



# CITY PARISH MODEL



CITY COLLECTIVE



The city parish model is a highly relational, deeply interdependent, kingdom-focused vision of the city church. It enables church to remain small enough for each member to be known intimately and to involve every person in ministry while maintaining a kingdom-sized vision for renewing the city. Mission is both local and citywide.



# NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCHES

Each parish is committed to living beyond Sunday services but moving to the heartbeat of the surrounding area, fully engaged with the neighborhood as a whole. With a local pastor living within the neighborhood, the parish is guided by local elders and a leadership team who provide spiritual direction and a specific missional vocation for the congregation. Each neighborhood community also has its own structures for pastoral care.

Permanence, proximity and priority in relationships are so elusive in city life but crucial to neighborhood transformation. For this reason, leaders establish their roots in their neighborhood near one another and encourage members of the church to do the same if they are able.

These neighborhood churches hold weekend worship gatherings, the purpose of which is to celebrate the signs of the kingdom of God breaking out across the neighborhood. Each community has the freedom to contextualize its worship to the culture of its neighborhood communities--meeting in areas with many families may cause a parish to focus on developing a thriving children's ministry, while a gathering in a neighborhood full of artists may include interactive, creative elements in its worship.



## COMMUNITY LIFE

The heart of each neighborhood congregation is a network of community groups that exist to equip each believer to live the kingdom life. For some parishes, the primary expression is mid-sized groups (20-50 people) often called missional communities that meet throughout the neighborhood and provide social space for building relationships while connecting participants to the heart and mission of the church. The missional community keeps the church small enough for everyone to have a real identity and be involved in the work of ministry, each using her own gifts to build the church.

Missional communities are organized around a shared mission to a neighborhood or industry. They cultivate partnerships with schools, organizations that provide social services, business leaders, activists, community organizers, and anyone else who loves his city and wants to make it a better place to live; they then leverage those partnerships to implement strategic projects aimed at redeeming and renewing that neighborhood.

To join a missional community is to enter into the journey of Christian discipleship. These groups are not just driven by theology but by practicing the Christian life together. They are a preview community that brings the city in contact with the DNA of the church outside of the walls of its meeting places.

Smaller communities of 3-15 people, sometimes referred to as lifegroups, are another way community life is organized in the neighborhood church. These smaller groups provide members an opportunity to abide in God's love through the essential practices of Christianity: confessing sins to one another, reading and meditating on Scripture, and praying for nonbelievers to be captured by the life of God.

Lifegroups cultivate vulnerability through committed relationships, servanthood, and love, and very often meet over a meal in the home of a fellow member. These groups allow believers to walk together in the rhythms of Jesus' way through the practice of shared spiritual disciplines: prayer, the study of Scripture, fasting, relationships of accountability. The pursuit of vulnerability in these groups requires the practice of reconciliation, and communal life deepens as members learn to bear with one another in love.

# CENTRAL MINISTRIES

The network of neighborhood churches are supported by an administrative and communications hub called Central Ministries. The functions of Central Ministries within the city parish church include accounting and financial management, human resources, legal and risk management, media production and communications. Central Ministries also generates shared resources, provides logistical leadership on churchwide collaborative events and can include demographic based ministry that can be done more efficiently through collaboration, with premarital counseling being one example.

Each parish contributes a portion of its income to fund Central Ministries. Consolidating these functions within the city parish church allows the Neighborhood Pastor and local leadership teams to focus on the work of ministry rather than getting bogged down in everything else required for the organization to function day to day.

# LEADERSHIP

In order for the city parish church to actually feel and function like one church family, the bonds between the leaders must be very strong. Beyond all that must be done to foster a leadership culture among the staff, elders and other lay leaders within each parish church, real deep relationships must exist between the leaders in each parish.

The culture of the Pastoral Team comprising all the Neighborhood Pastors is central. The culture of rivalry and envy must be intentionally broken through genuine vulnerability and friendship. The pastors must spend a great deal of time praying together, bearing each other's burdens, and developing a spirit of brotherhood.

As the team grows, it is important to recognize leaders who have an apostolic gifting to help establish, support and encourage new churches. Where this gift and calling is affirmed by both the Pastoral Team and the local eldership, a pastor is released to serve on an Apostolic Team giving leadership to the broader church while continuing to be rooted in a local congregation.

The church also has at least one event a year where all the leaders from each parish come together to pray, worship, celebrate God's faithfulness and dream together for what could be as God's kingdom advances in the city.

The city parish church is one wherein all the parishes have the same mission, DNA and culture. They have the same vision of what a disciple of Jesus is. Beyond that, the neighborhood church has the freedom to find its own unique rhythms, expression and missional focus.



## CITYWIDE GATHERINGS

Critical to the city parish model is the practice of gathering all the congregations together for nights of worship, celebration, and intercession for the city at large. These citywide gatherings feature stories of transformation, freedom, healing, and renewal from all across the city reuniting individual parishes to a common vision and expanding their knowledge of the movement of God throughout the city. From these gatherings, the harmony of passionate, reverent worship offered by so many different tongues rises over the city, and an integrated, holistic vision of urban renewal emerges. These citywide gatherings of a single city church also leverage influence, steward momentum, and display unity to the city at large.

Our sincere hope and prayer is that this model—by combining the best practices from several emerging church structures—will serve as an important contribution to God’s great work of renewing the world through the cities of our day.

Glory to our God reigns  
Glory to our God reigns  
Glory to our God reigns  
Forever all my days  
Glory to our God reigns



# JOINING GOD IN THE RENEWAL OF OUR CITIES

## CITY COLLECTIVE

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