⁸⁴ Psalm 127:1a

⁸⁵ John 12:26

⁸⁶ www.toowoombachurch.org

and afterwards asked: “Where are the evangelical leaders?” God used this inquiry to bring conviction of elitism, exclusivity and pride. We saw that our attitude of ‘we have an edge on other parts of the church’ was prideful. Having asked God’s forgiveness, we determined to rectify matters and invite others to participate. However, before any contact was made, those who gathered the next week were quite amazed to see an evangelical pastor walk into the meeting. The Lord had acknowledged the humble prayers of His servants. From that day forward the weekly prayer meeting has grown to become more representative of the church in the city.

A blending together

Not long after this, a good number of pastors representing most parts of the body of Christ in our city took part in the first four-day pastors prayer summit. Again God had brought the right people at the right time to our city. David Orton and Peter McHugh from Melbourne had invited Terry Dirks from Portland USA to Australia to share about prayer summits. These summits were being used by God to bring much blessing in the U.S. As Terry, the leader of this movement, visited and shared with us, we knew that this was something that God wanted us to take hold of.

The four days were set aside, a venue out of town was secured and other details were attended to. As the day arrived and began, with leaders sitting in a circle

looking at one another, there was still some apprehension as to how well different styles of worship and prayer would blend over four days! Would some in our midst get carried away with exuberant worship and prayer while others retreated into contemplative prayer? We were all pleasantly surprised. Love and sensitivity prevailed. Fears melted away, hearts were drawn closer to God and to one another as leaders became transparent and vulnerable in an atmosphere of worship and prayer. With a greater sense of being one in Christ, denominational distinctives faded into the background.

It was another major step forward in our (or should we say His) journey to see His house built in our city. Annual prayer summits have continued to play an important part in this journey. Each summit has been unique, taking on a different emphasis or direction, building on what has taken place in previous summits.

Leaders emerge

As mentioned, out of harmonious relationships, leadership giftings begin to be recognised and received. It has been our joy to see people, young and not so young, begin to be raised up by God and to contribute into the life of the church of the city. One of the major contributors into the life of the city-wide church is a Lutheran pastor, Dr Edgar Mayer. With a desire to see Christians generally identify with the city-

wide church, Edgar wrote “Forty Days of Unity”.⁸⁷ Six messages on unity were written and recorded onto DVDs. Churches then committed to preaching on unity for six weeks including mid-week group discussions on unity using the material prepared by Edgar. A devotional written for each one of the forty days was also written and circulated. Seventeen congregations, and some Roman Catholic individuals, representing over two thousand people in the city, participated in this exercise, with others preferring to do it at a later date. Many favourable comments were made with people asking what the next step in our journey would be. A deeper foundation of faith for the house had been laid. Since that time, Edgar has written, recorded and conducted city-wide seminars on the Holy Spirit in Toowoomba and elsewhere.⁸⁸

Another major contributor into the life of the city-wide church is Pastor David Blair. David is often referred to as a ‘pastor to pastors’ in our city. Besides giving leadership to the Vision Community congregation, David is often sought out by others for pastoral input. David and his wife, Hazel, have run “Search for Significance” and other Careforce programs that have brought blessing to many in the city.⁸⁹ More recently, many men in our city have been encouraged and

⁸⁷ Rev. Dr Edgar Mayer “40 Days of Unity - Church Unity and City Transformation” Christian Leaders Network 2005
office@tcchurch.com.au

⁸⁸ Mayer “But Wait, There’s More” TCVideo 2007
office@tcchurch.com.au

⁸⁹ Careforce Melbourne Australia www.careforce.org

inspired as they participated in ‘Valiant Man’, another Careforce program that David has facilitated.

David Stanfield is another person God has used to bring a significant contribution to the life and witness of the church in Toowoomba. David, an artistically gifted and creative leader, designed and managed various productions or events. One was ‘Christmas - the Full Story’, a presentation of the life of Christ from birth to death and resurrection. For a number of years this presentation was given every evening, for twenty-one days in December, attracting up to twenty thousand people each year. David was also the originator and chief designer of the floats in the annual ‘Carnival of Flowers’ parade. The standout float had the theme ‘The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe’. It had a cast of three hundred people from different churches and was awarded Grand Champion, best float prize! These two ventures became focal points for many Christians from a variety of churches across the city to pray and work together.

A festival is born

An event which has become a major event in the life of our city has been ‘The Australian Gospel Music Festival’, recently renamed ‘Easterfest’. For a number of years, Ian Shelton had been captured by the maxim: “The culture of a city is reflected in its festivals”. Ian asked himself: “Why can we not have a major Christian festival in our city?”

From an inspired thought a dream materialised. What began with a tentative start has now become a major Christian event attracting about thirty thousand people each year from around Australia and overseas. The underlying goal, however, is to involve and impact Toowoomba's wider community. This is happening, little by little.

On several occasions, the festival has faced seemingly insurmountable crises, but God has wonderfully undertaken. Isaac Moody, a gifted young leader, together with his team plus the thousand or so volunteers from many congregations who serve at the event, have gained the respect of civic leaders.

Family Week

More recently, Isaac and his team have become responsible for an additional event, 'Family Week'. The key Scripture behind this initiative was the words given to Abraham:

In your seed all the nations (or families) of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 22:18)

The questions were asked: "What could be done to promote family life? How could the families of our city be strengthened and blessed?"

Prominent city leaders were approached one by one and asked to consider the merits of hosting a week of family activities that would engender stronger family life in our city. There was a remarkably positive response. A coordinating team of key people was put together and a successful 'Family Week' has been held

for two years in succession. Schools, sports clubs, shops, businesses, churches and individuals sponsored or ran family oriented activities, supported and promoted by local media. Our prayer is that this 'Family Week' will gain greater traction from year to year.

Provision for the house

An overriding need for much pertaining to the church of the city is funding. Obviously, without the needed finance, little can be accomplished. How do we fund all these church, kingdom initiatives? The wonderful truth is that just as God provided abundantly, over and over again, for the building of His house in Bible times, so He provides today for His house and the ministry which flows out of it. Part of His marvellous provision comes through men and women who have a vision and calling to provide for the work of the Lord. The church in Toowoomba is greatly indebted to people who love His house and have given generously and sacrificially.

One businessman who has given in this manner is Andrew Youngberry. Years ago, Andrew and his wife Jennifer lived in a mining town in Queensland, Australia. While working at the local mine, Andrew became a Christian and went looking for a church to attend. He was deeply disturbed to find a spirit of competition and division among the churches in town. He was taken aback as people from one church bad-mouthed another church. Andrew, just three weeks a

Christian, prayed, “Lord, where is your true church?” Immediately he felt the Lord speaking to him with the words, “Read from Ezekiel 12:2”. Andrew, unaware that there was a book in the Bible with that title, went home and was elated when he picked up a Bible and found Ezekiel! He found the passage of Scripture and was struck with the last words of that second verse:

...they are a rebellious house.

From that time on Andrew yearned to see the church in every place knit together as one. He prayed that God would prosper and use him to that end. With savings earned from his work in the mines, Andrew and Jennifer were able to establish a business in hydroponic farming. After some ups and downs, a major turning point came when Andrew and Jennifer felt challenged to tithe off their gross income, not just off their profits. This was a complete step of faith, a radical move which God honoured by causing their business to flourish. Andrew and Jennifer’s dream to establish a significant source of supply for the building of the house of the Lord and its ministry has become a reality.

God’s messenger

Toowoomba has also been indirectly blessed through the ministry of Pastor Harold Cabelleros from South America. At a mid-week meeting he testified to what was happening in his nation of Guatemala and ended by telling of some extraordinary giving that had taken place in his home city. When he finished, instead of

receiving an offering for himself, he told the two hundred people present that the offering would be a seed offering for the city of Toowoomba. He encouraged the people to sow generously. To win a city we had to sow into a city. That night the offering was bigger than anyone expected. It added up to \$52,000. Not only did we receive a large amount of finance, we had also been entrusted with a valuable principle in city-reaching. Again God had brought the right person with the right message at the right time. This money was used to help fund further ministry into the city and was another milestone in the life of the church of the city.

Strategic placements

Just as the Father, throughout Bible history, strategically placed individuals in key places of authority or influence, so He does today. Whether it was a servant girl in Naaman's household or Nehemiah in the royal court of King Artaxerxes, all were prepared and positioned by God. Like many other places, Toowoomba has been blessed, as men and women of integrity have been positioned by God to occupy places of authority or influence. One of these was a former youth pastor, Lyle Shelton. Lyle, as a candidate for local council, watched the TV monitor nervously on the night of local elections and breathed a huge sigh of relief when he finally realised he had just become one of Toowoomba's nine councillors. From then on Lyle was called upon to make numerous stands for righteousness in our city.

At one point, with the backing of others, he countered the push from some quarters to have brothels located legally in Toowoomba. Many people in the city began to align themselves with this line drawn in the sand. At one stage, 300 men rallied outside the Council buildings with placards reading 'Silent No Longer'. This statement was to acknowledge and repent of the failure of men to honour the dignity of women in our city. We are grateful that to this point there are no legalised brothels in Toowoomba. The city is indebted to Lyle for his courageous stand on this and other difficult issues.

Nathaniel and Tiffany Spary are also outstanding examples of strategic placement by God in the city of Toowoomba. They are co-founders of 'The Base', an outreach to young people facing difficult circumstances such as drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness and family break-down. Nathaniel himself came from a similar background which changed in 1999 when he became a Christian.

Under the Sparys' leadership, The Base offers Friday night youth events, recreational activities, arts and crafts, leadership training and mentoring, job and accommodation assistance and court support for crime offenders and victims. Through the Sparys' love and acceptance, many young people have come to Christ.

In 2007 Nathaniel and Tiffany were awarded the Pride of Australia medal for their "selfless, tireless and largely unacknowledged actions which have enriched

and improved the quality of life for a local community”.

Pastors Alan and Robyn Small give oversight to a healing ministry in Toowoomba that comes under the banner of The International Association of Healing Rooms. People from various congregations, who sense a call to a healing ministry, help make up the small teams that minister to the sick. This ministry is a major focus of the Smalls’ congregation – another example of a congregation making a unique contribution to the life of the city.⁹⁰

A City Think Tank

God is a God of limitless wisdom and ideas. A city think tank can help ideas and strategies to emerge. This think tank can be made up of people from different churches, pastors and others who love their city. It is good to keep in mind that all that is needed for city transformation is already in the city. We need to cry out for, and expect God’s wisdom and God-breathed strategies. Before we cry out to the Lord, He is actually crying out to the city! Micah 6:9 says:

The LORD’s voice cries out to the city - Wisdom shall see Your name.

and Ecclesiastes 9:15 says:

Now there was found in it (a besieged city) a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

⁹⁰ For more information go to www.healingrooms.com

This unrecognised, forgotten man received God's wisdom for the deliverance of his city - a timely reminder that we can all be used by God to help bring salvation to our city or town. A wide range of unique, God-breathed initiatives are emerging in many places as Christians walk together and cry out to see their city blessed! Some examples follow.

Other city church stories

Palmerston North, New Zealand

The church in this city of 75,000 has a story to tell of the Father's leading and blessing. Providentially, a good foundation for unity was laid when in its early history, church leaders dropped denominational tags and met in a sawmill to pray. More recently, in the early 1990s, church leaders determined a framework of absolutes within which they would walk together; a group of city intercessors were endorsed by local ministers and more than thirty churches were assigned pre-determined streets and prayer-walked their city. In an atmosphere of unity and prayer, according to one core leader and pastor, Ralph Sutherland:

Flowers began to grow in the desert as God began to move in unexpected ways. The crime rate dropped, the changed atmosphere severely restricted occult activities and Christians were elected to be councillors (seven out of fifteen), including a Christian mayor.⁹¹

⁹¹ From a report emailed by John McNeil www.challengeweekly.co.nz

Various city-wide sub-groups have sprung out of the unity that is headed by the Christian Leaders Association. Spheres covered are women, youth, students, seniors, Christian counsellors and evangelism. There is also a small strategy team that meets regularly to seek the way forward. From time to time they visit the mayor and ask: 'How can we help? What needs to be done?'

Point Chevalier, Auckland, New Zealand

Baptist pastor Doug Vause watched as about sixty road workers spent weeks upgrading streets in his suburb. He began organising a thank you barbecue for them and invited local church folk to provide the necessary food and to man the barbecues. To his surprise, many non-church people got involved as well. The road workers were very appreciative. The foreman was quite overwhelmed and said: "This has never happened to me in forty years of working on roads!"

Tully, Queensland, Australia

There was a time when this small town of 3,000 residents was, according to Barry Dell, former Baptist pastor, "run down and not in good shape". He tells of the significant changes that took place after concerned pastors committed themselves to relate and pray together on a weekly basis. According to Barry: "After twelve months, town folk began commenting on the change of atmosphere. People were open-faced and

happier, homes and shop fronts were being ‘spruced up’. The whole place was different”.

After a combined Christmas carol service, the editor of the local newspaper exclaimed: “Nothing like this has ever happened in our town!”

9

WHAT IS THE FATHER SAYING?

Proceeding words

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.⁹²

We are very familiar with this verse as it applies to our day-to-day walk with the Lord. To live victorious and fruitful lives we need to hear and obey God's word on a regular basis. We pray "give us this day our daily bread" with more than baked bread in mind. We need regular spiritual nourishment. The Word of God feeds,

⁹² Matthew 4:4

guides, convicts, cleanses, sanctifies, comforts and delivers us. For our individual growth and well-being we need to be attentive to the Father's voice. In the same way, a good cross-section of leaders in a city need to be able to discern what they feel the Lord is saying to His body, the church in that place. Just as He speaks to individuals, so He speaks to the church of one locality. Just as there was a heavenly word for the church of Ephesus or Smyrna,⁹³ so there are words proceeding from the mouth of God for your city and mine. Without a united leadership, how can God's church hear His word for their city?

Thoughts and plans

This is another one of many reasons why the church of a city, particularly its leaders, needs to be in one accord, namely, to hear from God something of His heart and will for the church and the city. According to Jeremiah, God has plans for us corporately:

For I know the thoughts and plans I have for you, says the LORD, thoughts and plans that I have for you for welfare and peace, and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.⁹⁴

Gradually, a committed, humble, prayerful, united group of city-church leaders will gain understanding of some of God's thoughts and plans. They will begin to discern the heart and mind of God for the city-wide church. The church thus begins to be a spiritual womb

⁹³ Revelation 2:1-11

⁹⁴ Jeremiah 29:11 Amplified Bible

impregnated with the seed of God's Word. Perhaps through a prophetic word given or certain Scriptures submitted, there has come a growing sense that this is indeed the heart and mind of God for the church of the city at this time. This new direction can be tested by submitting it to a wider group of prayerful, city-focused leaders. Upon being agreed to, it is then shared with congregations whose leaders have identified with this direction. Not all parts of the church of the city will necessarily agree with what is being proposed. We ought not to coerce or pressure leaders into a change of course. Great effort needs to be made to maintain fellowship and trust with all parts of the body of Christ.

Beacons of light

Along the pathway to greater unity and reaching our city of Toowoomba, there have been Scriptures, prophetic words and messages brought by visiting speakers that have been like beacons of light along the way. They have brought clarity as to where we are on the journey and what the next step entails. One of these beacons of light was the word that came concerning repentance, already mentioned. Not that repentance is a once-for-all issue! Repentance will continue to be part of our daily walk and undoubtedly there will be further seasons of deep repentance as we are changed into His likeness. However we look back on that word as a milestone in our journey.

The word that has been pivotal and most significant for our journey together was given in 1974 to two young men seeking God in a hay barn. They had come to Toowoomba to start a church. While praying for direction and searching the Scriptures, one of these young men, Ian Shelton, was greatly impacted by the verse mentioned earlier, 1 Corinthians 3:16 (Amplified Version):

Do you not discern and understand that you [the whole church at Corinth] are God's temple (His sanctuary), and that God's Spirit has His permanent dwelling in you, [to be at home in you, collectively as a church and also individually]?

Suddenly, Ian realised that just as God saw one temple, one church in the city of Corinth, so He saw one church in Toowoomba. From that time on, Ian saw that his passion to plant and build a local church had to be matched by an equal passion for the whole body of Christ in the city.

Confirming words

A Scripture that helped give us a greater sense of the need for prayer in the city has come from Leviticus 6:13:

A perpetual fire shall burn on the altar; it shall never go out.

This led to the 'round-the-clock' prayer initiative, already mentioned, that continues to this day, albeit with fewer hours covered than there were several years ago. We are grateful for the way the Lord has

brought confirmation to the words that have come. In this instance, not long after the prayer initiative began, Harold Cabelleros, during his visit to our city, said that God had put a Scripture on his heart for us - Leviticus 6:13!

Other Scriptures that have had great impact on us have been:

Philippians 2:2-8, which encourages us to be

like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord ...having the mind which was also in Christ Jesus ... who humbled Himself...

then Haggai - both chapters - but to quote chapter 1:4:

"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple (house) to lie in ruins?"

and chapter 1:8b:

build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified says the LORD."

The whole of the book of Haggai and the thought of being one house in the city was the focal point of a three day prayer summit for Toowoomba pastors in the mid-1990s. It has been a recurring theme ever since.

Conference speaker and author, Cindy Jacobs, while praying for Toowoomba in Brisbane 2002, mentioned Toowoomba as a city of refuge. (Joshua 20:2) This was confirmation of something that had already been witnessed to. Recently we have had many people of refugee status settle in our city.

More recently

A further Scripture that has been highlighted to us, and already referred to, comes from Ephesians 2:22,

you also are being built together for a habitation (dwelling) of God in the Spirit.

Meditating on this verse and the book of Ephesians as a whole has brought a deeper realisation that God does indeed seek to dwell and be powerfully enthroned in our midst.

The passage from 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 has also been highlighted to us:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

With the thought of our being one loaf in the city, a local baker was asked to bake the biggest loaf of bread he could bake. This loaf of bread, representing the church of the city, sat on a table placed in the middle of our Friday morning pastors gathering for some weeks as a reminder of our 'togetherness'. Alongside the bread was a communion cup and a small wooden cross. The cup filled with grape juice, spoke of our covenantal union with Christ and one another - a reminder that as we walk covenantally with God and one another we can anticipate His blessing on the church and the city.⁹⁵ In order for this to happen we

⁹⁵ Deuteronomy 28:1-14

realise there has to be a daily application of the cross in every sphere of city-church life.⁹⁶

Appoint elders

At the time of writing, we are being confronted with Paul's word to Titus,

...set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city⁹⁷

There is a consensus of thought among pastors in Toowoomba that the Lord is requiring a more defined city leadership to serve the church and its ministry into the city - a leadership, relational in nature, that is able to discern God's voice in order to bring cohesion and direction. Because God's temple on earth is to be a reflection of the heavenly temple we have come to see Chapter 4 of Revelation as a heavenly pattern. John, following his communication with the seven city churches, was taken by the Spirit into heaven where he saw the Lord on a throne surrounded by elders. These elders were then seen to be prostrate, worshipping the Lord, casting their crowns before Him. Our belief is that, as a city leadership is recognised and set apart, the Lord will assume greater access to His church in Toowoomba and to the city itself. As part of the process of hearing from the Lord and discovering His way forward, monthly gatherings for pastors and other church leaders are being held for dialogue and prayer.

⁹⁶ Luke 9:23

⁹⁷ Titus 1:5

10

THE CROSS, SERVANTHOOD, HUMILITY

Jesus sets the scene

The most impacting city initiatives are those that embrace the cross, servanthood and humility. Jesus clearly modelled these things for us in His earthly life. He set the scene for His final discourse with the disciples by washing their feet.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin and began to

*wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*⁹⁸

The washing of feet was normally carried out by a servant or a slave. Obviously none of the disciples had offered to undertake this menial task. However, Jesus took this opportunity to impart a visible lesson on humility and servanthood they would never forget.

He humbled Himself

Philippians 2:5 says:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him ...

This is the way of the kingdom, and the only way to a kingdom harvest. John 12:24 says:

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

James 4:6b says:

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

⁹⁸ John 13: 3-5

God will resist all endeavours that are flavoured with self promotion and pride. It is worthy of note that the place where Jesus was baptised, the river Jordan, is geographically the lowest river on earth - a good reminder that the river of God flows in the low places and by-passes the mountains of pride.

Grains of wheat

A pastor told fellow Toowoomba pastors of his recent encounters with the Lord: “Graeme, if your congregation dwindles in size will you rejoice in the growth of the church nearby?”

After a time of heart searching Graeme was able to say, “Yes, Lord.”

In a second encounter, Graeme was asked: “If your church was to dwindle and cease to be, would you be willing to serve the pastor of that growing church?”

This time Graeme really struggled. Finally he found grace again to say, “Yes, Lord.”

Happily, that is not the end of the story; today Graeme has a thriving church! Nevertheless, it was a timely message for Toowoomba’s leaders. Would each of us be like grains of wheat in the Master’s hand, in preparation for an abundant harvest?

At the foot of the cross

In Wanganui, New Zealand, pastors attending a four-day prayer summit became aware of their preoccupa-

ation with their own churches and individual ministries. Seeing their need to lay all afresh at the foot of the cross, they symbolically placed car, garage and house keys on a chair serving as an altar in the centre of the room. This gave expression to their change of heart in surrender to the Lord, their commitment to each other and to the church of the city.

At a Toowoomba Christian businessmen's prayer summit, two men with similar businesses were sitting opposite each other during a time of worship. One of them, looking at his brother in Christ, realised that there was a project for which they were both tendering and competing! He began to wrestle inwardly with his own interests and those of his brother. Finally he shared about this inward struggle with the rest of the group, including the person concerned. The two men then prayed together, with tears, and came to a place of peace as the matter was surrendered into the Lord's hands at the foot of the cross.

Accolades for a donkey?

While attending a leaders' prayer summit in Houston, USA, I remember how, at a point when there was some tension between certain leaders, one of the facilitators addressed the gathering. He reminded us all that when Jesus made His final entry into Jerusalem, He rode on a donkey. "A donkey", he said, "is a stubborn animal and in Scripture is an unclean animal which needs to be redeemed with blood - all things which apply to us! The donkey was not the focus. It

got no accolades or promotion. Its one, simple job was to bring Jesus into the city”.

A holy quiet came over the assembled brethren as the Spirit of God began to convict and melt our proud hearts; in the following hours there was much repentance and reconciliation as we contemplated the donkey analogy.

All He needs is a nothing

I love the way Francis Frangipane puts it:

In the beginning, the earth was formless and void, but that did not deter the Almighty. He looked into the fathomless depth of its darkness and concluded, ‘All it needs is a little light!’ Likewise in the beginning of our spiritual lives, we also are ‘formless and void’ and God is still saying ‘All they need is a little light!’ Remember it’s the Lord’s responsibility to create and our responsibility to submit to His creating. The Lord only needs three things to fashion life. First, He needs a ‘nothing’. The Almighty always begins His great, creative works with a ‘nothing’. (This is very important because that is where we come in!) Then His Spirit needs to be hovering over the ‘nothing’. And, finally, He needs His Word, which is the ‘something’ He is going to put in place of the ‘nothing’. God has no difficulty at all creating something out of nothing. The only obstacle He faces is when the nothing doesn’t know it is nothing, but instead thinks it is something!

Frangipane continues:

There will be times in your life when, like the pre-creation universe, you discover your life seems

*'formless and void'. Do not be over-concerned ...you are at a new beginning!*⁹⁹

Humility and servanthood

Jesus' humility was expressed in an act of servanthood. Ruth Ruibal in her book, "Unity in the Spirit", describes what happened when a group of people sought to follow Christ's example by humbling themselves to serve their city of Cali, Colombia:

*The Ministers' Association once asked the mayor how the church might help serve our city. One problem was with the garbage collection in a certain area of the city, so we offered our help. In coordination with the city government, 1,500 believers gathered on a Saturday morning to collect garbage – 40 tons of it. In the process 500 people came to know the Lord as their Saviour! We didn't realise that it would be a city-church evangelistic garbage team! We discovered that service opens doors in a wonderful way to win people to Jesus.*¹⁰⁰

Service is the 'sweet spot'

Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson write:

'Service' is the only location that encompasses the needs and dreams of the city, the mandates and desires of God, and the calling and capacity of the church. Service is the 'sweet spot' where all three interests come together. Service is something the community needs, God desires, and the church has

⁹⁹ Francis Frangipane Ministries www.inchristsimage.org

¹⁰⁰ Ruth Ruibal "Unity in the Spirit" Transform Nations Media 2002

the capacity to do. The community may not care much about salvation, but it does have needs. It is in meeting those needs through service that meaningful relationships develop, and out of relationships come endless opportunities to share the love of Christ and the gospel of salvation. The early church grew because its people loved and served. We believe servants can go anywhere. Service gives us access not only to places of need but also to places of influence.¹⁰¹

It's happening!

There are numerous examples of the church humbly serving a city. Here is one that comes out of **Gisborne, New Zealand**. Many thousands came from all over NZ and further afield to greet the rising sun at the dawn of the new millennium. Much effort and finance had been given to organising and promoting this event with its celebrity artists and official guests. The Christians in Gisborne prayerfully considered what God might have them do in order to bring glory to Himself. They decided to undertake the massive clean-up operation needed after the celebrations. In the following days, this clean-up of the streets by the Christians was reported to be the most talked about part of the celebrations.

Another example of cleaning up comes from the Eastern Highlands town of **Goroka, Papua New Guinea**. One of the pastors, Simon Nenipa, had

¹⁰¹ Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson "The Externally Focused Church"
Group Publishing 2004

prayed: “Lord, I’m ready to do any dirty work if it’s for your kingdom”. He set to, cleaning up the long street where his church is situated. Following his lead, the members of the Goroka Pastors Fraternal agreed that their town ought to be clean, peaceful and God-fearing. Having prayed together weekly for a number of years they believed that their unity in Christ would be the foundation necessary for them to play an effective role in bringing this to pass. Their chief Scripture has been Psalm 133:1 “How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity”.

In June 2007 about a dozen of these pastors walked Goroka’s streets together, collecting rubbish that had piled up for years, layer upon layer. They purposely did not ask members of their congregations to join them. They deliberately chose to humble themselves and take a counter-culture stand against elitism.

With the aid of a loud speaker, the public was encouraged to help keep the town clean in the future. Gradually the piles of rubbish were removed and loaded into a truck headed for the local dump.

This simple act of service has attracted many favourable comments from members of the wider community including the local mayor. Following the pastors’ lead, the local council has since implemented further clean-up measures. According to local leader, Rev. David Kima, the pastors and their congregations have fresh enthusiasm and expectancy as they plan and believe to see further positive changes in their town.

11

LEADERSHIP

No leadership, no land

Someone has said, “No Joshua, no land!” Without a leader, chosen and trained by God and received by the people, Israel would not have possessed its inheritance. Godly leadership is a vital component to reaching our cities. George Otis, after documenting many city transformation stories from around the world, listed those things that had been instrumental in

bringing transformation.¹⁰² At the top of the list was leadership, the next was prayer. Judges 5:2 says:

When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord!

Men of peace

In every city or town there are proven, godly people with leadership qualities who love their city and who are called to take a leadership role. These people are prayerful, servant-hearted, ‘willing to be doormats’, mature Christians who have a deep love for Christ and His body. They and their unique giftings are recognised and drawn upon as the relational bonds of trust and love with other leaders grow across the church. It is exciting to watch the emergence of some leaders who, while fulfilling a leadership role in their own congregation, also have a clear, God-appointed role of leadership in the church of the city. This does not in any way make them of greater importance than a leader who is totally given to caring for his congregation. The strength and health of the local congregations determine the strength and health of the church of the city.

Among the emerging leaders there is usually one, who is clearly seen to be a leader among leaders. When the disciples entered a city they had clear instructions to

¹⁰² H.Caballeros & M.Winger eds. “The Road to Community Transformation” ‘The Transforming Power of Revival’ 1998

find the ‘man of peace’.¹⁰³ A man of peace will be a proven, humble person who has a deep commitment to, and love for, both his city and the church of that place - a person with vision and leadership qualities.

A major issue

Leadership being received by other leaders was an area we struggled with for some time in Toowoomba. For about one year there was a difference of opinion over the style of leadership we should embrace. Some felt it should be a plural leadership with no one person taking overall responsibility. Others felt there was a leader amongst us who needed to be recognised and received as the leader amongst leaders.

While this leadership issue remained unresolved we struggled to find a sense of peace and subsequently lost momentum in our journey together. Eventually we came together to confront the issue and resolve it. Two hours before we gathered, we received a call from a respected intercessor living in another state. This person, knowing nothing of the issue that was to be discussed, said: “God has shown me that you are currently facing one of the most significant and critical issues in your walk together there in Toowoomba. I am praying for you.”

During our time together later that morning a well-respected minister in the city spoke into the issue with much wisdom and the issue was subsequently

¹⁰³ Luke 10:6.

resolved. A leader among leaders was recognised and received, first by this executive group, then by a wider group of pastors. From the day of that endorsement we were blessed with a harmony that facilitated fresh momentum.

The issue of leadership is indeed a critical one that needs the Spirit's guidance from city to city. It is probably the one unresolved issue in the pioneering stages that most hinders the coming together and growth of the city-wide church in many places. It could well be that leadership takes on a different form as the process of unity matures.

An invisible canopy

When leaders walk humbly together, honouring and preferring one another, it seems that a divine, invisible umbrella or canopy begins to be established under which the Holy Spirit imperceptibly releases kingdom blessings. As leaders are affirmed, new leaders emerge, leadership giftings are recognised and received. Fresh revelation and strategies surface that bring fresh momentum. People generally begin to find a place of service in the wider city-sphere that they may not have otherwise found. This includes leaders who are not necessarily pastors or ministers. Mature, capable leaders, equally committed, are emerging from all walks of life. They bring with them unique contributions. The training, wisdom and skills acquired

over many years have been God's preparation for city-church leadership.¹⁰⁴

Essential leadership characteristics

As the city church emerges from place to place, certain leadership characteristics are essential. Already evident in leaders who are effectively leading city church initiatives, is a strong kingdom orientation. They have a deep love for the whole body of Christ and enjoy fellowship with people from other congregations and denominations.

Along with this, city leaders nearly always enjoy strong support from their own congregation, members of which willingly embrace the city church concept. These then gladly give themselves and their resources for the sake of a transformed city. These leaders have a deep compassion and a strong sense of being called to their city. As a result they exhibit a willingness to give much, in order that the house of the Lord be built. This willingness to sacrifice is not accompanied

¹⁰⁴ Barry Till "The Churches Search for Unity" Penguin 1972.

In 1967 the British Council of Churches set up 'The People Next Door' course to educate 85,000 Christians about denominations other than their own and thereby to promote church unity or the 'ecumenical process'. One thing that emerged from the groups was a persistent vein of anti-clericalism on the issue of urgency for unity. Typical comments from the group reports were: *The chief stumbling-block to unity is the clergy and ministers. The laity are more ready to accept ecumenism than the church hierarchies give us credit for.* These responses came from lay people who were keen enough to give up several week-day evenings to participate in the study course.

by any desire to be an up-front leader, only a willingness to take on a servant role to other leaders. They are happily fulfilled in working behind the scenes.

Being called to a new level of responsibility, city church leaders are also aware that a new level of spiritual warfare is being entered into, for themselves, their families and their churches. For this reason they encourage and rely on supportive prayer.

Summary:

To this point we have discussed eight principles:-

commitment to the city, prayer, corporate repentance, prioritising relationships, discerning that which the Father is doing and saying, embracing the cross, humility and servanthood, recognising and affirming leaders.

These are simply the **preparatory work and building blocks** for the unveiling of the house of the Lord, which is primarily a house for His glory.

12

A HOUSE FOR HIS GLORY

Casting the vision

Jesus sent the disciples out two by two to prepare a way for Him in the cities into which He was to come. As we have already seen, the Lord seeks a dwelling place, a place where He can be enthroned in our cities and towns. Vision needs to be cast. By casting a vision for the house of the Lord, we are preparing a place for Him to dwell.¹⁰⁵ This requires time and patience.

¹⁰⁵ Jacob encountered the Lord at the city of Luz, Genesis 28. The Lord was at the top of a ladder on which angels were ascending and descending. Jacob exclaimed 'How awesome is this place, (next page)

While many people desire and willingly support unity initiatives, church members who do not have the same vision or passion for the church of the city, feel let down when their pastor takes on wider responsibilities. Unless that congregation begins to see its own need to have and support a city vision, the leader's call to be involved in the life of the church of the city will be severely restricted. The way needs to be prepared.¹⁰⁶ This is why it is important to cast vision,

this is none other than the house of God!' and renamed the city accordingly. Here we have an early insight into how our cities might experience the manifest presence of God. As God's house is established in a city so it becomes the vehicle whereby heaven begins to invade and resource that city. It is not impossible, our cities can become a holy habitation for God and His glory.

¹⁰⁶ To prepare and build up the highway we must first take out the stones or the roadblocks! After one of the Transformation Conferences here in Toowoomba a number of us sat down together after one of the evening meetings and asked ourselves: "Why do many community transformation initiatives fail?" This is a summary list of what we considered that night to be roadblocks to transformation.

1. *A half-hearted commitment* to our city:
2. *No collective vision* for the community: If there is an absence of corporate vision, there will be independent initiatives that produce short-term, but no long-term change.
3. *Unbelief*: We must have God's Word in our hearts, believe in it and act upon it.
4. *A program mentality*: Sometimes programs can be an expression of our unbelief.
5. *The distractions of our society*: We are neutralised by consumerism, sport, television, etc.
6. *Altars of offence that remain*: The corporate sins of the community, both present and past have not been dealt with.
7. *Prayerlessness*: We need to sustain fervent intercession.

not just for the future of our own congregation, but also for the church of the city. In this way, congregational leaders and others will be supported as they serve their city in a wider capacity. An initiative, previously referred to, which greatly helped people to identify with the church of the city was the 'Forty Days of Unity' study and action series which enabled the vision to go deeper and wider.

Patient persistence

Transformation will only come as the house of the Lord, the church of the city, is built.¹⁰⁷ With the refocus and adjustments required, there comes the pressure of fresh demands on time and energy. Not everyone will have the same revelation or passion. Discouragement can set in, as it did for the people of Ezra's time when they were harassed in their effort to build the temple. Ezra 4:4 says:

Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building.

We are not so naive as to think that all will be plain sailing in our journey towards unity and the building of God's house. For the people of Judah, building of the temple ceased but began again after twenty years, through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah as they encouraged the people with the word of the Lord.

¹⁰⁷ It is of note that almost every Old Testament revival involved the restoration of the house of the Lord.

We read in Ezra 5:5

But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they (their enemies) could not make them cease...

These Scriptures, in fact the whole of the book of Ezra, are a great source of instruction and encouragement for those desiring to see the house of the Lord built in our time. God undertook for the building of His house in the midst of opposition and trial.

Actually the opposition and trials encountered only served to refine the hearts and motives of God's people. Similarly today, God is testing our hearts and motives like those revealed in Genesis 11:4:

"Come let us build ourselves a city...let us make a name for ourselves..."

It is never about us: it is all about Him, His glory, His name being made great. We must ask the Spirit of God to search our hearts and cleanse us of impure motives, things we covet or serve that have become idols we worship. There can be a wide range of things that are legitimate and good, even the ministry or the vocation we are called to, which subtly become idols. The condition of our hearts will determine the condition of the building. Paul told the Corinthian church that only that which is built with gold, silver and precious stones would last.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:11-14

Encouragement

David's great desire was to build a house for God. However, instead of David, the honour of building the house was given to David's son Solomon. David encouraged his son:

Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God. Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy articles of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the LORD. (1 Chronicles 22:19)

We also need encouragement to hear and align ourselves with the Lord's heart for His house in our city.

In commissioning Joshua, the Lord encouraged him to

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

Perhaps the greatest need of city-church leaders today is encouragement, just as it was for Joshua, Solomon and the leaders of Ezra's time. Hebrews 3:6 says we are His house

if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

We gain fresh insight and encouragement from others in Scripture who also had vision and passion for the house of the Lord.

Hezekiah, a man with a vision

A young king, Hezekiah, came to the throne with a dream. He was a man with a vision. His people Israel and Judah had been divided for 250 years. His dream was that one day the two would be reconciled. Hezekiah faced a degenerate culture. King Ahaz had not been a model father. He had worshipped foreign gods and sacrificed some of Hezekiah's siblings to demons. According to 2 Chronicles 28:19:

He (Ahaz) encouraged moral decline in Judah, and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD.

Because of this, Judah was defeated by both Syria and Israel. Despite these things and the recent loss of 120,000 of his countrymen who went to war against Israel, this young king took steps toward reconciliation. Older heads would have undoubtedly tried to dissuade him. After a history of 250 years of separation, many would have accepted the status quo.

Restoring the house of the Lord

With a wisdom beyond his years, Hezekiah began the reconciliation journey, not first by approaching a divided people, but by restoring the house of the Lord, ordained of God to be the place of worship for both Israel and Judah. He spoke to the priests and Levites saying:

Our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him. They have

also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to astonishment and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. (2 Chronicles 29:6-8)

Ahaz, in turning to other gods, had stripped and boarded up the temple. As a consequence, judgment fell and the people suffered. Hezekiah set to work. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. He repaired the doors, reinstated the priests, had them take out the rubbish, cleanse and sanctify the house of the Lord. He commanded the priests to offer to God the burnt offering accompanied by the song of the Lord. Hezekiah then issued an invitation for all in Judah and Israel to come and celebrate Passover, the covenant meal together.

Do not be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary ...that the fierceness of His wrath may be turned away from you.¹⁰⁹

In some places the carriers of this message were mocked and scorned, nevertheless some humbled themselves and came.

We are also told that

the hand of the LORD was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to do the commandment of the

¹⁰⁹ 2 Chronicles 30:8

king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD.¹¹⁰

The blessings abound!

Soon a great congregation assembled to keep the Passover, the covenant meal. There were seven days of great gladness and singing with loud instruments. The joy in Jerusalem was huge, the celebrations continued another seven days. Nothing like this had happened since the time of Solomon. We read:

...Their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.¹¹¹

This is just as God said it would be when Solomon dedicated the house of the Lord.¹¹² The blessings that followed were great. There were many healings, the worship of foreign gods in outlying cities ceased, people gave generously, the various offerings and feasts were reinstated along with the teaching of the law and there was a miraculous defeat of the armies of Assyria. Reconciliation had taken place. Hezekiah had not been daunted by a 250 year division between the tribes. As we look back on approximately 500 years of fragmentation and division, particularly in the Protestant church, this story can teach and inspire us to do what Hezekiah did; to cast vision for and build the house of the Lord for the honour and praise of His name in our cities. The blessings will follow!

¹¹⁰ 2 Chronicles 30:12

¹¹¹ 2 Chronicles 30:27

¹¹² 2 Chronicles 7:14,15

The impossible possible!

Many of us, like Hezekiah, may not have had the mentoring we could have had, we may even have had more than our fair share of trials and disappointments, but these should not deter us. What was totally impossible for Hezekiah to achieve in his own strength was possible as he obeyed God's word to him to cast vision for and restore the house of the Lord.¹¹³ Though many people accepted the status quo, this young man could not. Similarly there is a generation arising today who know that something is wrong, that the church in many places does not have God's blessing as in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. They have not accepted the status quo and are arising in a similar manner to Hezekiah, whose passionate vision for a restored temple and reconciliation became a reality.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Other Biblical models for the house of the Lord can be found in 2 Chronicles 15, 2 Kings 22, 23

¹¹⁴ Living in reality is necessary in continuing to lay foundations for the House of the Lord for the sake of future generations.

PART C

BRING BLESSING
TO THE CITY
AND
BEYOND



13

HONOUR CIVIC LEADERS AND SERVE THE CITY

In many places today there is an increasing momentum for church and secular leaders to work together. Positive things are happening as the church connects with, honours and serves community leaders.

The combination locks

Brian Pickering, former bank manager and current National Coordinator of the Australian Prayer Network, gained greater understanding from the Lord when he heard God say to him: “I created cities. I am going to teach you to take a city. I want you to see a

city the way I see a city. Brian, consider a bank vault. Cities are like a bank vault. Just as a bank vault is designed to be a safe place for things of value, so My intention is for cities to be places where people, whom I value, can be protected and kept safe. Brian, tell Me, why does a bank have two combination locks?"

Brian answered: "Because no one person can be trusted!"

Romans 13:1 tells us that there is no governing authority apart from God. They are in fact appointed by God to be His ministers. As we, the church, honour and serve both church and secular leaders as such, so the two combination locks begin to open our cities to the favour and blessing of God.¹¹⁵

Concerning the connection between the church and civic authorities, John Bond, Church of Christ pastor in Perth, Australia, writes:

This movement is grounded biblically both in the history of cooperation between rulers of state and temple¹¹⁶ and the positive place of pagan authorities in God's purposes for Israel.¹¹⁷ In reconciling all of creation to God,¹¹⁸ Christ abolished the sacred /secular division and opened up all the spheres of the world to the divine purposes. All governing authorities are appointed by God for our common

¹¹⁵ From a teaching by Brian Pickering, used with his permission

¹¹⁶ Ezra with Nehemiah; Zerubbabel with Joshua:(Haggai 1:12; 2:2)

¹¹⁷ 2 Chronicles 36:22- 23; Isaiah 44:28

¹¹⁸ Colossians 1:20

good¹¹⁹ and are to be the subjects of prayer as a matter of priority.¹²⁰ Spirit-led and comprehensive cooperation with all levels of government and public interest e.g. education, police, social welfare, is to be developed by the church. This will increasingly bring the favour of God on both church and nation.¹²¹

Casey, Melbourne

This cooperation between church and civic leaders is well illustrated in the city of Casey, Melbourne, Australia (population 230,000). A good number of pastors in this city meet every Wednesday morning to pray. The effects from this unity and prayer have been far-reaching. Under the banner of 'The Church of Casey' they have been able, in various ways, to minister effectively into the city. Pastors from this network have been invited to pray every fortnight for the Casey city council before its meeting and have been asked by council to appoint a chaplain to its 700 employees.

Because Casey has the highest level of domestic violence in Melbourne, the Federal government allocated half a million dollars for a city program that would begin to address this problem. The government asked Casey's city council to nominate the

¹¹⁹ Romans 13:1 -7; 1 Pet 2:13 -15

¹²⁰ 1 Timothy 2:1 -4

¹²¹ John Bond "Twelve Distinctives for the Church Today"
www.oneheart.org.au

organisation which it considered the best to drive the program. The pastors network was chosen to head up the three-year program. Four churches with strong ethnic connections agreed to pilot the project for twelve months, with another sixty churches to join the following year.

The church in Casey also serves effectively in local primary schools. Graeme Cann, who helps lead the pastors network there says:

Doors are wide open, as churches have adopted schools. Christians are in schools every week, for instance as teacher aides for kids who don't qualify for aid but who need help. Some teach hobbies, usually to kids who don't have grandparents. Others run a 'Kids Hope' program developed by World Vision, mentoring children from broken homes one-on-one for an hour.¹²² All go into schools on behalf of the church of the city.¹²³

Indigenous Leaders in Toowoomba

Recently Aboriginal Elders in our city called on church leaders to pray with them following the deaths of two of their young people. When about seventy people gathered to pray, one senior Aboriginal leader explained to the white folk present how difficult it had been many years before, for Aborigines to make the transition from rural, camp life to urban, city life. Commenting on the recent deaths, he said young

¹²² www.worldvision.com.au/getinvolved/kha/

¹²³ TCVideo 2006 office@tcchurch.com.au

people should be saying goodbye to their seniors, not older ones saying goodbye to the younger ones.

As those present heard this cry of pain, their hearts melted and many prayed tearfully and fervently for the needs of the city's indigenous community. It was an important step in the process of understanding and healing for the wider community and a significant day in the life of our city.

A mayor's breakfast

In 1992, the mayor of Toowoomba was invited to attend the Friday morning pastors prayer meeting. After relating his needs and receiving prayer, he was asked whether he would consider hosting an annual mayoral prayer breakfast for the city.

After asking, "What the ... is a prayer breakfast?" he was quick to set about organising what has since become a major, annual event in the life of our city! For well over a decade it has had an average attendance of about one thousand people representing most spheres of the Toowoomba community. Local establishments have generously donated food and service and all profits have been given to organisations that care for those in need. The speakers have been prominent Christians from different walks of life, from different parts of Australia, all with timely, and nearly always, Christ-honouring, messages.

Caring for others

The current mayor has had a long-standing concern for troubled and homeless young people. Speaking to a Christian women's group she commended the good work of churches but asked that they 'do more good in the community'. Unbeknown to the mayor, God had already been speaking to a pastor's wife, Val Ruyters. Val had received clear instructions from the Lord to give \$500 to the mayor for work with needy youth of the city. Upon hearing this, the mayor invited Val to her office to present the cheque.

For some time Val had been concerned to help bridge the gap between 'the spiritual and the secular'. One step in this direction, she thought, would be weekend camps for needy teenage girls. After much prayer, born out of a desire to link with the mayor's passion for the youth of the city, Val approached the mayor who was excited about the concept, and volunteered to play a part in it. These camps have now been held four times a year. They are known as 'Girls Getaways' and are sponsored by local businessmen and church members and facilitated by older and younger Christians. With lots of fun, food and open sharing, the program includes things like makeovers and photo shoots. They have been used to bring comfort and hope to about two hundred young girls thus far.

Since that time, Val has felt led to start a ministry, called 'Serious Fun', that reaches out to the mothers of these girls. These mothers have been invited to a range of events that include special dinners, camps, coffee and cake nights, 'pampering nights', plus

‘weekend getaways’, all connecting women with women. This again has brought a revelation of Christ’s love and hope to those experiencing hurt and pain.

Another program that some schools have adopted is called “Shine”.¹²⁴ High school and primary school girls are given the option of attending an eight week course where they acquire skills related to self worth, learn to set goals in life and develop a positive outlook. A number of the girls attending have become Christians and now attend various churches.

City women

Several other city-wide ministries have come under an umbrella organisation called ‘City Women’ headed up by Pastor Letitia Shelton.¹²⁵ Regular gatherings are held to mobilise women of all denominations in Toowoomba to work together through established programs to support and encourage non-Christian women and girls who are hurting.

Some of these ministries include ‘House of Nathan’, a ministry that provides accommodation and care for young expectant mothers. Needy young mothers are taught living skills that give a foundation for motherhood and life in general. ‘Fresh Hope’ is a ministry

¹²⁴ The “Shine” program, launched by Hillsong Youth Services, was designed to help young females in schools and community centres across Sydney, Australia.

¹²⁵ www.toowoombacitywomen.com

that takes in young mothers and their children who have lived on the streets and experienced drug abuse or domestic violence. “Kissed the Girls and Made Them Cry”, Lisa Bevere’s teaching (on DVD) helps girls find true intimacy with God and their peers, and encourages healthy dialogue between women of all ages. A ‘Young Mums Group’ cares for and meets the social needs of young mothers. ‘Mentoring’ is a program designed to bring love and security into the lives of younger children in schools, by connecting them with adopted ‘grand-parents’ for half an hour a week. These are some of the expressions of love and service to the city of Toowoomba and its civic leaders.

More city stories

Australia

In Launceston, Tasmania, Christians approached the chief officer of the local fire brigade inquiring how they might be of help. The officer told them that many elderly people were not replacing the batteries in their smoke alarms. Christians combined to visit the homes of the elderly, offering free batteries and free installation. They were received warmly with cups of tea!

New Zealand

Greymouth, New Zealand. In Greymouth on the west coast of New Zealand’s South Island, the local mayor asked for the churches’ help in celebrating a major national event, Waitangi Day, by organising a yearly

picnic for the town. The first one had an attendance of about one thousand people, the fourth one saw two thousand attending, about one quarter of the town's population. Fifteen hundred got a free meal. This and other initiatives have caused the church of Greymouth to gain greater credibility in the community.

Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

Since 2004 a group of businessmen and church leaders in Lower Hutt, N.Z. has met for prayer, and from that a group called 'Hutt Impact'¹²⁶ has emerged. This has led to the combining of church and business leaders' resources to positively influence the community with hope and godly values.

The vision of this group is:

Christians living our faith, sharing resources to impact the Hutt with Jesus Christ

It has as its mission statement:

Connect business people and churches to fund and serve community programs that bring hope and purpose

Hutt Impact has identified several spheres that the Christian community can influence: youth, children, family, community and health/social services, media, arts and entertainment, government (local, regional and national), church and ministry, education and schools, business and professional enterprise. It is

¹²⁶ From a PowerPoint presentation given by Seth Fawcett at a Roundtable Conference Rotorua N.Z. March 2007

facilitated by a core group of business and church leaders, with additional facilitators in each sphere who run regular meetings for those within their area of influence. The initial process is to bring people together in a network, firstly to pray and encourage each other and then to look at ways of increasing Christian influence.

Philippines - A story of a different sort!

This story came to hand at the time of writing as an email. Pastor Hector deLeon, leader of the Philippines Pastors Prayer Summits, tells of how the churches of one province worked together to support the election of a righteous man in local elections in a province where pastors prayer summits have helped establish strong relationships between church leaders. Hector shares as follows:

About three months before the 2007, May 14 elections, the people of that province did not have much of a choice between the two gubernatorial candidates. One was the incumbent who people widely suspected of pocketing the quarrying fees which amounted to millions of pesos weekly. The other candidate was Mrs. X, a person of notoriety.

A search committee of upright citizens was formed to look for and encourage a righteous candidate to run. No one accepted the challenge, as probably a lot of them were afraid. Mr X, the gambling lord, is known to deal harshly with his enemies.

Because no one wanted to take up the challenge to run, the head of the committee, a Catholic priest, a comparative unknown, was forced to run. He had

no money and even a number of his superiors were against his running, saying priests should not enter politics.

Most of the people in the province got excited when they learned that the priest was running. They learned that he was righteous and well liked in his parish.

The pastors had to check the priest for themselves, calling him to a dialogue. When they were satisfied with his stand on most issues, the church went to work.

The pastors, each in their towns and cities, started praying fervently. They went on prayer assignments, for the governor's office, for the local commission on electoral offices, for the police and military detachments etc., praying that righteous officials would be elected and that cheating be wiped out. They even praised and worshipped for 72 hours straight, just before the elections.

The rest is history. Despite the millions of pesos flooding the electorate from the two wealthy candidates, the financially poor priest won. The church prayed fervently. The people overwhelmingly supported him financially and in every other way. The people guarded the votes in the precincts to make sure they were properly counted.

The whole of the Philippines considers the priest's election a miracle! The church leaders continue to pray and dialogue with him. The new administration now collects one million peso daily in quarrying fees. It collects in one month what the previous administration collected in one year. That's righteousness!

14

CARE FOR THE POOR AND NEEDY

Our primary concern

We cannot overlook the poor and needy in our midst and expect God to bless our endeavours to reach a city. We have already made mention of caring for people in need. God's concern for the poor and needy is one of the main themes throughout Scripture.

Here are four of the approximately two thousand verses in Scripture related to meeting the needs of the impoverished:

*The righteous considers the cause of the poor.
(Proverbs 29:7)*

*If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the
afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the
darkness, and your darkness shall be as the
noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)*

*He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and
He will pay back what he has given. (Proverbs 19:17)*

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: execute true justice,
show mercy and compassion, everyone to his
brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless,
the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his
heart against his brother. (Zechariah 7:9,10)*

The sin of Sodom

One of the most challenging Scriptures related to caring for the poor, and one that helped prompt a whole chapter on this subject, is found in Ezekiel 16:48-50, where the Lord rebukes the people of Jerusalem for their spiritual harlotry as He compares them with Sodom.

*“As I live” says the LORD God, “neither your sister
Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and
your daughters have done. Look, this was the
iniquity of your sister Sodom: she and her daughter
had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of
idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the
poor and needy. And they were haughty and
committed abomination before Me; therefore I took
them away as I saw fit.”*

We often link Sodom’s awful judgment with its sexual sin. Here it would seem Sodom’s judgment came, in

part, because of its failure to take care of the poor and needy!

The way of righteousness

The responsibility to defend the rights of the poor is an essential part of God's way of righteousness for His people.¹²⁷ It is also His way of expressing Christ's love to the wider community. Old Testament prophets condemned Israel for turning their back on the poor. Amos rebuked Israel for buying

*the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals -*¹²⁸

According to Zechariah 7, one reason for Israel's exile was their failure to care for the poor and needy in their midst. The New Testament continues to reveal God's concern for the poor. Jesus was anointed to preach good news to the poor. (Luke 4:18) He shared about a kingdom banquet for the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. (Luke 14:13) The New Testament church made care for the needy a primary concern. (Acts 2:44,45)

¹²⁷ Missionary to India, E. Stanley Jones writes, "The social gospel divorced from personal salvation is like a body without a soul; the message of personal salvation without a social dimension is like a soul without a body. The former is a corpse, the latter is a ghost". Quoted by Charles Roesel "Meeting Needs and Sharing Christ" Atkinson and Roesel LifeWay Press 1995

¹²⁸ Amos 8:6

Early Christianity and the poor

Many people have had the impression that the Roman Empire became Christian almost overnight following Emperor Constantine's legendary encounter in 312 AD with a flaming cross in the sky and the inscription 'by this sign you will conquer'.¹²⁹ A contrary and well substantiated view is that the change began while the Roman Empire was self destructing through moral collapse. The people of The Way, the Christians, were rescuing abandoned babies, finding jobs and homes for the displaced, feeding the elderly and taking care of the children and the sick when the plagues came. The early church continued to prioritise its ministry to the poor and needy, despite some of its members dying as they selflessly served those in need. Notwithstanding this, Christians grew in number and Rome subsequently became Christian.

Professor Rodney Stark, author of "The Rise and Fall of Christianity", says:

Paganism collapsed under its own sinful weight and Christianity had simply been Christianity... Christianity served as a revitalisation movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world... Christianity revitalised life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent problems.

To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities

¹²⁹ In hoc signo vinces

filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachment. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fire, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services... For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities tolerable.¹³⁰

Throughout history

Throughout church history most revivals of faith have been accompanied by expressions of care for the needy. This was part and parcel of the ministry of well known men and women of faith.

John Chrysostom (330-379) was renowned throughout the civilised world as an anointed preacher of the gospel. But his chief concern was not his preaching but his service to the poor. He established many Christian charities and hospitals for the destitute.

Augustine (354-430) changed the face of the church with his inspired teachings, but he also changed the lives of many in Northern Africa by establishing works of charity in thirteen cities.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) launched not only one of the greatest monastic movements of all time but also established a charitable network throughout

¹³⁰ Rodney Stark "The Rise and Fall of Christianity" HarperCollins 1997

Europe to care for the poor. That network of hostels, hospices and hospitals has continued to this day.

John Calvin (1509-1564) helped make Geneva famous as the centre of the great Reformation. In so doing, however, he also transformed Geneva into a safe haven for Europe's poor, persecuted, dispossessed and distressed.¹³¹

The list goes on and on up to the many wonderful and varied, caring ministries across the world in this present day.

God's people caring

All city-reaching initiatives will need to include expressions of love and care for the marginalised. Again, John Bond writes:

Any state, city or shire will only fulfil its destiny when it is committed to meet the needs of the poor.¹³² God's blessing rests upon those who take an interest in the weak and marginalised.¹³³ For too long the church generally has shunned the poor; in response we recognise our clear responsibility of not despising our poor neighbours both within our country and beyond.¹³⁴ God's people will care about

¹³¹ George Grant "Bringing in the Sheaves: Transforming Poverty into Productivity" Wolgemuth and Hyatt 1988

¹³² Galatians 2:10

¹³³ Psalm 41:1-3

¹³⁴ Proverbs 14:20, 21

issues of justice and mercy – the renewed church will lead the way in this ministry.^{135 136}

It is humbling to hear of, and sometimes witness first-hand, the sacrificial way in which Christians in many places are endeavouring to help the less fortunate, either in their own city or in other places. Organisations such as World Vision, Compassion and others enable us to support individuals and communities in poorer nations. At the same time, for all of us, there will be people with real needs, perhaps next door, in our street, in our neighbourhood or in prison. While we in developed nations are well cared for with welfare programs, rest homes, hospitals and the like, there are still people who are finding it difficult to make ends meet. There are still people who need some sort of help, such as the aged and infirm, the homeless, those with serious or chronic illnesses, single mothers or fathers struggling to cope. This all should be seen as an essential part of the vision of a city-wide church. How can we, as the one church of our city, target and help meet the need of our city?

Accepting the challenge

In **Fremantle, Western Australia**, Julie Hollett, with her husband Wayne of New Life Christian Community, was asked if their church would pay the bill for a man whose electricity was disconnected. Julie was in two

¹³⁵ Proverbs 29:7; Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 58:6,7

¹³⁶ John Bond "Twelve Distinctives for the Church Today"
www.oneheart.org.au

minds as to what to do. If the church paid the bill, others in similar situations would come expecting the same treatment. As she was struggling in prayer over the issue a few days later, Julie felt God speaking the following words: “Declare a year of Jubilee for Fremantle.”

A vision grew in Julie’s spirit which involved representing the extravagant and unconditional love of God to the entire city of Fremantle. Julie, Wayne and the church leadership accepted the challenge. They agreed to approach other churches, the mayor, business people and welfare agencies to establish a fund from which to pay the debts of people in serious need. The concept was endorsed enthusiastically and led to a week of blessing for the city with radical and extravagant acts of kindness including paying of outstanding electricity, gas and rental bills.

In Moerewa, Bay of Islands, New Zealand

Nghau and Debbie Davis returned to their small home town to find it in a state of despair and apathy. Some time previously, as a result of riots over disputes at the local freezing works, the town had been vandalised. Every window in the main street was broken. With many socio-economic problems, morale in town was low. The Davises knew God had brought them home to help turn things around. They accepted the challenge and have worked hard with others to set up programs that motivated young people and improved family life. Community trusts have been set up to enable shops to be renovated. The main street is neat and welcoming with many smiling, happy faces. It has

been referred to in the NZ parliament several times as a model community for other small towns in New Zealand.

Toowoomba Some congregations operate community service programs, as mentioned previously. One congregation has a program called 'The Basement' which, among other things, serves lunches on a daily basis to needy people (about 10,000 annually), some of whom are in the homeless category. Another group called 'City Connect' works with municipal and business leaders, facilitating the transition of overseas workers, refugees and migrants into our city and surrounding regions. In practical ways they are able to extend the love of Christ to these people, many of whom are lonely with little in the way of material possessions and only a smattering of English with which to communicate.

As the church of the city becomes one, and the various ministries to the needy become better known, Christians from different congregations who identify with and wish to help one particular type of ministry, can do so. Together we can achieve much.

15

HAVE FAITH, BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Enlarge the place of your tent

The Bible is a manual for dominion. God's original mandate to mankind has never changed.

*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.*¹³⁷

Revelation 22 gives us a glimpse of the final outcome, a river in the earth, fruitful trees, the leaves of which bring healing to the nations. John also sees a city, the

¹³⁷ Genesis 1:28

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*formations point the way to a larger, more satisfying meal to come.*¹³⁹

Isaiah tells us:

*...darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising.*¹⁴⁰

A message of encouragement

Through John, God brought encouragement to seven city churches who had their backs to the wall, by telling them of a temple and a river to come, flowing in the earth, producing leaves and fruit along its banks for the healing of nations.¹⁴¹ This was a message intended to hearten and strengthen the faith of the early church and the church today to be fruitful and multiply.

How does God intend for the church of our city to be increasingly fruitful within it and beyond? Ian Shelton has a wall-hanging displayed prominently in his office. On it is written: “The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that our aim is too low and we reach it!”

Isaiah 54 is a significant Bible chapter for many of us in Toowoomba. This passage of Scripture has often

¹³⁹ George Otis www.sentinelgroup.org

¹⁴⁰ Isaiah 60:2,3

¹⁴¹ Revelation 22:2

been the text from which leaders have ministered to expand vision in and beyond our city. It begins:

“Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not travailed with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman”, says the LORD. “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your habitations; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited.
(verses 1-3)

Peace and fruitfulness

Can we expect to see multiplication and fruitfulness both within and beyond our city, as the house of the Lord is established, the place where He is to be glorified?

Let us look again at the book of Haggai. When the temple in Haggai’s time lay in ruins, he said:

This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built”.¹⁴²

They were told:

“Consider your waysYou looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. Because of My house that is in ruins, while everyone of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens

¹⁴² Haggai 1:2

*above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit.*¹⁴³

How did the people respond? In holy fear, they took heed to the word of the Lord that came through Haggai and began rebuilding. They heard and obeyed. Notice what transpired after the temple was prioritised. God covenanted that He would remain in the midst of His people, He would bestow His peace (shalom) and grant fruitfulness. He promised a day when the temple would be filled with His glory and all nations would come to the Desire of all Nations.¹⁴⁴

At the foot of the cross

We have yet to see what God will do through a city-wide church that will simply relate, pray and serve in one accord at the foot of the cross. We too can experience God's blessing and great fruitfulness as we, His people, commit to see His house built in each of our cities.

History affords examples of Christian communities that have modelled oneness. It is hard to think unity, prayer and servanthood and not to think of the eighteenth century European community in Herrnhut. This small community, with its fervent love and willingness to be a servant to all, left a lasting mark on the church world-wide. We are indebted to Count von Zinzendorf and the Christians who belonged to this

¹⁴³ Haggai 1:7-10

¹⁴⁴ Haggai 2:7

group. Von Zinzendorf, their standout leader, had a passion to see the oneness that Jesus prayed for. He maintained:

*True unity is all about a heart connection and intimacy, first with Jesus, the Lamb of God, then with our fellow Christians.*¹⁴⁵

As Psalm 133 would indicate, pursuing heart connect-edness, first with Jesus, then with fellow Christians, has to be an important key in inviting the manifest presence of God into our cities. As we prioritise relationships, walk in truth, pray and worship together, we can believe for His blessing and increased fruitfulness.

Perhaps the greatest legacy left to us by the early Moravians is their example in living daily at the foot of the cross. They chose to follow the Lamb, to serve, to be slaves if necessary, to be buried grains of wheat that would bear much fruit.

Prepare the way

Jesus said He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.¹⁴⁶ Do we have faith for this?¹⁴⁷ (next page)

¹⁴⁵ A. J. Lewis writes in "Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer" SCM Press 1962: "Just as Christ was the bond of unity in his (Zinzendorf's) own life, so was Christ the bond of unity with all Christians. In Christ all men are one. No peculiarity of creed or organisation need separate those who call upon Christ as their Lord and Saviour."

¹⁴⁶ Matthew 16:18

Perhaps, when you survey the church in your city you feel isolated and alone like Elijah who had to be encouraged with the fact that there were yet 7,000 faithful. Do you feel like Ezekiel felt when he was set down in a valley full of dry bones and contemplated the possibility of them living and coming together? In reply to the question:

Can these bones live?

¹⁴⁷ Jonathan Edwards, an 18th Century Puritan said: “The visible kingdom of Satan shall be overthrown, and the kingdom of God shall set up on the ruins of it, everywhere throughout the habitable globe...”

J.A.W. Neander , writing in the late 17th Century, said : “Strong and certain was the conviction of Christians that the church would come forth triumphant out of its conflicts.”

Goodwin, writing between 1600 and 1670, said : “There will come a time when the generality of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, shall come to Jesus Christ. He hath had but little takings of the world yet, but He will have before He hath done.”

Charles Spurgeon, speaking on Psalm 86:9, which says: “All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee O Lord...”, makes this rather tongue-in-cheek statement : “David was not a believer in the theory that the world would grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness and idolatry. Earth’s sun is to go down amid tenfold night, if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for a day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Saviour, shall worship Thee alone, O God, and shall glorify Thy name. The modern notion had greatly dampened the zeal of the church and the sooner it is shown to be unscriptural, the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honours God, nor inspires the Church with ardour. Far hence be it driven”.

I. Murray “The Puritan Hope” Banner of Truth 1971

Ezekiel wisely responded:

O LORD God, you know!

For him the seemingly impossible became possible as he prophesied the word of the Lord. Amazingly he saw the breath of life come into the bones; they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.¹⁴⁸

More and more, out of humility, unity, worship and prayer, God will have an exceedingly great army, a prevailing church, bearing witness to Christ in the cities and nations of the world. Concerning the purposes of God in our cities and in the nations, Isaiah 9:7 says:

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Therefore, Isaiah 62:10 is an exhortation for the people of God to press on:

Go through, go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples! Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world: say to the daughter of Zion, surely your salvation is coming...

Hebrews 10:25 from The Message exhorts us to

¹⁴⁸ Ezekiel 37:10

spur each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.

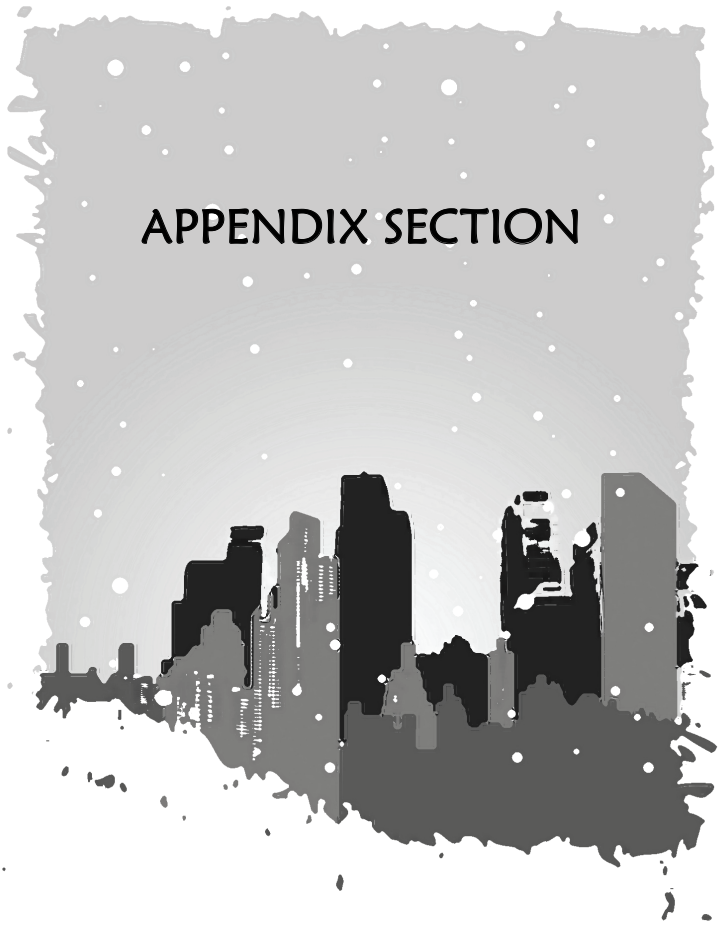
Francis Frangipane brings us this exhortation:

Be encouraged, the darkness, chaos, emptiness is not any more of a deterrent to the Almighty than the pre-creation void that awaited Him in the beginning. Arise, we are standing on the threshold of God's glory.¹⁴⁹

May we be encouraged to prepare a place for the Lord to dwell, to be that temple by loving one another, praying together and heeding His Word. May we believe to see a 'House for His Glory', a place for Him to be gloriously enthroned in each of our cities and across our nations.

¹⁴⁹ Francis Frangipane www.inchristsimage.org

APPENDIX SECTION



APPENDIX 1

POST-FLOOD CITIES

Genesis 11:1-9

Following the flood, men said:

Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves ...

This man-centred initiative aroused the Lord's concern

...and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language...

The synergy contemplated would have had disastrous consequences, so much so that it brought swift divine intervention.

Abraham and Cities

Genesis 18 & 19

Abraham enquires of God concerning **Sodom** and **Gomorrah**. We may draw from this passage certain conclusions

- 1 Cities are accountable to God.
- 2 Sin defiles cities.
- 3 God judges cities.
- 4 Righteousness delivers cities.
- 5 God hears those who intercede for cities.
- 6 God looks for people to stand in the gap for our cities.

Jacob and a City

Genesis 28

After fleeing from Esau, Jacob (the deceiver) comes to the city of **Luz**. Here Jacob encounters the Lord in a dream as

he sleeps with his head on a stone. He sees a ladder, its top reaching to heaven, angels are ascending and descending and the Lord is at the top of the ladder. The Lord promises the land to Jacob and his descendants. Jacob exclaims:

“How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God...”

He then changes the name of the place from Luz to **Bethel** which means House of God.

Moses and Cities

Recounting Israel’s journey in the wilderness, Moses reminded the people: (Deuteronomy 2:36 and 3:4)

“There was not one city was too strong for us; The LORD our God delivered all to us.”

‘There was not a city we did not take from them.’

Central to God’s plan for Israel was the possession of cities.

Joshua and Cities

The land was described by cities. In Joshua 18:9 they *wrote the survey in a book in seven parts by cities.*

The land was possessed city by city.

The land was inherited by cities.
(Joshua 19:16,23,31)

according to their families, these cities with their villages...

David, the Psalmist and Cities

2 Samuel 6:12

David went and brought up the ark of God ... to the City of David with gladness.

Psalm 132 reveals David's passion to find a dwelling place for the mighty God of Jacob in a city.

Psalm 60:9

Who will bring me into the strong city?

Psalm 72:16b

Those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

Psalm 107:4

*They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way;
they found no city to dwell in.*

Psalm 122:3,6

*Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact
together...pray for the peace of **Jerusalem***

Proverbs and Cities

Proverbs 8: 1-3

*Does not wisdom cry out ... she cries out by the
gates, at the entry of the city ...*

Proverbs 9:3b

*she (wisdom) cries out from the highest places of
the city*

Proverbs 11:10,11

*When it goes well with the righteous, the city
rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there is
shouting. By the blessing of the upright the city is
exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the
wicked.*

Proverbs 21:22

*A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings
down the trusted stronghold.*

Ecclesiastes and Cities

Ecclesiastes 9:14-15

*There was a little city with few men in it; and a
great king came against it, besieged it, and built*

great snares around it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

Isaiah and Cities

Isaiah 14:4b Concerning **Babylon**.

How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased!

Isaiah 14:31 Concerning **Philistia**.

Wail O gate! Cry, O city!

Isaiah 17:1 Concerning **Damascus**

Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap.

The word ‘city’ is mentioned more than 40 times in Isaiah. It is used sometimes to identify God’s people.

Isaiah 60:14b

...they shall call you The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Jeremiah and Cities

Jeremiah 26:2

*...speak to all the **cities of Judah** ... all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word. Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way...*

Jeremiah 29:7 To those Jews who remained captive in **Babylon**:

And seek the peace (shalom) of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

Jonah and Cities

Jonah 4:11

*...should I not pity **Nineveh**, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand*

persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left and also much livestock?

Just as God had compassion for the city of Nineveh so God has compassion for the cities of our day

Jesus and Cities

Luke 10:1

The Lord sent them (His disciples) two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

Jesus preached to (Luke 4:43); compared (Matthew 11:21); rebuked (Matthew 11:20); wept over and prophesied over cities (Luke 19:41-44). He told of men being rewarded with cities. (Luke 19:17-19)

Acts and Cities

Jerusalem The gospel was first proclaimed in this city.

Acts 5:28

...You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine...

Samaria

Acts 8:5,8,14

...There was great joy in that city ... the apostles ... heard that Samaria had received the word of God.

Antioch

Acts 11:19-26

News of a large number of conversions reached Jerusalem. Disciples were first called Christians in Antioch

Ephesus

Acts 19:11-12,18-20 Here there were unusual miracles, the Word prevailed.

Then, Acts 19:10

All who dwelt in Asia ... heard the Word of the Lord Jesus.

Cities were strategic. The gospel advanced city by city.

The Epistles and Cities

As already mentioned, many of the epistles were written to the one church of a city.

Romans 1:7a ... *to all who are in **Rome**, beloved of God...*

1 Corinthians 1:2a

*To the church of God which is at **Corinth** ...*

2 Corinthians 1:1b

*To the church of God which is at **Corinth** ...*

Ephesians 1:1b

*...To the saints who are in **Ephesus** ...*

Philippians 1:b

*...To all the saints in Christ Jesus ... in **Philippi**...*

Colossians 1:2a

*...To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in **Colossae**...*

1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1 ... *To the church of **Thessalonica** ...*

['Churches' (plural) is used only in reference to a wider region or province: in Judea, Galilee, Samaria, (Acts 9:31), in Syria, Cilicia (Acts 15:41), in Asia (1 Corinthians 16:19; Revelation 1:4) and Galatia (Galatians 1:2)]

Revelation and Cities

The revelation given to John was addressed to the churches of seven cities – **Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia** and **Laodicea**.

(Revelation 2-3)

APPENDIX 2

From International Fellowship of Transformation Partners Definition & Values 2006 www.sentinelgroup.org

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

George Otis, founder and director of The Sentinel Group, says:

A transformed community is a neighbourhood, city or nation whose values and institutions have been overrun by the grace and presence of God, a place where divine fire has not merely been summoned, it has fallen, a society in which natural evolutionary change has been disrupted by invasive supernatural power, a culture that has been impacted comprehensively and undeniably by the Kingdom of God, a location where kingdom values are celebrated publicly and passed on to future generations.

Community transformation is indicated when:

Political leaders publicly acknowledge their sin and dependence on God.

(2 Kings 11:17-18; 23:2; Jonah 3:6-9)

New **laws, curricula, and business practices** are put into effect.

(2 Chronicles 19:4-10; Nehemiah 10:31)

The **natural environment** is restored to its original life-nurturing state.

(Leviticus 26:4-5; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Ezekiel 34:27; 36:29, 30)

Economic conditions improve and lead to a discernible lessening of poverty.

(2 Chronicles 17:3-5; Psalm 144:14; Isaiah 60:5; Amos 9:13)

There is a marked change in **social** entertainment and vices, as kingdom values are integrated into the rhythm of daily life.

(Ezra 10:1-4; Nehemiah 8:10, 16; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Acts 19:17-20)

Crime and corruption diminish throughout the community.

(2 Kings 12:13-15; Nehemiah 5:6-12; Isaiah 60:17-18)

Volunteerism increases as Christians recognise their responsibility to heal and undergird the community.

(Isaiah 58:10-12; 61:1-4)

Restored hope and joy lead to a decline in **divorce, bankruptcy and suicide.**

(Nehemiah 12:27-28, 43; Isaiah 54:11-14; 61:3,7; Jeremiah 30:17-19; 31:11-13; Hosea 2:15)

The spiritual nature of the growing socio-political renewal becomes a hot topic in the **secular media.**

(2 Chronicles 20:29; Nehemiah 6:16; Isaiah 55:5; Ezekiel 36:36; Acts 19:17)

Overwhelmed by the goodness of God, grateful Christians take the embers of revival into **surrounding communities and nations.**

(2 Chronicles 17:9; Isaiah 61:6; Acts 11:20-26)

APPENDIX 3

A PRAYED-FOR CITY

Phil Miglioratti, of the National Pastors Prayer Network, USA, wrote “Living in a Prayed-For City”, 1999, www.nppn.org/Articles/Article020.htm

Here are excerpts:

What is a prayed-for city?

- a suburb where every household is assigned to someone in prayer
- a neighbourhood whose streets have been prayer walked
- a community where believers gather in homes to pray for their neighbours
- a city of congregations who have caught the vision to pray for by name every man and woman, youth and child ... so that ... they would be open to and interested in the good news of eternal life in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

What might it be like to live in a prayed-for city?

Would Mayors and Councillors be favourable to new church plants?

Would families begin to eat meals together?

Would school classrooms become places of respect and learning?

Would neighbours begin to communicate and help one another?

Would congregations begin to change the spiritual atmosphere by serving the community?

Would children and youth begin to look to the Church for entertainment and enlightenment?

Would the police be known as those who serve and protect all people?

Would Christians pray over people they meet on the streets, in stores, and at school?

Would spiritual awakening be the lead story on the evening news?

What would it take to live in a prayed-for city?

- Pastors taking the time to meet together with Jesus in a pastors prayer group
- Congregations committing themselves to becoming houses of prayer
- Prayer coordinators in every church beginning new prayer groups and ministries
- Concerts of prayer in every district bringing several congregations together for prayer
- Church members in every church being mobilised into being lighthouses of prayer
- Pastors declaring prayer as the basis of ministry, not an added or specialised ministry
- Christian business people meeting in office buildings to pray for co-workers

May our prayer be:

Lord we ask for the joy of living in a prayed-for city, so that those who may not even know that they need you, may begin to search for the One who is their only way to truth and life. We ask that You may give us a hunger to see our city transformed.

APPENDIX 4

POSSIBLE PRAYER INITIATIVES

A weekly pastors/leaders prayer meeting: Some pastors/leaders prayer meetings are fortnightly or even monthly. However, with the challenge of reaching our cities before us, I suggest that regular worship and prayer together needs to be prioritised. When leaders gathered in Antioch to worship and pray, the Holy Spirit was able to apprehend certain individuals and reveal His mind to those present. These regular times of worship and prayer need to be protected, that is, not given to prolonged discussion and the promotion of non city-related agendas.

Extended seasons of prayer for leaders: These can be for a whole day, overnight or for two to four days, in the form of a prayer summit. Obviously these types of prayer gatherings have to be planned well in advance for a time that is suitable for as many leaders as possible. Thought needs to be given to securing suitable accommodation with meals provided, (sometimes leaders choose to fast) all at an affordable price. Thought also needs to be given to the worship component, having a worship leader or leaders who are familiar with well-known songs, different worship styles and sensitive to the Spirit's leading.

A regular, usually weekly, prayer meeting for committed pray-ers, from a wide cross-section of the body of Christ. These people pray for issues related to the city and the church in the city. These are seasoned pray-ers who have the endorsement of their pastor. Their leader is someone who is held in high esteem by the city leaders. (Some would even prefer this person to be a senior pastor who is experienced in leading corporate prayer). As this group

learns to hear and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in an atmosphere of trust and transparency, their prayers become more effective. They need to be teachable and open to correction but at the same time recognised and affirmed by pastors generally.

Prayer walking: Praying while walking makes prayer purposeful, informed and stimulating for a variety of reasons. It helps us stay alert. It is difficult to fall asleep praying and walking! In addition there is a great difference between praying for our community from our church or prayer closet and praying for our community walking through it. Both are valuable but prayer walking makes you more aware of those you are trying to reach. You are visually engaging the different parts of your town and are much more aware as to the makeup of specific areas. For example, are there trouble spots? Is this predominantly a family area? Does there appear to be a concentration of the elderly or the poor or the affluent? When praying on location you are more apt to pray more specifically and fervently.

Onsite Praying. An effective way to pray is to pray onsite. This can mean:

- Praying at **city entry points**, that the city will be protected, for instance, from the entry of all forms of evil
- Praying at **sites of notoriety** where sinful behaviour is practised or promoted i.e. massage parlours, pornographic bookstores etc.
- Praying at **sites consecrated** to spiritual purposes, by e.g. Freemasons, occultic and Eastern religious groups, that hinder the light of the Gospel from shining into darkened minds

- Praying at **high points** where the city can be prayed over
- Praying at **sites where tragedies** killings, horrific accidents etc. have occurred
- Praying at our **place of work**. We can pray for the welfare of our work place and for the salvation and general wellbeing of our workmates.

Seasons of Prayer: Special days, evenings or seasons of prayer can be called for by city leaders for the city-wide church. These will have a special focus, perhaps as preparation for a city-wide outreach, a call to repentance, drought relief, local, state or national elections etc.

Houses of Prayer: These houses of prayer facilitating 24/7 prayer are increasingly common all around the world.¹⁵⁰

If this book has sparked questions, comments
or a desire for further dialogue,
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