



Breaking ground

The Church and Cultural Renewal

The background of the slide features a stylized illustration of large, overlapping green leaves. The leaves are rendered in various shades of green, from light to dark, with prominent white veins. The style is soft and painterly, with some areas appearing slightly blurred or blended. The overall composition is centered and fills most of the frame.

Breaking Ground tries to *re-imagine, revitalise, and resource* the Church's efforts towards cultural renewal

Church

- “gathered” communities
- “scattered” disciples

- foretaste
- sign
- instrument
...of the Kingdom of God

Culture

- framework of understanding and meaning (ideas, narratives, symbols, rituals, customs, artefacts)

- ‘complex system’ with multiple variables and feedback loops, where power is unevenly distributed

1. Dynamics of cultural change:

- *Cultural change* is generally a *slow and unpredictable process*
- Disproportionate role played by *elites, networks, and patronage*
- *Material conditions* matter – ideas alone do not produce change
- Most successful changemakers *work collaboratively*, plan for the *long term*, and *improvise skillfully* when the key conditions for change emerge.
- *Institutions* which incubate *seminal ideas* play a key role in cultural change
- Most consequential level of change is at the level of the *imagination, common knowledge and perception*

2. A Christlike engagement of culture

- ***Kenotic*** – acknowledging one’s power (i.e. resources, networks, capabilities) and using it for the flourishing of others, particularly the marginalised

Individual Christians should constantly ask: What power do I already have? How can I use it to signpost and “nudge” my home, my street, my workplace, my industry, my sphere of influence towards the Kingdom?

2. A Christlike engagement of culture

- ***Incarnational*** – each expression and part of culture we are in contact with requires its own distinctive response or ‘gesture’ (Andy Crouch): *celebration or challenge, cultivation or creation*

The contours of Jesus’ biography, his relationships, and actions is the clearest vision of the nature of God’s engagement with the world, and should be the starting point for any theology of cultural engagement.

2. A Christlike engagement of culture

- **Cultural gardening** – The Church is to sacrificially *care*, patiently *cultivate*, and imaginatively *co-create* with God in culture towards the New Creation

Culture is a field to be turned into a fruitful and flourishing garden.

3. What next? *Top down: seeding and planting*





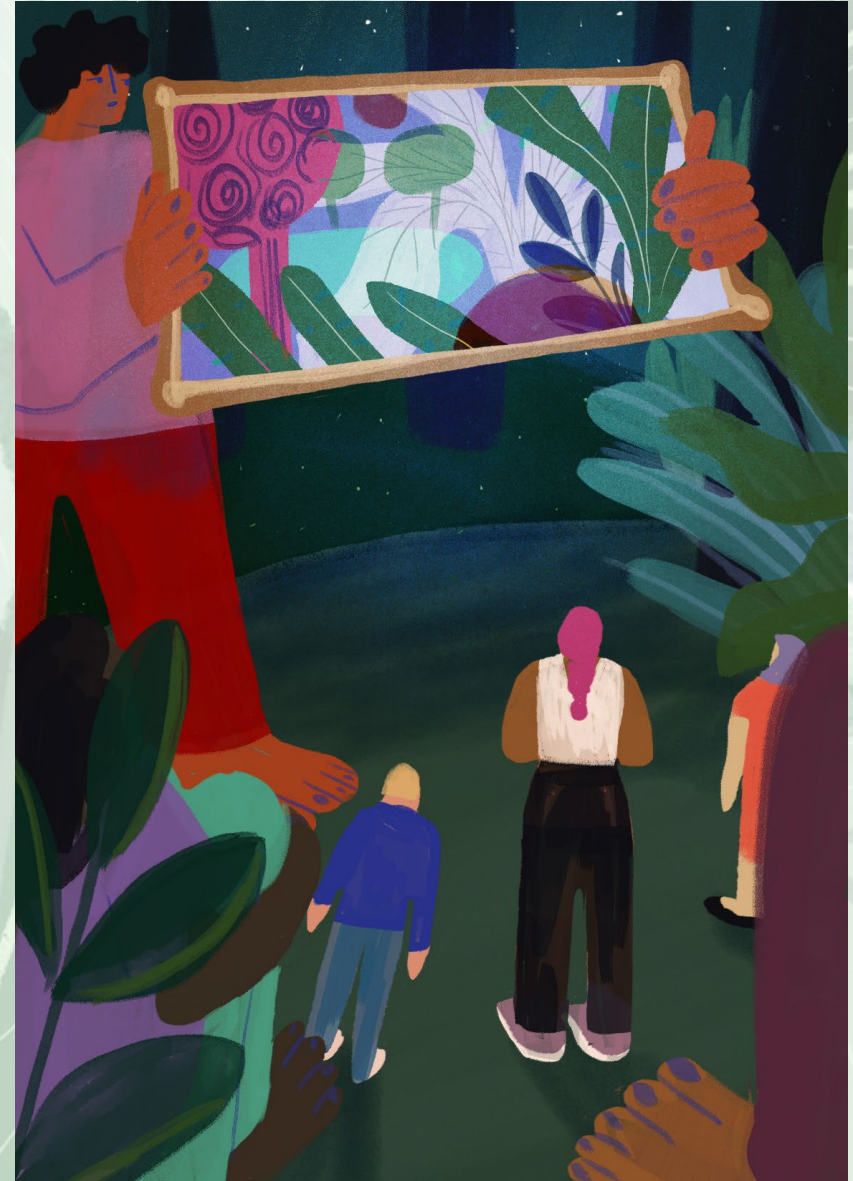
Eyes: cultivating prophetic attentiveness to culture

As gardeners of culture, Christians should always be paying close attention to the culture around them, asking the questions that any keen gardener constantly asks: What is dying? What needs pruning? Where are the signs of life? What needs special care?

Heart: the arts and imagination

Support for Christians working or seeking to work professionally in the arts, entertainment, and creative industries

- *Funding* (scholarships, bursaries, endowments, art prizes, artist support funds, artists in residence schemes etc.)
- *Patronage* for specialist organisations that offer *training, mentoring, and peer support*



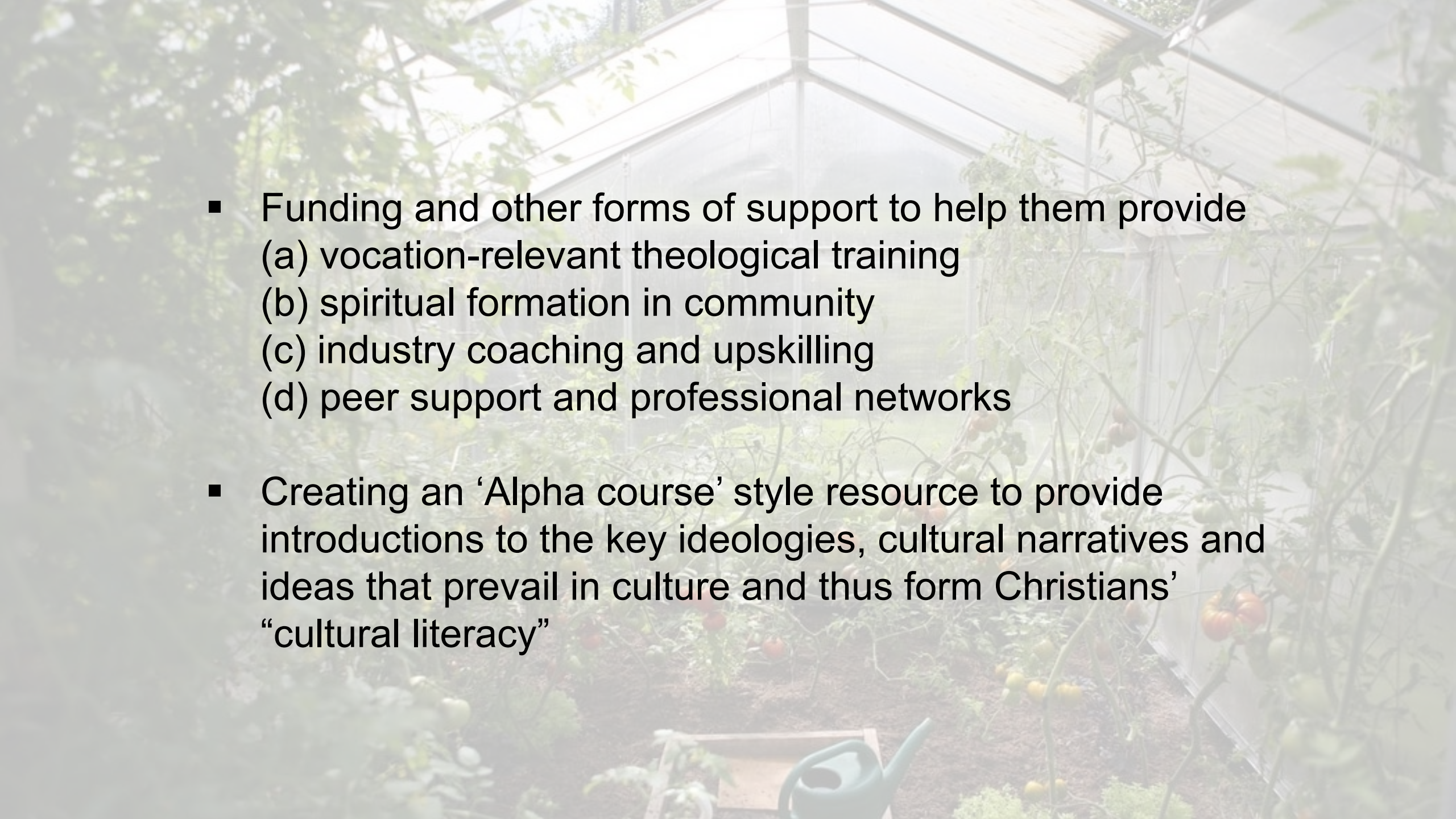


Head: Christian public thinkers and journalists

- long-term support, coaching, training, and funding for emerging Christian public thinkers and journalists: undergraduates, post- and recent graduates –
- patronage of more established Christian public thinkers, including academics, writers, public theologians, and public theology think tanks.

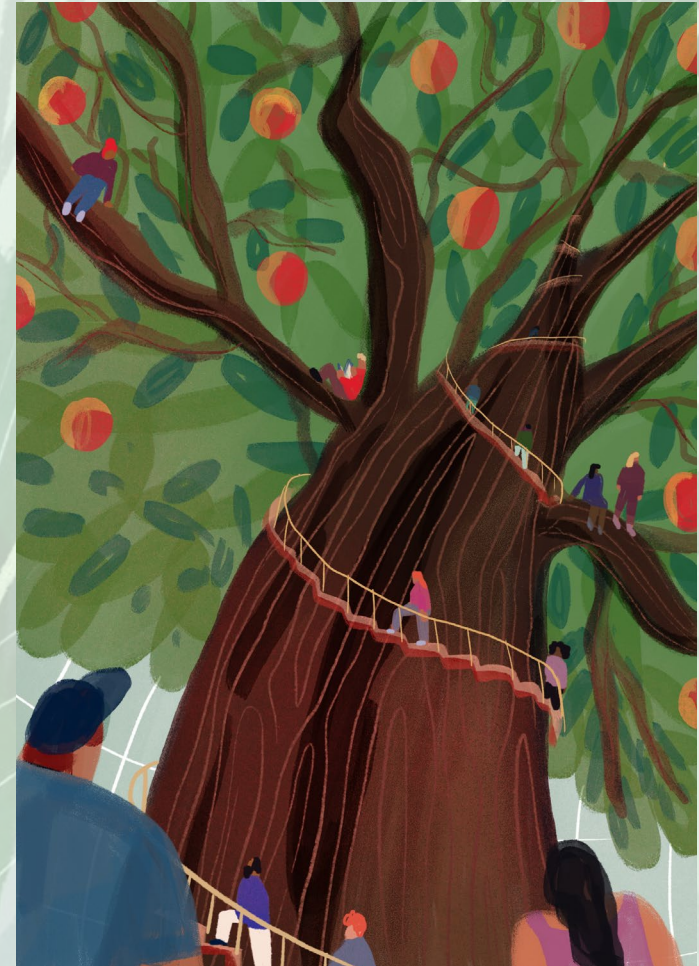
Hand: faith and work organisations or ‘greenhouses’ (e.g. incubators/accelerators)



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- A photograph of a greenhouse filled with tomato plants. The plants are supported by stakes and have several ripe red tomatoes hanging from them. In the foreground, a green watering can is visible. The background shows the structure of the greenhouse and more plants.
- Funding and other forms of support to help them provide
 - (a) vocation-relevant theological training
 - (b) spiritual formation in community
 - (c) industry coaching and upskilling
 - (d) peer support and professional networks
 - Creating an ‘Alpha course’ style resource to provide introductions to the key ideologies, cultural narratives and ideas that prevail in culture and thus form Christians’ “cultural literacy”

Hand: retreats and study centres

- Facilitating sector-specific and cross-sector retreats
- Establishing new urban or rural community-based study centres

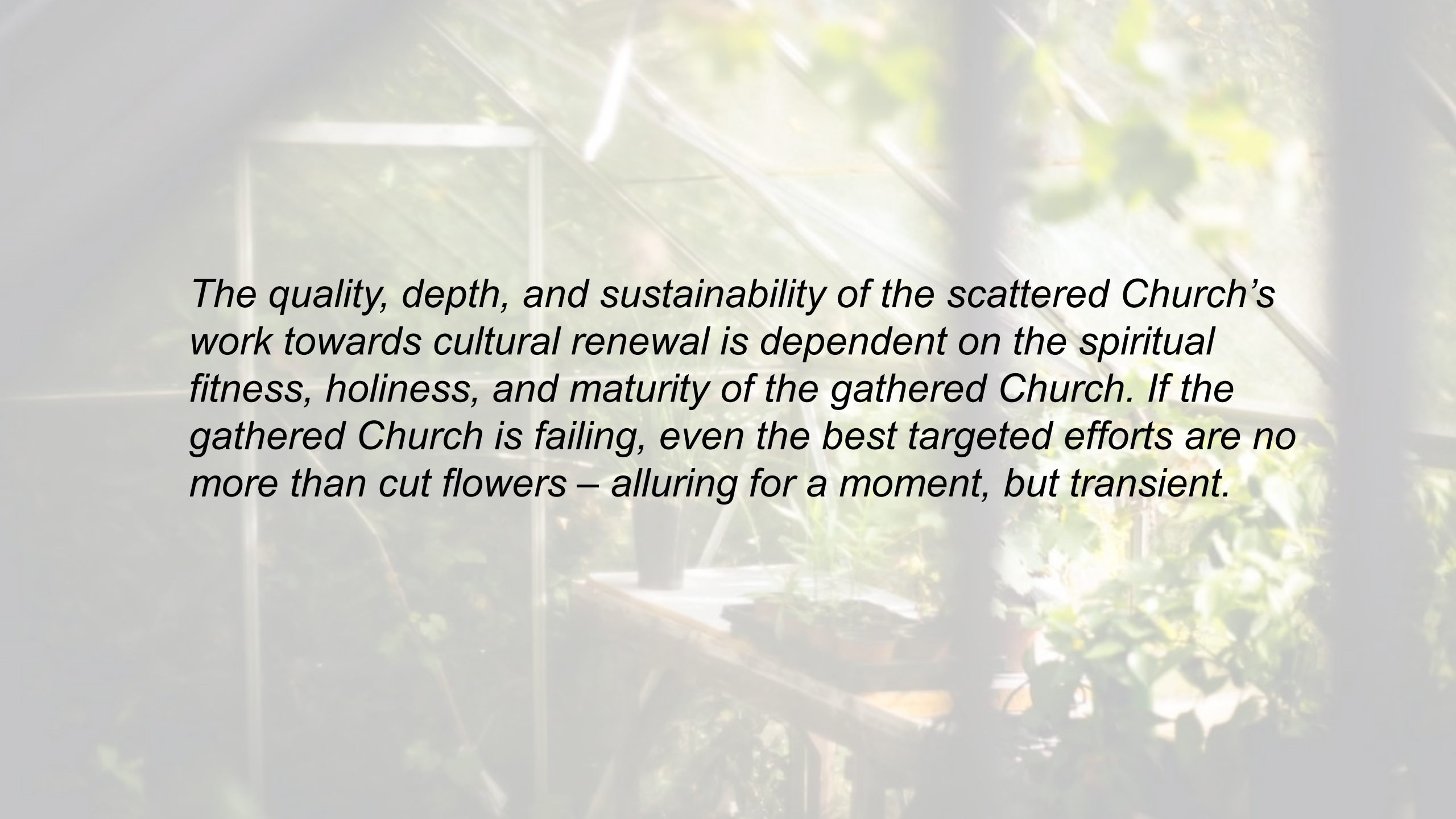


Hand: Climate and Kingdom

- Christian investors and investor groups should consider investing only in sectors and businesses firmly committed to sustainability and de-carbonisation.
- Establishing a Kingdom impact fund that would invest in social enterprises and other redemptive commercial ventures; through its charitable arm the fund would sponsor some of the projects previously mentioned

What next? *Ground up: ploughing and fertilising*





The quality, depth, and sustainability of the scattered Church's work towards cultural renewal is dependent on the spiritual fitness, holiness, and maturity of the gathered Church. If the gathered Church is failing, even the best targeted efforts are no more than cut flowers – alluring for a moment, but transient.

The background features a soft, pastel-colored illustration. At the top, a hand is shown pouring a substance from a grey container labeled 'FERTILISER' into a small green plant in a terracotta pot. The scene is set against a backdrop of various green plants and a light blue sky, suggesting a garden or indoor plant care environment.

Discipleship and formation: nurturing “cultural gardeners”

- firm grasp of the biblical metanarrative
- “prophetic imagination”
- “cultural literacy” – the ability to understand in a theologically informed way the ideas, narratives, and ideologies that prevail in specific vocational settings
- spiritual practices and healthy life rhythms

Theological education

- Committing to an integrated approach orientated towards the formation of whole-of-life disciples and whole-of-life disciple-makers who live out of a Kingdom-saturated imagination in the whole of their lives.

Community: commitment to place and people

- Continued commitment to projects that seek the flourishing of communities in which churches are embedded
- Churches should consider getting involved in “community organising” as a way of wielding their power wisely and working for the common good