Common Grounds
a place where anyone can get inspired
Some say that the Church in America is declining.

And yet, more than 70% of people in the United States consider themselves to be Christian.

It’s not that the U.S. is “less Christian” today. It’s not that people crave Jesus or a faith community any less. **It’s that people are less likely to commit to a church.**

1 in 5 Americans say they attend church less often now than they used to. 48% of Millennials say they pray daily but only 18% attend church weekly. 23% of Christians seeking a new church were dissatisfied by a lack of fellowship*

*From Pew Research Center study (2010)

The truth is, the traditional church system doesn’t work for everybody, especially young adults. People are finding church less relevant to their lives. They’re not rejecting Jesus—they’re rejecting institutions.

So how do we respond? We still need churches and pastors. We need congregations and worship services. **But we also need to reach people—especially those who would never step inside a church—in new ways.**

We need fresh, vibrant, non-traditional spaces where people can nurture their spirituality without any barriers.
Jesus was on mission.

He came to remove the barriers between humans and God. He created community. He met people right where they were. And we can do the same.

Ultimately, Church is not an organization. It’s about people—ordinary, everyday people exploring faith together. This Biblical understanding of Church is an organic movement of spiritually motivated people.

As followers of Christ, we must strive to be dynamic representatives of God in a very complex world. We must follow the example Jesus set for us, being cultural bridges to bring people of all walks of life together.

Whether people have been hurt by religious institutions, have grown disillusioned, or have never stepped inside a church building before, we must try to remove the barriers keeping people from God.

And that is exactly what Common Grounds strives to do.
WHO WE ARE

Several years ago, Jeff Foster set out to create something new. It became a coffee shop called Common Grounds.

Like most modern coffee shops, Common Grounds offers a variety of beverages and food alongside books and local art. We brew in the direction of freedom by serving fair trade coffee and tea. But we are so much more than a coffee shop.

We are a community. We are a place where anyone can get inspired, a hub for collaboration, a space where career, family and social lives intersect with faith and activism.

We are a learning community. We create a culture of education and reflection. We hold space for people to explore faith and critical issues. We promote learning about advocacy.

We are a missional community. We take the hope of heaven to those who need it most. We serve our community in tangible, meaningful ways. We raise up a generation of leaders who pursue a lifestyle of generosity, seeking justice, and discipling others.
### OUR VALUES + CHARACTERISTICS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>We focus on the mission of God.</strong></th>
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<td>We seek the Kingdom of God by pursuing reconciliation and shalom in all we do.</td>
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<th><strong>We are Christ-centered.</strong></th>
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<td>We seek to emulate the character of Jesus, bearing witness to all who come through the doors of Common Grounds.</td>
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<th><strong>We are an incarnation ministry.</strong></th>
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<td>Our downtown location allows us to influence people from all walks of life.</td>
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<th><strong>We are community-based.</strong></th>
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<td>Compassionate, transformational work is best done in community. As a community hub, we foster transformation through personal relationships and social action.</td>
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<th><strong>We are discipleship-driven.</strong></th>
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<td>Our team creates a safe, trusting, nurturing space where discipleship takes place between staff, volunteers, customers, and partners.</td>
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<th><strong>We are transformative.</strong></th>
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<td>Works of justice are the outflow of the Holy Spirit moving. We seek to be agents of hope and healing for people, relationships, and the broader community.</td>
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<th><strong>We are service-oriented.</strong></th>
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<td>Evangelism and social action are inseparable. We demonstrate the Gospel tangibly by serving and giving back to our community, and on on a national and international level.</td>
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<th><strong>We partner strong.</strong></th>
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<td>We work collaboratively with individuals, churches, and other agencies to build a strong, resilient, spiritually-nourished community.</td>
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<th><strong>We are hope-infused.</strong></th>
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<td>In the midst of the challenges and problems in DeKalb, our missional community shines as a beacon of hope. With Jesus as the center, Common Grounds meets people right where they’re at and inspires hope in unlikely and dark places.</td>
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This is about more than reaching people with the Gospel. It’s about rebuilding community.

It’s because of brokenness in community that social justice issues emerge. Problems such as human trafficking, violence, racism, and abuse are the result of our fragmented relationships, divided communities, and unjust systems.

Seeking the Kingdom of God must mean we balance evangelism with social action. And one of the best ways to do this is by being an incarnational ministry: moving into the neighborhood, being among the people, fostering an environment where hope, healing, and transformation take place.
We mentor emerging leaders and build our community’s resiliency through trainings on entrepreneurship, fair trade, social issues, and more.

We cultivate creative thinking and expression as a platform for artists, writers, and musicians to convey messages of justice, freedom, and healing.

We nurture a space for theological reflection and for people to explore their faith by conducting regular workshops, hosting study groups, and more.

Using fair trade products, we raise public consumption standards and promote ethical business, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

We support efforts to seek justice by giving a portion of our proceeds to local, national, and international agencies intervening in human trafficking.

Common Grounds is many things. We seek community engagement and transformation in broad and deep ways, all of which are founded on our core purpose of serving as a missional community.

**OUR PURPOSE**

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**COMMON GROUNDS**

As a community hub, we seek to creatively and meaningfully incubate, equip, and mobilize a community of care and concern in 5 key ways:
Our intention is to be a place where people from all walks of life experience spiritual enrichment and community with others.

Everything we do in this space is cultivated around dialogue, learning, serving, building relationships, and sharing the love of God in a welcoming place where anyone can get inspired.

**We resemble a church experience**: people coming together to pray, be encouraged, explore the Christian faith, and engage in service. Yet, as a missional community located strategically in Dekalb’s downtown, we are uniquely positioned to go even further than a traditional church can, reaching people who normally would not feel comfortable in a church setting.

**We are a missional community**

- We create a safe space for vulnerable people, who desire a relationship with God outside of a typical church environment.
- We have the privilege of praying with broken people consistently throughout the business week in an informal setting.
- We get to minister to people who have been hurt or disillusioned by the church and are seeking new ways to explore Christianity.
Human trafficking generates an estimated $150 billion each year in criminal profits.

As a % For Freedom business, we seek to counter the illegal business of modern slavery by supporting local, national, and international organizations who are at the frontlines of intervention.

For every cup of coffee purchased at Common Grounds, we give a portion to:

- Ethiopia
- Panama
- Costa Rica
- Guatemala

100% of Barb City Roasters profits are donated to support people in need of housing, clean water, and food around the world.

By purchasing only fair trade coffee beans from Barb City Roasters, we are helping to create dignified, viable livelihood opportunities for small-scale farmers from:

- Indonesia
- Columbia
- Brazil

We seek to end slavery.

We are passionate participants in the modern abolitionist movement.

We seek to intervene in human trafficking and create new futures in numerous and evolving ways, including:

- partnering with the Set Free Movement and Safe Passage
- educating and engaging our community on the presence of human trafficking regionally, nationally, and globally
- creating a safe space for survivors to come for community, prayer, and spiritual development
- and more
The Free Methodist Church was birthed out of several social issues in the 19th Century, seeking to change values to be inclusive of women, opposing of slavery, and focused on justice.

In 2007, the Free Methodist denomination voted unanimously to work to end modern slavery in all its forms. In the wake of this milestone, the Set Free Movement formed as a non-profit organization under the Free Methodist Church, seeking to reduce vulnerability to exploitation through community-based action and partnerships with all sectors of society. For several years, Common Grounds has been a member of the Set Free community.

**How do we fight modern slavery?**

We start by acknowledging that human trafficking is a symptom of the deeper problem of our community brokenness.

**This is where healthy community dialogue is vital.**

Without community, we continue to hate what we don’t understand, we have lifestyles that harm and oppress others, we demonize opposing views rather than listen and seek understanding. But in relationship, we turn from ignorance and confusion and find lasting solutions.

**Common Grounds seeks social change, healing, and unity.**

Drawing on our abolitionist roots, we seek to strengthen community. We build bridges between academia, the arts and people of faith. We encourage and support the problem solvers, the creative thinkers, the people inspired to change the world. As Emerson stated, “Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.”

**40 million people around our world are trapped in human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery.**

Children, women, and men are forced to work against their will, doing things they don’t want to do.
Society and culture should change if the church has been truly effective. Is the church reaching out and seeing lives changed by the Good News of the Kingdom of God? Surely the numbers of Christians will increase once this happens, but filling seats one day a week is not what the Kingdom is all about.

We do Jesus an injustice by reducing His life and ministry to such a sad story as church attendance and membership roles.

**The measure of the church’s influence is found in society — on the streets, not in the pews.**

- Brandon Hatmaker, Barefoot Church
CONNECT

131 East Lincoln Highway | DeKalb IL | 60115
commongroundsekalb@gmail.com
815.570.3379
www.CommonGrounds.com

@CommonGroundsDekalb  @CommonGroundsDekalb  @CGroundsDekalb