



CULTIVATING HOUSES OF PRAYER

WORKBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Across the UK, Europe and beyond, there is a growing number of prayer communities that are either friends with or family of 24 7 Prayer. They are sometimes called Boiler Rooms or Houses of Prayer.

They are in varying stages of development. Some are at this juncture just seeds germinating in the ground. Others are finding root and have sprouted, and others have grown and spread and are beginning to multiply. There are even others that have been established for some time and were affiliated with other expressions of the prayer movement, but are interested in exploring a more formal relationship with 24 7 Prayer.

This resource has been created to catalyze conversation within and among prayer communities in their various stages of development. We want to notice and name what it is we have been given to steward, and let those gifts inform the way forward. In a sense, we are responding to the question that God asked Moses What is it you have in your hand?

👉 Firstly, we will explore the **Culture**, or DNA of 24 7 Prayer as a movement, and how each of our prayer community carries that family resemblance. We will discuss the six **Core Practices** through which most 24 7 communities utilize as live into our apprenticeship to Jesus. This culture and these core practices are common to us all.

👉 Secondly, we will identify and discuss what is unique to our communities. We have categorized these as our **Context**, our **Cast of Characters**, and our **Charism**. These independent variables give each community its unique shape and expression.

👉 Finally, we will explore together the essential **Competencies** required to cultivate a prayer community. What is it critical for us to be good at to be faithful to and fruitful in this work?

Sharing our stories and collective wisdom will strengthen, resource and enrich us all. We hope you find this framework of understanding and these conversations helpful as you partner with Jesus in His passion to see His house become a House of Prayer for all nations.

Shalom,

Jill Weber
24 7 Prayer
OMS



Figure 1: The Five Elements



CULTURE



In an anthropological sense, culture is defined as follows:

1. The **behaviours and beliefs** characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group (ie. the youth culture; the drug culture).
2. The **sum total of ways of living** built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.

Culture is essential DNA that reproduces in kind.

All 24/7 communities all over the world share similar DNA. We have some kind of family resemblance.

We may teach what we know, but we reproduce who we are. Consequently it can be helpful to identify and articulate the life giving culture within the movement.

② How do we identify and articulate culture?

Ritual

Story, Song, Art and Symbol

Exemplars



Examples: Community Storytelling

EXERCISES

 **Word association:** Off the top of your head, what are five words would you use to describe the 24-7 prayer movement?

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 **Rituals:** What common rituals do we participate in together?

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 **Story:** What are the most memorable 24-7 stories you can think of and what do they say about our common culture?

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 **Exemplars:** What examples, whether people, events or communities, are held forth as models? What do they show us about our common culture?

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 **Systems:** How does how we do things speak about our common culture?

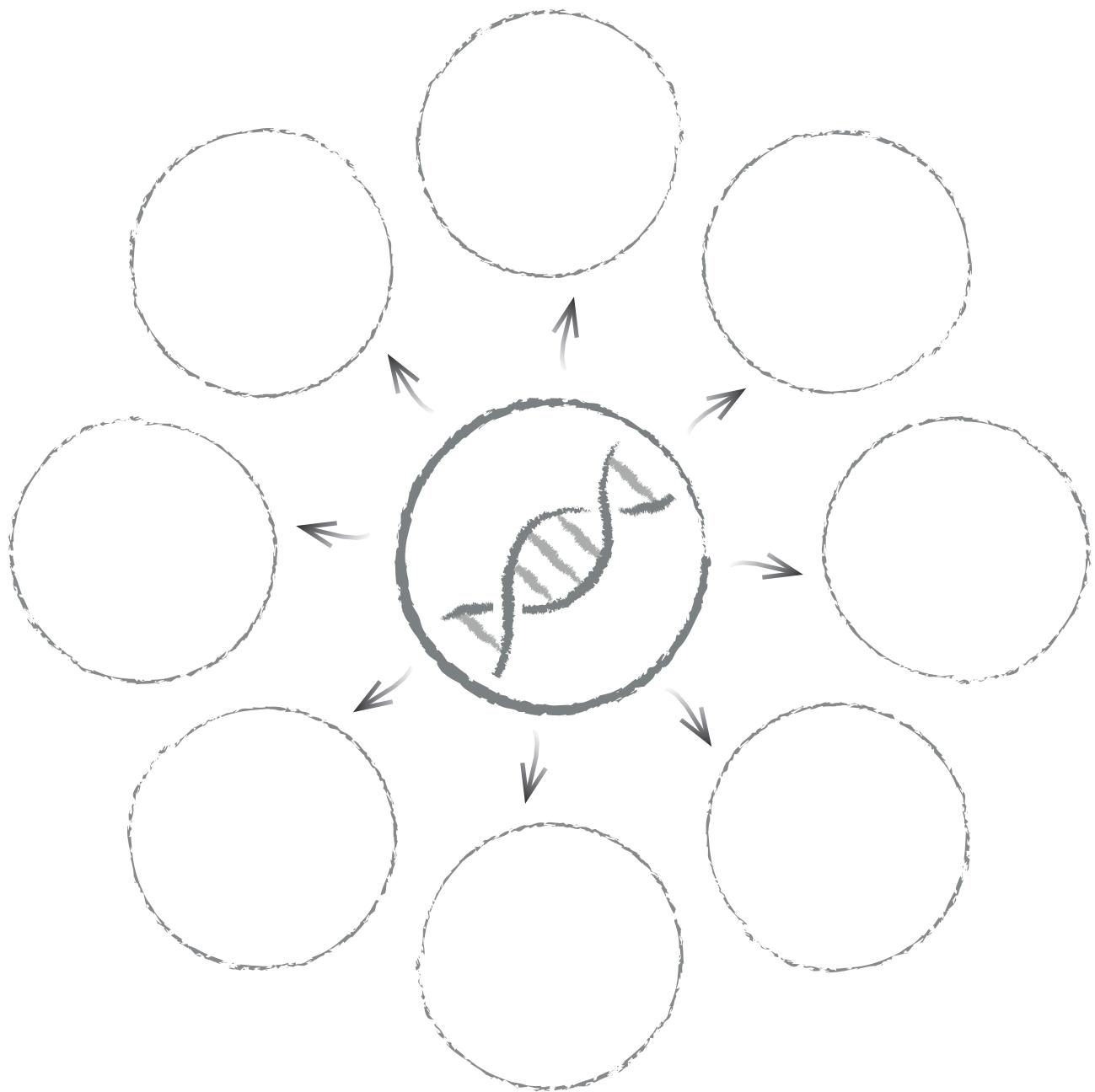
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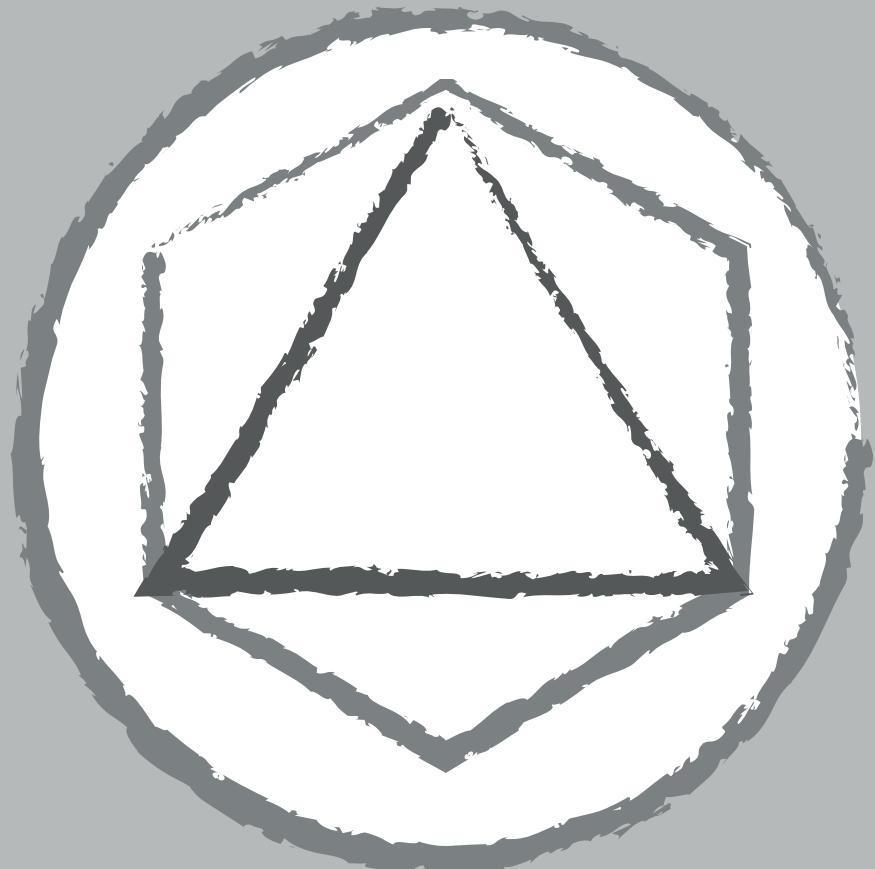
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 YOUR NOTES



CORE PRACTICES





Figure 2: The Core Practices of the 24-7 Movement

24 7 Prayer Communities express in some way most or all of the following **core practices**:

1. Prayer
2. Mission
3. Mercy and Justice
4. Hospitality
5. Learning
6. Creativity

Examples: Community Storytelling

EXERCISE

 **Describe how your community is currently expressing the core practices:**

CORE PRACTICES



CONTEXT



24 7 communities are shaped by the contexts we are planted in: by our history, our geography, and other aspects of our context.

We need to develop a theology of place and we need to learn how to exegete our context (see **Appendix 2: How To Exegete a Neighbourhood**).

The key issue here is prayerful discernment through the lens of appreciative inquiry. It takes very little discernment to look at our communities and see where the world, the flesh, and the devil are at work and to approach things from a problem solving perspective. Instead,

② Prayerful discernment

How can we eyes to see and hearts to discern where God is already actively at work in our context?

Can we explore and appreciate what already is life giving in our contexts and build from that foundation?

Context can include:

1. **Historical** important historical events, history of churches/church unity/prayer movement in city.
2. **Economy**
3. **Politics** local and beyond
4. **Geography**
5. **Neighbourhoods**
6. **Felt needs** of people groups in your city
7. **Strategies** what has been tried in the past? What has worked? Not?

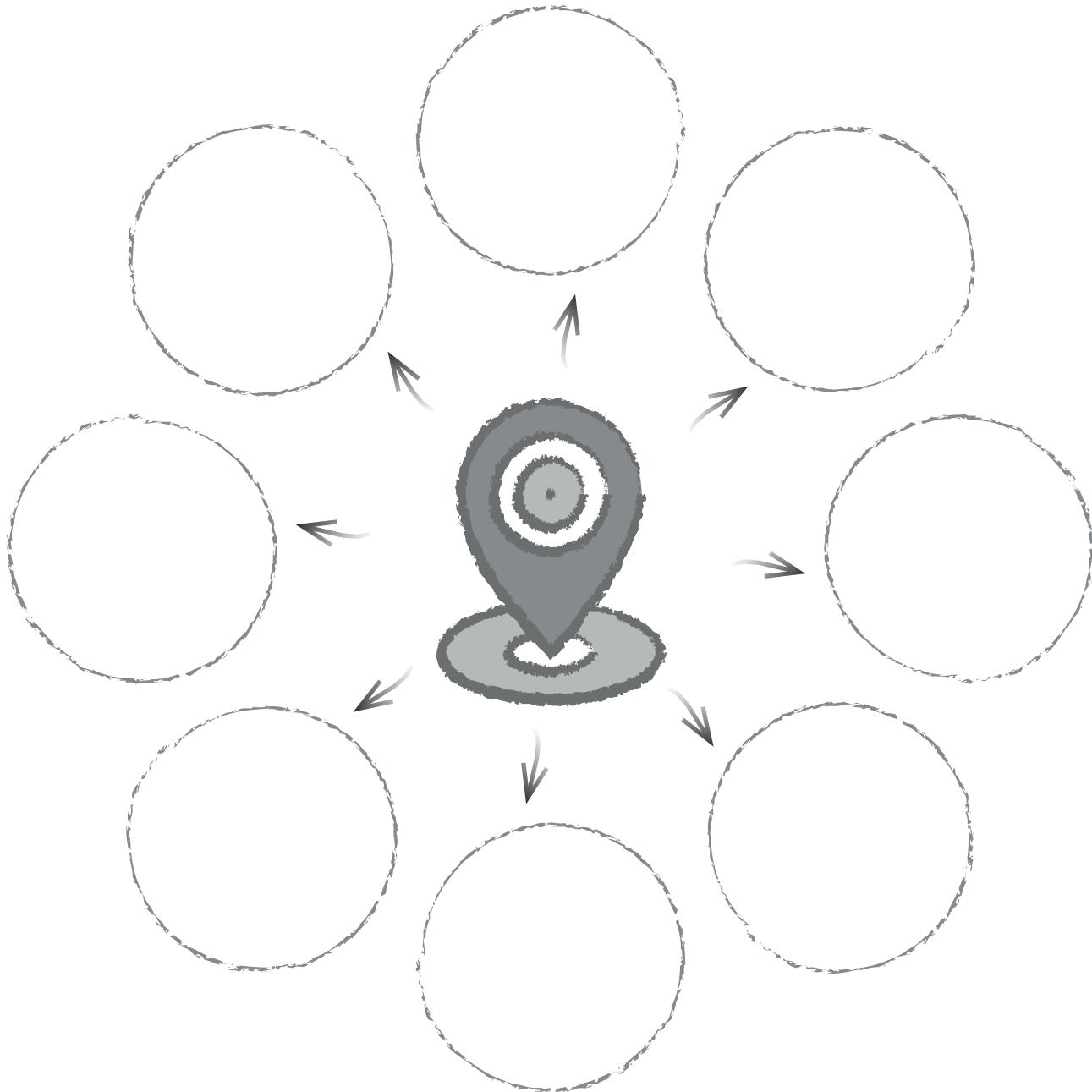


Examples: Community Storytelling



EXERCISES

✍ In the following mind map, consider how various aspects of your context have shaped your prayer community so far.



👉 Where do you see God already actively at work in your context? How can your prayer community come alongside Him in His work?



CAST OF CHARACTERS



24 7 communities are built out of living stones, not out of prefab components.

Healthy, lifegiving communities are not shaped by roles and job descriptions, but by the gifts, passion and vision of those gathered. We use the analogy of People Soup .

When someone new pops into the pot (community) it changes the flavour of who we are.

Examples: Community Storytelling

EXERCISES

👉 Who is gathered around the vision? What flavour do they bring to the soup?

Take into consideration their:

- Personalities
- Culture/ethnicity
- Vocation/calling
- Natural and Spiritual Gifts
- Age and stage of life

👉 How can the life of your community be built around the gifting/calling of the cast of characters you've been given?

C A S T O F C H A R A C T E R S



CHARISM



Here we will define **charism** as a gift of the Holy Spirit given in a particular way to an individual or to a group to build up the Kingdom of God.

It is both a gift to do something and also a particular assignment given by God to your cast of characters within your context! It is your unique contribution to the work of God.

It is the burning yes that helps you say no to lesser things. It helps you discern between the good ideas and the God ideas. In the words of Frederick Beuchner, The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

② How is charism discerned?

- through discerning the charism/gifts/assignments of those gathered around the vision
- through prophetic words given to your community
- through formational experiences in your community
- often charism is discerned at the inception/conception of your community, but it can change and develop over the community's lifetime
- through paying attention to moments of consolation/deep gladness/the sweet spot

Examples: Community Storytelling

EXERCISES

✍ What is the birth story of your community?

✍ What are formative prophetic words that were spoken over your community early in its life?

👉 Describe a moment or situation where your community felt like they were in their "sweet spot" - in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing. What might that say to you about your charism?



COMPETENCIES



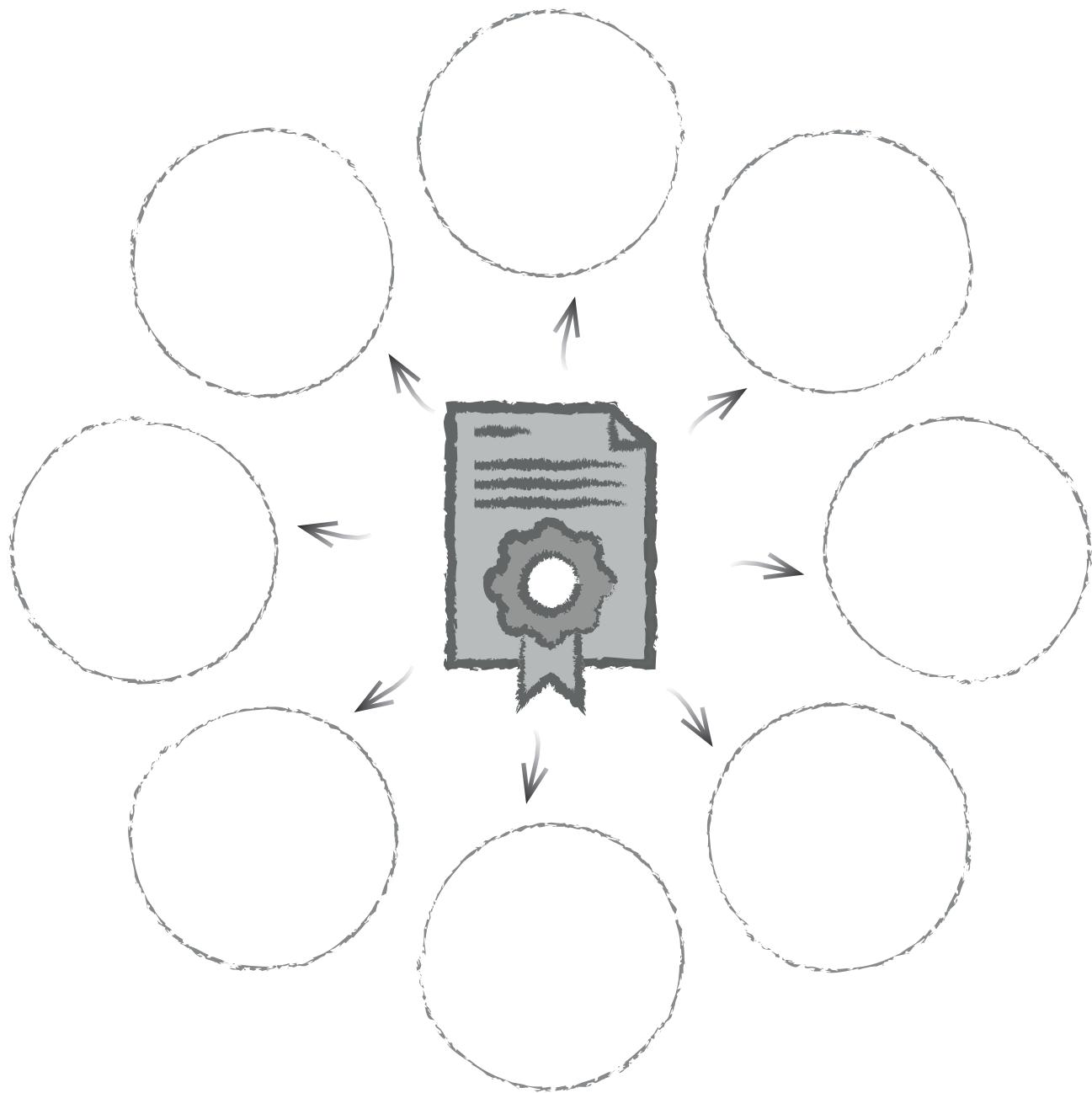
② What are the essential skills required to make this work?

Corporate Discernment:

Community Cultivation:

Collaboration:

✍ Thus far in the life of your 24-7 community, what essential competencies have you identified?



✍ YOUR NOTES



APPENDICES

1: For Further Study

Bevans, Stephan B. Models of Contextual Theology. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1992.

Bevans, Stephen B., Schrodoer, Roger. Prophetic Dialogue. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 2011.

Haley Barton, Ruth. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups. Downers Grove; Intervarsity Press. 2012.

Hirsch, Alan and Frost, Michael. The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 2013.

Hjalmarson, Leonard. No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place. Portland: Urban Loft Publishers. 2014

Sedmack, Clemens. Doing Local Theology. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 2002

2: Further Conversations

For more conversations around the cultivation of Houses of Prayer you are welcome to subscribe to my blog at www.jillweber.com.



How to Exegete A Neighbourhood

by Dr. Glenn Smith

Introduction

There is no "magic formula" for tackling urban ministry. In the following suggestions, we are attempting to facilitate how one implements a strategy to reach a specific segment of a metropolitan area.

F.B. Meyer once wrote, "Christian missionaries should be strategists, expending their strength where populations teem and rivers of world wide influence have their rise." In this context, it is little wonder that we must rethink our urban strategies.

There are few experts in this field, not many with great experience to share with newcomers. Humility and teachableness are absolutely essential. Referring to the urban masses, William Booth, of the Salvation Army, asked his volunteers, "Can we weep for them? If you can't weep, we cannot use you."

Requirements to begin:

Large Map

History Book

Good Shoes

Subscribe to the web based service of Christian Direction to get the most recent socio religious research about Quebec.

For me, in Montreal, this means:

Census tract data from Statistics Canada.

Using articles from Institut National de la recherche Scientifique (INRS Urbanisation)

Basic reading on the city might include:

The Neighbourhood Organizer's Guide. Warren & Warren. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1977.

Merger Mania The Assault On Local Government. Andrew Sancton. Montréal: McGillQueen's University Press, 2000.

Canadian Cities in Transition. Second edition. Bunting T. and Filion, P; Toronto, Oxford University Press. 2000.

Canadian Cities in Transition. Third edition. Bunting T. and Filion, P; Toronto, Oxford University Press, 2006.

The New City. Lorinc, John ; Toronto: Penguin Canada. 2005.

The Twenty Steps

1 Compile a list of significant historical events that inform the community's identity. These could be specific, historic conflicts that took place, such as a war or dispute, specific unifying events such as the city coming together to fight a massive fire, specific decisions that leaders made such as the building of a community centre, or something that happened that gave people hope, such as a person doing something heroic or selfless. These will provide clues to the best way for the church to focus its energy. Begin this step by reading about the community. The local library or historical society is where we always begin.

Study the history of the city, particularly its growth patterns.

Why is the city growing (or why did it grow)?

Who are (were) the immigrants to the city (examine lines 400-734 in the published report from Christian Direction)?

Where did they come from and where are they settled?

Where are they employed?

2 Understand clearly the sections or zones which make up the city:

Downtown

Blue collar neighbourhoods

Ghettos

Industrial zones

Commercial areas

Examine the Census Canada map provided with the data. (Find out from city planners and real estate offices where city populations are expected to move; where commercial and industrial zones will develop, and which areas are slated to undergo major changes.)

Isolate the sectors of your larger community using the representation of the city at the conclusion of this article. This represents the functions of a city.

3 Study the neighbourhoods:

household revenue (lines 152515-47 of the 2011 Census data¹. Lines for 2006 are somewhat different. We use 2001 as the baseline as it was a complete census); ethnicity including immigration patterns (lines 400-734) and language spoken at home (lines 225380) ;

rates of scholarly (lines 1356139-7);

issues related to family structure: age structure (lines 643), birth rates, number of children per household (lines 8289), marital status (line 45) etc;

current rates of religious affiliation (lines 16-751-709).

To understand a neighbourhood you must walk the streets, talk to people, insiders and outsiders:

census data is important but onsite observation is best.

people groups crisscross in the city. Probe to discover the dominant influence in a neighbourhood: ethnic identity? social class? or...?

What is the extent of social contact between the people groups? Is social contact increasing?

When examining the data, notice the criteria used. When walking the streets, watch for the impact of these on the neighbourhood.

4 Determine and analyze the power centres in the city the political figures, the police department, the religious leaders.

Who controls the media? (TV, radio, newspapers)

Who controls commerce, finance? The schools and the arts?

What are the religious\moral commitments of the power people?

5 Analyze the felt needs of specific people groups within the city. You are looking for indications of receptivity and "keys" which may unlock doors to homes and hearts. Felt needs vary from group to group. In some communities, such things as personal illness, loneliness, physical hardships, insecurity in terms of housing, property rights, and the threat of losing one's dwelling are very real. In other neighbourhoods the felt needs may be entirely different.

¹ Every five years, Statistics Canada does a census. Every 10 years they ask questions about religion. You can consult Christian Direction (www.direction.ca) for help on using the data.

Addressing felt needs is essential to holistic strategy. From the felt needs the missionary moves to peoples' ultimate needs and shows how Christ meets both.

6 Examine the traffic flow of the city. Just as successful advertisers know where to place their signs, missionaries must know where to build their churches, where they can readily be seen and reached.

Find out where each of the following is located:

CLSC (or a community services centre)

library

police

fire

city hall

7 Seek to discover how news and opinion spread in the city, and in particular groups. Mainly through conversation? By radio, TV? Who are the ideap eople, the opinion makers? Subscribe to the weekly publication in the area. Read it faithfully.

8 Examine the relationship between citydw ellers and the rural, smallt own communities outside the city. Do certain segments of the urban population maintain strong ties with their rural cousins? Is there a lot of travel and visiting between city and village? What are the present immigration patterns from the countryside? How might the urbanr ural interaction be used for the spread of the gospel and multiplication of churches? Study lines 38139 8 of the report.)

9 Churches in the city locate them on a map, identify them by denomination and even by size and age. Reflect on what the church map shows.

10 Analyze the various types of existing churches. Common types as found in many cities are:

"Old First"

Cathedral church

"Uptown" churches

Peoples' churches (large auditoriums, drawing numbers from all over the metropolitan area)

University church

Storefront churches

Ethnic language churches

Suburban churches

Special purpose churches (for gays, lesbians, street people, etc.)

"Renewal" churches, the fastest growing in many countries; they are usually newer, independent

Consult Christian Directory published by Christian Direction for a list of congregations in your milieu.

11 **Find out the growth patterns** of the various churches attendance, membership, rate of growth. Try to determine the nature of the growtht ransfer, conversion, biological?

12 **Inquire about church planting** in the past several years; who has tried it, who has planted churches, and why\where did they succeed? Learn all you can from them.

13 **Who is planning to start new churches?** Where and among which people groups? Find out all you can from church and mission sources as to what is being planned for the city.

14 **Strategies** what has been tried in the past, what has failed, and what was effective in starting churches and stimulating growth? Analyze the information you receive. In the light of recent church growth studies, what has been done right in this city, and where ought things be done differently?

15 **Christians and non Christians** where are the Christians located (which may not be where they attend church)? Identify areas of the city where relatively few Christians live.

Read: David Ley and Bruce Martin. Gentrification as Secularization : The Status of Religious Belief in the Post Industrial City. Social Compass, 40 (2), 1993, p. 217232.

16 **Identify Christians in positions of influence** in the city in business, politics, the media, education, entertainment, sports. Analyze their potential for wider spread of the gospel and assistance in planting churches.

17 **List and analyze the para church ministries** operating in and to the city. How might each contribute something to the overall strategy? Are there some you may want to avoid because they might have a negative influence on church multiplication?

18 **Make an inventory of all possible personnel resources** that might be tapped for the carrying out of your church planting strategy. For example, are there Biblesch ool or seminary students available to help with doort odoor calling? Could workers be borrowed from existing churches to help plant new congregations?

19 Evaluate all known methods for planting churches in the light of what you know about this city, its history, people, existing churches, and particular characteristics. What methods have proven effective elsewhere, appear appropriate for this city and certain of its communities, and are within the capabilities of your resources.

20 List and evaluate the community agencies (private, religious and civic) that are designed to meet particular needs (literacy, overnight shelter, emergency food and clothing, etc.) and consider how their help can be incorporated into your overall strategy.

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Cultivating Houses of Prayer Herrnhut

by Phil Anderson

The Christian community which we now know as Herrnhut started life as a refugee camp. It came about through an unlikely encounter between two men who on the face of it should have had little in common. Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a high ranking nobleman who had grown up in an early 18th century renewal movement called Pietism. As a teenager he and some friends had made a solemn commitment which they referred to as The Order of the Mustard Seed, to be True to Christ, Kind to People, and send the Gospel to the Nations. By 1722 Zinzendorf has returned to his family's country estate in Saxony determined to establish a version of Christian discipleship which would live those principles out in practise.

Christian David on the other hand was a restless wanderer a carpenter and former soldier who by his own admission had for many years hated the name of Christ. He came to faith through the kindness of a pietist pastor who nursed him through a near fatal illness after he turned up homeless at their church. On his travels he had encountered the faithful but fearful remnant of an older group known as the Bohemian Brethren, now living under persecution in Moravia. He went to the Count and asked if he would offer them a place of refuge. Worried that they might upset his plans for a model community but feeling bound by his promise to be kind to all people, Zinzendorf agreed.

The Brethren arrived in 1722 and were soon joined by an odd assortment of other persecuted believers. Their rough settlement was given the name Herrnhut after a prophetic word that it would live under the Lord's Watch. What happened next was sad but perhaps inevitable they started to disagree with one another and became increasingly dogmatic and contentious. By 1727 things had got so bad that Zinzendorf felt compelled to act. He moved with his young family out of their manor house and into the refugee village up the road and set about the work of reconciliation. By summer a remarkable change had occurred, and on the 13th August the whole community gathered to celebrate communion together as a mark of their newfound fellowship. During that service they experienced a dramatic visitation of the Holy Spirit which proved so transformational that it became known as the Moravian Pentecost. It proved to be the birthing point of a community and a movement which would change not just their locality but Europe and much of the world over the decades that followed.

As a house of **Prayer**, Herrnhut stands out as one of the most remarkable and inspiring examples in church history. A small village numbering just a few hundred people, none of whom were full time monastics, prayed without ceasing day and night for over one hundred years. A week after the events of 13th August 1727 they sensed an urgent call to

prayer, writing in the community journal that We have been considering how necessary it is, for the well-being of the church, to keep constant watch over her – the church still being young in years and having an old enemy in satan, who rests neither by day nor by night. To this end we have resolved to ignite a free-will offering of intercession in our town, which can burn day and night. 14 of the young men responded immediately to the call, rapidly followed by 28 women. The first cycle of continuous prayer began a week later, with a rota of 48 named individuals, 24 men and 24 women. The numbers grew rapidly to around 70 and eventually every member of the community would become involved.

The prayer watch focussed exclusively on intercession, with other small prayer groups existing for people to pray for their own needs. Their prayers were personal and specific, with Christian David noting that many who were oppressed and in prison who told us of their needs and placed their situations in our hands. Also, many others who were working for the gospel, those who wished to join our fellowship, many who were ill or under attack and those who were struggling with repentance came to us for prayer. For some people the achievement of managing to keep going for month after month can feel like reward enough, but the community at Herrnhut were never going to be satisfied with just chalking up hours in prayer. They longed for intimacy and expected answers. As one participant put it, Various gifts and spiritual powers manifested themselves in the church at Herrnhut, and, in particular, many miraculous cures. Its members believed the words which the Saviour spoke regarding the hearing of prayer; and when any particular affair pressed itself upon them, they spoke with Him concerning it – and it was done unto them according to their faiths.

With such a strong outwards focus to their prayer life, it might seem obvious that it would soon overflow into **mission**. And indeed, in 1732 just 5 years after the start of the prayer watch, Leonard Dober (a potter) and David Nitschmann (a carpenter) set out on foot to walk from Germany to Denmark, the first leg of a journey to the Caribbean island of St Thomas. Their plan was to take the gospel message not to the settlers but to slaves, and they went with the full intention of selling themselves into slavery in order to gain access to the closely controlled slave population. They were the first of over a thousand Herrnhut missionaries who would go out in the decades that followed, reaching the Caribbean, Greenland, Africa, North America, the Middle East, and beyond.

Individuals from Herrnhut had already seeded a network of revival groups in churches across nominally Christian Europe, but in the early 1700s the idea of missions to unreached people groups was almost unheard of. There were no colleges, no training manuals, and very few examples to follow (none of which had seen any great success). The Herrnhut community had to make up their approach to missions as they went along. They were the first modern missionaries to be sent by an unofficial organisation, the first to go as lay people rather than ordained ministers, and the first to go to slaves. The

sacrifices demanded of early missionaries like Leonard and David were incredible. The journeys took months, communications consisted of letters sent by sailing ship, living conditions were primitive, and they were so vulnerable to tropical diseases that the period was sometimes referred to as the great dying. But despite this they eventually saw fruit from their work. Five years later over 600 of the slaves on St Thomas had come to faith, and churches planted by Herrnhut missionaries are still active in the Caribbean and around the world today.

The Herrnhut approach to **justice** ran through every aspect of their lives together. Simplicity of lifestyle and generosity with possessions were seen as a fundamental expression of faith. This was shown in their simple style of dress, their voluntary practise of communal living during the single stages of life, and their assumption that the profits from trade and enterprise should go primarily to supporting the communitys mission works. As one of their leaders put it: To say that believers should have no personal property, but must have everything in common would be to go too far. But believers are to lay down their lives for one another and if it is needed not withhold property from others clearly echoing the principles of Christian community described in Acts 2:42 47.

Their community was pioneeringly inclusive in operation, despite predating enlightenment philosophies of equality by over half a century. Education in the early 18th century was normally reserved for the upper classes or professional men, but in Herrnhut everyone; rich or poor, male or female, received an education. One of their most prominent leaders was Anna Nitschmann; a farm labourer who was initially chosen as leader of the single sisters group at the age of 15, challenging pretty much every rule of age, gender, and social class. When establishing one of their missional communities around the globe the Herrnhutters would focus on including the poor and needy and establishing indigenous leadership; something which often proved invaluable when they were persecuted or expelled by the colonial authorities for challenging social norms.

Their approach to learning was groundbreaking. Every member of the community at Herrnhut was literate and numerate, over 150 years before this became the norm across western Europe. As well as teaching their own children, the establishment of free schools was a distinctive characteristic of their work amongst poor communities in Europe and unreached people groups internationally. Anna Nitschmanns rise to leadership in the movement did not happen by chance; by the age of 15 she was able to read and teach the Bible in her own language, lead small groups effectively, and was part of an environment that discipled all young people on the basis that some of them would be called to mission and others would serve in support of mission as whole community endeavour. Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann went to St Thomas as unordained lay workers, but had spent 4 years learning medicine, languages, biblical studies, and geography before they did so.

In spite of their determined and often sacrificial approach to serving God, the community at Herrnhut lived and breathed creativity. In an age where much church worship was conducted formally and with little conviction, they wrote thousands of worship songs and sang and celebrated with a joy that was utterly infectious. Zinzendorf's wife Erdmuth Dorothea was mostly known as a practical organiser whose skills and financial acumen several times saved him and the movement from bankruptcy. But I was recently thumbing through a hymnbook and found a song written by her which is full of zeal and passion for spreading the love of Christ throughout the world. How often in our culture of celebrity worship leaders do we make space for songs written by the finance director, or realistically expect them to still be being sung nearly 300 years later?

The Herrnhut community also applied their creativity to visual arts, crafts, and enterprise. Their love for Christ and heart for mission is recorded not just in words but in paintings and engravings. They were known for excellence, and it was said that a Gracehill apprenticeship (a daughter community of Herrnhut in Ireland) would guarantee a job anywhere in the country.

As a place of welcome for refugees Herrnhut was born out of hospitality, and that sense of welcome was never lost. One of the first buildings to be constructed was a guest house, and this remained a feature of all the subsequent communities which they planted around the world. One of the reasons that Herrnhut was able to reproduce a model of high commitment missional communities around the world was that they constantly welcomed people to come and live alongside them, learn by participating, and then go out to reproduce what they had experienced. Their hospitality was not just offered to potential members or workers. When they first established their new community base at Herrnhut the property was already informally occupied by a number of homeless families. Rather than moving them on the Herrnhutters offered them food at their communal table, friendship, and free education.

The 100 years of prayer at Herrnhut also marked 100 years of mission, justice, learning, creativity, and hospitality at their most inspiring and challenging. By the mid 19th century Herrnhut and the dozens of daughter communities they had planted had grown and prospered to the point where the core community had become a minority in the villages and towns which formed around them. They gradually transitioned to become a more conventional Christian denomination, but their legacy of prayer, mission, and community life has been an inspiration for nearly 3 centuries, and is a central part of our own story with the founding and development of 24/7 Prayer.



The Story of Reading Boiler Room

by Pete Ward

The answer is in the Abbey.

Little did we know that such a short sentence would have such an impact over the following decade and beyond.

We were reminded of these prophetic words previously given to us as we stood on McIlroy Park overlooking the town of Reading. A small group of us were dreaming of, and praying for, a place to locate the house of prayer we sensed was a part of the Lords plan for us and for our town. Over the previous year we had been amazed by the power and presence of Jesus as we sacrificially set time aside to be in his presence night and day. Friends had come to know Him for the first time, drawn to Jesus presence in our week long or monthl ong prayer rooms. There had been miracles of healing, and countless answered prayers locally, nationally and internationally. The body of Christ in the town was being strengthened. The thirteen weeks of prayer that year had been marvellous, but we were sensing that there was something more for us. The Lord was birthing in our hearts what was to become the first 24⁷ Prayer Boiler Room, a house of prayer making a measurable difference amongst the poor and the lost.

It would be easy to describe our journey as something that flowed easily and clearly from the beginning, but that wasnt how it felt at the time. When we were on that hilltop, we really werent clear on how to proceed. There were many prayers and prophetic words both spoken and offered in silence, but we were wrestling with what we were being called to do next. As we moved from the park to the town centre, we were none the wiser initially, walking around the Abbey Gardens and straining to hear what the Lord was saying to us. As we were about to give up, Andy Freeman stood in the still standing Abbey gateway and exclaimed thats it! as he looked down the hill to the dilapidated old Forbury Vaults pub. Over the next few months, as the work of bringing our dreams to reality began, we agreed a peppercorn rent with the buildings owners, and Reading Boiler Room began its night and day watch of prayer.

The significance of this building and the relationship to the prophetic word that we were initially given, was that the pub was actually on the site of the former Cluniac and Benedictine Abbey, some of the ruins of which remain to this day. We were captivated by our place in the continuing ministry to God in prayer that had begun in the Abbey on the same site in 1121. As we prayed night and day, our hearts were drawn to a desire to live out some of the old monastic values in a way which suited our modern town centre context and the people we were ministering to. As the team took tentative steps

in identifying what values we were going to centre our work around, our thoughts were shared amongst other leaders in the fledgling 24⁷ Prayer movement. Finally, we settled on the six practices that characterise all 24⁷ Prayer Boiler Rooms to this day Prayer, Creativity, Mission, Justice, Hospitality and Learning.

Prayer and Creativity were the n obr ainer practices that always came at the top of our early lists of values. The whole Boiler Room idea was birthed in prayer and came out of a prayer movement. We were, and are, passionate about encounter with Jesus. Experiencing Him changes everything. Although we didnt manage continuous 24 hour prayer for more than the first three and a half months, we almost always continued our prayer watch for more than 130 hours each week. There was much that needed to happen practically to ensure that our core value of prayer was maintained. Our good relationships with the churches in the town were vital as we encouraged others to come and join in with our prayer schedule, and to volunteer for our staff team to help run the building. Our main prayer area was on the first floor of the building and during the day it could get quite noisy due to the presence of young people who used to hang around the area. They were invited into the Boiler Room by members of our team who had been working with them long before the building opened. Some didnt like the noisiness of young people being around the house of prayer, but our relationship with them was as much of a core value as the prayer itself, so we committed to allowing them in, as well as having times dedicated to quiet, making more reflective times of prayer easier. We also kept another room in the building for contemplative prayer, including an altar and the sacraments, as well as a room specifically set aside for praying for the nations.

Creativity was a practice that was part of our DNA from the very first, for which we have to thank the community that birthed 24⁷ Prayer, Revelation Church in Chichester. Our friends at Revs set up their first prayer room the only way they knew how as a community, based on artistic expression to reveal the creativity of the Holy Spirit, and the open heart of mission and justice. As a result almost all prayer rooms that use 24⁷ Prayers resources as an inspiration, find beautiful ways to welcome prayer room occupants into communication with God. Although there was a natural link for us with creativity from the 24⁷ side, our new location also fostered that link. The Cluniac monastic order that had seeded the Abbey in Reading was renowned for its artistic creativity, and as we researched our forebears, we found that the earliest known sixp art harmony from Britain, the song Su mer is icumen in, was first written down in the abbey about 1240. If we needed any encouragement for creativity to be one of our core values, this was it. Soon the walls of the former pub were covered with creative expressions of prayer from those using the various prayer rooms. Every couple of months we changed the prayer stations and installations in the main prayer area around the theme we felt God was calling us to focus on for that season.

The activity of mission came easily to us due to the relationships we were consciously developing with the young people that used to hang out in Forbury Gardens, just near the old Abbey Gateway. Many of them had messy family situations and were struggling with issues around sexual promiscuity and substance abuse. Our evangelistic stance was to talk with them about Jesus only when they wanted to, but they could see in our use of the prayer room that we were serious about our relationship with Christ and they would occasionally join in with our prayer times. Such conversations were therefore never awkward or forced when they did occur. Some of the young people became Christians and many didn't, but many of those who did not look back on that time as a really positive experience in their journey into adulthood. Several people without faith and from other faiths were also miraculously drawn to the building, and we shared our faith and story with them when we met them.

Old monastic institutions sought to care for their local communities through the provision of healthcare and schooling. We sought to engage in the practice of justice through the prayers we were encouraging and through practical action with the young people we were serving. Justice related issues were regularly highlighted in the resources in our prayer rooms, both in the main prayer area, and specifically relating to international justice issues in the prayer room for the nations.²⁴⁷ Prayer passionately believes in also being the answer to our prayers where we can be and consequently we worked in partnership with local and national government, running schemes to improve the life chances and experiences of the young people we were working with and helping them to access relevant local services. Hard choices had to be made – we also worked with a number of homeless people in the town centre, but for child safety reasons that work had to take second place.

We were struck by the exhortation in the Rule of Benedict to entertain the visitor as if he were Christ himself. We soon had to get to grips with the practicalities of such hospitality, as the story of Reading Boiler Room spread and drew hundreds of pilgrims from around the nation and the nations! Rooms were converted into accommodation and friends of the Boiler Room took people in as both short term and long term pilgrims. Many of these early pilgrims remain strong and active friends of the ²⁴⁷ Prayer movement almost 20 years later.

The final practice is that of learning. We were fascinated by how the early monasteries were centres of learning of global importance and how this also linked with the practice of creativity. The Celtic monasteries in the first millennia were a particular inspiration, with the creation of masterpieces such as the Lindisfarne and Iona Gospels. Their learning wasn't purely about building knowledge, but to seek God; an act of devotion rather than that of academia. As an 8th Century catechism asks: What is the fruit of study? To perceive the eternal Word of God reflected in every plant and insect, every bird and animal, and every man and woman. Our team regularly went on pilgrimages

to learn more about particular locations such as Winchester Cathedral or Holy Island, and other movements ancient and modern, such as the Benedictines or the Iona and Northumbria Communities. We also retained a small library of books in the Boiler Room to enable people who were interested to read some of the resources that we had found useful, and encouraged learning through listening to others, contemplation, and prayer. The desire to help others with lifelong discipleship resulted in our running the first of 247s training programmes, where our Wild Goose pilgrims explored living out the six practices and orienting life around God through them.

If you would like to find out more about the early story of Reading Boiler Room and the six practices, you can pick up the story in Red Moon Rising by Pete Greig and Dave Roberts, and Punk Monk by Andy Freeman and Pete Greig. As you've read this section of the manual, I hope you've picked up some of the key aspects we think are important in the journey of starting a 247 House of Prayer.

Here are a few of the points that are worth thinking about further:

Explore your journey and your calling as a team.

Listen to respected voices in your locality – they may bring the word of the Lord for your next steps.

The way ahead isn't always clear. The temptation is to take an example, and to try to recreate it. Your road will almost certainly differ from the Reading Boiler Room one, although you may be called to the same practices.

247 Houses of Prayer and Boiler Rooms are passionate about being the answers to their prayers, as well as being committed to prayer. These are not holy huddles or academic bible study groups. Who and where are the people to whom you are being called to serve?

Build good relationships with the churches in your area, particularly with the leadership of the churches. You will need their support, and the support of their members.

How are you continuing to develop your vision, and sharing your vision with others?

Are you called to multiply the vision that God has given you, but encouraging others to join you on the journey? Are you able to be a resource to individuals and churches in training?

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