

# Better Together: How Workplace Ministry Contributes to the Flourishing of a City

At Work On Purpose's seventh annual summit held in Cincinnati, Ohio connects leaders and focuses on growing faith at work movement.

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## Media



At Work On Purpose is a pioneer in the workplace ministry movement, advancing citywide workplace ministry around the world.



Chuck Proudfit (right) introduces AWOP executive team members John McCarthy (left), Laura Jackson, and Bobbie Sparks.



The summit celebrated the international influence of Jerry Kirk, left, shown here with AWOP founder and president Chuck Proudfit.



Panelist Helen Mitchell (left), director of the Talbot Center for Faith, Work, and Economics at Biola University, with AWOP founder and president Chuck Proudfit.

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This year's annual XL Summit, attended by more than 240 Christian leaders from across the nation, was held on July 19th at Grace Chapel in Mason, Ohio.

The summit, hosted by At Work On Purpose (AWOP), featured pioneers in the faith at work movement, practitioners, faculty, and business leaders from a diverse group of sectors who provided fresh and action-oriented content to attendees.

“This year’s XL Summit showcased the deep connections and strong relationships we have in our community and across the faith at work movement,” said AWOP founder and president Chuck Proudfit.

“The summit gave us an opportunity to share how workplace ministry has advanced across Greater Cincinnati, and it allowed us to explore our ‘next steps’ for accelerating the growth of citywide workplace ministry nationally,” added Proudfit.

Now in its seventh year, the summit included vibrant conversation and practical insights on how Christians can understand work as worship and bring faith expression to their everyday work environment.

Proudfit opened the summit with a presentation on the AWOP model for citywide workplace ministry, a model that’s recognized across the country and internationally. Proudfit explained how in June of this year, he presented the model at the Lausanne Global Workplace Forum in Manila, Philippines.

Representing the United States, Proudfit was one of 850 global leaders from 110 countries at the by-invitation gathering.

Another key part of the discussion at the summit focused on unlocking the power of purposeful employment.

“We’re facing an epidemic in our country: Three out of four working Americans are disengaged at work—they don’t enjoy being there, and they don’t feel fulfilled in their work,” explained John McCarthy, president of AGI Hospitality Recruiting and AWOP executive team member. “How do we expect to see salt and light in the marketplace if most Christians don’t even enjoy being at work?”

The panel discussion, led by McCarthy, featured Kathy Book, Founder of Women in the Marketplace, Inc.; Brian Holbrook of Job Search Focus Group (JSFG); and Brett Ralston, co-founder of Roots Staffing. The session highlighted how local groups and leaders are working to help people identify and follow purpose-driven pathways.

“We need to curb this trend, and the only way to do so is to help people rediscover their purpose and to identify purposeful employment,” said McCarthy. “If we could bring 1 million disengaged workers in our region to a place of purpose—and into a place of purposeful employment—imagine the impact that could have for the Kingdom in the marketplace,” he added.

In a session facilitated by AWOP executive team member Laura Jackson, attendees heard practical strategies and ways to disciple within the workplace. Panelists included Julie Thomas of Priority Logistics Group and Priority Dispatch; Dr. Gary Huber of Huber Personalized Medicine; and Ron Henry of Marketplace Chaplains.

Henry explored the role of Marketplace Chaplains, explaining that chaplain care partners are professionally trained professionals who have a heart for the influencing an employees’ and their family members overall spiritual and emotional well-being.

As a business owner, Thomas explained that discipleship at work for her is about seeing employees as a whole person, respecting them unconditionally, and learning how to deeply listen to them. “For 25 years I’ve been unpacking love in a very practical way,” she explained.

During a panel discussion on how to cultivate work life ministry in and through the local church, AWOP executive team member Bobbie Sparks interviewed leaders and changemakers to see how they find success in working with local congregations and ministry networks.

Helen Mitchell, director of the Talbot Center for Faith, Work, and Economics at Biola University, described her work to help churches take the next step in the work life ministry movement: “This is an organizational change,” she explained. “You’re defining strategy and integrating this into the church culture. It is more than programs. You are redirecting the ship. More churches are engaging in this conversation with great enthusiasm, but generally, efforts are not sustainable or impactful.”

In looking at how Cincinnati can continue to learn from other citywide transformation models, Proudfit turned to panelists to hear their lessons learned.

Tom White of Frontline Ministries and author of *The Practitioner’s Guide to Building City Gospel Movements* reminded attendees of the importance—especially in the midst “of all the noise”—in fostering a rhythm and culture of prayer in a city movement. “If we’re going to ask for an expected spiritual and societal transformation, either in the workplace or in the city of Cincinnati and beyond...it’s going to be by the presence and the power of God,” he said.

Henry agreed, and spoke about another theme of the summit: the necessity for individuals and groups to come together to steward a sustainable difference in the community. “We proceed at the speed of trust,” he said.

Proudfit agreed, citing how coordination and collaboration are a part of the “next steps” for the faith at work movement. “Together, we need to be a collective force for the Lord in the workplace. The question is: ‘How can we complete each other?’—versus, ‘How can we compete with each other?’” said Proudfit. “We recognize that we are better together.”

Other spotlight panelists and speakers included: Tom Thatcher, professor of Biblical Studies and dean of the Russell School of Ministry at Cincinnati Christian University; Eric Swanson of the Leadership Network and co-author of *To Transform a City*; Drew Dinkelacker, president of The Marketing Accelerator; and Darrel Geis, president of the Christian Blue Network.

While the event explored where the workplace ministry movement is headed, the XL Summit also included time to honor and celebrate those heavily invested in the growth of the ministry community to date.

One of those integral members: Jerry Kirk, who has had profound influence in the movement, nationally and internally, for more than 50 years.

Kirk is former senior pastor of College Hill Presbyterian Church, founder of the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families, and founder of The Prayer Covenant.

In celebration of Kirk’s impact, Revivaltown Music Group performed music inspired by the prayer covenant at the close of the summit.

About At Work On Purpose (AWOP)

At Work On Purpose is a pioneer in the workplace ministry movement, advancing citywide workplace ministry around the world. With offices in Mason and Blue Ash, Ohio, more than 10,000 individuals from the private, public, and social sectors are a part of the AWOP community in Greater Cincinnati alone, with thousands of others in the AWOP network globally.

To learn more about AWOP’s innovative citywide workplace ministry model or to find out how you can get involved, visit <http://www.atworkonpurpose.org> or call (800) 513-9580.