

## **CITY IMPACT ROUNDTABLE**

Report for the  
“Definitions” Working Group

April 10, 2002

### ***Perspective***

As active practitioners in the city-reaching/transformation paradigm in the United States, we find ourselves twelve years into a groundswell awakening of a multitude of spiritual innovations in the areas of prayer, unity, reconciliation and cooperative partnering in Jesus’ Great Commission to teach and disciple our communities and nation. Here is a sampling of some of the initiatives we are familiar with:

- >> Concerts of Prayer (Bryant)
- >> Pastors Prayer Summits (Aldrich, Dirks, Fuqua)
- >> Reconciliation (Promise Keepers, Dawson)
- >> Prayer & Fasting (Bright)
- >> Prayer Evangelism & City-Reaching (Silvoso)
- >> Church Renewal (Blackaby, Hybels, Warren, etc)
- >> Community Development (Perkins, Carpenter, Bakke)
- >> Spiritual Mapping & Transformation (Otis)
- >> City Reaching (Dennison, Herrington)
- >> Prayerwalking (Hawthorne)
- >> Lighthouse Movement (Vandergriend, MA Coalition)
- >> Apostolic & Prophetic Networks (Wagner, Jacobs, Pierce, etc)
- >> “24/7” Harp & Bowl Ministry (Bickel)
- >> Newly Renovated National Prayer Committee (Bryant et al)

Participants in the CIR would all readily witness to the profound workings of the Spirit of God over the past decade. We have seen a remarkable, steady proliferation of city-reaching and city transformation projects in all types of cities--mega, medium and small. We can document movements towards prayer and unity in rural and regional areas. There has been a clear theological re-discovery of the city church, the geographical integrity and solidarity of saints in a city or regional context (e.g., Romans 1:7). Many leaders are asking: “What must we do together that we cannot accomplish in isolation?” “How do we effectively shepherd our city, and not just our own congregations?” “How do we give concrete measurement to effective kingdom impact in a city?” “How might the Spirit work in our city in ways He has not yet worked because of our disunity and disobedience?”

We are convinced of the need to honestly, accurately assess the current socio-economic reality of our cities, and measure the unfinished tasks (the requirement of good research). And we discover, as we move forward on the journey, our increased dependence on the power of God released through prayer that is desperate, united, fervent and sacrificial.

So here we are, on the journey, a learning community sharing together our passion, and mixed results. While there are causes for encouragement, the hurdles are many, and high.

For example, 1) the struggles to achieve diverse participation from both genders, ethnic groups, denominations and generations, 2) the challenge drawing in the key players in a city context, 3) the tension between the priorities of the local congregation and the call to shepherd the city church, 4) tensions between church and para-church interests and methodologies, 5) funding our endeavors, and 6) fighting the constant distractions and deadening effects of a prosperous, self-sufficient culture.

The Community Impact Roundtable is a task group of the Mission America Coalition, a network of practitioners walking and working together to develop contextual Community Impact models that result in a pre-eminence of desperate prayer, increased unity of mission and vision, increased conversion growth, healthier local congregations, and measurable change in society. CIR is a learning community that is both relational and intentional. We are seeking to discern together what God is doing, then discover the best practices that align our endeavors with His sovereign initiatives. To this end, CIR formally meets two times a year.

## ***Our Assignment***

The assignment of the “Definitions” working group is to offer operative definitions of words and concepts vital to our endeavor to build prototypes where effective, measurable city impact is happening in reality, and not merely discussed in endless forums. We feel it is important to land on some definitive language, and try to get on the proverbial “same page” together. Only two individuals, Tom White and Adam Shields, have worked on this document. We readily admit to our biases. Therefore, we offer the following definitions for immediate, on-site response and input at this consultation (you may begin using your brutal red pens starting now!) There will be obvious omissions—share with us words/concepts not on this current list. On Thursday afternoon, our group (hopefully with fresh wordcrafting volunteers) will work toward a glossary that can be sent out to the wider CIR mailing list for further input and revision. We will incorporate those changes by June 30, and consider our present task completed. The glossary would be distributed at the CIR gathering in October.

## ***Definitions***

### **City**

A geographically specific area designated by any or all of the following: natural boundaries, city limits, municipal incorporation, cultural ethos, school districts, zip codes. Such designations define and determine a clear sense of a sociological “us” as distinct from another clearly determined “them.” (for example, Houston has 31 separate, identifiable municipalities, Melbourne, AUS 28; whereas Southern Tier, New York has four distinct cities, Jamestown, Wellsville, Elmira-Corning and Binghamton, this region exhibits a common, cultural and economic solidarity).

## **Additions & Input**

## **Community Impact**

The measurable supernatural impact of the presence and power of God on human society, sacred and secular. In the church, this is characterized by increased holiness of life, accelerated conversion growth, reconciliation in relationships, mobilization of gifts and callings, and an increased relevance to and participation in greater society. In the culture, this may be characterized by pervasive awareness of the reality of God, a radical correction of social ills, a commensurate decrease in crime rates (evidence of authentic biblical justice, as described in Isaiah 58), supernatural blessing on local commerce, healing of the brokenhearted (the alienated and disenfranchised), and an exporting of kingdom righteousness. To this end, a catalytic core of saints typically embrace a lifestyle of persistent repentance, humility, prayer and sacrificial servanthood that attracts the favor and presence of God, and breaks the predominating influences of the ruling power structures of human flesh and the devil.

## **Unity**

The inherent, relational oneness with fellow believers rooted in a supernatural love for Jesus Christ and one another. This is a harmony of heart that is primarily organic, yet often expressed through organization. It is imparted by the Holy Spirit, not created by human good intention. It is embraced as a revelation, and maintained through persevering faith and love. It is universal, regardless of differences in culture, doctrine or organizational distinctives. Jesus Christ, as the “living logos,” embodies the objective truth that gives foundation to authentic unity. This is therefore not uniformity, but a conformity to the bedrock doctrinal essentials revealed in Christ, and through the inspired Scriptures. Such inherent spiritual oneness enables a celebration of diversity of the expression and application of Christian life in doctrinal non-essentials.

## **City Church**

The collective, corporate identity of believers indwelt by Jesus Christ in a geographically defined city or region, e.g., Ro.1:7, “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints,” and Rev. 1:4, “to the seven (city) churches in the province of Asia.” Paul’s definition: members of God’s household...a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-21). One Body, comprised of numerous, diverse congregations, bound together by a common adherence to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and life in the Holy Spirit, allowing freedom and diversity in ecclesiastical form, style of worship, gift expressions and non-essential doctrines.

## **Sacrificial Servanthood**

Individual believers, congregations and/or the wider Body of Christ available in humility to incarnate Jesus’ compassion in meeting the felt needs of a community, with no ulterior motive (Is. 58:6ff; 1 Pe. 2:12). The “city church” coming, on its knees, with an outstretched hand, saying to secular city officials, “What can we do to help meet the needs and alleviate the social pains of our city?” (e.g., school tutoring and reading assistance, building up blood bank reserves, funding a homeless shelter, police chaplaincies, etc.)

## **Prayer Summit**

Typically, an annual non-scripted extended gathering (minimum two nights, 48 hours) of the spiritual leaders of a city to cease striving (Ps. 46:10), to wholeheartedly seek the Lord in prayer and worship (Ps. 27, 84), and to “carry each other’s burdens” (Ga. 6:2). Such a gathering emerges from a weariness with the status quo, and a desperation to more effectively advance the kingdom. A Prayer Summit is typically convened by a catalytic core of local leaders responding to the initiative of the Holy Spirit. A Prayer Summit will be characterized by the following components:

- 1) Refreshment, sabbath rest, seeking God for his own sake (Ps. 131)
- 2) Dwelling in unity, reconciling differences, building relational trust (Ps. 133)
- 3) Seeking God for the release of vision for walking and working together toward increased kingdom impact on the community.
- 4) Emergence of city elders (servant leaders) to steward a continued vision for prayer, unity and community impact.
- 5) Formation of on-going groups centered on transparency, confession and accountability.

A successful Prayer Summit will spawn a continuation of leaders prayer groups, intra-congregational prayer, city-wide corporate gatherings, intercessory ministries, social impact roundtables, service projects, training events, etc. A variety of “mini-summit” models also are typical at quarterly or semi-annual intervals, ranging from half-day, to full day to overnight retreats, for the purposes of spiritual refreshment, deepening relationships and introducing the summit style for broader participation.

### **Servent Leaders (or City Elders, City Facilitators)**

A spiritual leader appointed and anointed by the Holy Spirit to steward the vision for dependence on God in prayer, unity and city impact. Servant Leaders are typically either informally recognized, or formally selected at a Prayer Summit or its equivalent and then acknowledged by a critical mass (at least 25%) of the life-giving churches of the city. These are men (in some cases men and women) with a mantle to guide the development of the “city church.” Often this takes the form of a leadership team that meets regularly to further pursue relationship with God and one another, and to define and monitor the mission, vision and goals of the wider “city church.”

### **Foundational Orthodoxy**

The core body of doctrinal truth as derived from the person of Jesus Christ, the logos, the living word of God (Jo. 1:1, 2), from the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-8; 2 Tim. 3:16), and from the historic confession and creeds of the Church. We choose to abide by the maxim of John Wesley: “In things essential, there must be unity, in things non-essential (secondary, open to a range of interpretation) tolerance, in all things, charity.”

Such “essentials” for us would be: the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the deity of Christ, heartfelt submission to the Lordship of Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, salvation by faith alone in the atoning death of Christ, the bodily resurrection and return of Jesus Christ, the certainty of eternal judgment, etc. CIR recognizes there are clear theological tension points between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and between “evangelical” and “mainline” church expressions. We believe that in order to move in the favor and blessing of God in our city-wide endeavors, we must strive to build on the sure foundation of sound, essential doctrine. Love, mutual respect and inclusiveness on service projects must be guided by truth, or we run the risk of compromise.

## **Diversity**

Embracing and celebrating the variety of our humanity-- in society in general, and in the community of faith in particular, i.e., race, culture, gender, generation and socio-economic status, with intentional renunciation of the pride, prejudice and power that feeds the lie of superiority. As partakers of the one, common life of Jesus Christ, we strive for the ideal of unity (Eph. 4:1-6; Ro. 15:5-7), made possible only through the cross (Eph. 2:14-22). But we readily acknowledge that the struggle to achieve this is altogether real, requiring us to forsake our pride, embrace humility and “consider others better than (our)selves” (Phil 2:3). We believe this involves a persevering pursuit of the following:

- 1) asking God to expose and root out strongholds of pride and prejudice in our own hearts

- 2) being intentional to get inside another's world
- 3) committing to build on-going relationship with those different from us
- 4) acknowledging our utter dependence on God's grace to model a Body that demonstrates authentic diversity, with nothing forced or manufactured...to keep trying and crying together to walk and work together in love.
- 5) understanding that the full nature of God cannot be expressed in any single community, but rather is more fully expressed in the plurality of the Church (Eph. 4 "fullness").

## **Five-Fold Ministry**

The resurrected Christ appointed giftings empowered "to prepare God's people for works of service so that the Body of Christ can be built up" toward the goal of maturity and fullness (Eph. 4:11, 12). CIR acknowledges that the primary leadership roles in a local congregation are elders (overseers) and deacons (practical ministries). But the CIR also acknowledges that the Church has generally relied on the giftings of the pastor, teacher and evangelist, to the exclusion of apostles and prophets. While there is a diversity of interpretation as to whether and how these roles operate today, we acknowledge that God is at work to raise up prophets to speak forth clearly and accurately what God is saying to his Church, and apostles to discern what is lacking in the Church and act with authority to put things in right kingdom order.

While some choose to emphasize the office of apostles and prophets (top down hierarchy), CIR chooses to emphasize the recognition of the supernatural unction and function of these individuals flowing from their servanthood and proven effectiveness. We affirm the wisdom of growing the Church with all callings and gifts operative, and acknowledge the need to learn and grow in further understanding of the five -fold offices.

## **Watchmen (or, Intercessors)**

While the Scriptures do not identify either an office or gift of “intercessor,” our Lord reveals that he posted “watchmen” on the walls of Jerusalem assigned specifically to take no rest and give him no rest, calling out in prayer until the redemptive destiny of the city was realized (Is. 62:6). Intercession is not the calling of a special elite, but the privilege of any child of God to cry out on behalf of God’s purposes for a city (e.g., Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2). Such an intercessory burden can involve men or women, leaders or laity, any who take seriously the charge to pray for the increase of divine activity and a decrease of the influences of human flesh and the devil in a particular place.

We acknowledge, however, that the Holy Spirit compels, equips and calls individual men and women to ministries of intercession, those who spend significant time standing in the gap praying for particular leaders, ministries, nations, cities, etc. Such persons cultivate the discipline of listening prayer, receiving promptings and assignments from the Spirit of God to pray according to the will and purposes of the Father (see Ro. 8:26, 27). Increasingly, in cities and regions, intercessors are being identified and mobilized to pray for and alongside a city leadership team.

## **Mission**

A clear and compelling task that God has authorized His servants to carry out... definitive goal that is communicable and measurable, e.g., a city so permeated by the presence and power of God, with the whole Church living in increased holiness, mobilized and ministering to the needs of the whole city, with spontaneous harvest of souls and healing of broken hearts, bringing honor and glory to God for his goodness and mercy.

## **Vision**

Seeing with the eye of imagination what it will take for God's authorized mission to be accomplished, e.g., mobilizing a critical mass of the Body of Christ to walk in the spirit of the Great Commandments and work together on fulfilling the Great Commission. Seeing a cleansed Church, rising from repentance, walking in covenantal love, depending on God in prayer, moving forward in the fivefold offices, manifesting the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit, and releasing the presence of the kingdom of God into the daily realities of secular human culture. Praying and seeing the fulfillment of Jesus' model prayer: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in \_\_\_\_\_ as it is in heaven."

## **Strategies**

Planning and prioritizing large-scale, long-term operational components essential to the completion of the mission. Commonly agreed on broad approaches that inspire and serve our vision, and inform our tactics, e.g., doing prayer evangelism through Lighthouses, saturating a city with fervent, united prayer, choosing to sacrificially serve a city's needs.

## **Tactics**

The arranging and maneuvering of personnel and resources within a strategic plan that advances a measurable fulfillment of the mission, the carrying out of short-term leverage actions that sustain and empower vision, e.g., identifying tasks, personnel, time targets, funding needs and evaluative measurements.

## **Models**

Places where there is a core of persevering servant leaders who have embraced an intentional definition of mission and vision, and a sustained outworking of strategies and tactics toward the purpose of illustrating, teaching or learning

about transferable approaches to city transformation. Such working prototypes are useful for a “cross fertilization” of both concept and practice, and must not tempt others to “copy” techniques, but rather encourage others to evaluate their own principles and practices.

### **Fulfillment of the Great Commission in a City**

While this is a subjective measurement, and will elicit a variety of definitions, we agree that such a functional fulfillment is measured by making the incarnation of the life and message of Jesus Christ accessible to every culture, language and generation in a city (optimal one church for every 500 people, minimal for every 1,000), where we are baptizing, teaching and discipling those coming into a saving knowledge of Christ.