



C O N F E R E N C E
DO JUSTICE · LOVE MERCY · WALK HUMBL Y · MAKE DISCIPLES

A RALLYING CRY TO GATHER IN UNITY FOR THE MISSION OF JESUS

On October 1, 2014, I stepped into the role as President of Vision New England. As I began to travel, observe and listen, I began to feel a bit like Nehemiah, who arrived in Jerusalem and immediately inspected the walls. During this time of inspection, I searched for where God was moving, looking for the bright spots of renewal and discerning the realities of the brokenness in our region. I found bright spots. I found space where people were coming to Jesus and churches were growing. I also found brokenness, weariness, and spiritual decline. During this time the Lord continued to provide more and more clarity about the spiritual landscape of our Region. The spiritual needs are overwhelming and often leave us feeling as though we are sitting in a pile of rubble--walls that have been broken and are in need of repair.

How do we see the spiritual climate change in New England?

I enlisted the VNE Board to join me in praying and seeking God's direction for the work of our association. We asked the Lord, "What are the commitments of the 21st century church that will produce the fruit of new followers of Jesus, families restored, and broken hearts healed?" "What is the role of Vision New England in raising the temperature of personal disciple-making and corporate church growth?"

The Power of Unity

The Lord continued to call us to understand our role in uniting and bringing together people committed to advancing the Gospel in New England. God has affirmed our calling to be a table for the work of God in New England. God has called us to provide context and space where the unique parts of His body in New England can come together to become more effective in growing and strengthening His kingdom in New England. Too often we often strive for an easy unity. A unity that gathers people who share common worship styles, prayer habits, and theological beliefs but aren't normally in a room together. The unity we feel called to help facilitate is much more difficult than that.

Unity that changes the spiritual landscape of New England requires diversity and distinction but deep commitment to the work of Jesus. This is what God laid on our hearts. Unity is only as powerful as the diversity it brings together. Unity requires differences of opinions, thoughts, practices, and beliefs. Unity also contains a core so strong that it overwhelms all of the differences. That core is Jesus Christ.

VNE believes what will change the spiritual landscape of New England is when local churches and individual Christians unite together on mission to reach the lost and hurting in their unique New England contexts. Unity in mission will produce the change we pray and yearn for.

The Power of Gathering Together

I believe that for those who claim Jesus is Lord, we must set aside our differences, come together, and grow in the biblical mandate for all of us to go make disciples, do justice, love mercy and walk humbly. I believe that when we do that, we become more like Christ, humbly accepting that only God has perfect theology. When we join together we provide a testimony to the world of the truth of Jesus as sent by God.

In John 17, Jesus prayed for his followers to be one as He and His Father are one. If we can unite on mission to see the lost found in New England, God will move powerfully in our region.

A New Congress on Evangelism: The GO Conference was conceived a year ago.

This powerful belief that God's people can stand united on mission gave birth to the GO Conference. A rebirth of VNE's long held *Congress*. Together, we can find encouragement from each other's struggles and hope in each other's successes in our shared mission. We can honor our distinctions while uniting in our purpose to bring the love of Jesus into our region.

The GO Conference brings us together in order to equip and encourage participants to effectively reach the lost in their communities by doing justice, loving mercy, walking humbly, and making disciples both as individuals and as local churches. Christians across New England hold to different outreach tactics, liturgical practices, and doctrinal beliefs, but with the mission of Jesus as our core, we can learn from one another and encourage one another, even those who might worship and believe differently than we do.


Keeping Our Eyes Fixed on Jesus

If Christ crucified is the center point of our faith, surely we can unite in these four areas.

We need a renewal of personal and corporate commitments to justice, mercy, humility and disciple-making if renewal is going to take place in our region. By coming together, our shared call to reach New England with the hope of Jesus can unite us and overcome our differences. I am passionate about the conference vision, theme and topics. Each speaker was prayerfully selected for this time, this place, and this purpose.

I believe God will inspire and equip us to accomplish the good works He has ordained for His church in New England. Our churches and hearts must be transformed by God, filled with mercy and focused on the priority of those who are spiritual lost and dying in our communities.

Doing Justice, Loving Mercy, Walking Humbly and Making Disciples Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Ryan Howell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ryan Howell, President
Vision New England