

## **Uniting Churches and Leaders for kingdom advancement everywhere**

Groundlevel sees a movement of churches advancing the kingdom everywhere. When we say everywhere - mean everywhere, in all spheres of society.

Our understanding of the biblical narrative and the work of the cross starts in the beginning, in Genesis 1 in a Garden with raw and uncultivated materials and ends in the end in the book of Revelation where John describes a city coming down to the earth from heaven and in that city there is no more pain or sorrow or death. We find ourselves in the middle of the story, people made in the image of God, partnering with Jesus to take the elements of the Garden and make them into the City

Jesus came to redeem us of our sin and reconcile ALL things to himself. Including whole towns and cities, people but not just people - structures and systems as well.

We are talking here about bringing transformation to our locality and our geography.

There is something brilliant about gathering as a network of like minded people or as a tribe - the word and the spirit tribe or the Groundlevel family. We have much in common. And although we are geographically closeish - mainly England, mainly midlands and the north. Its unusual to have a bunch from the same town. Usually in a town there's a more distinct diversity of flavours and expressions of the body of christ.

**This seminar is about uniting different leaders both official church leaders and christian leaders from other spheres To see real whole transformation in a town or city**

We've been on this journey in Lincoln for quite some time and I've asked my friend and colleague Sian Wade - an AOG minister to come and share the work she has spearheaded in Lincoln.

It takes way more than one church or ministry to see a city or town reached. And it takes way more than the filling of church pews or the salvation of souls or the repentance of sin.

Colossians 1:20 Jesus came to reconcile **all** things, things on earth and things in heaven. The land or geography or territory we are in, the structure and systems and no one church has a claim on that?

When we are partnering with God to see ALL things reconciled to him we need to look at renewal in three main areas

\*Spiritual

\*Social

\*Cultural - the atmosphere in the town. What does the soil of the town produce?

"The church in a town." When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was speaking to THE church not to individual churches.

The letters to the churches in revelation written to the angel of the church of XYZ

It's much easier to gather as part of a network across a wider region when we share a flavour or style of church. than it is to engage with the body of christ in our towns or cities who we might not agree with or would do things differently.

Tim Keller who has done a lot of work on city transformation in NY - When our church grows, its natural for us to feel God is doing something significant in that place.

Often, however, what is really going on is “Christian reconfiguration.” When churches grow, they typically do so by drawing believers out of less vital churches. This can be a good thing if the Christians in these growing churches are being better disciplined and if their gifts are being effectively deployed. Nevertheless, if this is the key dynamic, then the overall body of Christ in the city or town is not growing; it is simply reconfiguring.

Reaching an entire city, then, takes more than having some effective churches in it, or even having a burst of revival energy and new converts. *Changing the city with the gospel takes a movement.*

When a gospel town or city movement occurs, the whole body of Christ grows faster than the population so that the percentage of Christians in the town or city rises.

Tim Keller calls this a *movement* because it consists of an energy that extends across multiple denominations and networks. It does not reside in a single church or set of leaders or in any particular command center, and its forward motion does not depend on any one organization.

The movement is organic and self-propagating, the result of a set of forces that interact, support, sustain, and stimulate one another. **We can also call it a *gospel ecosystem*.** Just as a biological ecosystem is made of interdependent organisms, systems, and natural forces, a gospel ecosystem is made of interdependent organizations, individuals, ideas, and spiritual and human forces. When all the elements of an ecosystem are in place and in balance, the entire system produces health and growth as a whole for the elements themselves.

Can we produce a gospel city movement? No. A movement is the result of two sets of factors.

Take for example, a garden. A garden flourishes because of the skill and diligence of the gardener *and* the condition of the soil and the weather. The first set of factors—gardening—is the way we humanly contribute

to the movement. It's our stewardship. This encompasses a self-sustaining, naturally growing set of ministries and networks, some of which Sian is going to describe.

But the second set of factors in a movement—the conditions—belong completely to God.

He can open individual hearts (“soil”) to the Word (“seed”) in any numbers he sovereignly chooses. And he can also open a culture to the gospel as a whole (“weather”). How does God do this? Sometimes he brings about a crisis of belief within the dominant culture. Two of the great Christian movements—the early church of the second and third centuries and the church in China in the twentieth and twentieth first centuries—were stimulated by crisis of confidence within their societies. The belief in the gods of Rome—and belief in orthodox Marxism in China—began falling apart as plausible worldviews. There was broad disaffection toward the older “faiths” among the population at large. This combination of cultural crisis and popular disillusionment with old ways of belief can supercharge a Christian movement and lift it to greater heights than it can reach in a culture that is indifferent (rather than hostile) to Christians.

We are in the middle of a shift in weather patterns in our nation and indeed the world.

Enforced lock down means we are having to rethink how we “do the gardening” of church and mission in our communities. The fear and anxiety of potentially mass infection, economic turbulence, and vast numbers of people either furloughed or unemployed is we believe a potential weather system that demonstrates our trust in other gods with a small g can not be trusted. In this hour, the church must begin to and think beyond our four walls as the walls have shifted. Collaboration is the future and getting out of empire thinking and into kingdom thinking is what we believe God is stirring us up for.

The values of Groundlevel have some treasure to bring to the table. Relationship. Partnership, Spirit and Word, resourcing. But we aren't it. Its vital that we partner across our area to build relationship, to resource one another and to believe and pray and work for transformation.

Last week Sian and I were on a global zoom call with over 300 city unity leaders and this is the pattern I noticed. People were talking about 4 main things.....

1. Repent
2. Build Unity
3. Join in with civic leaders
4. Plug gaps

### **Intro Sian - story of Lincoln active faith network**

Details here <https://lincoln.activefaithnetwork.com/>

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Questions for reflection

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What is the change in weather system doing to your community?

How well are you working with the church in your locality?

How are you working towards Spiritual / Social / Cultural transformation?

What are the barriers?

What are your next steps?