

## A CALL TO TRANSFORMATION

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**Transformational Streams are becoming one Fast-flowing River for the Healing of the Nations.**  
**By Luis Bush (For biographical information see: [www.ad2000.org/staff/luis.htm](http://www.ad2000.org/staff/luis.htm))**

### Stories of Transformation

The stories grow daily. There are sixty transformation venues in Fiji alone. Tribal leaders are being reconciled, denominational leaders have coalesced in heart, mind and vision, the Prime Minister begins the day early seeking God, the governmental cabinet seeks to do what is right and the regenerative work of God is becoming evident in nature itself. God is demonstrating His approval all over the islands through regenerating coral reefs, returning fish, growing fruit on plants that had ceased to bear for decades. Torch lights carried village to village by enlightened Fijian government officials symbolically impart revival to catalyse other venues.

Transformational city-focused prayer initiatives have been taking place since 1989 in Indonesia. More than 350 cities currently have interchurch and intermission prayer committees offering seminars for facilitators trained for enabling transformational initiatives.

In Africa annual transformation prayer days have grown exponentially over recent years from the moment Graham Power heard the call of God to gather His people at the stadium in Cape Town to seek the His face. On May 2, 2004, an estimated forty million people met in more than 1200 African stadiums in fifty countries opened their gates to allow God's people to come in for several hours of fervent, united prayer. There were fifty-eight reported events in Egypt alone, one thousand in Nigeria and another one thousand in Ghana. A week of bounty preceded the prayer day in Africa as God's people give generously to bless communities, cities and nations. Positive changes are being reported by secular newspapers. Event co-patron Michael Cassidy: "We need to get with what the Lord is doing and move from prayer in the stadiums to transformation of the cities."

The Cali, Colombia, story on video is about a city where 60,000 Christians jam the municipal stadium for all-night prayer vigils every 90 days; where a multi-billion dollar drug cartel has been brought to its knees. In Almolonga, Guatemala, video footage tells the story of city jails closed for lack of crime. The presence of God is claimed by more than nine of ten people and agricultural production beyond imagination.

City-wide transformational initiatives have been taking place for well over ten years in Argentina. Harvest Evangelism holds its fourteenth annual international institute expounding a new concept: "City Reaching is expanding... through national transformation marketplace redemption."

### Five Major Transformational Streams

Five major transformational streams are flowing across the world: the **revivalist** stream, the **church growth stream**, the **city-reaching** stream and the stream engaged in the **transformational development** of the poor and **market-place redemption** stream. These diverse transformational streams converge into the same "transformational river."

Christian leaders around the world made their voices heard through the World Inquiry, calling for the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. Mission as Transformation global events have been scheduled for Indonesia in 2005, India in 2006, Korea in 2007, Brazil 2008, Africa in 2009, the Turkic World in 2010, Beijing 2011, Monterey, Mexico, in 2012.

## There are five main streams of transformation:

- **Saturation church planting movements** working in a spirit of cooperation, resulting in healthy churches in every class and kind of people, and within practical and relational reach of every person, that are permeating every segment of society with the love, truth and saving power of Jesus Christ.
- **Emphasis on divine visitation and revival.** God acts on the Church bringing revival and He acts on society bringing spiritual awakening. What is taking place in Fiji today is an example of this transformational stream.
- **City-reaching:** Obedience to God as an apostolic people with an apostolic mission to transform peoples, places and the culture within which the Church lives.<sup>1</sup>
- **Pioneer marketplace redemption.** The marketplace—the combination business, education and government—constitutes the heart of a nation. To change an individual his or her heart must be changed, and similarly, a nation transformed the marketplace must be transformed. An important key to take the Kingdom of God to the marketplace is found in Jesus' parable of the Minas (Luke 19:10-27) where believers are instructed to business to gain authority over cities by using Kingdom principles.<sup>2</sup>
- **Transformational development of the poor through community development.** This involves creating a better future for the poor. Jajakumar Christian, World Vision, India, sees poverty as a set of disempowering systems. There is the biophysical system--body and mind--which represents the basic human needs of health and education. There is the cultural system in terms of inadequacies in worldview. There is the captivity to god-complexes of the non-poor and deception by principalities and powers, promoting anti-life and deception through the religious systems. These all interact and contribute to a the disempowerment and marred identity of the poor.

An effort to define a comprehensive approach to transformation must be “rooted in the theology of the mission of the Kingdom of God and seeks to express the Lordship of Jesus over every aspect of life, economic, religious, personal, political. It does not give priority to any area of life as an area for mission . . . but this change will be effected whenever people address issues of life directly, rooted in a gospel perspective.”<sup>3</sup> As the head of the church Christ initiates and His body responds—as one body. Transformation associates are now gathering to contemplate then seek to cooperate with the beauty of God’s movements. The basic idea behind “transformation coordination” is that, not only can we do more together than we can separately, but we move to a new ministry realm which operates on entirely new laws of input and output. Like the gushing forth of the waters the love of God through the people of God unleashes multiple mission initiatives in which divine resources are channelled through willing servants to meet human needs to the glory of God. A comprehensive movement to bless the nations includes many emphases.

Missional initiative among the last and the least prioritizes the spiritually needy while integrating the physically needy without leaving any country out of “focus.” Transformational leadership engages a new generation in participatory leadership with current leadership.

We are being called not to dilute, adulterer, temper, water down, reduce, weaken or pollute that which the Spirit of the living God is purifying and gushing forth on this dusty plain we call Earth. A transformed world is a place where the power, the presence and the peace of God are experienced by all. The power of God is unleashed. The peace of God rules. Shalom-Salaam embrace. The presence of God fills the earth. “Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven Ps. 85:10-11

## The Mission of Transformation

**Transformation is a concept rooted in the New Covenant** (see John 4:14; Romans 12:2; II Corinthians 3:18, 5:17; I John 3:9). **The term itself derives from the Greek word “metamorphoo” which means to change from one degree of glory to another, with ever increasing glory.** It is the spiritual equivalent of a caterpillar being metamorphosed into a butterfly. Unlike reformation, it does not merely tinker with society; it changes it from the inside out. It operates at the heart level (George Otis, Jr. The Sentinel Group)

**Transformation is the progressive and ongoing measurable supernatural impact of the presence and power of God working in, through and apart from the Church on human society and structures.**

**In the church**, this is characterized by increased holiness of life, reconciliation in relationships, and appetite for prayer and worship.

**Through the Church** this is characterized by accelerated conversion growth, mobilization of gifts and callings, and an increased relevance to and participation in greater society.

In the culture, this may be characterized by pervasive awareness of the reality of God, a radical correction of social ills, a commensurate decrease in crime rates, supernatural blessing on local commerce, healing of the broken-hearted (the alienated and disenfranchised), regenerative acts of restoring the productivity of the land, and an exporting of kingdom righteousness.

**To this end, a catalytic core of saints typically embrace a lifestyle of persistent repentance, humility, and sacrificial servant-hood that attracts the favour and presence of God, and breaks the predominating influences of the ruling power structures of human flesh and negative spiritual forces** (Tom White, *Prayer Summits*).

**Transformation involves seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially and spiritually, by recovering our true identity as human beings created in the image of God and discovering our true vocation as productive stewards, faithfully caring for our world and people** (Bryant Myers, *World Vision Intl.*).

**Transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God. According to the biblical view of human life, then, transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God** (Jn. 10:10; Col. 3:8-15; Eph. 4:13).

**This transformation can only take place through the obedience of individuals and communities to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose power changes the lives of men and women by releasing them from the guilt, power and consequences of sin, enabling them to respond with love toward God and towards others** (Rom. 5:5), and making them "new creatures in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).<sup>4</sup>

**"City reaching" is the ongoing process of mobilizing the whole body of Christ in a geographic area to strategically focus its resources on reaching the whole city with the whole Gospel, resulting in the transformation of the city and its societies. Dedication to mobilizing the whole Church requires the initiative be inclusive of every believer in its approach. Commitment to the whole city requires that the initiative be comprehensive in its scope to include all peoples, problems, and conditions that affect community life.**

The whole Gospel requires methods that are **holistic** in nature requiring a balanced integration of proclamation and incarnation. A city reaching initiative by definition must be inclusive in approach, comprehensive in scope, and holistic in nature. Transformation is a reference to two points of time in a city's history; where the city is now and where it once was. For a growing number of cities the language that best describes the degree of societal change occurring between those two historic points is transformation. Deep and profound change is possible in human beings and is equally possible for the social organisms that we call cities and communities (Jack Dennison, CitiReach). It is less important where a city is on the transformation continuum than where it is compared to where it was (George Otis, The Sentinel Group).

## Transformation Principles

**We are being called to seek God in all His holiness, to humble ourselves as did Isaiah of old, to respond to God with a “yes” when he asks “Whom shall I send?” to seek the unity of God’s servants and to cultivate creative transformational community initiatives to bless the peoples and the nations**

Principles emerge in response to the question “What will it take to achieve the vision for transformation?” Some of the proven principles include the following:

**Spiritual Vitality** - *Laying the foundation for ministry through corporate spiritual growth*

Experiencing the holiness of God with other leaders leads to repentance, humility, and deeper life commitment to Christ and His mission in the world.

**Relational Priority** - *Fuelling momentum for ministry through loving relationships*

Reconciling, forming and developing relationships of mutual love, respect, and trust enables leaders to work together for the common good of their community.

**Compelling Vision** - *Aligning transformational efforts by maintaining vision for the completed task*

Ongoing clear, compelling and comprehensive vision casting that involves everyone in the project brings about shared vision, values and strategy, common language and goals, urgency to act and a bonded team.

**Empowering Leadership** - *Identifying leaders and initiating a process for community transformation*

Empowerment thrives from a growing base of committed leaders and no barriers to keep them from doing a good job. Effective leaders shepherd people and processes putting together the structures and strategies to carry out God’s vision. Strategy results from the prayerful planning of leaders who recognize the activity of God in the community and make the large-scale adjustments needed to join Him in that activity.

**Thorough Research** - *Increasing understanding of the current realities of one’s community*

If the Church wants to be relevant and effective in the community, it needs good information that describes the community’s people and need, the condition of the church; and the spiritual forces which influence current reality. The Church must see the city as it truly is; not just what it seems to be. These data will show leaders God’s top priorities and highest leverage (greatest results per effort) ministries that will bring about the most impact and lasting results.

**Loving Service** - *Enacting high leverage opportunities to minister to the community*

Building bridges through acts of service and kindness establishes relationships of trust and credibility with the community. People open their lives to those who genuinely care about personal and community needs and more often will open their heart to the One who empowers loving service.

**Intentional Learning** - *Making a fresh commitment to individual and corporate learning around needed skills and effective ministry models.*

Constructing the right structures and steps to work together effectively means we must use the assets God has given us to their fullest extent - committing ourselves to training and ongoing learning. Finding out what the Church needs to learn to bring about greater impact is crucial to achieving its goals. For many of us, community transformation means a shift in our underlying philosophies, as well as learning new skills. Building the Church’s ability to facilitate change in the city requires a community of learners who are committed to discover news ways to achieve God’s plans and purposes.

## Signs of Transformation

Jesus did more than preach the Kingdom; he demonstrated its reality with “signs of the kingdom,” public evidence that the Kingdom he was talking about had come. These “signs of the kingdom,” are the same as signs of transformation.

Since “the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 Jn. 3:8), he inevitably came into collision with the prince of darkness. The signs of the kingdom were evidences that the devil was retreating before the advance of the King. As Jesus put it, once the strong man has been overpowered by the Stronger One, his possessions can be taken from him (Mt. 12:29; Lk. 11:22). Similarly, signs of transformation prompted by God-initiatives often through transformed individuals and the Church which is the body of Christ also evidence the advance of the King of Glory in the twenty-first century.

**The first sign** of transformation was (and still is) Jesus himself in the midst of his people (Lk. 17:21; Mt. 18:20), whose presence brings joy, peace, and a sense of celebration (Jn. 15:11; 16:33; Mk. 2:18-20).

**The second** is the preaching of the Gospel. There was no Gospel of the Kingdom to proclaim until Christ arrived. Now that he has come, however, the Good News of the Kingdom must be preached to all, especially to the poor (Lk. 4:18, 19; 7:22). The preaching of the Kingdom points people to the Kingdom itself.

**The third sign** of transformation was exorcism. Although the “principalities and powers” may have a reference to demonic ideologies and structures, they are evil, personal intelligences under the command of the devil. Demon possession is a real and terrible condition. Deliverance is possible only in a power encounter in which the name of Jesus is invoked and prevails.

**The fourth sign** of transformation was and is the healing and the nature miracles - making the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sick whole, raising the dead (Lk. 7:22), stilling the storm, and multiplying loaves and fishes. We all agree that these were not only signs pointing to the reality of the Kingdom’s arrival, but also anticipations of the final Kingdom from which all disease, hunger, disorder and death will be forever banished. We also agree that God is still free and powerful, and performs miracles today, especially in frontier situations where the Kingdom is advancing into enemy-held territory. Some Christians think we should expect miracles as commonly as in the ministry of Jesus and his apostles (e.g., Jn. 14:12), while others draw attention to the texts which describe these miracles as authenticating their unique ministry (e.g., He. 2:3, 4; II Co. 12:12).

**A fifth sign** of transformation is the miracle of conversion and the new birth. Whenever people “turn to God from idols, to serve the living and true God” (I Th. 1: 9, 10), a power encounter has taken place in which the spell of idols, whether traditional or modern, and of the spirits, has been broken. God’s power for salvation is displayed in the Gospel (Ro. 1: 16), and converts who have been rescued from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18) are said to have “tasted ... the powers of the age to come” (He. 6:5).

**A sixth sign** of transformation is the people of the Kingdom, in whom is manifested that cluster of Christlike qualities which Paul called “the fruit of the Spirit”. For the gift of the Spirit is the supreme blessing of the Kingdom of God. Where he rules, love, joy, peace and righteousness rule with him (Ga. 5:22, 23; Ro. 14:17). Moreover, love issues in good works. Thus, if the Gospel is Good News of the Kingdom, good works are the signs of transformation. Good News and good works, evangelism and social responsibility, are once again seen to be indissolubly united.

**The seventh sign** of transformation is suffering. It was necessary for the King to suffer in order to enter into his glory. Indeed, he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps (I Pet. 2:21). To suffer for the sake of righteousness or for our testimony to Jesus, and to bear such suffering courageously, is a clear sign to all beholders that we have received God's salvation or Kingdom (Phil. 1:28,29; cf. II Th. 1:5).

### **Transformational Church: Characteristics of the Church as an Agent of Spiritual and Social Transformations in its Community**

Formulae and strategies cannot convert a church overnight into an agent of spiritual and social transformation in its community. What it does mean is that churches that are making an impact that is truly evangelical--rooted in the gospel and consequently bringing about transformation in society--are churches that share certain characteristics that contribute to that impact.<sup>7</sup>

What are these characteristics? What are the marks of a church which, through the power of the Spirit, is prepared to fulfil its role in its own surroundings as "salt of the earth" and "light of the world," a task to which all followers of Jesus Christ have been called? Obviously, one prerequisite for practicing integral mission is to be an integral church. That is not to say a perfect church, for that would render integral mission impossible. It means a church in which God's Spirit is free to act so that in it the Word of God becomes flesh. It means a church which is making progress in its own transformation and the transformation of the community which it serves. More concretely, an integral church is a community of faith which gives priority to:

1. its commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of everything and everyone;
2. Christian discipleship as a missionary lifestyle to which the entire church and every member have been called;
3. the vision of the church as the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and lives in the light of that confession in such a way that in it can be seen as the inauguration of a new humanity; and
4. its use of gifts and ministries as instruments that the Spirit of God employs to prepare the church and all its members to fulfil their vocation as God's co-workers in the world.<sup>8</sup>

### **Conclusion: Transformation Narrative**

The good news is that God wants to visit our communities. Indeed He desires to make them His habitation. But He will not be comfortable in our midst until we remove offending spiritual roots and cultivate an appetite for holiness, unity, faith, humility and prayer. In the end, divine visitation is as much our responsibility as it is God's (George Otis, The Sentinel Group).

The word transformation and its cognates have emerged as an expression of mission throughout the Christian world today. For example, representatives from seventeen Christian relief and development organizations met in February 2004 and agreed on a statement that expresses their vision as a collective association that the whole Church become a transforming and transformed sign of Christ's Kingdom among all people.

Different transformational streams, each with its own approach, are flowing into a river of transformation. As the river of transformation moves across the earth individuals, churches, communities, cities and nations are being transformed by the power of God through the people of God for the glory of God.

Christians are engaged in a transformational mission at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A cyclical pattern is emerging of those getting involved. It begins with a fresh awareness of the holiness of God which leads to greater humility. The humility of the servants of God makes way for a spirit of unity. Greater unity leads to the cultivation of a transformed and transformational community sensitized to discover, embrace and become servant catalysts on His mission of transformation.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Jack Dennison, *City Reaching: On the Road to Community Transformation* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Ed Silvano introduces the concept in November 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds., "Introduction," *Mission as Transformation*, (Regnum, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Wheaton '83, sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship, provided a platform for further clarification of the response to human need among evangelicals. In the book containing the presentations made at the "Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need," edited by the co-presenters of the topic "Evangelism and Social Responsibility" a year earlier, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, the final document titled "Transformation" reflects, by its very name, the call for societal transformation (Samuel and Sugden 1987:254-265).

<sup>5</sup> Jack Dennison, *City Reaching: On the Road to Community Transformation* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from *Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, written during the international Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, held at Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 19-25, 1982 in which the term transformation replaces kingdom.

<sup>7</sup> Rene Padilla writes in an article titled "The church, the world and the mission at the beginning of the 21st Century," a *World Inquiry* publication presented to the Lausanne-sponsored 2004 Issues Forum, September/October 2004 in Pattaya, Thailand.

<sup>8</sup> Rene Padilla, *Ibid.*

From a website [www.transform-world.net](http://www.transform-world.net) -(which is under reconstruction, but worth waiting for!)  
The First Transform-World Conference was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in May 2005