

CFSF Presentation: “Christian Community Development”
By Steven Hennes
February 13, 2004

A launching point for talking about CCD:

- Anonymous Chinese poem

“Go to the people
Live among them
Learn from them
Love them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have:
But of the best leaders
When their task is accomplished
Their work is done
The people all remark
‘We have done it ourselves.’”

A definition of CCD:

- Wholistic ministry that seeks to meet physical, spiritual, emotional and social needs in the name of Christ
 - “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, and I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” (Matthew 25:35)
 - Helping people made in the image of God reach their full potential (Genesis 1:26)
 - Combating problems such as illiteracy, poor housing, lack of access to health care, and generational poverty
 - The goal of ministry should go beyond merely persuading people to become Christians
- A philosophy of ministry that follows a pattern of development based on Biblical understanding and imagination.
 - “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10)
 - Incarnational theology – neighbor’s needs become one’s own, consciousness and collective action can lead to community transformation
 - Key questions: If the Kingdom of God as described in God’s Word came to my house, my workplace, my school, my neighborhood, and my community, what would it look like? What would it consist of? What would people do? How would they be in relationship to each other?

Some principles of CCD:

- Practicing the Three Rs:
 - Relocation - “go to the people, live among them,” Jesus relocated (John 1:14), he came to earth to live with us, a “downwardly mobile” lifestyle decision – the truth is often packed in paradoxes
 - Reconciliation - “learn from them, love them,” bridging race and class, living in truth and forgiveness, seeking and experiencing redemption together
 - Redistribution - “start with what they know, build on what they have,” giving power back to the people to improve their lives and the well-being of their community
- Meeting felt needs - “start with what they know”
 - Jesus feeding the 5,000, ministering to people at their point of greatest need
 - Jesus and the woman at the well, addressed her on her own terms, used the “thirst” for water as a means for introducing Himself as the “living water,” (John 4)
 - Old adage - give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime.
- Developing indigenous leaders - “build on what they have”
 - Jesus was a developer of leaders, he selected them (Matthew 4:18-22)
 - He taught them, (Matthew 5-7)
 - He singled out a select few to share special experiences: Peter, James, and John
 - He commissioned them to keep doing what he had done (Matthew 28)

- Equalizing access to opportunity
 - A man can know how to fish, but if he doesn't have access to the pond, he still goes hungry
 - Redistributing power – teaching literacy, life skills, developing safe affordable housing, promoting neighborhood safety, developing job skills, supporting entrepreneurs
- Empowerment of people, community self-sufficiency – “We have done it ourselves,” nurturing local leaders, local businesses, and civic organizations for the future

A Biblical account of CCD:

- Story of Nehemiah - rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem project, a kind of blueprint for CCD

Some modern stories of CCD:

- The Preacher and the Klansman, John Perkins
 - “Granddaddy” of the Christian community development movement
 - New Hebron, Mississippi, story of how he and Tommy Tarrants learned to hate early in life
 - Tarrants – White Knights of KKK, Imperial Wizard arrested for possessing submachine gun after attempted bombing of Jewish leader’s home, labeled “The Most Dangerous Man in Mississippi,” later shot when fleeing from police, came to Christ in prison
 - Perkins – civil rights activist, overlap with Mississippi Bus Boycotts in 1968, beaten and imprisoned, became a follower of Jesus, later started children’s evangelism program
 - Move to Pasadena, Calif., founded Harambee Family Christian Center, eradicating the neighborhood of crack dealers, twice office firebombed, ultimately successful
 - Returned to Mendenhall, Miss. - pastor, teacher, author, chair emeritus of CCDA
- Real Hope in Chicago, Wayne Gordon
 - The “Lawndale Miracle”
 - City of Chicago - 77 communities, 7, 000 vacant lots, 1,000 are in Lawndale
 - Wheaton College graduate and his wife moved into Lawndale, started coaching track at local high school
 - Started Bible studies with athletes in their apartment, set up weight room in vacant business downstairs
 - Break-ins and thefts, God saying, “When it rains in Lawndale, it’s going to rain on you too,” the need to repent of a superior attitude
 - Convictions guiding work: a community’s greatest asset is its people, people display moral integrity and personal sacrifice, answers exist right here in the neighborhood, the key to unlocking answers is listening
 - Formation of a church - a result of listening, proposed by youth in Bible study groups, led to inviting several other couples to join them as only other adults
 - First outreach act - listening to the people tell them what were the needs of the neighborhood
 - Chalkboard list - “Is there anything on this list we can actually do?”
 - The need for a safe place to do laundry - a washer/dryer in the church, pivotal event in history of the church
 - Threefold pattern to ministry: 1) listening to the people, 2) prayer, 3) partnership (Three P’s)
 - List of church jobs people could do in exchange for using the machines - vacuuming, folding, stuffing envelopes, etc.
 - The idea needs to come from the people. We need to pray for God’s help. We need to form partnerships for it to happen.
 - Acquisition of vacant lots and buildings, completion of gymnasium, health center
 - Differences between the suburbs and the inner city, guilt vs. hopelessness. If the Christ of the suburbs is the Christ of forgiveness, the Christ of the city is the Christ of hope.
 - Start of CCDA - two hundred people met in Lawndale in 1989 to discuss forming an association or fellowship network, has grown from 37 founding members to over 5,000 members, 500 churches and ministries, over 100 cities and 35 states
 - CCDA brochure: “More and more Christians are discovering the simple truth that people empowered by God are the most effective solution for the spiritual and economic development of the poor.”

- My own story (just beginning)
 - Moved to Mizzou, graduate studies in rural sociology (community development)
 - Working with Grace Covenant youth group, church property purchase at Garth & Sexton, prayer, vision, city rezoning decision
 - Met and married Kerri, wife and lifetime partner in ministry
 - Answered call to serve in the city, prayed for a place to establish a “house of peace” in the Ridgeway neighborhood (Luke 10:5-7), led to 205 E. Sexton Rd., followed move of Pastor Art Dyer and family and other church members
 - Groundbreaking and opening of The Intersection center at 7 E. Sexton Rd.
 - Formation of Covenant CDC, plans for discount grocery store
 - Oral history project and other church outreach ideas

Ways you can support CCD:

- Find out more: www.cdda.org (next conference: Oct. 27-30, 2004, Atlanta)
- Pray for neighborhoods, and individuals and families working in CCD ministries
- Give financially to CCD organizations
- Volunteer for urban ministry service projects
- Consider your own church’s outreach (partner with a CCD ministry on a project)