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GoodCities Confab in Mason to train leaders from 20 US Cities on city transformation

Contributed By: [Melinda Zemper](#) | Oak Tree Communications, LLC

We've all had conversations with friends over drinks on how to solve all the problems in the world.

The GoodCities "City Convene Conference" on Sept. 21 and 22 in Mason aims to help leaders apply action plans to those dreams.

Pastors, nonprofit and business leaders, and those who aspire to leadership from 20 cities across the nation are slated to attend Ohio's first GoodCities City Convene at Christ's Church, 5165 Western Row.

Leaders will be asked to identify the problems they seek to resolve and learn strategies and best-practices to work with people of faith and goodwill to build processes that create good cities.

Neighborhoods Embracing Transformation, an At Work on Purpose (AWOP) ministry, co-sponsors the event. AWOP, a faith-at-work nonprofit with offices in Mason and Blue Ash, is the nation's largest, citywide marketplace ministry with 8,000 members. It's also expanding into Dallas, Dayton and Nairobi, Kenya.

GoodCities president Glenn Barth of Minneapolis will lead the conference.

Barth is the author of *The Good City: Transformed Lives Transforming Communities* (Good Place Publishing, 2010). He has been working since the 1970s as a visionary and innovator among faith-based leaders mobilizing people to serve cities.

GoodCities has hosted three national and international city transformation conferences a year since 2012. The last four conferences have been in New York City.

Christian faith and business leaders from the following cities are slated to attend: Cincinnati; Cleveland; Columbus; Akron; Toledo; Dayton; Indianapolis; Detroit; Pittsburgh; San Diego; Portland; Dallas; Lexington; Nashville; St. Louis; New York City; Kansas City; Florence, South Carolina; Charleston, West Virginia; and Boulder, Colorado.

Part of the event will include tours of AWOP and Self-Sustaining Enterprises offices at the Grace Chapel campus in Mason so attendees can learn about AWOP and SSE's BIZNISTRIES®.

BIZNISTRIES are businesses formed as marketplace ministries, where excess profits provide seed money to form new businesses and create jobs, lifting people out of poverty.

"We'll talk about key issues in leaders' cities," said Barth. "Usually they include employment among the poor, foster care for children, alcohol and chemical abuse issues.

"Our goal is to seek the peace of the cities where we live. In order to build unity in the body of Christ in our cities, first we have to go to the Christian community and engage them around issues they care about. Christians are often already involved through their work and service in leadership roles in their cities, where they work with people from all walks of life, addressing critical issues in cities."

Speakers include: Barth on "Current Realities and Future Trends in City Transformation;" Kevin Palau about his new book, *Unlikely: Setting Aside Our Differences to Live Out the Gospel* (Howard Press, 2015); the Rev. Richard Coleman on "Helping People Move from Public Assistance to Good

Jobs;" Jeff Martin on "Church and Public School Partnerships;" David Beldel on "Building a Citywide Prayer Movement;" and Eric Swanson on "City Transformation as a Platform."

"AWOP has been very active in the faith-at-work space in Cincinnati since 2003 and is recognized as a national leader," said Barth. "Chuck Proudfit and his volunteers have been very open about sharing information with other city leaders across the nation about what has worked with Cincinnati's working Christians to inspire others to live out the Gospel where we work, as well as create hope and jobs through their sponsored BIZNISTRIES."

Barth helped pastors and faith leaders around the world engage in community-wide outreach with leaders in Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina. He has worked with Christian faith-based leaders in 80 cities in the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, India, and Kenya.

These leaders are working with other community leaders to address issues in the areas of education, human trafficking, foster care, job creation, homelessness, and alcohol and chemical rehabilitation, said Barth.

AWOP founder and president Chuck Proudfit traveled to Nairobi in June and taught about 300 entrepreneurs there how to form and sustain marketplace ministries, or BIZNISTRIES. It received a four-year, \$200,000 grant earlier this year to teach city leaders nationwide how to replicate the Cincinnati marketplace ministry's success formula.

AWOP has seven monthly business Christian roundtable groups, or "collaboratories" in Cincinnati.

"The faith-at-work movement has existed since Jesus selected disciples from the workplace rather than the religious community to spread the Gospel," said Barth. "It has become more robust the last 50 years under leaders like Sam Shoemaker, founder of the modern faith-at-work movement and contributing founder of Alcoholics Anonymous; Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Church in New York City; Amy Sherman, senior fellow at the Sagamore Institute; David Miller of the Princeton Faith and Work Initiative; and The Theology of Work project, which is dedicated to helping people live out God's calling in today's world and to bear witness to the teaching and work of Christ."

The modern faith-at-work movement is not a "flash in the pan," said Barth. "It has a deep foundation. Every generation has to own it and we are experiencing an exciting time in its development."

To register to attend the City Convene convention, go to bit.ly/1IqKtvR. Cost is \$129 for Early Bird registration until August 21 and \$159 beginning Aug. 22. A discount is available for team registrations of five or more.

For more information about GoodCities, go to www.goodcities.net.

For more information about AWOP programs, its faith-at-work tools and events, go to www.atworkonpurpose.org or call (800) 513-9580.