



**Matt Bird – Cinnamon Network**  
**Bi-Lingual Missions**

Hello, my name is Matt Bird. I'm the founder and the chief executive of Cinnamon Network International. We're a global NGO committed to helping churches transform community. Our success is the local churches success. We see ourselves as a servant to the local church to enable her to become all that God has called her to be in the community. I'm broadcasting here from Wimbledon in London, in the United Kingdom from my little studio at the end of my garden, and it's a real privilege to be with you today.

And I wanted to speak on the subject of **Bi-Lingual Mission**. If, as a church, we have a desire to impact our cities, our towns, our communities, then my belief is that on the basis of cross-cultural mission, we need to become bilingual. You see, our primary method of communicating value as the church is through the story. The power of story which is hugely impactful. We're led by professional storytellers. Our pastors are primarily preachers who know and have mastered the art of telling a great story. And they are so inspiring. But if we want to be able to communicate and engage and understand and be understood in our communities, it's so important that we become bilingual and not just communicate the value of what we do in story, but to communicate the value of what we do in numbers. Because the language of Civic Society of business, politics, policing, health, education is numbers, it's metrics, outputs and outcomes.

So, let's not finish telling our stories, but let's learn the language of numbers to communicate the value of who we are and what we do. Cinnamon Network International has developed a tool called the **Faith Action Audit**. We are able to support churches in a local government area to work collaboratively to help them take a snapshot in time of the value of what they contribute to the life of their local community. So that they can communicate that to civic leaders and institutions. And it just -I mean what it does is- it just grabs people's attention. Because most people have no idea about the value and the breadth and the depth and the scale and the scope of all the church does in the community. You can tell one or two stories, yes, but when we learn to speak in numbers, civic society understands in new ways.

I pioneered the **Cinnamon Faith Action Audit** here in the United Kingdom and we've now supported the church in 92 local government areas to measure their impact. We use that data to drive partnerships locally but also, we aggregated the data and published a national report which we presented to our government. One of our broadsheet newspapers, The Times, wrote an article about this research, and the headline was this, "**Loving thy neighbor is priceless - but it's worth £3 billion**" a year. That was the value we put on the time, not the money saved or the gifts in kind, but the time given by churches and faith groups to the local community each year. It transformed how we were understood. It enabled us to form partnerships with police and with business and with government and other stakeholders to deliver even greater transformation in communities around the country.

Just last year we supported churches in New York to measure their impact in just two of the 182 ZIP code areas in New York City. And the value of what the Church of the faith groups are doing in those two zip codes -not the wealthiest, most affluent zip codes- quite areas of where there's great levels of poverty, the church was delivering over 40 million American dollars of time each year to those communities. You multiply \$40 million by 182 zip codes: you're getting up to billions of dollars of value. Actually, worth more than many big corporations moving to New York City itself.

Just recently we supported the churches in Australia and an area called Illawarra, just an hour South of Sydney to measure their impact. A community of just 300,000 people. But they measured their value of the time given by the churches to the community each year's worth nearly 10 million Australian dollars.

You know, it's these numbers with an evidence based behind it and a strong methodology that enable us to communicate the value of what we're already doing to civic leaders and institutions. And these numbers that grab people's attention, and think, "Wow!" For the first time, they understand the scope and the scale and the breadth of what the Church does. When they understand that they want to work with us in new ways. In one city that we supported to do the Cinnamon Faith Action Audit, the churches hosted a public event and invited all the other church leaders, invited all the civic leaders that were interested, and they announced the results. And big numbers about the value of what the church was doing in the city and the chief executive of the city government was asked to comment publicly at this event. They took the microphone and just congratulated the church and thanked the church on all that it was doing in the city. And they also said, but we'd love to work with you but there's one problem. We're limited on resources and there are so many of you we couldn't possibly coordinate working with you all separately. Do you think you could work together as one church in the city? The church leaders looked at each other, slightly sheepish, and slightly embarrassed, but immediately nodded and agreed that they would work together. Since then, the churches have formed a network across the city and appointed a single point of contact to be the liaison between the city and the church. Now the city in the Church of Work to identify six areas of common social concern: children, families, housing, community safety. And now the church in the city is developing workstreams together about how they work in partnership to address these issues that they both share.

Another city that we supported, they took the results, presented them to the chief executive of the city, amazed by how much the church is doing, for the first time understood the scale and the scope of it. But this time the chief exec was slightly embarrassed. They said we've just published our Community Strategic Plan and the only place where we've mentioned the church is in a subsection under the title Mitigating Extremism. The chief exec of the city immediately said. Would you work with us as the Church to help us rewrite our strategic plan? And that's exactly what the church did.

**When we learn to become bilingual, other people understand us in a way that they've never done before.** They become convinced like us that faith is a force for good. The Good News isn't just good news for the Church, **but the good news is good news for the city.** This is so important that we become bilingual in the way that we communicate the value of what we do. That we adopt bilingual mission to communicate our value in stories and also in numbers.

So what, what two things I would suggest if I could be cheeky enough? One is, I'd like to really, really, really encourage you, whatever church or agency or network you're leading, I want to really encourage you that data matters. That measuring matters. And don't let the reason that you can't measure everything be an excuse not to measure anything. Start somewhere. **Begin collecting data.** Measure

what you do because as you communicate that, other people will understand the value of what you do in new ways and invite you to the table. They'll invite you to the table to be involved in strategic planning. It will encourage the church in communities, towns or cities to work together as one church. But the second invitation I'd like to give you is if you think the church you go to and the churches in the city where you live would be interested in **working collaboratively** to measure their collective social and economic impact. Talk to us please because Cinnamon Network International would love to serve you. We're not going to do it to you or for you. We'd love to work with you and alongside you to provide the tools to enable you to measure your impact and provide empirical evidence that faith is a force for good. Thank you so much. Please be in contact. Our web address is [cinnamonnetwork.com](http://cinnamonnetwork.com). Thank you so much and I look forward to meeting you. Bye for now.