

SERVANT PARTNERS: AN INTRODUCTION



Transforming Communities with the Urban Poor

Servant Partners
P. O. Box 3144
Pomona, CA 91769
www.servantpartners.org
info@servantpartners.org



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Welcome! We are glad for your interest in Servant Partners.

One in every six people in the world lives in an urban slum. The vast majority of those slums have no church in the community. Since 1993 Servant Partners has sought to send people to live among the urban poor in order to love them concretely and share Christ's hope for them. It is a difficult calling but it is one we know is close to God's heart.

This document is an introduction to who we are and what we do. It contains our mission, our values, and our strategies. We believe that we have been called into this work not simply because it is strategic or prophetic but because loving the poor is part of our own obedience to Christ. It is part of our discipleship, our seeking to know Him and become like Him.

The poor have much to offer us as well. All people are created in the image of God and have gifts, creativity, agency, and intelligence to use for the common good. As we enter into relationship with each other we are able to be a blessing to one another, the body of Christ building itself up in love and interdependence.

We also acknowledge that though God loves the poor he hates poverty. Our call as Servant Partners is to help break the stranglehold of poverty in these neglected corners of our cities. This is my burden and why I chose to join Servant Partners in 1998. I became convinced by God that concern for the poor is not just a specialized ministry but a requirement for all who seek to truly follow Jesus with their whole lives.

God may have placed the same burden upon your heart. You may be interested in serving the poor directly as a staff member with us. We also offer internships to help people gain a deeper understanding of God's concern for the poor. Others of you may be church members, businesspeople or social entrepreneurs who want to make a difference among the world's urban poor by doing something life giving and creative in partnership with us. Whatever your interest, we'd love to talk with you.

We hope that this document will answer many questions that you might have. Please make sure to get in touch with us if you have any other questions or want to learn more about opportunities for service and partnership.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Derek Engdahl
General Director
On behalf of the Servant Team

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BASICS

Jesus loves the urban poor.

He lived his life among those on the fringes of society, teaching them and compassionately tending to their needs. While respectable people of his day often ignored or shunned 'the least,' Jesus welcomed them as valued friends and challenged the powerful who took advantage of those on the margins. He demonstrated a community of social justice and love he called 'the Kingdom of God,' inviting the poor to take honored places in that new fellowship.



Over the past century hundreds of millions of rural poor people have migrated to the world's cities to seek a better life. Today over a billion people live in often desperate conditions in urban squatter slums and ghettos, sometimes without the basic necessities of life much less the freedom and joy of the good news of Jesus. Soon over half the world's population will live in urban areas. The future of Christian mission and ministry is in the city.

Those of us in Servant Partners seek to follow Christ as we respond to this global shift by:

- Living among the urban poor
- Demonstrating the Kingdom of God through our lives
- Partnering closely with local Christians
- Working for reconciliation between people of different classes and cultures
- Inviting the urban poor to take their places in God's Kingdom and in new local churches that best express that new community
- Equipping churches to transform slum communities through Christian discipleship, self-empowerment, advocacy for justice, and working creatively and practically to improve the lives of their neighbors
- Catalyzing movements of transformational churches that will make a difference in their cities and nations

BEGINNINGS

Servant Partners grew out of a renewal movement that spread across American college campuses in the 1980's and 1990's. John Perkins and Viv Grigg, Christian leaders with hearts for justice, influenced this movement profoundly through their prophetic biblical teaching and example. Inspired by God's Spirit, hundreds of graduating university students relocated into American inner city neighborhoods to serve as ministers of racial and economic reconciliation.

Servant Partners was founded in 1993 to facilitate a work among the urban poor that God's Spirit had already begun among graduates of InterVarsity's campus ministry in the USA. Servant Partners was created to be a work that combined God's call to proclaim the good news to every nation, and God's call to love and serve the poor. Though Servant Partners began with a call to global mission among the poor, we focused our early efforts on inner city communities in the US. We wanted to serve faithfully in our own context before moving to the ends of the earth. Over the years, Servant Partners teams in Los Angeles area neighborhoods have strengthened or planted new churches, and helped create separate non-profits for increased ministry impact in their communities. From the beginning, we have placed a strong emphasis on training. Since 1995, young adults have entered our two year internship program and learned to love the urban poor by living, ministering, and studying in inner city neighborhoods in the Los Angeles area. In the late 1990's, God led us to expand our ministry into the cities of the developing world. Today we are working in fourteen different areas planting churches, training leaders, and organizing communities. In 2003, we began an innovative initiative to strengthen and expand the work of indigenous national leaders who are developing cutting-edge models of urban poor ministry, and to help mobilize new missionaries from developing world countries to the urban poor of the nations. Currently we are serving in North America, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Seeking Jesus together by living and serving among the world's urban poor.

MISSION STATEMENT

Transforming Communities with the Urban Poor

VALUES

Our Core Values

- Joy in God
- Incarnation
- Servanthood
- Making disciples
- Justice
- Transformation



Joy in God

We believe that we are created to enjoy and rejoice in God, and be satisfied in him as we seek his Kingdom and live under his Lordship. This joy is ours in the present as well as the future. The Scriptures repeatedly exhort and encourage us to rejoice in God, to root our joy in him. Jesus teaches us to keep his commandments and abide in him, so that his joy will be in us, and so that our joy will be full (John 15:1-11). Even in a prison cell, faced with the prospect of death, the Apostle Paul was filled with joy and rejoicing knowing that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). The author of Hebrews exhorts us, as we run our own race, to look to Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross (Heb 12:1-3). Especially in a ministry such as ours, in which the “cross to be endured” is often great, remembering that our life and ministry are all about finding our joy in Jesus guards us against false motivations for living sacrificially among the poor.

Incarnation

God came in the flesh to live among us and demonstrate the new life of the Kingdom of God. We choose to live among the world’s urban poor as Jesus did through the power of God’s Spirit, sharing their lives and sufferings and offering a celebration of God’s love and justice through our witness. We believe that we come to understand the poor as we walk alongside them in interdependent relationships day to day. We seek to establish churches that flesh out authentic Christian community and discipleship.

Our value for incarnation inspires us to contextualize our lives and message as much as possible in ways that are significant to the local community, such as:

- Presenting the gospel in terms of local cultural forms which are not in opposition to the gospel message.
- Living among our urban poor neighbors to the extent that we are able, making their hardships our own, so that we can understand and empathize with their situation.



Servanthood

The very nature of true authority is servanthood. God himself is a servant-leader who works on behalf of those who trust in him. Jesus willingly chose into great costs and personal suffering in order to benefit humanity. He became the servant of all, took the lowest place, and taught that doing so was the path to greatness in the Kingdom of God – that the last will be first. He described himself as a “good shepherd” who cares for his sheep, and lays his life down for them. He calls us to follow his example of being good shepherds of others, and becoming the last of all and the servant of all.

Deeply owning the truth that Jesus is our servant and shepherd who cares for our needs enables us to be servants of others, rather than using our position for our own benefit.

Following Jesus among the urban poor means becoming servants of our neighbors in practical ways, laying down our own lives for them, and choosing into inconvenience and suffering for their sake.

Making Disciples

The poor need Jesus. They need his forgiveness, his promise of salvation, and his sanctifying work in their lives. They need the good news that though they may be poor they are rich in Christ. At the end of Matthew, Jesus commissioned the twelve to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey all he had commanded. We emphasize making disciples as a value, because our goal is not simply conversions, or professions of faith, or church goers, but disciples who are growing in obedience and maturity in Christ Jesus. We work to see faith communities formed of such disciples.

Justice

God cares deeply about social justice. He challenges the powers and systems that oppress the poor and marginalized. Justice is foundational to God’s character and the nature of his Kingdom. Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy as the one who would proclaim justice to the nations, and bring justice to victory (Matthew 12:15-21). God requires his people to do justice, and to work for justice in society. We join him in that work by:

- Seeking to be reconciled to our poor neighbors.
- Sharing our resources and access to the benefits of society generously with those who are poor, since God is a generous God.
- Identifying unjust relationships, structures, ideologies and attitudes that contribute to poverty and oppression
- Calling for repentance from those who oppress the poor

- Advocating for the poor among the influential and seeking to find practical and creative ways to help the powerful be reconciled with the poor and become part of the solution.
- Equipping our poor neighbors to become effective advocates for themselves.

Transformation

God hears the cries of the urban poor and works to make their lives and communities better. He calls his followers to work for the transformation not only of individual lives, but of communities and nations. God's ultimate plan is to have his Kingdom come in its fullness. We partner with God in that mission by:

- Emphasizing faithful discipleship and personal responsibility while challenging destructive personal choices that perpetuate poverty
- Breaking the hopelessness of our poor neighbors by encouraging and training them to organize themselves so they can take greater community responsibility for their own lives and neighborhoods
- Creating innovative and practical approaches in partnership with our poor neighbors that make life better for poor communities.
- Encouraging partnerships for mutual transformation between our poor neighbors and businesspeople, social entrepreneurs, government officials, and development professionals.
- Seeking to be transformed ourselves as we live and minister among the poor, acknowledging that we need to be changed by our relationships with the poor, just as we seek to see change in their lives.



A Deeper Look at our Values

What We Believe About God

- *God is Reconciling All Peoples to Himself and to Each Other*

God strives for a deep and loving relationship with all people. But our sin has destroyed our relationship with God. Our sin has also damaged our relationships with each other and led to hostility and injustice along class, race and gender lines.

God responded to this pervasive sin through the death of Jesus on the cross. Only through this sacrifice are people able to live in restored and right relationship with God. Likewise, the love and power unleashed at the cross is the only means by which we are empowered to be in right relationship with our neighbors, reconciling our many differences.

In response, we must emphasize Jesus' work of atonement as a work of reconciliation. Through death on a cross, Jesus broke down the dividing wall of hostility and is in the process of reconciling the world to himself and the peoples of the world to each other. As a result of God's work, we have access to this redemptive power. Pursuing reconciliation with one another across existing divisions like class, race and gender is an essential aspect of reconciliation with God.

- *God Has An Intense Concern for the Poor and Oppressed*

Poverty is a distortion of the full and right life God has intended for everyone. In the Bible, there are multiple causes of poverty and any poor person or community may have one or more reasons for being poor. Some poverty can be a direct result of an individual's sinful action. Other poverty comes as the outcome of a crisis beyond the control of a person or community. However, most poverty in this world, according to the scriptures, comes as a result of oppression and exploitation – human beings and human systems not being in right relationship with one another, but rather using one another in dehumanizing ways.

We believe God is deeply grieved by this human experience of poverty. We believe God is profoundly angered by the deeds of those who oppress others through unjust actions or oppressive systems.

However, God's intense concern for the poor and oppressed does not in any way lessen his love for the remaining minority of humanity - the non-poor. We must value all people while maintaining that God has a special concern for the poor and oppressed.

What We Believe About Ourselves

- *God's Word and the Holy Spirit Are Our Primary Source of Authority*

The Bible is our primary source of insight regarding God, the Body of Christ, and the world. God's word is authoritative and heart renewing.

We will also depend daily upon the Holy Spirit for guidance, comfort and power over our sin as well as the evil we encounter. This dependence on the Holy Spirit will be demonstrated through prayer.

- *Losing Our Lives for the Sake of the Gospel of the Kingdom is the Guiding Principle for Our Lifestyle*

In all that we do we will seek to follow Jesus' example of losing his life for the sake of the Kingdom. We will live sacrificially, risking our lives and the approval of others for the sake of the gospel. We will seek to die to ourselves in all areas of life: finances, possessions, housing, decision-making, and ministry opportunities. We will live sacrificially for one another in our relationships and in our marriages. We will seek to submit to one another in love. We will seek wisdom from God and from one another in exercising this principle.

- *The Heart of Our Work is Seeking Justice for the Poor and Oppressed*

We all are called to seek justice for the poor and oppressed. Some of us will be called to live *among the poor* in order to express God's desire to be with the poor, his desire to serve those least among us, and his desire to bring transformation to poor communities. Others of us will advocate *for the poor* in order to make their needs known to those in power, both within the church and in the public arena. Others of us will engage in concrete service *to the poor* who need physical relief. We will honor one another as servants of Christ regardless of the way we are called to serve.

- *Seeking "The Joy Set Before Us" is Our Motivation for Obedience*

We are motivated to obey God's Word because we believe he has our greatest joy, and the greatest joy for others, set before us in heaven.

As we experience suffering and trials in the course of our mission, we believe that God uses these to refine our faith so that we can rejoice fully when we see him face to face. We know that the measure of our suffering will be infinitely less than the measure of our joy when we dwell with him forever. And we believe that our joy in him will be far greater when we can share it with as many others as possible. We are motivated to obey by the promised blessings of scripture for ourselves and for others. The greatest blessing is to be with Jesus forever.

Characteristics of Our Life Together

We rejoice in God who has first loved us. Christ has commanded that out of this love we are to love Him and our neighbor. We therefore aim to be part of a community which is empowered to love one another by the Spirit of God. This life-giving love will be reflected in the following ways:

- *Gathered Around the Word*



We seek to be a community gathered around the Word of God. We're committed to studying and meditating on the Word both individually and collectively and asking how to understand and apply its teachings in light of our lives and unique experiences. In other words, we will 'do theology' together and strive to apply the Word in light of our actual experiences and then allow that fresh and living perspective to shape our lives and ministry together.

- *Reconciliation*



In Christ there is no partiality. We are to be part of a community that seeks reconciliation across class, racial, and gender lines. We will challenge those who are rich to relocate into low-income areas in order to share fellowship more deeply with the poor. We will invite the affluent to participate in concrete service to the poor as well as to advocate on their behalf. We will encourage racial reconciliation among those who oppress and those who are oppressed. Moreover, we will honor women and men as full partners in life and ministry. All will be in vain if we do not seek forgiveness from God and one another when we fall short of honoring each person's dignity.

- *Spiritual Disciplines*



We believe that worship, celebration, rest and prayer are central to the life and health of our fellowship together. We will pursue the spiritual disciplines in order to submit to God, to refresh our spirits, and to participate with God Spirit in bringing about His will in our lives and the lives of the people we serve.

- *Discipleship*

Following Jesus is not a one-time event, but rather is a process that continues over a lifetime. We believe that, together with Christ, we will always be working out our salvation, bringing us to further maturity and Christ-likeness. We must always be learners.

We will build communities that emphasize discipleship. We will form relationships in which people are consciously influencing one another to be more Christ-like. This will involve accountability, confession and humility. Despite our sin, we will boldly follow Christ's command and seek to reproduce his values in the lives of other disciples.

■ *Servant Leadership*

We hold that servant leadership is the primary model for leadership in the Christian community. We believe that God has gifted the body of Christ to be led directly by Christ himself. As the head of the church, Christ has also given leadership gifts to the church for the purpose of building up the body in love.

Therefore, we seek to root our roles and leadership influence in the gifts of the Spirit and demonstrated service and not in seniority, tradition, or hierarchy. We believe the Christian community is to be led by those whom God has gifted with apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching gifts. Each person in leadership must demonstrate a servant's heart and mind.

Decision-making will be done in prayer and by consensus as much as possible. Leaders will seek to make decisions based upon what is best for the whole community as well as the good of the individual. However, when a course of action is not soon apparent, leaders will make decisions which will advance the mission as a whole while staying true to the community's purpose.



Those affected by decisions will deal respectfully with their leaders. While complete agreement is neither possible nor expected at all times, mutual submission will mark the relationships of followers and leaders. In addition, those who make decisions will be as close to the point of implementation as possible.

We are also committed to developing leaders within our organization. We identify key experiences, values, and skills that we would like to see rooted in our leaders. We then help them to create plans to gain those experiences, develop their gifts, and grow spiritually. We are continually looking within the organization for young talent that can be challenged to take on greater responsibility.

■ *Partnership*

As the body of Christ we must emphasize being of “one mind.” This doesn’t mean conformity. Having one mind means “approving what is excellent” together. Specifically, we approve of the suffering that results in the advance of the gospel. We expect this suffering to be costly to believers in terms of time, money, energy, and success. We anticipate conflict, persecution, and misunderstandings while following Jesus as a community.

This “one mindedness” also includes a commitment to the process of letting the Word and Spirit reshape our hopes and dreams for our individual lives, the life of the Christian community, and the community in which we live. We refer to this process as “gathering around a common vision.”



We also believe that the financial and personnel resources of the developed world are part of the means by which the Kingdom of God will advance beyond its current borders in the developing world. It is a mutual blessing for believers in the developed world to sacrificially invest their resources in the emerging mission leadership of the developing world. We believe that there are many common mission goals between the church in the developed world and the developing world. Through mutual partnerships, each bringing their appropriate gifts, we can advance the Kingdom of God more effectively than if we are each left on our own. We orient our partnerships around a shared vision to serve the urban poor, mutual relationships of trust and respect, and plans for concrete results.

Characteristics of Transformational Ministry

■ *Apostolic Mission*

Servant Partners is an apostolic movement. We’re apostolic because our primary focus is on catalyzing and creating new churches and movements in places where few if any incarnational, urban poor ministries exist. We are continually looking for opportunities to develop new ministry around the world among the urban poor.

We’re a movement because we seek to be more than simply a mission structure or organization. We’re gathered together around a prophetic vision and we see ourselves as a part of a worldwide movement of God’s Spirit aimed at loving the urban poor and

bringing God's justice to the cities of the world. We want to be open to God's Spirit by emphasizing initiative taking, flexibility, dynamism, relationships, creativity, and risk taking in how we go about ministry.

- *Global Mission to the Urban Poor*

We place a special emphasis on preparing workers who will leave their own people or culture and serve another people or culture. We seek to send cross-cultural workers from each new ministry and community we help to establish.

- *Evangelistic*

We will boldly declare the good news of the gospel in word and deed to our neighbors. By witnessing to Jesus' saving grace in our own lives and in the lives of others, we will call people into the Kingdom of God. We seek to do this in a culturally appropriate way, which, without compromising our faith in any way, will create the highest possibility of a positive response.

- *Planting Reproducing Churches*

We seek to plant new Christian communities that are Jesus centered and rooted in the Word of God. We emphasize planting churches that reproduce themselves and help develop networks and movements of church planting.

- *Developing Indigenous Leadership*

We seek to turn over new churches and ministries to indigenous leadership as soon as possible. We work from the beginning to identify the individuals whom God is anointing for leadership. We will focus our attention on serving these leaders in concrete ways as well as helping them mature as disciples of Jesus. As they are ready to take on leadership responsibilities, we will encourage them to take full ownership of the ministry.

- *Transforming Neighborhoods*

We focus on the transformation of whole communities and not simply individuals. By "community transformation" we mean the greater and greater realization of the Kingdom of God in a particular community of people. As God frees people from an unhealthy focus on simple survival and acquisition to a life of service and love of neighbor, true community transformation begins to occur. This liberation produces a greater and greater expression of justice and peace within any community which positively affects every aspect of life. While we're very committed to helping improve the material standard of living of individuals and whole communities, we place an even

higher value on strengthening the spiritual depth of communities so they are more hopeful, peaceful, dignified, initiative-taking, sharing, and grateful.

We believe that the Christian community must engage its local community through declaration of the gospel of the Kingdom as well as concrete service to one's neighbor. While we encourage many types of service which contribute to the transformation of the community as a whole, we believe these ministries must flow from the organic life of the Christian community. We will not seek to establish service ministries which are fundamentally disconnected from the life of the Christian community, but we strongly emphasize the importance of creatively and practically meeting the concrete needs of local slum communities. In this way local believers can live out a faithful life of practical service to their neighbors and build networks of trusting relationships which often result in new believers and new Christian communities.

Community transformation is a process by which people in a particular community grow in their abilities to shape their own environment. We're deeply committed to training our poor neighbors to organize themselves so they can collectively take greater responsibility for transforming their own lives and neighborhoods. We seek to introduce an ongoing process of action and reflection. That kind of process helps urban poor neighbors to persistently take action to address common local challenges and then reflect on the outcome of those actions in order to create increasingly more effective ways to solve the tremendous practical challenges faced by any urban poor community. We seek the kind of economic and social development which is appropriate to and affirming of the existing cultures of our poor neighbors.

An important part of community transformation is the effort to bring about structural changes in the larger society that makes up the context of poor neighborhoods. We are committed to entering this arena when we believe some practical good can be done for our neighbors. We are committed to none but the politics of the Kingdom of God and seek to avoid identifying ourselves with any social or political group. In our advocacy for the poor and our work for structural change, we seek to conduct ourselves with humility, patience, peacefulness, honesty, and integrity.

We believe community transformation should start with local Christians where this is possible and our first priority is to work in partnership with local believers, churches and ministries. However, we are convinced it is desirable and at times essential to involve the wider local community outside the church in whatever ways seem practical and useful in a particular community. At times we will actively seek partnerships with schools, governmental institutions, the business community, the non-profit community and other groups.

We believe the transformation of local communities and their larger surrounding societies can be achieved most effectively through catalyzing church planting

movements and not simply through planting individual churches. We seek to catalyze reproducing movements of church planting and we're committed to pursue ministry approaches and strategies conducive to developing such movements.

We're committed to a strategy that is community based and long term in its perspective. In all things we seek to be practical and concrete.

■ *Living Among Our Poor Neighbors*

"Though he (Jesus) was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, so that by His poverty we might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9) We seek to live and work among the people as nearly as possible to their standard of living. In this attempt, we will seek to maintain reasonable health, recognizing emotional, physical, cultural, and family limitations. As we make ministry and lifestyle decisions, we will remember that Jesus lived among the poor to minister both to the rich and the poor. We intend to master the language and culture of the people among whom we minister.

■ *Seeking Justice for the Poor and Oppressed*

We believe that justice for the poor and oppressed is integrally tied to Jesus' call to salvation. We will seek to work for justice in concrete ways in the communities in which we live. This may involve working in material service and relief to the poor, organizing a community to address structural injustice, or speaking to the rich on behalf of the poor. We will work for justice with humility and integrity, seeking to honor all individuals regardless of their role in the society.

■ *Working in Teams*

We minister together in teams. Our workers commit to build community not only with their poor neighbors, but also with one another. These teams will be characterized by love through one-mindedness, servant leadership, complementary spiritual gifts, and a supportive atmosphere. There will be accountability to one another for mutually agreed upon goals, especially lifestyle issues.



■ *Partnering with the Indigenous Church*

We are committed to work in collaboration with indigenous Christian churches. When possible, we seek to work in partnership with and under the leadership of existing indigenous Christian churches and leaders who are already pursuing transformational church planting among the urban poor. When this is not possible, we are committed to building relationships with indigenous Christians in order to model our missional values and encourage new indigenous ministry among the urban poor. In all cases we seek to encourage indigenous partnerships with a goal of catalyzing local movements of transformational church planting among the urban poor.

8 Signs of a Transforming Community

Reproducing, transformational communities of Jesus-followers (Jesus Communities)

A transforming urban poor community has many groups of 5-20 people who are worshipping Jesus, studying the Word, serving one another, praying, inviting others into a personal relationship with Jesus, discipling others, developing leaders, becoming change agents in their own community, and planting new communities that do the same.

Increased Civic Participation for the Common Good (Civic Good)

Civic participation means local residents are actively involved in the improvement of the community as a whole through increased volunteerism and participation in democratic processes. For example, this could include participation in neighborhood groups, actions organized by those groups, volunteer activities that served children, youth, or the elderly of the community, voter registration, etc. When leadership develops from within the community to serve the common good, a society emerges that can no longer be controlled by self-serving political groups.

Improved Accessibility to Life-Enhancing Education (Lifelong Learning)

While a few urban poor communities offer some educational opportunities, even the best opportunities tend to use an approach that delivers information, rather than engaging learners in ways that help them actually improve their lives. A transforming community offers people affordable educational services that respect the dignity of the learners and increase their ability to reflect on their lives, take action, and improve their career opportunities.

Expanded Opportunities to Achieve Economic Sufficiency (Wealth at the Bottom)

Economic sufficiency in an urban poor community means that more and more people are integrated into the mainstream economy in the city and have the opportunity to provide a living for their families. Rather than sustaining themselves “under the radar,” in the informal economy, the urban poor must have access to the resources (capital, training, materials, etc.) of the wider marketplace. This means not only more jobs, but more bridges to middle and upper class that create opportunities for income growth and greater productivity.

Increased Spiritual and Psychological Health and Freedom from Destructive Patterns (Breakthrough to Freedom)

A transforming community supports those who seek freedom from addictions, the occult, and other destructive patterns while they develop healthy, sustainable lifestyles and relationships. We can apply some existing models of effective programs, but it will take fasting and prayer to help create the spiritual environment where those seeking change have a strong enough desire to commit to their lives to it.

Increased Family Health and Well-Being (Whole Families)

A transforming community helps families free themselves from domestic violence, sexual abuse, divorce, teen pregnancy, and other destructive patterns. Urban poor families are going through a major paradigm shift from traditional values developed over centuries in their villages to modern urban lifestyles embraced by their children. This produces relational breakdowns that most families do not survive. Through support/recovery groups of every kind, family social services, and youth development, families will have an opportunity to adapt to the changing world around them.

Improved Environmental and Community Health (Health for All)

While taking the health of the individual and family seriously, a transforming community also works together to address the physical well-being of the community. Disease prevention, education and direct services that help residents reduce the spread of preventable diseases are crucial parts of an urban poor community that wants to improve the quality of life for its residents. Addressing the environmental degradation in an urban poor community is the partner of public health. Creating clean neighborhoods, open spaces, and healthy environments outside the home are essential elements of a sustainable community.

Presence of political, economic, and legal systems that work for the poor (Systems that Work)

Most systems that govern an urban poor community are based on power that serves a few. A transforming community develops systems that serve those who cannot speak for themselves. Transformed political systems seek to include those who do not already have a voice. Transformed economic markets create opportunities for the poor entrepreneur who needs capital, materials, and good counsel. Transformed legal systems bring justice to those who cannot find it.



Examples of Programs/Approaches for the 8 Signs of Transforming Communities

Reproducing, Transformational Communities of Jesus followers (Jesus Communities)

Evangelism
Discipleship
Leadership development
Multiplying churches

Increased Civic Participation for the Common Good (Civic Good)

Education of government systems & civil rights
Community organizing
Creation of Community Based Organizations
Voter registration, voter education
Anti-corruption education
Increasing volunteerism and studying best practices of volunteerism
Neighborhood watch groups, parental supervision of groups of kids
Community centers
Other-focused & servant leadership teaching
Elder care groups
Community Council

Improved Accessibility to Life-Enhancing Education (Lifelong Learning)

Vocational classes
Computer training
Tutoring
ESL
Kids Ministries – values and leadership education
Youth Ministries – values and leadership education
Scholarships
Referrals to ongoing training
Aiding people to access the system
Hosting adult education
Literacy
Teaching school teachers
Book rooms/Mobile libraries/Educational Game room
Community Business and Education Centers
Accessibility to e-governance

Expanded Opportunities to Achieve Economic Sufficiency (Wealth at the Bottom)

Micro-credit programs
Vocational training
Savings groups & savings coops
Small business training and development
Social enterprise
Personal financial management
Accessing and networking with proven business experts
Business ethics
Increasing industrial growth (ideally inside slums)
Placement/training agencies
Food (or other) Cooperatives

Increased Spiritual and Psychological Health and Freedom from Destructive Patterns (Breakthrough to Freedom)

Fasting and prayer
Inner healing ministry
Intensive retreats
Community, live-in programs
Accountability (12 step groups)
Referrals
Psycho-social education (tools to deal with pain and trauma using minimal resources)
Community organizing to eliminate problem sources
Deliverance ministry
Teaching on destructiveness of activities and access to freedom

Improved Environmental and Community Health (Health for All)

Planting trees
Health & Environmental Education
Public health (training) program
Nutrition education
Models of trash removal (for-profit, community based, etc.)
Recycling/composting
Solar energy solutions (LED lighting)
Rooftop or urban gardening (for-profit, community based, etc.)

Clean water projects & rain water harvesting, possibly for-profit

Street Theater Education

Green spaces & community parks

Accessibility to affordable, quality health care

Sports and recreation

Dog & pest removal

HIV/AIDS education

Sex education

Improving health care regulations

Providing health research results to the government or other organizations

Starting pharmacies or clinics (vaccinations, dental)

Short-term medical teams accompanying an ongoing program

Special Needs Programs or referrals to special needs programs

Increased Family Health and Well-Being (Whole Families)

Indicator: reduction in domestic violence, sexual abuse, divorce rate, teen pregnancy and an increase in:

Marriage Encounter Retreats

Support groups

Parenting classes

Counseling

Domestic violence reduction

Encouragement toward abstinence, research teen pregnancy reduction best practices

Development of children's and youth ministries

Anti/Fair Child Labor

Presence of political, economic, and legal systems that work for the poor (Systems that Work)

Improving public education

Housing projects, available and affordable housing

Land rights

Anti-corruption measures

Improving police systems

Influencing municipal development plans and holding people accountable

Better banking systems & access to capital

Transparency and accountability mechanisms (government, organizations...)

Broad-based organizing (organizing institutions) and coalition/network building

Public servant schools

Advocacy

Anti-human trafficking

Improving basic services and infrastructure (brick and mortar)

Child labor

Illegal/Undocumented immigration & discrimination issues

Racism & Reconciliation

Improving health systems

Anti-drug trafficking

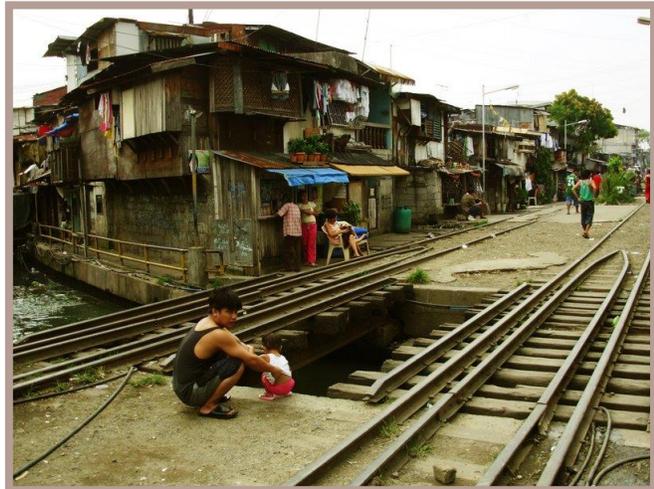


STRATEGY

Our strategy is a roadmap that helps us accomplish our mission.

It gives us a tool to measure the impact of our work.

We learn by experience. As we accumulate more experience and God speaks into the ministry, we change our strategy to fit the new situation.



It is more accurate to speak of our 'strategies.' We minister in many different contexts and cultures around the world that no single approach could work in every situation.

Still, our teams do share some important strategic elements in common no matter where they serve. Here's a look at a few of them that might help you better understand what we do.

Learning Language and Culture Among Our Neighbors

We believe the most effective way to successfully enter and bond with an urban poor community is to live directly among the people. This approach encourages our missionaries into a 'learner' posture, puts locals into an honored 'teacher' posture, and helps new workers learn appropriate language, idiom, culture and customs more quickly. It also builds trust and gives our missionaries a much better feel for the challenges and opportunities in a particular urban poor community. While language and culture learning can be supplemented by academic approaches, there is no substitute for learning directly from our new neighbors.

Team Modeling and Creative Synergy

There are many reasons we emphasize working in teams, but none more important than the opportunity those teams have to demonstrate authentic Christian community to their neighbors. In addition, we seek to build teams with a variety of gifts and skills. That *creative synergy* of gifts and skills can be more effective than any individual worker, no matter how gifted or experienced.

Specific Community Focus

We work in neighborhoods in a definable geographic area. This approach gives us boundaries for our work that allows us to go deeply into people's lives and into the neighborhood. We choose new cities and specific neighborhoods based on specific direction from God, on the availability of leadership with sufficient gifts and skills and a sense of call, and on an extensive

list of criteria that help us discern whether we have something useful to offer a particular city and urban poor community.

Relational Evangelism and Discipleship

We're fully committed to a relational model of evangelism and discipleship. Our missionaries spend a great deal of their time building strong relationships with their neighbors and carrying out evangelism and discipleship based on those personal relationships.

Church Planting

We concentrate on creating small house and cell churches based on friendship and family networks. These smaller congregations fit the cultural realities of urban poor communities well and offer an excellent learning environment for new urban poor Christian leaders.

Community Organizing

The foundation of our community development work is *community organizing*.

We use a community organizing model that focuses on identifying key leaders and potential leaders in an urban poor community, gathering them together to begin identifying felt needs in their community, training and equipping them to take action to meet those needs, and then following through over the long haul with a consistent process of action and reflection. That process allows our friends to create increasingly more effective ways to solve the practical challenges they face.

Neighbors gain confidence and skills to change things for the better. They come to realize that they are not weak and helpless but that they have the power to produce change. That's what empowerment is all about.

Advocacy

Some systemic change will require resources outside of the community. We seek to *advocate* for our poor neighbors among the influential, equip our poor neighbors to effectively advocate for themselves, and find practical ways for people in influential local communities such as government and business to practically serve our poor neighbors.

Creative, Practical and Sustainable Approaches to Transformation

As neighbors and SP missionaries identify key challenges facing their specific community, we encourage the creation of creative and practical approaches to meet those challenges. Since every urban poor community is different those approaches may vary a great deal between communities. One community may start a computer training center. Another may set up a micro-credit organization. Another may start a health clinic. Over time urban poor communities

may create a wide variety of complementary approaches. We're there to encourage sustainable initiatives that make sense in the local context.

As a part of this effort, we also build bridges with people of good will outside the local context in order to direct useful and sustainable resources for transformation toward our poor neighbors. Businesspeople, social entrepreneurs and development workers—among others—can make a major positive impact by sharing their skills and know-how with our neighbors.

Servant Partners Sites, Ministry Partner I Sites, Ministry Partner II Sites or Indigenous Partner Sites

All of our staff serve in one of the four following types of sites.

Servant Partners Site

Sites in the initial stages of development (7-10 years). These sites are:

- Bangkok, Thailand
- Western India
- Manila, Philippines
- North Africa
- Johannesburg, South Africa
- Managua, Nicaragua
- Lincoln Heights and East Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.
- San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.
- San Jose, California, U.S.A.
- Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Ministry Partner I Sites

More developed Servant Partners sites that are beginning to move toward organizational independence. These sites are:

- Mexico City, Mexico

Ministry Partner II Sites

Servant Partners sites that are organizationally independent, but seek to continue in partnership toward common goals. These sites are:

- Pomona, California, U.S.A.
- South Central Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.

Indigenous Partner Sites

Already established local ministries which Servant Partners comes alongside. These sites are:

- India
- Kampala, Uganda

Domestic and International Internships

Originally launched in 1995, Servant Partners Internships equip emerging leaders to minister alongside the urban poor. Interns live, learn, and pursue God together in order to discern a call to urban poor ministry.

We offer internships in various forms: short-term, international, and 2 year domestic. Short term internships are currently offered in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, CA, and range from one day to a few weeks. They are meant to engage the church at large in learning about God's work in urban poor communities and to build ministry networks. International internships can vary from 6 months to 2 years and can look significantly different from site to site. We plan to send international interns to France, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Philippines, Thailand, Canada, and India. Two year domestic internships have a shared curriculum with some local nuances and have been run recently in Los Angeles, Lincoln Heights, Oakland, Pomona, and San Jose. These interns kick off their internship with a 3-week international slum retreat to help with discerning their long-term call.

We accept applicants who are serious about urban poor ministry, open to planting churches, and open to working internationally. Interns live communally, work at full or part-time jobs, engage in ministry in their communities, and do readings and study scripture. We invite many interns to consider joining Servant Partners staff as a part of their discernment process and pray many of them will. For those interns who are not called to full-time work with Servant Partners, our hope is that they will influence the church to live out God's heart for the urban poor, partnering with SP in its mission.



STATEMENT OF FAITH

We receive the Bible in its entirety, and the Bible alone, as the word of God written, inspired of God and therefore the infallible rule of faith and practice. In view of contemporary theological discussion, we explicitly affirm our belief in Biblical doctrines as they are stated in the historical confessions of the church. We also affirm the Lausanne Covenant (printed below).

1. The Purpose of God

We affirm our belief in the one-eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who governs all things according to the purpose of his will. He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name.

2. The Authority and Power of the Bible

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God

3. The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ

We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognize that everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and people. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men and women are perishing because of sin, but God loves everyone, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as "the Savior of the world" is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Savior and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted

above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord.

4. The Nature of Evangelism

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.

5. Christian Social Responsibility

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.

6. The Church and Evangelism

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and

is his appointed means of spreading the gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology.

7. Cooperation in Evangelism

We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness.

8. Churches in Evangelistic Partnership

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the world. A reevaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's Church will be more clearly exhibited.

9. The Urgency of the Evangelistic Task

More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of all humanity, have yet to be evangelized. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole Church. There is now, however, in many parts of the world an unprecedented receptivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and to receive the good news. We cannot hope to attain this goal without sacrifice. All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.

10. Evangelism and Culture

The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God.

11. Spiritual Conflict

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the Church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put people in the place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel.

12. Freedom and Persecution

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable.

13. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth and Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the Church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love and power. We therefore call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit

of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice.

14. The Return of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to consummate his salvation and his judgment. This promise of his coming is a further spur to our evangelism, for we remember his words that the gospel must first be preached to all nations. We believe that the interim period between Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the mission of the people of God, who have no liberty to stop before the end. We also remember his warning that false Christs and false prophets will arise as precursors of the final Antichrist. We therefore reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that people can ever build a utopia on earth. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ and of people in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives.