

## Hosting a Leaders Prayer Summit

This document is intended for kingdom-minded leaders in a particular city or region considering the possibility of hosting a Leaders Prayer Summit. Please take time to read and reflect on this content. Share it with other local colleagues who may be tracking with your interest promoting increased unity, prayer and kingdom collaboration in Christ's Body.

### ***Origin and History of the Prayer Summit Movement***

The origins of the Leaders Prayer Summit movement trace to Dr. Joe Aldrich, former President of Multnomah Bible College in Portland, Oregon. In 1989, "Dr. Joe" was deeply troubled by the disunity in Christ's Body, and called a group of leaders together in Salem, Oregon to seek the Lord in repentance. A visitation of God's Spirit in this gathering spilled over into a movement that spread city to city throughout the Pacific Northwest, then to cities in the United States, Canada and around the world. International Renewal Ministries, Portland, OR, continues to resource Prayer Summits, predominantly in the United States ([www.prayersummits.net](http://www.prayersummits.net)).

In addition to calling kingdom leaders into increased unity and prayer, Dr. Joe often posed this question: *what would it take for leaders in a geographic location to initiate and sustain a move of God that would result in measurable gospel impact in their city or region?* Since 1989, cities worldwide have hosted Prayer Summits, with kingdom men and women meeting in a format with no theme or special speakers, to meaningfully connect with God, and one another. Emerging from these Summits, teams of "servant leaders" have often formed to steward an on-going commitment to prayer and collaborative endeavors to reach their community with the gospel. That pattern continues to this day, with citywide leadership teams being put in place to steward an on-going movement.

Around 1993, doors opened to lead Summits in Japan and Russia. In 1995, Tom White and Dr. Joe were invited to lead an initial Summit for leaders in the Galilee region of Israel. This then led to annual Summits in Jerusalem. After six years, the model was contextualized, and continues for kingdom leaders nationwide twice a year as "Sitting at Yeshua's Feet." Also in the mid-1990's, Tom and Bill Berry led numerous Summits in cities across Australia. In 2003, Viju Abraham of Mumbai invited us to lead Summits in some initial select cities in India. The format quickly spread to multiple cities, and continues to this day, providing a foundation of relational trust on which to build sustainable "city gospel movements" (Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, Siliguri, Goa, etc.) There are current 50-60 cities that have built the Summit into their prayer rhythm, with a vision to grow that to at least 100 by the end of 2024.

### ***What Is a Prayer Summit?***

We believe the highest priority of a Prayer Summit is to provide an opportunity for kingdom leaders to meet heart-to-heart with the Lord, having fresh, unhurried encounters with his presence, and exposure to his Word. The chief purpose of a Summit is ***personal transformation***: allowing the Holy Spirit access to our inner lives, posturing ourselves for personal transformation, i.e., repenting of sin, self-centeredness, and growing in Christlikeness (2 Cor 3:17, 18). *If we aim to be agents of kingdom transformation in our cities and nations, we must first be transformed agents*, fostering families, congregations and organizations that embrace the principles and practices of spiritual formation.

A Summit is not a conference. There are no special speakers. There is no particular content or curriculum. This gathering is an opportunity for a Sabbath rest for busy leaders: to “unplug,” come apart from the demands of family and ministry and seek the Lord. We’re here to posture ourselves in a listening mode, reflecting on our relationship with Jesus, asking the questions, “Lord, what are you saying to me? What do you want me to know about myself, and you? What are you inviting me into?”

Summit is a context where trust in relationships goes deeper, a safe place for leaders. We share this up front: “What we say here, what we pray here, *stays* here!” The door is always open for reconciliation between individuals, congregations, generations, or theological traditions. Psalm 133:1 is our central aim: “What a beautiful, delightful thing it is when brothers and sisters dwell together (do life!)” This is a unique opportunity to *be* and *do* authentic kingdom community, with open conversations, worshiping and praying, sharing meals, and recreating together. Summit is a place where we transparently share and carry one another’s burdens. Over thirty years, we have found Yahweh to be faithful to do what David describes, to “command blessing” in that place where his people gather in community.

Summit is also a place to receive revelation of the Lord’s wider purposes for our communities. At the close of our gathering, we often ask, “*What must we do together to more effectively increase the impact of God’s kingdom in our city?*”

**The Summit model has these distinctive strengths:**

- Unhurried, extended time in God’s presence
- Laying aside our various agendas—non-programmatic
- Centering on the person of Jesus, and centrality of the Word of God
- Opportunity to practice the classic spiritual disciplines, e.g., meditation, silence, solitude
- Bonding of leaders--mixed gender, multi-generational, multi-ethnic and theologically diverse

If God’s Spirit is leading you to consider a gathering like this, we recommend you pursue the following initial steps. If you have interest hosting a Summit, the City Advance team will be available to coach your envisioning and planning process. We also have available a thorough Prayer Summit Facilitators Manual, a session-by-session guide for leading a full two-day Summit.

***Logistical Considerations***

If you’re being called to host a Summit, we highly recommend that at least one experienced leader engage the chief facilitation role. Here are some logistical preparations we have found helpful:

- 1) Typically, there is a core team of leaders, already in a relationship of trust, who begin to envision increased unity for the local Body of Christ, and who have heard about the Prayer Summit model.
- 2) These leaders call together a wider group of at least 12-15 colleagues (pastors, leaders of NGO ministries, marketplace leaders) to share their hearts, and have a conversation: is the Spirit guiding us to catalyze increased unity in Christ’s Body?
- 3) If this wider circle wishes to take the next step, make contact with City Advance or the Movement South Asia team to share your vision, to begin a planning process, identify prospective trained facilitators in your region, etc.

- 4) In the early years, the model was three nights/four days. In our opinion, especially for a first-time “birthing Summit,” the ideal is two nights, three days. increasingly, however, due to time pressures, *we have found a two day residential Summit can still be effective*, but with this caveat: make it a 28-32 hour retreat, beginning with a morning session on day 1, and ending with a final session late afternoon on day 2. Honestly, being “in community” for at least one night, sharing meals together, having spontaneous conversations, etc., is essential.
- 5) City Advance will provide options for fliers/graphics/videos useful to promote the Summit.
- 6) Set a date least conflictive with local schedules.
- 7) Search for a suitable venue for an overnight, residential retreat, ideally removed some distance and time from your city center. Do not allow “busy leaders” the predictable tempting option to drop in late or depart early.
- 8) Our model is that you would cover the actual costs of your Summit through a) a registration fee, b) the conveners sowing funds in from their own ministries, c) raising local funds, d) raising funds from supporting outside organizations.
- 9) Secure a proven “worship minstrel” familiar with songs/choruses/hymns common to the culture you are serving. This should not be just a good “song leader,” but rather a person called and gifted by the Lord to bring leaders into His Presence, familiar with the anointing of the Spirit that draws hearts to deeper communion with Jesus. The majority of songs should be heart-to-heart adoration and worship, widely familiar, and sing-able.
- 10) At registration, we make available a document, “Guidelines for the Prayer Summit” for all participants, explaining the format and various components. This helps participants understand the purpose and format of the Summit.
- 11) We also have available multiple versions of a document to be sent to registrants 2-3 days prior to the Summit, titled “Preparing for Prayer Summit.” This has been helpful preparing leaders to come with expectation and focus.

In multiple cities across South Asia over the past twenty years, The Leaders Prayer Summit has provided a context for building deep relational trust among a diversity of kingdom leaders. This has also been a place to receive fresh revelation to see Jesus’ Body walk and work together in a greater measure of unity, corporate prayer and collaboration on kingdom endeavors. Further, we have found the Summit as a context for putting in place Book-of-Acts-like citywide leadership teams committed to grow sustainable, God-favored “city gospel movements.”

If God’s Spirit is stirring you to host a Summit, go to [cityadvance.org](http://cityadvance.org), Convening Prayer Summits page, and select the button, “Interested Hosting a Summit,” and someone will contact you.