



A Project Of

Rebuilding Lives, Transforming Our Community

One Body Collaboratives

*No one church can bring city transformation on its own,
but together we can. Imagine the impact we could
have if we knew each other and worked together.*

Introduction

One Body Collaboratives is built on the concept of collaboration and has an original mission to unite the Christian Churches to collaboratively work together. There are over 100 Churches, representing more than 20 denominations in our network.

Our local churches and faith-based organizations are too often vast, yet greatly underutilized and undervalued resource pools in our communities. One Body Collaboratives was formed to help them effectively become the central and valued players in rebuilding lives and their communities as they were meant to be.

What would our community look like if the kingdom of God really took shape here?

Our Process

The Board of Directors of One Body Collaboratives engaged in Strategic Planning Sessions around this idea. And we began to wonder what it would look like to pray...

“Thy Kingdom come thy will be done (in Rockford) as it is in heaven.”

In July 2021 we introduced the Community Flourishing project idea at a Faith Leader Breakfast hosted by Mayor McNamara. We further engaged additional churches in the process by presenting the information in an online forum.

Our next step was to survey our local churches to better understand the good work already being done by them in our community, and to also understand the areas that they would like to impact.

In September 2021 we hosted a Faith Leader Strategy Session where we reviewed the survey results and identified the Focus Area(s) in our community that they would like to impact collectively in 2022.

This report serves as the summary of these events and also outlines our process to implement the project in 2022 and our continuation on the project in 2023.

Background Data

We researched faith lead city transformation efforts in other communities where they have successfully connected churches with one another for the purpose of collectively impacting their community in meaningful ways. Common factors of the success of these efforts is documented in the book, [*The Externally Focused Church*](#), by Eric Swanson.

Churches that transform communities are those that are inwardly strong but outwardly focused. An increasing number of churches are rediscovering their focus and thinking differently about what church should be.

These are **externally focused churches** – churches that measure their effectiveness not by how many congregants are sitting in the pews but rather how many congregants are engaged in the community.

Partnering and collaboration are not essential for becoming the best church *in* the community but are absolutely essential if you want to become the best church *for* the community.

Churches that are transforming communities don't divide over differences but unite with other churches and community service organizations (faith based or not) around their common love for the community.

We can unite and work together with other churches and groups in our communities not because we share the same theology but because we care about the same things.

Churches that are working together have discovered the biblical truth that there is really one church in the city that meets in different locations and at different times. There may be many congregations, but there is only one church.

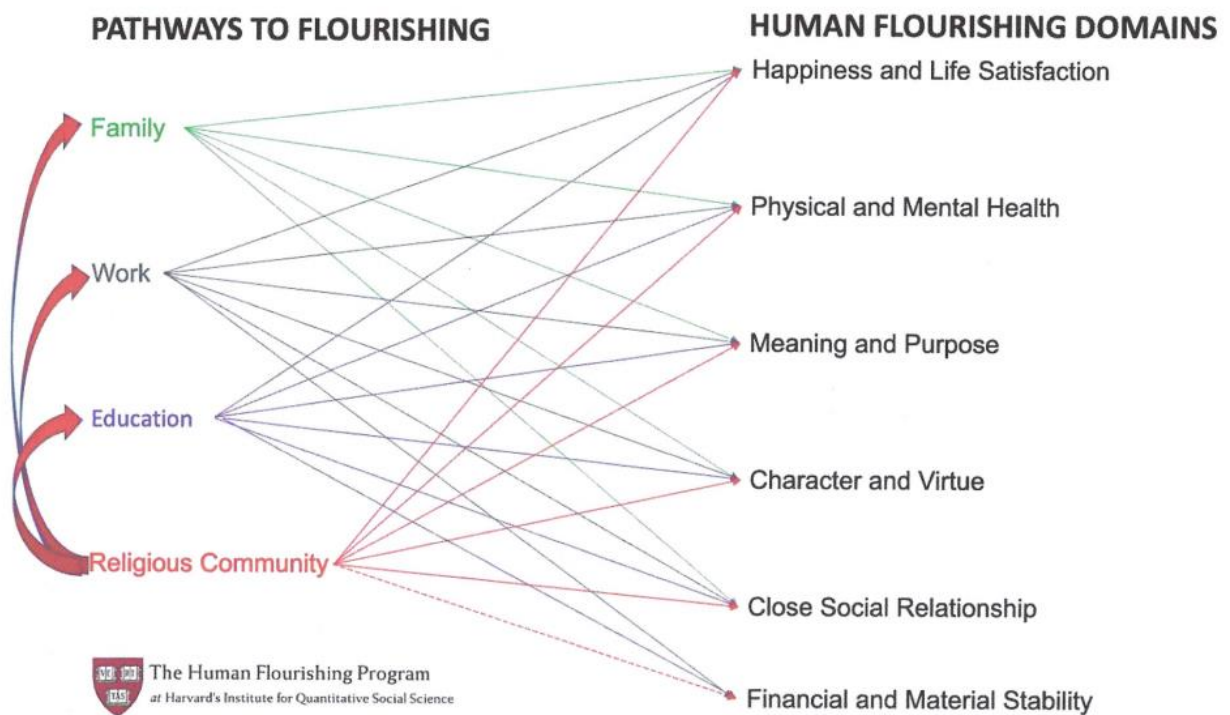
It's no secret that people are walking away from the church. Yet there is a glimmer of hope. Thirty-one percent of lapsed Christians report that they would be "More interested in Christianity if they saw various churches in their community working together more." Understanding our congregations as parts of one larger church in the city allows us to experience the unity of family that we share in belonging to the same Father, the unity of fellowship as we accept one another and worship together, and the unity of purpose. Congregations are discovering that sometimes we can publicly express our unity through service that blesses our community.

***The united and equipped church,
working together with others can solve almost any problem.***

Human Flourishing

Harvard University created the Human Flourishing Model. They determined that individuals flourish through four pathways: Family, Work, Education, and through the Religious Community. These four pathways of family, work, education and religious community were selected on the grounds of being relatively common in human societies, and also having evidence that suggests modestly large effects on various human flourishing outcomes.

They then identified Human Flourishing Domains which are listed in the graphic here:



The program sponsors research projects that investigate the role that religious communities play in public health, medicine, and human flourishing. These projects include original empirical research on how religious communities affect various aspects of flourishing, such as health, happiness, meaning and purpose, and close social relationships.

More information on the Harvard Human Flourishing Model can be found [here](#).

Isaiah 65: When God Builds a City

The Flourishing Domains identified by the Harvard Flourishing Program can be correlated directly to Isaiah 65: When God builds a city.

When God Builds a City—Isaiah 65:17-25

I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

HAPPINESS & LIFE SATISFACTION

“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

HEALTH & LONGEVITY

They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

HOUSING & FOOD—FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.

MEANINGFUL WORK

They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune,

UPWARD MOBILITY

they and their descendants with them.

STRONG FAMILY STRUCTURE

Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear.

CONNECTION TO GOD—SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

The wolf and the lamb will feed together...They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

RECONCILIATION / ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE

We used these Flourishing Domains to define twelve key areas in our community which include:

Crime Reduction: Absence of Violence

Domestic Violence: The city is safe for all

Education: Opportunities at all levels

Elder Care: Elderly are living long and full lives

Food Assistance: Access to Quality Food

Housing: Access for all to Quality Housing

Quality of Life: Happiness & Life Satisfaction; Health & Longevity

Racial Justice: Structural and systemic changes to ensure racial equity

Re-entry Services/Jail Ministry: Assistance to returning citizens

Strengthening Families: Strong Family Structure

Workforce Training: Upward Mobility/Meaningful Work

Youth Resources: Children are valued, protected and nurtured

Survey Results

In 2021 we asked churches to complete a survey to help us to better understand the areas that our faith community are already impacting.

Strategy Session Activity/Outcomes

At our Faith Leader Strategy Session hosted in 2021, we asked those in attendance to indicate the areas in our community that they are *already* impacting, areas they are *interested in* impacting and areas that their *denomination impacts* at a regional or national level.

We then asked each church to write down three **unacceptable realities** in our community that they would like to impact. All of the feedback was documented on large posters designated for each of the 12 key areas in our community.

Each church was also provided with stickers that they used to indicate the areas they would most like to impact together.

The participants then took part in a Gallery Walk where we reviewed each theme as a group. We were able to see areas that had a large amount of support behind it, and areas that were lacking in support.

A summary of this activity is provided on the next two pages.

Community Flourishing Impact Areas	Currently Impacting	Would Like to Impact	Denomination Level Impact	Unacceptable Reality	Level of Support For This Theme
Racial Justice	First Covenant, Forest City Church, Grace UMC, SecondFirst, Spring Creek UCC	Community Bible, Emmanuel Lutheran, Our Saviors, Rockford Arae City Church, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	Bethesda, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Spring Creek UCC, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	Racial Division, Racial Inequity & Systemic Racism, Racial Hate Crimes	12
Quality of Life/Health & Mental Health	Bethesda, Emmanuel Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Forest City Church, Grace UMC, Life Church, Salvation Army, Spring Creek UCC, United Lutheran	Willow Creek	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Grace UMC, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Spring Creek UCC, Willow Creek	Inadequate Health Care, Lack of Mental Illness Resources, Poor Mental Health, Need for Counseling & Resources for Adults, Youth & Children	11
Workforce Development		Rockford Area City Church, Willow Creek	Brooke Road, First Covenant, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Willow Creek	Poverty, High Poverty, Underemployment and Job Skills	5
Strengthening Families	Bethesda, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Grace UMC, Rockford Area City Church, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	Our Saviors	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Our Saviors, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	Broken & Fatherless Homes, Low Access to Addiction Care	4
Youth Resources	Bethesda, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Life Church, Our Saviors, Salvation Army	Community Bible, Third Presbyterian	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Grace UMC, Life Church, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, United Lutheran, Willow Creek	Lack of Youth Engagement, Lack of Support for Children, Long Term Impact of Foster Care	4
Crime Reduction		Brooke Road, Emmanuel Lutheran, First Covenant, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	Brooke Road, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, SecondFirst, Willow Creek	Gun/Neighborhood Violence, Youth Crime, Fear for Safety	3

Community Flourishing Impact Areas	Currently Impacting	Would Like to Impact	Denomination Level Impact	Unacceptable Reality	Level of Support For This Theme
Education (any/all)	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, First Covenant, Grace UMC, Our Saviors	Rockford Area City Church, Willow Creek Presbyterian	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, United Lutheran, Willow Creek	Unequal Access to Education	3
Reentry/Jail Ministry	Salvation Army	Community Bible, First Covenant, Rockford Area City Church, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Willow Creek		3
Housing	SecondFirst, Spring Creek UCC, Third Presbyterian	Community Bible, Rockford Area City Church	Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, First Covenant, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Willow Creek	Lack of Affordable Housing, Eviction Crisis, Homelessness	2
Domestic Violence	Emmanuel Lutheran, Grace UMC, Spring Creek UMC, Third Presbyterian	Our Saviors, Willow Creek	Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek	High Rate of Domestic Violence	1
Food Assistance	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, Emmanuel Lutheran, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Forest City Church, Grace UMC, Life Church, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Spring Creek UCC, Third Presbyterian, United Lutheran	Willow Creek	Brooke Road, Evans/New Life, First Covenant, Grace UMC, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, United Lutheran, Willow Creek	Hunger, Food Insecurity & Food Deserts	1
Elder Care	Lutheran, First Covenant, Forest City Church, Grace UMC, Salvation Army, Spring Creek UCC, Third Presbyterian	Our Saviors, United Lutheran, Willow Creek	Bethesda, Brooke Road, Christ Lutheran, First Covenant, Our Saviors, Salvation Army, SecondFirst, Third Presbyterian, Willow Creek		0

Next Steps

Focus areas of Racial Justice and mental Health were decided upon for collective impact in 2022. A series of events were held around these focus areas throughout the year.

In August of 2022, we sent out a survey to get additional feedback from our local pastors and faith community, including those who have and have not attended our events around our focus areas. The feedback we received is that choosing two focus areas each year does not always align with areas in the community that all of our churches are focused. Many want to be engaged in other areas than what was decided on. Additional feedback included dedicated time for prayer covering our community was needed; as well as focused time to have deeper conversations about next steps on the community issues and not just an overview of what other churches are doing in these areas. Building unity and fellowship was also top of mind for our faith community.

Our Pastor Advisory Network engaged in meaningful conversation about how to continue to refine the Community Flourishing initiative to address the great feedback has been provided.

We determined that One Body Collaboratives would continue to focus on Racial Justice each and every year. In terms of a second focus area, that is already built into the work we are doing in reducing poverty through the Bridges Out of Poverty program. It was discussed that it is better to take deeper focus on these two key community issues instead of a lighter approach to a different focus every year.

One Body Collaboratives provides the framework, consistency, coordination and networks for faith leaders across denominational lines to come together and learn from one another, fostering fellowship and ultimately unity as One Body, while also working toward creating a flourishing community!

The Community Flourishing project will be implemented through the following areas each year:

Educational Events

We will host a series of events around topics of interest to local churches. These events will provide information while also equipping your church with best practices and learnings from other faith leaders.

Collaborative Networks

Our Collaborative Network will take the place of our annual strategy session, allowing our faith community to come together to discuss a variety of issues affecting our community. When we know the issues in our community, and how local resources are addressing them, we can be more strategic in a united approach. This network will convene church leaders in outreach and mobilize them to discover how the church can be an extension of local nonprofits.

Referral Network

When someone walks into your church and asks for help, whether it's a congregation member or someone else, we know that the heart of the church is to always want to help. However, it puts stress on your pastor and your staff to know all of the resources available to provide assistance. Our Referral Network is a service provided to Member Churches as a way to connect congregants needs with community resources. We provide this service as Referral source only, providing referrals to community resources, such as agencies, social services, ministries, etc.

Pastor Networks

The men and women who shepherd Christians in our community through a diversity of denominations and church expressions are key to unity. They are the leaders and teachers who bless our region with the Word and encourage the body to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We will mobilize these neighborhood Pastoral Networks across our community.

Prayer Network

We will coordinate an ongoing Prayer Network to provide faith leaders with the opportunity to come together across denominational lines to pray for our community on a consistent basis.

Racial Justice: Be the Bridge Group

In 2015, Be The Bridge founder Latasha Morrison gathered a diverse group of Christian friends to process the current state of race and racism in America. They committed to meeting regularly to listen to and learn from one another.

Between meetings, they looked to scripture to see what the Bible had to say and they educated themselves about our country's racial history.

That's how Be the Bridge was born: from authentic, God-centered relationships and conversations between people committed to loving their neighbor by pursuing racial healing, equity and reconciliation. As part of our continued focus on Racial Justice, we will foster the creation of a local Be The Bridge Group.

Poverty Reduction Community of Practice

Through our Bridges Out of Poverty Rockford Region project, we have implemented a Poverty Reduction Community of Practice which meets on a quarterly basis to discuss how local organizations are working to reduce poverty through the way services are delivered and how they are working with others in their respective sector and others to remove barriers.

“When right-living people bless the city, it flourishes.” Proverbs 11:11

Additional Ways to Support our Effort

Pastor Advisory Network

If you are a Senior Pastor, we ask for you to prayerfully consider joining our Pastor Advisory Network, which will act as our advisory board for this initiative.

Pray

Please continue to pray for this effort as we work together to help our community flourish.

Community Flourishing Prayer

God, today I pray for my city. I believe you have planted me in this community on purpose. I pray your Holy Spirit would continually remind me to speak life and blessing over my city. May we walk in unity and love for one another. Please use me to be a part of solutions to problems. Help me have a selfless heart and generous hands. Show me opportunities to give back because I believe as I bless my city, we will flourish!

For More Information

For more information, please contact:

Mary Cacioppi, Executive Director, One Body Collaboratives

Email: Mary.Cacioppi@OneBodyCollaboratives.org

Website: www.OneBodyCollaboratives.org

PO Box 1633, Rockford, IL 61110



Pastor Advisory Network

Pastor Norma Borrero
Life Church

Pastor Steve Bowie
Third Presbyterian

Pastor Sonji Collins
House of God Church

Pastor Peter Dibley
First Covenant

Pastor Rob James
Our Saviors Lutheran

Pastor Chad McKenna
Saint Mark Lutheran

Pastor Alvin White
Empowering Word

Pastor LaToya White
Empowering Word

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Chapelwood Community Church

Cherry Valley United Methodist

Christ Lutheran Belvidere

Christ United Methodist

Church of the Holy Spirit

City First

Community Bible Church

Crosspoint Church

First Baptist of Belvidere

First Baptist of Machesney Park

FirstBorn Ministries

First Evangelical Covenant

First Free

Forest Hills Evangelical

Journey Church

Life Church Assembly of God

Maywood Evangelical Free

Mount Olive Lutheran

Northeast Christian

Our Saviors Lutheran

Pilgrim Baptist

Prince of Peace Lutheran

Riverside Community

Rock Church

Rock Valley Bible Church

Saint Anskar's Episcopal

Saint Mark Lutheran

SecondFirst

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran

Third Presbyterian

Trinity Lutheran

Unitarian Universalist