

What is Christian Community Development?

Kingdom Community Builders is modeled after ***Christian Community Development (CCD)***. If Community Development is a new concept for you, this article will explain in brief detail eight key components of community development. Let me borrow the mission and vision statement from the Christian Community Development Association as well as the eight components. This material comes from the **Making Neighbors Whole: A Handbook for Christian Community Development** written by Wayne Gordon and John M. Perkins.

CCD Mission: To inspire, train, and connect Christians who seek to bear witness to the Kingdom of God by reclaiming and restoring under-resourced communities.

CCD Vision: Wholistically restored communities with Christians fully engaged in the process of transformation.

CCD desires to bring the Kingdom Of God from theory into practice focusing on the poor. CCD envisions redeemed people redeeming communities spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally.

There are eight components to CCD that shape what we do and why we do what we do! Each component has some bullet points, and the italicized comments are practical elements that KCB deals with daily.

Relocation: There are three types of relocation.

- ***Relocator:*** A person who moves into a community from the outside who has never lived in the community before.
- ***Returner:*** Someone born and raised in the community but left for a time, and chooses to return.

- **Remainder:** Someone born and raised in the community and decidedly stayed to be a part of the solution to the problems surrounding them.

Linda and I are relocators. By moving into the community, we come to live incarnationally, among the people. This gives us a chance to live life from the perspective of the community, listen to people and their needs, and creates credibility among the community.

Reconciliation:

- **Reconciling people to God**
- **Dealing with racial reconciliation**, seeing people reconciled to each other, whether that involves relationships within or outside the community
- **Lament.** This is recognizing the brokenness of God's creation. It is entering into someone else's pain. It is acknowledging our own pain.
- **Prayer and Dependence.** Our first desire is to fix things, but we soon discover the problems are so complex and deep that no easy solutions will fix the problem without God.

The race issue is alive and well, and racial reconciliation has hit a wall. Living in a racialized society is a challenge and there is much to learn from my community.

Redistribution:

- We are stewards for kingdom purposes. Am I an individual owner with rights or a steward with responsibility? Does my income in the US justify a lifestyle that ignores the billions of people that live on \$2/day? Does the United States close our

borders to immigrants because it costs us economically or do we steward our resources recognizing that we have a calling as Christians to care for children in danger of gangs, sexual trafficking, and poverty?

- It is the redistributing of economic, social, educational, and relational resources in order to create equal access and opportunity for all humanity.
- When God starts to mess in our pocketbooks, what is a biblical response to tough questions about the resources and access we possess as Americans?

Do the children of Orange Mound deserve the same type of childhood and opportunities I had growing up? Do adults in Orange Mound have the same economic access that I have? Linda and I struggle with what it means to be a steward of what God has given us. We often ask the question how life would be different if we were born in Orange Mound instead of East Memphis.

Church-Based: There are three ways the church can engage in culture.

- **Fortress:** Your building is located in a community. However, the church has little to do with the community life or members. The church sees its purpose to protect the sheep from the fallen world and build a fence so that the outside does not penetrate the inside.
- **Savior:** Your church is located in the community and offer services to/for the community. The church decides the how and what programs/services to offer the community. The "ownership" of the program/services is held by the leadership of the church.
- **Partner:** Your church is an integral part of the community. Existing relationships and programs utilize the gifts and those of the community. Decisions about programs/services to offer are

made with the community. The community shares the ownership of the programs/services.

- We are called to live life in the midst of the people, not being the best church *in* the community, but being the best church *for and with* the community. This requires partnering with the community. An example is Jobs For Life. Less than 2% of churches focus on helping people find jobs to get out of poverty. What if churches collaborated with those in the under resourced community to help people find jobs and restore the dignity of work?

God has called the church to be his ambassadors and reconcilers. The world needs the church, and despite its problems, the church is still God's instrument. What can the suburban church do? How can the inner city church be revitalized? How can the two partner to bring the Kingdom of God on earth in Orange Mound?

Listening to the Community

- Every person is created in the image of God and regardless of where they live; they have a story to tell.
- Avoids paternalism. This is when an outsider comes into the community thinking they are smarter and better and know how to solve the problems of the community.
- Asset Based. Discovering the strengths of the resources and community members. Focusing on the strengths instead of the negatives.
- Allowing the community to decide what the issues are and empowering them to take ownership in developing strategic plans and solutions.

The more I live cross-culturally, the more I learn. The more I learn, the more I realize what I do not understand, and what type of cultural tools I bring that shape my worldview. We want to rush to solutions without

listening to the very people who know the problems and live with them daily. To listen is to share in the joys and pains, and listening is a hard art to develop.

Wholistic:

- It is more than evangelism and discipleship. It requires meeting the spiritual needs and the physical needs. We preach the gospel and we demonstrate the gospel.
- Under resourced areas have complex problems involving economic empowerment, housing improvement, educational enrichment, quality affordable health care, re-parenting parents, and Christian discipleship. Changing generational poverty requires dealing with multiple complex issues.

Just because the domestic problems are overwhelming, the welfare system isn't working, the prison system is broken, government seems too infested with bureaucracy, and we have global issues as well, we as followers of Christ are called to be redemptive agents in a messy complex world. The church is not a fortress, it is a partner, joining God in the redemptive work He is already doing.

Leadership Development

- Filling the leadership void. Most under resourced communities have two influences, the church and gangs, and those in gangs can be found hidden in the churches.
- Raising up Christian leaders from within the community of need.
- Building leaders begins and ends with relationships and takes a long-term approach to investing in future leaders.

Everyone agrees that we are missing the leadership of black men and that the responsibility has fallen to women and grandmothers. Developing leaders will take an investment of time and requires mentors.

Where will the mentors come from? Will Christians sacrifice in order to free up time to be used to change a life?

Empowerment:

- Heads, hand, heart. What are the spiritual gifts and talents of those in the community?
- CCD focuses on creating conducive environments in which we—individuals and communities—realize our own capacity and take ownership for the development of our community.
- Avoiding toxic charity. How is what we do building a foundation for the emergence of local leaders? How are we creating an environment to empower and flourish?

Thinking through the difference between a hands up and a hand out is one of the hardest things to do. The government and church are equally responsible for the failure of empowerment. We must work together for long-term effective change. We must put on our thinking cap of moving from providing relief of immediate needs to paving the way to sustainable solutions.

Relationships: *I add a ninth component because you must build trust through relationships. That is why in KCB I spend time meeting personally with non-profit leaders, government, community residents, and church pastors. That is why I come as a servant leader, helping to serve existing programs and activities in any way. A majority of my time is spent building a foundation of relationships. Programs develop after relationships are born and nurtured. I can have great intentions, but without trusting me, understanding my motives, discerning any hidden agendas, people in the community will never accept me nor allow me to join them in transformation.*