

**Sidewalks in the Kingdom. New Urbanism and the Christian Faith**  
by Eric O. Jacobsen. Brazos Press, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2003. Pb. 189 pp.  
Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

There are numerous Christian books on missions to the city. This very readable and practical volume is different. Jacobsen, an associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Missoula, argues that Christians have moved their homes and congregations to the very fringes of their historic cities or suburban enclaves. And they have learned to speak of cities exclusively as places for rescue missions, rather than as places to live, work, worship, or play. He challenges them to think about the city as place with sidewalks or plazas. Instead of leaving for the suburbs, they should confront the problems of the city, such as overcrowding, addiction, and declining schools. And they may also enjoy their cities for the cultural performances, civic art, and opportunity for the human interaction they provide.

A member of the Congress of the New Urbanism, Jacobsen explains various concepts and ideas associated with the movement. He deplores the disastrous "urban renewal" project that the US federal government helped to fund in the post-World War II era as an example of what not to do when it comes to city planning. He laments that the American population is "becoming increasingly transitory, making it difficult to develop a history with a place, more and more geographical locations are becoming standardised and are losing any sense of place."

He also points out that environmental and farm lobbies are discovering that urban sprawl is one of the greatest threats to our farms and wilderness.

What makes Jacobsen's book so interesting, are his creative, yet realistic, ideas about renewing city life on a more human scale. He encourages his readers to think through the Biblical teachings on the role of the city and why they must care about architecture, neighbourhoods, streets, local businesses, and communities.