



Connecting Our Connections

The Fruit of Relationships Fostered by the Kern Family Foundation

What is the likelihood of an associate pastor of a small local church bringing a prominent international thought leader to connect with local church leaders? Well, unless that prominent international thought leader was a congregant's uncle, there would be scant chance of such a thing coming to fruition. Our Twin Cities coalition of faith, work, and economics (FWE) committed partners changed scant chance into reality.

Pastor Robert Olszewski from CrossWinds Community Church had led his congregation in effectively engaging *Life on the Frontlines*, discipleship content made available through the [London Institute of Contemporary Christianity \(LICC\)](#). [Mark Greene and Neil Hudson](#) are major thought leaders responsible for the content of this series, as well as an equipping resource called [Imagine Church](#). Pastor Robert had heard that Neil would be traveling across the U.S. in February 2017 and he saw great value in having Neil share his learning and ideas with other local pastors in the Twin Cities. But CrossWinds is much too small a church to host an international speaker. Pastor Robert turned to his network of FWE-committed partners to cast a vision.

The Kern Family Foundation has been investing in the Twin Cities for a number of years. That support encourages and equips local church leaders through the work of Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative and the Made to Flourish (MTF) pastors' network. The Twin Cities now has a coalition of FWE-committed partners that easily work together to leverage opportunities that benefit multiple churches – opportunities like bringing Neil Hudson's message to local church leaders.

In August 2016, Pastor Robert alerted the coalition that Neil would likely be traveling the U.S. in mid-winter. Work with Purpose and Twin Cities Made to Flourish gave him the thumbs up to preliminarily explore the opportunity. Robert also discerned that key players of this conversation would be attending the Faith @ Work Summit in Dallas in October. He arranged a dinner meeting with our Twin Cities coalition (seven local leaders), Mark Greene, Neil Hudson, and Chris Lake, director of the [Vere Institute](#), the Boston-based arm of LICC. That relationship-building evening solidified our commitment to bring Neil and Chris to the Twin Cities.

The Faith @ Work Summit was instrumental in advancing the cause. At Work with Purpose we speak of "playing catch-up with the Holy Spirit." We were clearly to move at double speed to do so, given the divine appointments at the Summit. Bethel Seminary's leader, Dr. David Clark, found himself sitting at a table with Mark Greene, engaging in excellent conversation about



leading pastors toward whole-life discipleship. In addition, Mark's Summit talk on whole-life discipleship further advanced our shared desire to bring this message to the Twin Cities. The Twin Cities coalition came back from Dallas with "git-r-done" resolve (evidence of the Texas influence.)

By mid-December, Pastor Robert had negotiated a proposal for an event featuring Neil Hudson and Chris Lake where together they would encourage and equip local church leaders on imagining whole-life discipleship flowing from the local church. Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative would host the February 21st event. CrossWinds would arrange and cover travel expenses for Neil and Chris and host their visit to the Twin Cities. Made to Flourish would cover the speaker honorariums and travel expenses. We would get the word out through our various email lists.

Work with Purpose Manager Tessa Pinkstaff leaped to action. She pulled together all the necessary logistical event arrangements, leveraging a Bethel core competency of event hosting. Nathan Miller and Aaron Brockmeier, the Twin Cities Made to Flourish co-city directors, contacted and encouraged MTF pastors to attend the event. CrossWinds commissioned a congregant who is a professional art director to create the marketing pieces. By January 3rd, we were fully marketing the event within our various networks.

On February 21, 2017, 40 pastors and key church leaders gathered for a day of learning and sharing as Neil Hudson and Chris Lake engaged them with a vision for whole-life discipleship. The workshop was highly interactive; church teams worked among themselves and in discussion with leaders from other churches as they envisioned application of Neil's message in their local church context. In addition to this event, Neil and Chris also spent the day prior interacting with local church pastors in Robert's community of Stillwater and with the leadership of his church.

Pastor Robert's desire to share the value of the LICC resources, Neil's wisdom, and the impact on CrossWinds with the Twin Cities region became a reality. In addition, Pastor Robert was able to bring a key influencer in the discipleship at CrossWinds to dinner with this small local church's leadership team. Kudos to Pastor Robert, the Made to Flourish Twin Cities leadership, and Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose team for connecting and collaborating so well and bearing fruit from the Kern Family Foundation's long-term investment in our region.



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