

# City and town pastors' groups – integral to outreach

**As articulated at the beginning of this publication, the unique place of the united Church in outreach is as the 'majority reach'. Initiatives in this space are an important and needed part of our work as churches – with a plausible 80% of the non-church-attending population in mind.**

The role of local church unity is also important in this regard. The Apostle Paul said, *"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel..."* (Philippians 1:27)

God's intent was that we work together when needed. Our unity was to go beyond relationships and prayer to outwardly-focused action. The same theme is found in Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17. His prayer wasn't only for the believers – but for those who would yet believe through them. The goal wasn't unity for unity's sake – but unity *for mission's sake!*

The role of churches together is becoming more important as the Christian faith is pushed increasingly to the margins of our society, being subtly and yet consistently maligned within the narratives of public media and education. Our story is no longer being told. Awareness of the specifically Christian origins of cultural blessings like our high levels of prosperity, equality, freedom and charity are being

lost. Negative stories are regularly told – while thousands of positive stories are left untold. It's a slow but definite downward progression – *unless interrupted.*

An overlooked role for churches together in this environment is therefore to be seen. Being seen brings reputation, counters negatives stories, and establishes connections that could see churches invited back to the decision-making tables of our communities.

Here's a time-proven approach\* for being seen. *Find a need in your city that you could meet together – and meet it!* This might be a community event to strengthen community cohesion – like a larger well-coordinated Light Party or children's carnival. The public see that the churches care and are approachable, while community leaders see that churches are capable of working together and connections are made. Sometimes it is meeting a significant community need that opens doors – like Te Hāhi\* is doing so brilliantly (a support service to victims of crime in support of local police). Some churches in Invercargill\* recently ran a 'serve your community day', with 250 volunteers, running 18 projects in partnership with five schools, a neighbourhood regeneration group, an environmental group, council, local marae and three other charities. Efforts included planting 2500 trees, cleaning streets and parks, painting and building, and a morning tea for police, fire and ambulance staff.

There is sometimes a difference between having the 'light of Christ' – and knowing how to *'let your light shine that others might see...'* This kind of engagement can be genuinely impactful.

Let's work more intentionally together to find and meet notable needs!

## \* Resources:

- **Web:** [AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups](https://AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups) – including links to a blog on the Invercargill event, and an interview with Roy Crowne of HOPE Together UK following a tour of various NZ city and town pastors' groups – regarding 'a time-tested approach'. For Te Hāhi – [teahi.org.nz](https://teahi.org.nz). For pastors committed to unity the SLT facilitate a closed group FB page. Search "Mahi Ngatahi - Working Together"
- **Book:** *A House for his Glory* by Colin Shaw – <https://www.citybycity.co.nz/resources/citybycity-2nd-edition-ebook-2/>
- **Book:** *In One Spirit* by Dave Mann – available as a PDF download at [AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks](https://AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks) The last chapter articulates a possible 'vocabulary' for unity that is useful by way of what it can enable.
- **Geographic teams:** Support the initiatives of those actively serving the united efforts of churches via the 80+ geographic pastors' groups that exist.

