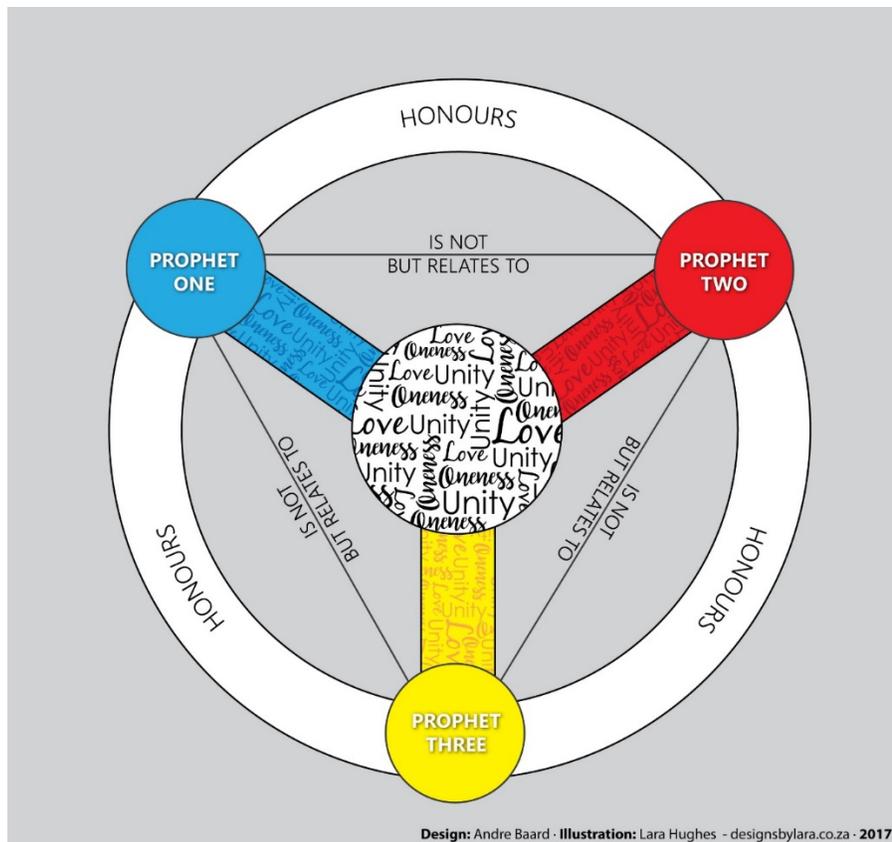


PROPHETIC CIRCLES



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Introduction

Many attempts at gathering the eagles have failed over a long period in Cape Town, South Africa and many cities and nations worldwide. The story of the prophets trying to find one another reads like a horror novel. With offences given and taken, brazen competition (manifesting its underlying root of jealousy) and lots of hard hearts and bad attitudes that have not displayed the glory of God, not at all.

Some prophets even refuse to minister at the same event as some fellow ministers who are openly labelled as rivals. Some refuse to forgive those that hurt them and will not even meet for coffee to try and reconcile. What is that? Friends, we have not so learned Christ.

Perhaps it is because we have gathered around doctrine or around charismatic personalities and not Christ alone? Perhaps it's because we have not gathered around the cross – the only place eagles naturally occur together ...

'For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.'

Mat 24:28



As the Recording Room Prophetic Circle (www.recordingroom.co.za) based in Cape Town, we have been gathering for over two and half years with this heart for unity and increased credibility and for mutual support. The group comprises prophetic leaders from different churches across the city. Thanks be to God, we have begun to see good stable fruit emerge out this kingdom venture.

I have committed to these pages some of my developing understanding from the scriptures and from the experience of our journey the past few years. The best gospel light comes from community and I hope you will find some light in these pages that will help you with your journey in finding oneness amongst the prophetic ministry in your city and nation.

This journey began over fifteen years ago, when attempts were made to find the one voice but the timing was premature and perhaps we were immature. Hopefully, being older and a bit wiser, the Lord is moving his prophetic servants to find one another.

The prophets must gather but how that should happen (or continue to happen), that is what we seek to find the mind of Christ on. I hope you will receive these few pages in the spirit it is shared and the tone in which I submit it for your thoughtful and prayerful consideration as a now wineskin to gather the prophets.

I am indebted to too many to mention and this work can be co-credited to the those courageous and humble enough to journey together in the Recording Room. You know who you are, bless you.

Shepherding Cats

For a successful gathering of prophets there needs to be real unity. And as a friend says, 'Gathering prophets is like trying to shepherd cats.' Prophets seem to be naturally solitary creatures, like cats and eagles that do not have a well-developed herding instinct, yet we are all still sheep under one Shepherd. We desperately need to find God's order in the chaos.



The Master wants the prophets to co-operate, co-ordinate and not compete. It is pointless to gather stones and heap them in an unformed pile. You gather stones to build a house, in this case a prophetic house or fortress (because war is on the horizon). Our kingdom-colleagues in the intercessory movements are finding one another but prophets stubbornly remain very isolated. Perhaps we need more of the glue that bonds stone to stone? Agape relationships. We need to gather but not for the sake of gathering, we need to gather with a long term multi-generational goal in mind.

It is not the mandate of any one prophet or group of prophets to work this, it is an obligation of every prophet in every city to make efforts to find the common ground with fellow saints called to the prophetic ministry. It's though the Lord has issued a spiritual summons in the heavenlies for the prophets to convene. He wants us to strengthen one another and build stronger prophetic bonds. Why I imagine? One puts a thousand to flight, two ten thousand and the gates of hell remain way too intact?

For Christ-lovers, walking in peace and unity with your brothers is more than an obligation, it is a commandment. Love one another, deeply and from the heart. The Church has enough opposition from outside, it ought not to be handicapping itself by ongoing grudges and in-fighting. We do not need to pursue unity, we pursue love and repent of our variance from the mind of Christ, which is that we, the reward of His suffering, may be one as the Trinity is one. As a good friend says, 'How do you step out of a room you are already in?' We are already one in Jesus, let us so walk.

How to Gather Diverse Prophets

One river is formed by many rivulets

Unity is needed not uniformity. We need to unite but maintain our individual colour and so maximize the glory of God. Bricks all look the same. We need to avoid uniformity because it will place one prophets colour above another and breed exclusion.

'A river -- its rivulets rejoice the city of God, Thy holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.'

Ps 46:4 YLT

Gathering prophets nationally under one ministry brand can work but is it God's best? Rivers are comprised of many rivulets. We need to come together in a way that you do not lose the identity of the rivulets.

Twelve Tribes, One Nation

When God camped with Israel in the desert, he had a specific place for every single family, clan and tribe - they had exact allocated positions around the tabernacle.

'The Israelites are to camp around the tent of meeting some distance from it, each of them under their standard and holding the banners of their family. Now those who will be camping on the east, toward the sunrise, are the divisions of the camp of Judah under their standard.'

Number 2:2-3

The twelve sons of Jacob formed the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve apostles of the new-Jacob: Jesus Christ formed twelve apostolic families, twelve entrances into the Kingdom of God. Note, the tribes did not mix with one another, each had its place, north, south, east and west of the tabernacle. Why? I think God enjoys the orderliness, it's in His nature.

The tribes were not arranged randomly, they were arranged in definite and set order. But it was not hierarchally arranged but geographically. Are the Southern Tribes above the Northern Tribes? Is West above

East? The tribes in the north were unique and differed to the tribes in the south but both gave God glory in their own unique God-ordained fashion. They were co-equal but, there was an order. As with all truth, mystery of truth will never fully be explored ... we see Judah always went first. Is that hierarchy or rank or a functional ordering? The scepter never departed from Judah and the Messiah came from this tribe. And we come from the lineage of Christ, as our firstborn of creation, we are in Christ and so to speak in Judah as the church ... the mysteries!

Cape Town based groups and Pretoria based groups each under its own ensign so to speak etc etc We can be certain the tribes learnt from one another and relied heavily on one another. But when Israel camped, they had to camp each in their own order by patriarchal lineage, by family DNA. Most prophetic groups do not want to be blended away into another prophetic group but most, in heart, do want to unite with others to bring God glory through their own unique colour and flavor.

A Prophetic Structure for Prophetic Unity

How do you best build prophetic unity while maintaining identity? We need to consider very prayerfully the how of nurturing prophetic unity citywide and nationally. We need to hear the Lord on the question "Once we have gathered some of the prophets Lord, how do we structure going forward?" Gathering for a purpose.

There really are two paths before us as I see it, both can work but they have very different lifespans, speed of passage and final outcomes:

Organizational-Hierarchical Structures (OHS)

This type of structure communicates a vision top down, it gives the direction and establishes a structure which others can join. Members serve the vision and in return get recognition. Individual identity is sacrificed for the corporate branded franchised identity. Members give the structure legitimacy and in turn the structure gives members legitimacy.

This structure mirrors much of how a business functions. The final, matured outcome is a large international, branded network of prophetic ministers, with lots of events and their corresponding platforms. Is this God's best for South Africa, for Africa?

Relationally-Ordered Structures (ROS)

The second type of structure is based on face-to-face and heart-to-heart relationship building over a long-time horizon. Relational and organic-in-essence but with a firm structure or skeleton to hold it up. Not a loose and floating web of relationships as one can imagine relationally based networks are but an ordered, intentional mutual honouring family. Christian workers of like-mind and like-gift. ROS mirrors the functioning of a family. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, Paul's and Timothy's. Paul's and Silas's.

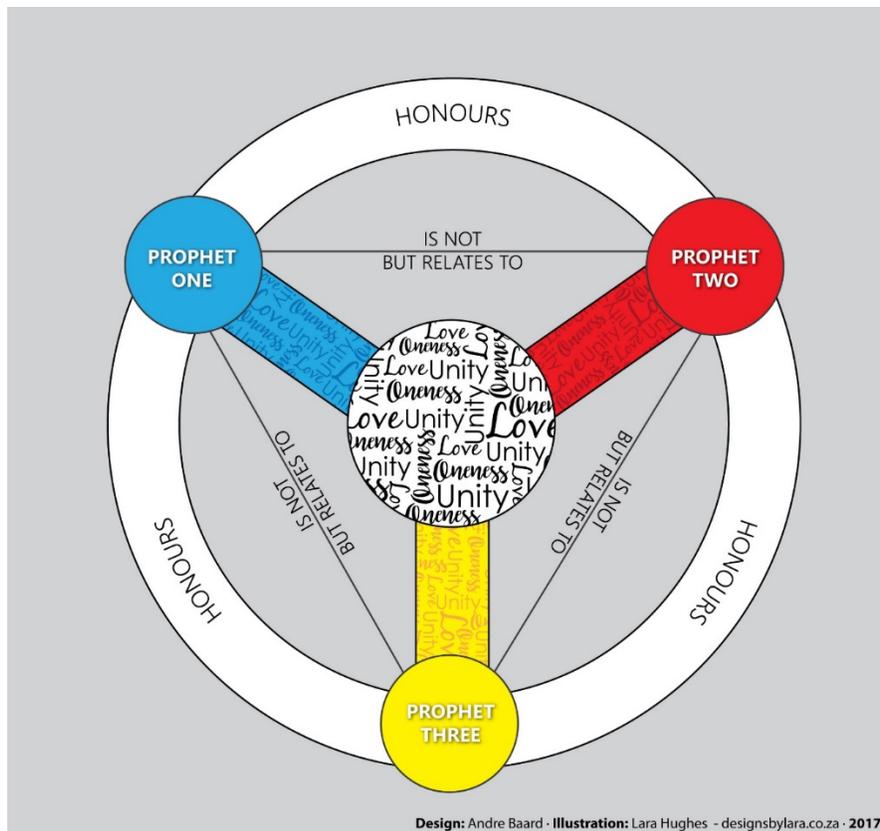
'Prophetic Circles' - what is that?

The below diagram visually shows what I mean by a Relationally-Ordered type structure. I term it a 'Prophetic Circle' because of the rotational aspects conveyed by the symbolism of a circles in circles. The diagram below describes how I envisaged prophetic groups can relate *en masse*. It is wheellike – it is made for movement.

Importantly, it also shows how individual identity can be maintained while allowing a greater corporate identity to emerge – a union more glorious than the sum of the parts.

I based the below symbolic diagram on the 800-year-old Shield of the Trinity diagram or otherwise known as the Athanasian Symbol, after the great third century Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius. What better place to look for model than the Godhead? Thankyou also to Bernard Sanders for sharing the important emphasis of looking no further than the Trinity for our divine model of how to relate. It provides a useful picture to help conceptualize a wineskin for citywide or national prophetic gatherings. This is a reliable biblical type to structure the gathering of God’s people, be in intercessors, apostles, or teachers etc etc.

The Trinity functions in a divine triune dance, to which we are called into, otherwise known as *perichoresis* (thankyou Jacqui Schmidt for sharing this useful word). The term describes the harmonious rotation of honour whereby each individual member of the Godhead is recognized and rotates, taking turns in making space for the other to express their love in a dance of mutual, perfect love for one another.



‘Prophetic Circle’

Rotation is Everywhere

This rotation aspect of how the Trinity relates is all over created order, even on a cosmic scale. Earth rotates on its axis and Earth rotates around the Sun. The Sun in turn rotates around the Milky Way Galaxy’s centre in a symphony of three mysterious mega-rotations. The first rotation creates day and night and the second, the four seasons, the third creates a time-yardstick which helps scientists measure the universe.

This is the Godhead's signature etched into Creation – designed from the very way the Trinity relates with one another. Truly a mystery! Check the water exiting from the plug in your bath tonight – it rotates out too. And next time you take communion from the vine, know that the fruit was produced over one full rotation around the sun.

The Prophetic Circle imitates the pattern of the Divine dance of mutual recognition and honouring. It has all the elements to well represent a healthy functioning assemblage of prophets. It is non-hierarchical but not without order. Patriarchal yes, but not hierarchical. It is an ordered structure, not floating, with clear identity of the individual members.

The Athanasian Creed lends a hand to a tricky subject

As with the widely accepted ancient Athanasian Creed, the co-equal status of the three Persons of Trinity is unequivocally affirmed while acknowledging some functional hierarchy - when Jesus was on His earthly mission, His Father was greater.

“Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and
inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood”
quote from Athanasian Creed

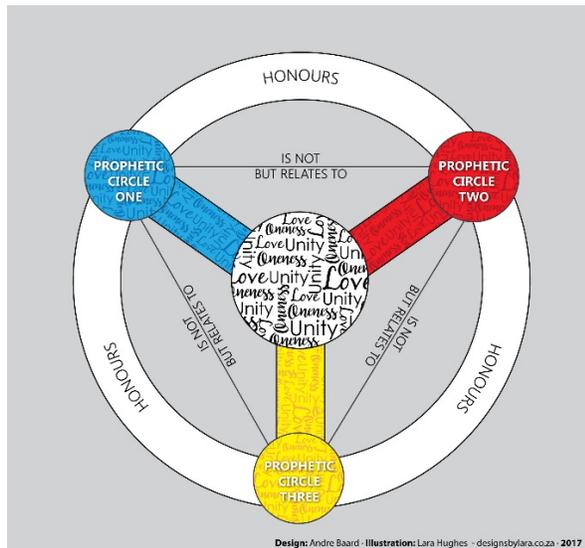
We see co-equal status in substance but we also see examples of non-equal ie hierarchical functioning in the way the Persons of the Trinity relate to one another. Rotated roles, allowing times of hierarchy, when functioning or doing something specific but never a substantial inferiority of one Person to the other. This is the crux of the famed Arian heresy. We see in part and recognize that how the Trinity functions is truly a mystery.

The continual cycle of mutual honouring strengthens identity which simultaneously also radiates the oneness of the many parts. Three, yet one. It's more about order than organization. It's organic but also organised. Relational contact is governed organically i.e. relationally. The paradox and tension of the three being one, is held. It's a divine mystery this corporate union. It's about turning inwards the unique colour and flavor of each member while releasing the corporate power of a *union of all* outwards. An outward looking structure, yet inwardly stable. Centripetal forces in tension with centrifugal forces.

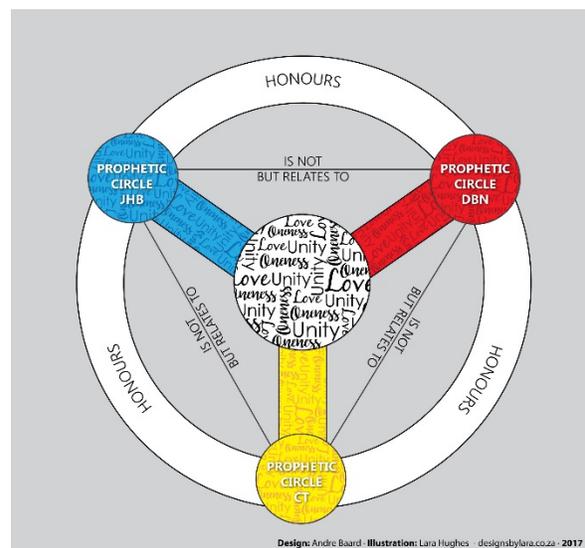
Colour and Sound bleed into One

When all seven colours of the light spectrum merge, you get white light. The fullness of the stature of Christ, bright spiritual light – more than the sum of the parts. That is the pay back for persevering in love and unity – white light. There is big pay back! Interestingly, by mixing the three primary colours of blue, red and yellow, you can also make an infinite amount of other colours, hues, shades and tones - a diversity explosion. Unity produces new colours! The same can be said with the notes of sound. The sound of Cape Town is unique, as is that of Durban etc etc.

The structure can accommodate an infinite number of circles and the ordering principle holds true on citywide level and national level as the below two diagrams illustrate.



Citywide Prophetic Circle



National Prophetic Circle

ROS and OHS Compared

OHS type models are excellent and essential for structuring the smooth running of businesses and highly branded type organisations. ROS type models are excellent to facilitate the smooth operating of networks that relate like families. Both wineskins have their purpose.

Relationally-Ordered Structures (ROS)	Organisational-Hierarchal Structures (OHS)
Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, cousins	Members, staff and executive management
Bottom up flow of resources	Top down flow of resources
Shared / rotated / ordered / leadership	Executive leadership
Shared values based participation	Loyalty based to vision-bearers
Usually slow to form	Fairly quick to set-up
Identity/character and action aspects held in tension	Destiny/ performance orientated
Membership-for-life based/ multigenerational	Membership based on meeting certain conditions
Authority based on calling and character	Authority based on position and gifting
Unity of shared values/DNA	Unity of shared functions
Family culture (shared DNA)	Business culture (shared goals)
Relationship first emphasis	Function emphasis
Promoting others/ cross pollination	Promoting own brand/ methodology
Focus on seeking unity across many streams	Focus on seeking unity in one stream

Citywide Prophetic Circles – a source of hope for every city, every town

I see in the future God establishing more city based prophet groups. I can see numbers of them in each city and town in South Africa and Africa and worldwide. How awesome! Not just one company of prophets per city but numbers! Why the number? To cope with the bewildering diversity God has hidden in His Bride.

Prophetic Circles function similarly to the well-attended pastor fraternals, a gathering of equals to share wisdom and resources. They are also like the *old craft guilds* of years gone by, people in the same ministry, learning from one another and sharing the 'tricks of the trade', so to speak. It is also like an accountability group in the prophetic (NB - not replacing local church pastoral care and government!), where not only words or weighed but character too. God is raising the standard in the prophetic! These groups offer a lot in helping increase the edge of the prophetic axe of the church. Many roots need to be axed by those that wield the axe in love and with maturity! Much still needs to be reformed in the body. God begin with your prophets.

Prophets and Apostles

Prophetic Circles will work with Apostolic Circles. The civic rulers and elders will come to sit in the city prophets' houses while under siege, as they did with Elisha (2 Kings 6:31-33). Prophets will begin functioning increasingly in end-time fullness, delivering God's word in groupings of prophetic excellence to Municipalities (Regional level), Governments (National level) and globally. These groups will begin to work hand in glove with apostolic groupings. Hallelujah! Prophets operate best in plurality. Why? Because individually we only 'see in part', together the whole. Apostles need their prophetic plumb lines, without which they will build skew.

Resident and Itinerant Prophetic Ministry

It is now time that the prophetic mature into a permanent, resident type foundation ministry not only itinerant. It appears the prophetic ministry has been predominantly shaped by an understanding of the itinerant prophets of the Old Testament. Highly gifted individuals traveling from city to city. But I believe God is busy maturing the prophetic to operate in a resident capacity more and more, to act like resident foundations. It is not itinerant versus resident, it is both-and. But we need to see prophets acting within the often-uncomfortable tension of working with resident elders who have the responsibility to oversee the flock of God. Elders as pillars, prophets and apostles as foundations. We need to see more resident prophets working with resident elders as God builds His Royal Dwelling Place in the spirit in every city and town.

City Prophets

Resident city prophets will work with many congregations within a city not just one. They will help build the wall around the whole city and have the watchtowers manned 24/7/365.

Red Cross for Prophets

These groups will also provide spiritual hospital care to wounded 'sons of the prophets'. They will act as hospitals for the prophets, to help nurture back the broken and marginalized. 'The Christian army is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded', is too often heard and how much more true than that of its prophets! The formation of such groups is already happening, it must happen and the sooner the better. I see, 'Red Cross for Prophets' ambulances collecting the wounded from the battle field and routinely stopping by Elijah's Refuge Cave on Horeb. *Prophetic refugees* needing a place of recovery! We need to include the prophets living on the fringes and desolate outskirts. Not as a substitute to good pastoral care from a local church but as a company that uniquely understands the PIT – prophet in training process.

Prophetic Missions

I see God releasing more servants to establish these new kingdom structures, to promote them, catalyse them and serve them. The Lord is already raising up many such servants to the prophets in the body. We are not alone as Christ, the Head of His Body, co-ordinates all his servants to do His will. *These servants will lead prophetic missions that lend from those groups rich in prophetic treasures on city and national level and act as a conduit to supply the need of those groups who are poor in a prophetic tradition, that there may be equity in the Body of Christ.* The Kingdom is a matter of giving and receiving.

Too many South African prophets, with rich gifts and strong character end up in first world countries. What about Africa? Who is going to Africa to support young African prophets? We need to look to Africa and unearth the many prophetic gifts here so that they can strengthen us and we them. Some gold digging missions need to happen!

'Perennial Words' for the City

Also, an important part of the future of the prophetic I believe is for the prophets to systematically research, record, and create awareness of the 'perennial prophecies' to the cities and nations of Africa. Prophets need to reveal the enduring words of the Holy Spirit to cities and nations, not just the now word or the word to a congregation, individual or ministry.

God works in a multi-generational strategic fashion, not just tactically (short time horizon words). I believe these citywide Prophetic Circles will be given the keys to open these words, reveal them. Just like eagles, which are territorial creatures get to know the exact local conditions of the wind and location of snakes in their area, so resident city prophets are uniquely well positioned to understand the local spiritual micro-climate.

Each church in every city and town needs a weighed prophetic library of what God has said about his plans for that people in that place. That takes persistence and perseverance. How awesome to serve apostles with a reference library of God's word over a people and area – this will help the church in a city unify and prevent duplication. And God's word is sticky, his word to a people'n'place usually stays the same (see www.stafp.com, pg. 101 of the free e-book download for a full explanation on this).

There is much work to be done for the prophetic community! There are so many words given by the Holy Spirit that are ignored and shown contempt. Why should He reveal more, when what He has already said -and the church agrees is weighed word - is ignored, forgotten, or shown contempt?

Functioning with Church Government

Prophetic Circles are not meant to be governing bodies, they are support groupings, aiding and serving the ruling elders in cities with God's word. Prophetic Circles are foundational sub-structures in the church, often hidden. They are not organisations, they are relational kingdom structures that exist to edify the body in love and when well-functioning, will supply the church and different spheres in business, government and education etc accurate and relevant spiritual compasses. They are not design to replace the local church but to support and serve the prophetic ministers in them.

Positive Outcomes of Prophetic Collaborations

The benefits of collaboration are many. One major benefit is the better utilization of the scarce resource of prophet discipling younger prophets and prophetic teaching. Joint efforts in coordinating and structured approach to creating prophetic schools, by several prophetic circles in a city, reduces the burden on all and ensures the role of equipping the saints prophetically is done well. It will be done well because of the balance that comes with diversity in teaching styles and content. The team approach will always trump the individual.

Other benefits in having one voice is naturally the greater credibility and clarity. There are some words the Lord wants to release that can only be received in community and delivered in community. Some truth the Lord wants to bring cannot be carried by any one soul. These prophetic circles are kingdom structures that can hold such weighty truths.

Concluding Encouragement

Prophetic circles are not only acting as *incubators, nurseries and accelerators* of embryonic prophetic ministers but also acting as bridge builders between the gift groupings such as Pastor Fraternals, Apostolic Roundtables and Schools of all sorts. They offer uniquely prophetic fellowship for prophets but do not replace the local church.

This journey of developing Prophetic Circles has already started in many places but the time is now to have them strengthen one another – that is unity – the whole strengthens the parts and the parts the whole. I know of six such Prophetic Circles in Cape Town alone and there is no doubt more. The Busy Jesus has been raising up these groups to establish greater prophetic credibility, stability, and authority in His church.

The work is great and the workers are few. A voice of one crying will certainly help reduce the prophetic noise in the heavenlies, of which the drone is deafening. We can testify that we have begun to taste good fruit in our journey and we invite you to begin to catalyse the prophetic circles God has ordained you to be part of and help form in your sphere, your town and city - today!

