



UNSAID

Why Community Service Isn't Enough In Our City Gospel Movements

Communicating the message of the Gospel in culturally relevant ways is necessary to the flourishing of our cities. We've experienced a renewed conviction and enthusiasm for sharing the Gospel in our own city of Portland, Oregon. Through passing on what we have been learning, we hope to elevate the conversation on evangelism in citywide movements.

Kevin Palau:
President, Luis Palau Association

It's the million dollar question . . .

Does community service lead to Gospel conversations?

In 2008, at a citywide evangelism festival on the waterfront in Portland, Oregon, 50,000 people gathered on a hot August weekend to hear the Gospel message and celebrate the united effort of 600+ churches who had participated in community service initiatives leading up to the festival weekend.

Over 10 years have passed since this festival, during which service initiatives have continued and new ones have been birthed. Churches continued to build relationships with the city and local believers mobilized to serve in lasting ways. Because of this powerful *“Portland Story”* hundreds of communities have been inspired to ask:

*“What is God doing in our city?
And how can we join?”*

Surely this movement of service led directly to increased faith-sharing by churches and Christians as they served . . . *right?*



Learn more:

If you want to learn more about what local pastors believe about this question and others, check out the *Portland Evangelism Report*.

Gospel Movement (noun)

A united, holistic, sustainable effort by the citywide Church to seek the peace and prosperity of their city. Common union found in Jesus Christ provides the foundation for relational trust on which all collaborative efforts are built.

United:

The united citywide Church working together with other sectors of society.

Holistic:

Living out and proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.

Sustainable:

Long-term vision and commitment to the city.



A note from your friends at the Luis Palau Association

In 2017, we gathered with leaders who have played key roles in the movement to reflect on the last decade. We celebrated the unity amongst the pastors and the community service that was making Portland better.

However, we identified together one area of weakness: evangelism. *We had not been nearly as intentional about sustainable, citywide evangelism as we had been about our efforts to serve the community.*

We don't regret the last 10 years of service work, especially because of the way that showing up and following through on commitments has forged strong relationships of trust with leaders across the city.

But as the Luis Palau Association — whose organizational mission includes proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus — we sense a unique responsibility and hopeful opportunity to ensure evangelism is an integral distinctive of Gospel Movements — **starting in our own city.**

You, too?

We're glad we're not alone in this struggle! Join us as we remind ourselves **WHY** we are motivated to emphasize evangelism in our city networks, learn **WHAT** actions others have taken to prioritize it in their community outreach, and explore practical ideas of **HOW** you can do so, too.

"Evangelism is so important, but it's one of the hardest things to tackle as a city transformation network. Pastors regularly admit that their congregants aren't having many Gospel conversations." — Matt Shenk, Richmond, VA

Learn more:

Check out www.citygospelmovements.org/evangelism.

The WHY

The motivation for prioritizing evangelism in Gospel Movements.

- City transformation must include both **word** and **deed** if it is to be holistic and truly transformative.

"Good deeds are never a substitute for Good News."
— Eric Swanson, Colorado Springs, CO

- It is the reason most of us got started in Gospel movement work — we want to see lives and cities changed through Jesus Christ.

"Evangelism is not what we do, but who we are. We aren't asking your city or church to add another program, but for evangelism to become who we are as a Church."
— Mark Warren, Manchester, NH

- Citywide efforts are too massive to go at alone. A vision as large as creating a culture of sustainable citywide evangelism cannot be realized by one organization or a few churches — we need to combine our efforts in strategic, humble ways.

"God is the great architect of connecting us to the right people at the right time." — Jean-Paul Tiendrebeogo, Columbus, OH

- People often don't verbally share their faith by default. It takes intentionality.

"We need to actually bring up spiritual conversations. They don't just 'come up.' We can guide people to them."
— Jose Zayas, Portland, OR

- Leaders are often unsure how to prioritize evangelism and equip others to do the same.

"We are wrestling with what evangelism looks like, but I think the secret sauce is weaving evangelism through everything you're doing. How are your volunteers, leaders, and staff being equipped to share their faith in the process of the good things already happening?"
— Ian Stevenson, Costa Mesa, CA

The WHAT

One way to prioritize evangelism in your city.

In order to prioritize evangelism, 16+ cities across North America have formed a local team whose sole purpose is to bring evangelism forward in their local Gospel movement. These groups are called **Evangelism Teams**.

What is an Evangelism Team?

A group of strategic leaders (including pastors, non-profit leaders, and other people of influence) in a city that are passionate about evangelism and act as a catalyst to keep evangelism a central part of the Gospel Movement through many different means.

The great news is that God is already working through individuals and organizations to shape a culture of evangelism in micro and macrocosms.

We need to first recognize where God is already creating momentum and prayerfully brainstorm how we can come alongside to support. Energy rises when evangelistically passionate communities are connected and bridge their collective enthusiasm, experience, and obedience to share the Gospel citywide.

Cities are not ambiguous entities too big to grasp and too hard to save. On the contrary, God has a passion for cities, and we determine to seek His vision for our cities and join Him in this God-sized city transformation mission.



Learn more:

Learn more about Evangelism Teams by watching the video at www.citygospelmovements.org/eteamvideo.

The HOW

Some practical ideas you can adapt to prioritize evangelism in your city.

- Assess the current state of evangelism in your city through interviews or digital surveys. It's important to start as a learner.

Learn more:

Go to www.citygospelmovements.org/listeningtour.

- Explore the fit of an Evangelism Team – a group of key leaders from various sectors (business, nonprofit, faith communities, etc.) who want to incorporate and increase faith-sharing in their city.

“We are committed to racial diversity on our E-Team. It’s also important to include business leaders, pastors, and intercessors. It takes different perspectives to create a good team.” — Richard Long, Ottawa, ON

- Explore the fit of an Advance Group – a team of people who are passionate about evangelism and want to grow in their practice of it.

Both groups exist to . . .

- **Build relational capital:** Relationships are the foundation of working together toward a common mission.
- **Share what is already working in evangelism:** God is already moving. Sharing these stories raises faith and uncovers opportunities for collaboration.
- **Discern your city’s evangelistic season and temperature:** Pray and dialogue about how evangelism/Gospel conversations are viewed in your city’s churches and in your city.
- **Shape a plan to celebrate and accelerate evangelism in your city:** After discerning your city’s evangelistic temperature, pray and identify 1–3 clear goals to pursue as a team. Then consider which leaders, organizations, and resources you can partner with toward these ends?

Learn more:

About forming an Evangelism Team in our resource, Evangelism Team Guidebook. Go to www.evangelist.global/home/advance-groups for Advance Groups.

*We sense our unique role in supporting city movements is to elevate the conversation on evangelism. City networks are already doing incredible work in their communities, and we want to create spaces for these practitioners to share ideas of ways of how they are creatively communicating the Gospel in ways their community can hear. We dream of a day when faith-sharing is integrated into every aspect of city movements so that cities experience the transforming power of the spoken **and** embodied Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Lizzie Burke:
Director, City Gospel Movements

