

[Jeff:](#) I'm sorry about again the delay that we hadn't had this call in a while. I am ever hopeful that our relationship and the growing network and finding ways to collaborate can both expand the influence of our various organizations as well as strengthen them. So, I want to thank you, yeah, for all being on this call today.

[Jeff:](#) Let me actually step back as we start. It's been, gosh October, so what it has been like five months so you are totally forgiven if you have no idea what we are talking about with the City Gate Ecosystem Call. I thought I would actually start with what are we doing here today. Let me actually read this, we talked about this, I guess it's a mission statement though it's not an organization more than a network of friends. We're wanting to create a relation strategic space to start and grow institutions focused on the integration of faith, work and life by those with a shared commitment to the Church, a particular region or a city and the far reaching affects of Jesus' life, death and resurrection for the world.

[Jeff:](#) There is a handful of aspects of this here; relational and strategic. I think it really is based on we all care about one another and want to benefit one another. Chris Lake and I just got off the phone, about half an hour ago, and we were talking about institution building and fundraising and boards and all this stuff. We just simply need each other and I think it's a place for us to not only build relationships but to figure out how to build strong institutions.

[Jeff:](#) I'm very much of the belief that movements come and go based on the strengths of their institutions. And we want stuff to outlast us. And so, I really care about that. That's why we've structured some of our calls as we have, which I will talk about in a second.

[Jeff:](#) The next part is church particular region or city and the far reaching effects of Jesus' death and resurrection for the world. We all love the church, all of us are generally focused on a region or a city and the particularities of the Gospel applied to our vocations in different areas as well as we all have this shared faith in Jesus, the redeemer of all things.

[Jeff:](#) That's a little bit of an overview. But this is what we've done for the calls. The first half of the call we think about leadership, programs, best practices, cultural city issues. The second half of the call we usually talk about funding. Because we all want to talk about ideas because that's all of our strong points, usually the first half of the call is the first two thirds of the call and usually the last one third is funding. But I actually think funding is a part of institutional strength so I always want to talk about that as well. I think it's important.

[Jeff:](#) As I sent out an email, Mark Robertson and I have been chatting more about how to collaborate amongst leaders and we want to really start and grow that conversation of really how do we work together to increase reach, to maybe decrease costs, to increase revenue but to otherwise strengthen our organizations as well as strengthen the movement broadly. And I think relationship is a way that we're doing that and I really

want to figure out how different institutions are doing that as well. So we're going to be doing a little more of that in the future, of highlighting examples of collaboration.

[Jeff:](#) These calls are about an hour long and we have Q & A after each presentation. We are generally speaking the last Thursday of the month at 2:00 pm Mountain time, which apparently Denver and Phoenix are not always on the same time zone, which I learned from my friend Jim Mullens. Thank you very much. Thank you very much Jim.

[Jeff:](#) Okay, microphone, during the presentation you can chat a question directly in. You can chat to everybody. You can make fun of me. You can make fun of Matt. You can make fun of each other if you want. That would be fun. You can chat questions to individuals, to us or you can actually chat to the whole group as well. If during Q & A, for instance we are going to hear from Matt Ruston today, if you want to address the whole group, you wanna address Matt just unmute your microphone and we can talk to Matt.

[Jeff:](#) Okay so, a common language. We are going to talk about this for the issue today. I wrote a question here in a common standard for faith and work integration in local churches. We all care about local churches. We all want them to grow in this integration of faith and work or faith work and economics or what the Gospel means for vocation. We all want this to grow and one of the conversations that I had with Matt saying should we have sort of like a minimum standards that all churches should do that we touch? What would those be? Could we agree on those or not?

[Jeff:](#) This is really just the front end of a conversation but Matt touches all sort of churches around the US. I think about this particularly with respect to pastors in America, and so I thought Matt would be a great well to use Kinsmen language, a great illuminator for us today. I am going to give over this to Matt and then after his fifteen-ish minute presentation we would love for you guys to either type in questions to the chat function and then I'll just sort of do the teacher thing and call on folks for having Matt respond to them afterwards. All right?

[Matt:](#) All right. Thanks Jeff.

[Jeff:](#) Yes sir.

[Matt:](#) I know many of you on the call and I know that most of you if not all of you could have led this exact discussion and probably have led this discussion, in areas of influence that you have. Jeff and I were just talking about it and because our organization specifically exists, in our mission statement, that we are helping churches in faith, work and economic wisdom. I'll tee up today's conversation, but definitely I am under no illusion that I have a corner on the market for these insights. You guys are all great leaders and have thought about these things.

[Matt:](#) I think the goal today, Jeff and I had some fun going back and forth to say how many common standards would we want to talk about as just kind of the very first step that a church that is interested in this conversation would want to take. And one of the very

concrete things they would do and how often. Should we have three or four of those or five or six of those or eight or nine those?

Matt: I am going to lead. Obviously there's 100 things that a church could do, but I am going to suggest four concrete ideas that I think are just baseline for any church that wants to integrate faith, work and economic wisdom, is the language that we use. And would love to hear your feedback on what you think are those one on one items as we seek to influence churches.

Matt: Why don't we go to that first slide with the first four categories, Jeff. First just a little bit of context at Made to Flourish. We talk about faith, work and economics integration across four areas of church life. We don't think that this is just a silo program in a church, kind of a one off ministry or something that those people over there do. But we really do believe this conversation should influence across the life of the church no matter how big that church is. Whether you are 12,000 people on a Sunday or whether you're 120 people on a Sunday.

Matt: Number one, we think it should be affecting; number one your corporate worship, the gathered community. Whether that is on a Sunday or other day of the week. Number two, your Pastoral practices. The non church gathering time whatever that would look like. Thirdly your discipleship or spiritual formation pathways in the church and fourthly the way that you think about engaging in mission or outreach to your local community. Either in your neighborhood, across the nation or across the world, across the globe.

Matt: Again, we seek to resource Pastors, thinking of lots of creative ideas and practical ways in each of those categories and each of us could come up with 10 or 15 examples in each of those four. I would like to suggest one key practice that a church can begin engaging in, in each of those four areas and just suggest that these are some common standards.

Matt: So go to the next slide Jeff and in the first area of corporate worship. Of all the different integration practices I thought the most concrete, the most simple, has the most power to transcend lots of different types of churches, would simply be pastoral prayers for workers. I would love to see this happen in some fashion at least one time a month. They could be general liturgical prayers. We find that lots of our traditionally liturgical whether that be Anglican or some Presbyterians or Episcopalians have a very set liturgy and in many cases they're already doing this where they have prayers for the people, and those include people's everyday work.

Matt: They can also be vocation specific prayers. This is something that one of the pastors in our network, Jason Harris he's in Manhattan, he began doing it. He said this is one of the most transformative practices that his church is engaged in. You pick a different vocation group once a month, first lawyers then engineers then carpenters then real estate, whatever it would be. And he said after three or four months this was the big moment when someone had a doggy head tilt and different people would come up to him and say, "Do you really believe that God can be active in my line of work? Do you

know what we do on a daily basis?" And this actually started a conversation as he formed really intentional prayers around specific vocations.

[Matt:](#) I also think this is a really wonderful way to offer commissioning prayers. Many churches are still, I guess I'll use the word stuck, maybe that's not the right word but they're stuck in this. We commission missionaries when they go out from us or we commission pastors when they are going into traditional church ministry or ministry has been commonly spoken of.

[Matt:](#) There are opportunities that make a lot of sense during the year to commission the teachers as the school year is beginning, to commission a new business owner, to commission city planners, different vocational fields. These are just three very minor twists on pastoral prayers for workers. I was talking to Dave Lyons a couple of weeks ago, and I said that the good news is sometimes a small gesture goes a really long way. It means so much to people and it's one thing as a pastor just to affirm people's work but to do that in the form of a prayer, not simply condemning people and seeking justice in the bad spaces of work, but actually praying that God would be at work through people's work as well. Just some different ideas. That's the first category in the corporate worship gathering.

[Matt:](#) Secondly, in pastoral practices, we found that one of the most transformative practices is simply pastors getting out of their offices to go to the office place of their congregation members, work place visitation. This has often been the case that pastors have gone to different hospitals to visit people in the hospital when they are sick, but we are encouraging more and more pastors to do that. I think this is a growing need as people move to cities, as churches, there's a lot of large churches and it's very easy to spend 20, 30, 40 hours of your week in the pastoral study instead of getting out of our offices.

[Matt:](#) I have three subcategories of work place visitation, one is simply an onsite non-participatory where you are meeting someone in their space and you are hearing about work. Maybe in their cafeteria over lunch and it's a chance for them to talk about their work and their work space. Maybe give you a tour. That is probably the easiest touch point. A lot of people are willing to take that risk.

[Matt:](#) Secondly is onsite participatory. This is where you are actually engaging in the work that people are doing. The president of our organization, Tom Nelson, one time reached out to a surgeon in his congregation and they had a conversation. He actually went into the operating room and put on the scrubs and was right there, was washing his hands and looking over whatever they look over into whatever crevasse of the human that the surgeon was operating in that day. And it was really a powerful experience. They took pictures of that and he actually showed that to his congregation, and there is something about solidarity of someone doing that. We had a pastor in our network that worked on a hog farm. He actually worked doing some of the tasks that his hog farmer was doing and in certain settings that will be appropriate.

[Matt:](#) We've had certain pastors in our network say, "You know what? Vocational visitation is really easier for white collar work, but I'm a mailman or I'm in a place where I don't have a level of power in my organization to even invite you in." In that case I would say there's opportunities to meet off site and still intentionally engage about people's work. They could be meetings.

[Matt:](#) And then finally in that off site category, this isn't exactly off site, but one of the things that Jim Mullens likes to do, I'm not sure if Jim is on this call or not but he actually will do sermon prep. And he goes out and sometimes he'll ask to do that either in coffee shops or warehouses or different businesses in the city. He is reminding himself even as I am writing this sermon I'm offsite in a vocational space and it's something to think about workers when you're in your church office it's another thing to be in that space as you are preparing messages. So this whole category of work place visitation is really powerful for pastors and does so much to build trust with those we are meeting with.

[Matt:](#) The third integration area in discipleship or spiritual formation is around vocational interviews in small groups. The reason why I chose this practice of integration is that most churches have some sort of small group structure and they might not even do classes. They might not have Sunday school. They might not have curriculum. They might not have conferences, but usually they have some sort of small group or home group or bible group or community group or growth group whatever they call their group structure. And one of the most powerful things that I have done personally in my small groups is that I've taken this model. And some people do this on a Sunday morning, but you have a sort of all of life interview or some people call it a this time tomorrow interview and it's three or four very simple questions that you ask the person.

[Matt:](#) Number one, give us a picture of a day in the life of your work. And if I've asked this question to people in the groups that I've led I've been so surprised. I thought I knew what people did but I actually didn't. One of the women in my previous community group was a nurse and I thought I pretty much knew what nurses did. They go to hospital rooms, they turn people over, they give them shots. She said actually, no I work in a clinic and I check people in to the clinic. And one of my biggest tasks as a nurse in this clinic is not to freak out at the people that come in here and just show them love and care and dignity. She said last week someone came in with bed bugs and I was trying not to freak out that I would get bed bugs because I was meeting this person and I had to show them honor and dignity. But even that little story of her world I was like, "Oh, wait I don't actually know what you do and the challenges that you face."

[Matt:](#) I had another guy in our community group where he was a salesman and at the end we prayed for him and he said that I don't think anyone has ever prayed for me as a salesperson. And what a wonderful opportunity that it is not just a pastor doing it but it's a group of people getting to know one another and actually praying for one another. So these are just the different questions that can be asked. There's nothing magical about them but what unique opportunities do you have to love your neighbor through your work? Where do you experience the brokenness of the world in your work? And then simply how can we pray for you?

[Matt:](#) This is a very simple practice and most small groups are trying to get to know one another anyway. I think even if you don't care about faith, work and economics and integration this is just a simple practice to build trust and to get to know one another in a group. Often times even groups that have been together a long time haven't done this simple exercise. This is a simple way to integrate these ideas.

[Matt:](#) And then fourthly in the category of Mission and Outreach. One of the things that I think is the most important exercises that a church can do is a simple asset mapping exercise. Especially if the church is at a point where they're thinking how do we want to engage maybe in ways that we haven't in our city. It could be a kind of evaluation. Some people call this ABCD asset based community development.

[Matt:](#) But, these are just some different categories to think about mapping assets and there are different tools that are out there. There's no magic bullet. We've developed the tools that we give to our churches. I think different groups have sort of ABCD model and then at the Chalmers Center and Brian Fikkert has advocated some of these tools. I think CCVA does some as well but these are the different categories. First of all your physical space. Do you have a kitchen? Do you have a gym? Do you have a space that could be converted to a work space for entrepreneuring? What do you actually have during the week that isn't being deployed for kind of mission in your community?

[Matt:](#) Number two, what are the financial assets? Do you have a benevolence fund? Do you have certain categories that are financial assets. Number three, what are your networks? What are the relationships and influence that you have? And this kind of goes into the community. Where there are awesome organizations where you don't have to reinvent the wheel but they exist in your city and you can partner with them in the area of faith, work and economics.

[Matt:](#) And then finally, human capital. Who are the people that actually attend your congregation? I think so many congregations say what do we want to do in our city? What is our passion? What is our city involved in? Without ever taking a look to say actually, you know what we have like 60 educators or we have 100 carpenters. There's a huge church down in Dallas, Watermark, and every year they ask people to re-up their membership. And they ask them specifically when they re-up for membership in their congregation, what's your occupation? What do you do during the week?

[Matt:](#) And so, when a church of 12,000 when the hurricane hit Huston they know that they have 621 carpenters and people that are involved in that and they can immediately go to them and deploy them. That's different than sending out the youth group that has to be taught how to hammer and nail for a mission project. So, what are the assets in the congregation? And I think that one simple exercise, just the congregation to say how are we stewarding who God has brought to us and given to us, and is in our community to make really wise decisions.

[Matt:](#) So, I'll [inaudible 00:18:43] now for discussion. I know there's 100 other practices that I can appoint it to and maybe that you think are more important or more kind of one on

one practices, but those are the four that I would suggest that also attached on different areas of church life. So, any comments, questions, different suggestions, affirmations, clarifications.

[Jeff:](#) Yeah, man, that's incredible. Let's take some questions. I actually have the first one. If you guys want more keep on typing in those questions on the chat feature. But Matt, do you have that survey instrument on asset mapping that you can share with the community?

[Matt:](#) Yeah. We could do that. I can do that. Yeah, it's part of our learning community core curriculum. It's our deepest dive training and we do that in session three, and have every church fill that out.

[Jeff:](#) That's great. One of the questions you guys have, even on, are these the four practices? I think these are wonderful and core, but I wanted to hear what everybody else thinks. What do you think about this and when we think about equipping the saints for works of service in local churches? John, you've been a pastor for a long time so take it over.

[John:](#) Yeah. While up until a year and a half ago. Now, I'm kind of freelancing and part of what I'm doing with another local church is what we're calling pop up theology events. And so, next month I'm giving new talks at our brand new world class architectural beauty library down town on the theology of work. Through the work that all came collectively together through architects, engineers, librarians, civic leaders. Through all of that work collectively coming together to built this beautiful space. And I think this connects to the mission outreach part, by taking all of the stuff that we do. And instead of expecting people to come to us in our faith community places, actually going into a place that everybody in the city knows is safe and beautiful. And is on the map in terms of their awareness of it.

[John:](#) Sitting down in the big auditorium there and [inaudible 00:20:44] the theology of work as we sit within the text. And I don't know if it's going to work. I'll let you know next month. It could've been a huge disaster, but like the Calgary Herald is letting me write a two page oped on this. And a local radio station is picking it up. A local business guy bought 1,000 of my books. They hand out for free. There's something about taking it all out, incarnating it into the heart of the city that feels very true. And I'll let you know how it works out. And yeah, the focus for me has always been for the last 20 years preaching people's jobs as actual vocational, God image bearing vocational parables.

[John:](#) Based out of that parabolic view of what a structural engineer is and how they image God or a librarian or all the other. Hopefully a beautiful introduction of a theology of work will happen here in Calgary.

[Jeff:](#) That's great. That's really inspiring. But John that's outside the actual confines of church walls. Obviously it is the church, but that's more in the community, right?

[John:](#) Yeah. Well, it's in the kingdom.



[Jeff:](#) Yeah. That's right. It sure is. It sure is. What other questions you have about these areas. I'd love for folks that have been around this conversation, which actually we all have. Are these the ones? What do you think? Man, I'm convinced, but I'd love to hear you guys' thoughts.

[Chuck:](#) It's Chuck from Cincinnati. Matt, I really love what you put together here because it's a strategic framework that can fit so many specific ideas. I affirm everything that you have down there. One thing that I've seen that especially speaks to people in congregations is story telling. And in some ways I found that to be as powerful or even more powerful than prayer in a congregational setting. When an everyday working Christian can come up on stage and talk about how they have seen God move in their life at work. I found that it makes everyone in the congregation over time more observant and just aware of God's presence at work. In words Romans 8:28 starts to come to life for people because they literally see first in the stories of others and then eventually through their own experiences.

[Matt:](#) Chuck, I think you're right. And even in the preparation for this I debated whether I put that practice in the corporate worship or the section of discipleship and spiritual formation. But, I think there's a strong case to be made that having that in a corporate worship gathering is really important. And we do recommend that our churches do that, but it very well may be even more important than the pastoral prayers.

[Speaker 5:](#) Can I jump in on that one, Jeff?

[Jeff:](#) Go for it.

[Speaker 5:](#) Yeah, so I think that's great. If we can have more discussion and hearing what happened during the week of where God showed up, and how we've seen him at work. I think one of the challenges is if we can find a way to balance the cool stories of people coming to faith and all that stuff also with the real stuff of heartaches or where you might have been disappointed or God didn't show up or ... So, it's not always a positive thing because I think sometimes people can feel, God's not showing up in my work place or my front line as we would say. So, yeah, I don't know if anyone has experience with that. I just want to get some feedback on has that worked. Have people done that before?

[Chuck:](#) Yes. Speaking just from our own experience in Cincinnati that's huge. We jokingly call it celebration versus commiseration. There's a place for both of them. Sometimes it's the heartbreaking stories that reveal how God works through brokenness. Fallen world, people who've disappointed you, other Christians at work who haven't lived up to standards that you would've expected. And it creates a sense of not just vulnerability on stage but community. Because if all you have are the success stories then everybody feels like if they're not in a season of success that somehow they're a failure or God isn't working in their work world.

[Speaker 5:](#) Yeah, great. Thanks Jeff.



[Jeff:](#) I wonder do you have any more questions? Anybody else? Or comments.

[Steve:](#) I had a question on the title of your presentation kind of hark into the notion of a common language. And all these practices can facilitate that, but you didn't really speak directly to the literal language people use that makes this whole concept. And then it brings your faith in work problematic from a church environment perspective. Man, our pastors, last year they preached two sermons right out of Amy Sherman's book. And yet six months later they're talking about full time mastery that they were called to. It's so embedded in the DNA of professional staff and church workers. Is there anything that you suggest ... I almost feel like maybe just drop that as an issue, and just do what you're saying. And then figure after a while they'll sense the inconsistency, and maybe adopt. And maybe that's the best approach. Just [inaudible 00:26:37] and hearing the stories and having a personal experience with it. But is there anything more direct on that note?

[Matt:](#) Yeah. I can just jump in and give a little context. So, when Jeff and I talked about this we talked about both common language and common standards. And I think that common language is a really interesting conversation to have. I actually just in the interest of time decided to duck that and nearly focus on common standards. Because I think we could spend a lot of time on both [inaudible 00:27:10]. That's a really worthy conversation and it's one that I'm really interested in. And I think the whole use of the language around ministry is one of the most important ones to talk about.

[Steve:](#) Yeah.

[Lisa:](#) Hey Matt. This is Lisa, I have a quick question for you. In the major flourish learning communities, I know when we did it we adopted something that Amy had used in the original national learning communities. And maybe this is part of your asset mapping exercise, but it was a really a self assessment for churches to do around a whole series of things including language. So that they could begin to see how they were creating disconnects and gaps for people. I haven't looked at the most current of the learning community materials to remember if that's part of it. But that was a great resource and tool if you've still got it. I think there's some value if a church is ready to make those adjustments. They have to do a little self examination on where they may be creating confusion. Does that make sense?

[Matt:](#) Yeah. I don't know that, that's a particular tool. I know it's something we talk about in our learning communities, but I don't know that we actually use a tool for them to do. But we do talk about full time Christian service and calling. And all these buzz words that really can push people up. I only say that because it's not a resource that I would send out share just because we don't [inaudible 00:28:42] in our community. But we do talk about it.

[Lisa:](#) Yeah. I just think there's something valuable to a group of church leaders, pastors, pastoral staff, full time staff as well as lay leaders doing a [inaudible 00:28:54] through of how do we talk about these things? Where do we create confusion? And a little self

assessment, a little gap analysis can create a pretty big aha for churches to say, "Oh my goodness. We're unintentionally creating a bifurction that we don't intend to.

[Matt:](#) Yeah. And I'm not even sure that all churches will land on the same language and I think that's okay. The point is to be really intentional with whatever language you land with. And that's a conversation that a lot of people, a lot of churches haven't had.

[Lisa:](#) Yeah.

[John:](#) One of the things that has changed my heart with regards to language Steve has been in the [inaudible 00:29:38] of people's jobs literally as texts, as vocational image bearing texts and learning more about who God is through what a carpenter does or an electrician or an investment banker. The sacredness of them as image bearers, the dignity of that work rose up in me, and in some mysterious way kind of diminished the whole pastor as vocation being church vocation. Just brought me down. Well, I wouldn't naturally ever fall into the language traps like I used to fall into the language traps. It think this is a revelatory answer or component to getting your language figured out internally that might be part of this as well.

[Steve:](#) Yeah, that's good. Thanks guys.