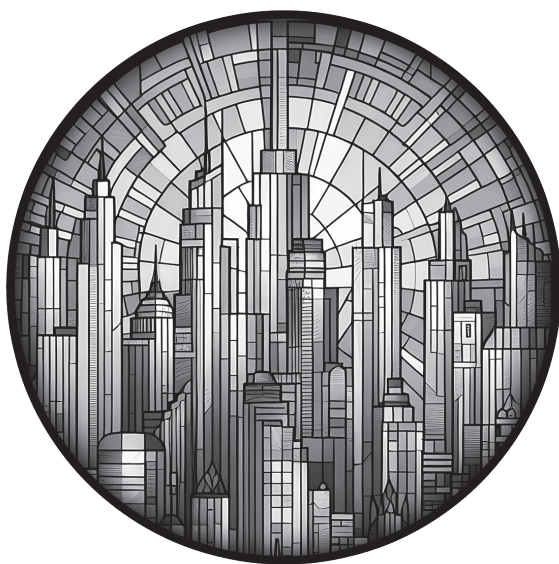


THE  
**CITY-WIDE  
CHURCH**

UNITY THAT GOD BLESSES



**RICHARD LONG**

# PREFACE

Father we join with the prayer of Jesus,  
as You are, so let us be one.

Joined together in unity and purpose,  
all for the love of Your Son.

**DAVID RUIS, 1994**

It's a song, it's also a prayer. And it became an anthem in congregations across the world during the 1990s.

I was pastoring Runnymede Baptist Church, in Toronto, Canada. David Ruis is a friend and had come to lead worship at a weekend conference. “We will break dividing walls ... we will be one.” At the time, those lyrics seemed to perfectly express my own heart for true unity in the Body of Christ. I haven't moved on from that deep desire. I still long to see the answer to Jesus' prayer manifested on Earth, that His people might be one as He and the Father are one.

This book aims to move the answer to that prayer forward—in my own life, in my own congregation, and in my city. Together, we can move it forward into every corner of the world. This book does not propose a utopian dream; it is a practical handbook. I am naturally pragmatic, and everything you read in the following pages is grounded in the real world. True unity is not about wishful thinking, but about the messy, difficult, and sometimes exhilarating work of reconciliation, restoration, and re-creation.

## THE CITY-WIDE CHURCH

This handbook follows my own progression in the journey of discovering the powerful biblical idea that there is only one Church in any given city. You could summarize my journey with the progression of these questions:

- Is there one Church in the city?
- What does it mean if there is only one Church in the city?
- Since there is one Church in the city, how should we engage together?

You will see that progression in the three sections of this book. First, we need a revelation that there is only one Church in each of our cities. For me that revelation had to be biblically clear, and theologically sound. Second, if this is true, then there are shattering implications for the current way we do church, and exciting possibilities to consider. I have long moved on from the “if”, so my challenge to you is, “Let’s start to live this truth.” It starts with baby steps, but soon we can think about making strides forward. Living and acting in the reality of a city-wide Church really works. It is a more fruitful, beautiful, and easier way to be the Body of Christ in our communities.

### **How to read this book**

This book begins by laying the biblical and theological foundation for the concept of “the Church” in any given city. If you are already convinced that there is only one Church in your city, you may be tempted to skip to the more practical chapters. Don’t! These chapters provide foundational material. I still constantly talk with leaders about the fact that practical unity is based on very strong biblical principles. These early chapters will familiarize you with the arguments you will need to make this case for yourself.

Section 2 guides you in exploring and imagining how the Church in your city can live out this unity. It dives into the big question of what kind of leadership you need for a unified Church. This movement is growing and taking place across the globe, and city unity movements have discerned

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common principles. Chapters 8 to 10 look at each of the key pillars—relationships, prayer, and mission—using examples from cities around the world.

Section 3 uses the model of my own city (Ottawa, Canada) and the work of One Way Ministries, with which I serve, to discuss the messy, but profitable work of implementing an effective city-wide work. Ottawa is a work in progress, but many in Canada would say it is the most advanced city-unity movement in our nation. Because of the foundation of long-standing, deep friendships among Christian leaders, along with a powerful prayer movement, we have seen exponential growth of collaborative teams in the last decade, and each is producing much fruit. Ottawa's journey can encourage and envision you, as you build a unity movement in your own city.

Finally, don't miss the appendices and bibliographical resources that will help you take your own calling and assignments to the next level. We are all in this together!

May our Lord Jesus' heart be warmed as we answer His prayer that we might be one. This is for Him and His glory.