

PROMISE: CITY TRANSFORMATION

Origins

With the toss of a coin, the city with no name became Portland, and what was an outpost of speculator hopes, decade by decade, turned into the city it is today. The North End, as Old Town was originally called, quickly became the epicenter of the low-wage ship and dock-related work, gambling, drinking, and prostitution. Portland's Old Town neighborhood has a strong history of being the place for those who were not wanted by the larger community of upper and middle-class white people.

But what does God say?

What would revitalization look like here that would allow Old Town to become a place that was established for the flourishing of all people? A place where businesses thrive, creativity explodes, and even the most marginalized in our community could find a home that does not keep them isolated, struggling, and alone but rather lifts, embraces, and heals.

George Otis, a modern day revival historian, has said that in every move of God resulting in revival, awakening and/or reformation in a city or region, there have been two common factors. They are:

1. Persevering Leadership: Those who have withstood the test of time and have not given up. They have remained faithful regardless of circumstances and have set their eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith. They trusted in what He had promised to them. They were sure of what they hoped for and certain of what they could not see. And they were willing to stand, believing that if they did not see the promises come to pass with their own eyes, that surely the future generations would. It was more important to walk in and stand in faith than to “succeed”.

2. Persistent Prayer: This faith led them to continue to press into the heart of God and to position themselves between what is and what would be; between the current state of affairs, the brokenness of humanity and human systems, and the promises of God - Shalom, healing and wholeness, fruitfulness, abundance, grace, peace, and a richness of love and community. They stood on the promises of scripture and proclaimed with their mouths the future reality of what would come, thus partnering with God for the very thing He desires in the earth.

We have seen many moves of God in the Portland Region. The revivals at the turn of the century (1900s) touched here as well. Businesses in the downtown area would shutter their doors at noon and churches would overflow for an hour of prayer. John G Lake had a powerful healing ministry here with stories of entire hospital floors being cleared out after he prayed for just one person. Healing rooms were established on 4th Ave where many would come to experience wholeness and new life through God's miraculous touch. The 1970s brought a wave of salvation with many who were saved in those years becoming prominent ministers and leaders in the Portland region. Again in the late 1980s and early 1990s, renewal washed over Portland with salvation, healing, and unusual signs and wonders such as gold dust and gold teeth.

Through the early 2000s Portland also saw an economic and social turn as the downtown core was revitalized and businesses, restaurants, and the arts districts began to thrive.

Through all of this, the Old Town neighborhood has remained a challenging place. Many services offer help to those struggling with addiction and homelessness but the issues remain and many who call Portland home are afraid to walk these streets.

Reflect and Pray

Spend some time asking the Lord what revitalization could look like here. Ask for the resources, the leaders, and the creativity to build a new ecosystem here that

allows Old Town to no longer be a place for the unwanted, but a place where the broken are restored, the sick are healed, and those who are bound become free.