

Servants Vancouver

an introduction to our community

"In years to come, we are going to need many small communities which will welcome lost and lonely people, offering them a new form of family and a sense of belonging. In the past, Christians who wanted to follow Jesus opened hospitals and schools. Now that there are so many of these, Christians must commit themselves to the new communities of welcome..."

[Jean Vanier]

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THE VISION

The issues facing the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver are well known¹. Fuelled by cheap, potent and available heroin and cocaine, including crack cocaine, and - increasingly - crystal methamphetamine, the Downtown Eastside's drug scene has exploded over the past decade. Drug dealing now takes place in full public view - as do the drug overdoses. Vancouver averages about 150 illicit drug overdose deaths per year. Most of these are in Downtown Eastside.

In addition, the Downtown Eastside is the third most densely populated place in North America. In 1999, the City Council declared homelessness a national disaster. It is estimated that more than 1200 people are homeless on the streets of Downtown Eastside on any given night. First Nations people are disproportionately represented and it is estimated that at least two-thirds of those on the streets suffer severe addictions to drugs and/or alcohol. Mental illness further compounds the issues of homelessness and drug addiction and creates a complex web of pain, sadness and despair.

Servants Vancouver is a Western expression of the Servants vision to see the urban poor and their communities transformed by Christ. Servants does not come to the Downtown Eastside as yet another charity, another soup kitchen, shelter or service provider. We come as an intentional community, a family made up of singles, married couples and children. We are a community called to practice radical hospitality amongst those who are not normally the recipients of hospitality. Our approach is to simply offer a space where others can experience Christian community, love and healing in our midst. This is what we dream of:

- playing a part in seeing God's Kingdom come amongst our neighbours in the Downtown Eastside, Vancouver. See Appendix 1 for a description of this abandoned place.
- speaking up on behalf of the 2/3 of the world's poor who live in Asia. Advocacy on behalf of Asia's urban poor is an important aspect of our calling, and what better place to do so than in a city where at least one in four trace their family to that continent. We would love to contribute an international vision of God's heart for the urban poor to the local church and Christians in Vancouver and beyond.
- creating a hub for Servants ministry in and from North America, grounded in a prophetic lifestyle and grassroots work in the inner city, but with a global vision, serving and mobilizing those who want to serve the poor anywhere in the world. Servants Vancouver will be a place where people from all over Canada and the United States can come and live and learn in preparation for cross-cultural mission in Asia or in other inner city neighbourhoods around the world.

¹ See Appendix 1 for further information and sources

OUR PRIORITIES AND RHYTHMS

People often live fragmented lives. Church, work, family, friends, play and rest may be highly compartmentalized with little cross-over. We may find that we are busy - too busy - and stretched in several different directions. Most people organize their life around several areas:

- Work
- Study
- Family
- Church
- Friendships
- Socializing
- Ministry
- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Home Group

In the Servants Vancouver community we commit ourselves to simplifying and consolidating our lifestyles in order to be more intentional about our calling to build God's Kingdom among the poor. We use the wheel as a metaphor to help explain our 3 main priorities and live a community rhythm that is based around these 3 commitments. (For an example of Jesus using this rhythm see Luke 6:12-19 and read Nouwen's article in Appendix 3)²:

1. **Solitude** (*the hub: time with God*) – [eg. morning and evening common prayers, individual quiet times]
2. **Community** (*the spokes: time with each other*) – [eg. meals, hanging out, chores, meetings, celebrations]
3. **Ministry** (*the rim: time serving others outside our core group*) – [eg. potlucks, hospitality, discipling, volunteering]

In doing so, each of us chooses to cut down on other things or incorporate them into our life together. For example, our work becomes ministry and/or we cut right down on work hours. Hospitality and socialising with other community members and neighbours is prioritized over other outside friendships and family commitments (though these are very important too). We make the core community our primary place of belonging rather than church, clubs or other groups.

SOLITUDE

Solitude with God alone is at the core of our being. And it is only out of this hub that we can move healthily into the other parts of our calling. Solitude must come before community with each other because otherwise we will be seeking to have our deepest needs met by each other rather than by God. And solitude must come before ministry because otherwise we might fall into ministering to others out of our own unmet needs. This is not to say that we closet ourselves away. On the contrary, much of our time and attention is outward-focused. We do not define these 3 commitments narrowly and we recognize that there is a great deal of overlap. For example solitude will include many or all of the following:

- Creating art as an act of worship
- Sabbath-keeping³
- Contemplative Prayer
- Bible Study and reflection on scripture
- Meeting with a Spiritual Director⁴
- Walking prayerfully in nature
- Regular Spiritual retreats

Sing and dance together and be joyous,
But let each one of you be alone.
Even as the strings of a lute are alone
though they quiver with the same music.

Stand together yet not too near together
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
and the oak tree and the cypress
grow not in each other's shadow.

Kahlil Gibran

² The Benedictines also used this model of three: cloister, community and hospitality

³ everyone has a designated Sabbath day each week – you can choose either Saturday or Sunday

⁴ everyone is expected to meet with a Spiritual Director every 4-6 weeks

COMMUNITY

Community is about a real commitment to one another's wellbeing, mutual submission, accountability, vulnerability and going above and beyond our duties. Community includes many of the daily tasks of doing life with others: eating together, cleaning up together, corporate prayer, team meetings, monthly fun events, learning together, playing games and partying together etc.

Community is about simple things like sharing food around the table. In today's society, even family members often eat alone and on the run. To a large extent, we have lost sight of the significance of shared meals. So, unless we intentionally break patterns, we usually eat with people who are similar to ourselves. Our community is committed to eating together on a daily basis. By opening our home and our meal table to our friends and neighbours in the Downtown Eastside we have seen that the intimacy of a shared meal can forge relationships which cross social boundaries.



Our community is currently made up of several singles and three families with six children (all under 8 years old). Over the coming months and years, others will be prayerfully invited to join us from a variety of life stages. We share a common commitment to nurturing and caring for the children in our community and inviting others to experience family in our midst. We have seen homeless friends begin to experience healing while interacting with our children, who treat them as normal people. Our homeless and addicted friends also find dignity in helping with the care of children, in reading them books and playing.

MINISTRY

Ministry should not be defined too narrowly. Ministry is not a tidy compartment of our life. It is our way of life. We place a lot of emphasis on relational ministry and radical hospitality. So, welcoming neighbours into our home and sitting around talking with them over cups of coffee is as important as volunteering in a local drop-in centre or serving in a soup kitchen. We want to free up some of our time (or be flexible enough) to be open to the gift of interruptions. In the early months we expect each person to volunteer at another ministry at least three afternoons or mornings a week somewhere in the Downtown Eastside, in order to build relationships. Over time that volunteering may turn into discipling or building relationships with a handful of people.

Radical hospitality is the place where community meets servanthood, and respect meets care. Responding to the needs of people without stripping them of their dignity has long been a concern amongst those working with the poor. Opening our homes and lives to others in radical hospitality is a way of doing this, whereby the lines between rich and poor, us and them, server and beneficiary are blurred. We invite those we meet on the streets to participate in our lives and relax in our home, an oasis of peace away from the chaos of the streets. While this is a daily practice, we have also established a weekly community potluck, where those who have much bring a lot and those who have little bring what they can. We follow the potluck with our Creative World Justice meetings (action, worship, learning on behalf of the world's poor).

Some of us work in the Servants Canada Office: supporting overseas workers, training, or communicating the vision of Servants at a regional or international level. This is ministry too. It contributes to our ultimate vision to see the urban poor and their communities transformed by Christ. However, each of us commits to be grounded in some form of relational ministry locally as well.

A good rule of thumb is that each person is involved in one or two main areas of outwardly focused ministry which will take around 30 hours each week which may include one or more of the following examples (all these are things some of us do):

- Hanging out with DTES friends
- Servants Office work
- Caring for children (discipleship)
- Local/International Advocacy
- Prayer walking the DTES
- Hanging out at Drop-in Centres
- Networking
- Community Dinners
- Community gardening
- Mentoring others (eg. interns)
- Pottery Studio
- Homeless soccer
- Night Vision
- Volunteering at Carnegie

SERVANTS 5 PRINCIPLES

Wherever Servants communities are formed, we commit ourselves to practising the following five biblical principles:

1. **Incarnation:** We intentionally live with the urban poor, learning from them, building genuine relationships, participating in their lives and struggles, learning their language and their culture, and working out how Jesus' love can best be shown in their context.
2. **Community:** As well as a commitment to the communities we move into, we have a passion to work together in supportive teams (intentional Christian communities) that model the love, care and community that Jesus spoke of. We work with people, not just for them.
3. **Holism:** We want to see the good news of Jesus proclaimed in word, deed and power. We have a God who is working to renew all things and to restore wholeness of life to individuals and communities, rich and poor alike. We work for justice, proclaim God's grace, and lift all things to Him in prayer.
4. **Servanthood:** We follow Jesus who came in humility 'not to be served but to serve', the path to true leadership. We empower the poor by placing control in their hands and not overpowering them with outside resources or expertise. With courage, we embrace sacrifice and suffering, share faithfully in the life of Jesus and the poor.
5. **Simple Lifestyle:** We commit ourselves to lifestyles of inner and outward simplicity, in order to be free to love and serve God and the poor. Setting aside our 'right' to affluence while there are still those who live in abject poverty, we desire to be a relevant yet prophetic voice in a world preoccupied with self.

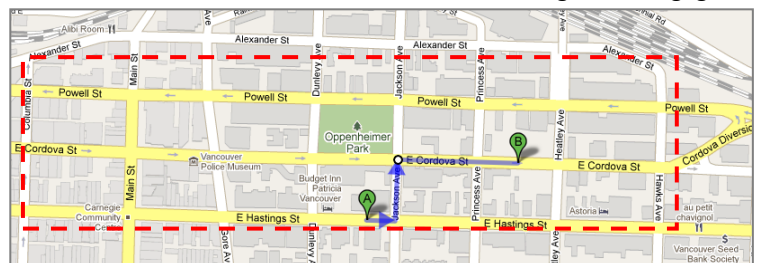
Here is a description of some of our thinking so far on what these Biblical principles look like in the Downtown Eastside context.

INCARNATION

The Servants Vancouver community was established and first moved into East Vancouver in 2006, then the Downtown Eastside (DTES) in April 2007, an area with drug and homelessness problems, as well as a large Asian population in parts. The DTES area officially covers several suburbs but the most notorious place, or "ground zero", is the corner of Main and Hastings Streets, the steps of the Carnegie Hall, where drug dealing takes place day and night. Oppenheimer Park is another place where drug use and homelessness are concentrated. The issues are not limited to these two places - all along East Hastings St and increasingly towards Main St, there are people living on the street and facing difficulties. Next to the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown has a number of Asian shops/restaurants and Strathcona is the oldest residential neighbourhood in Vancouver. It has always been a working class community and is home to many cultural groups. It is the only neighbourhood where English is not the most commonly spoken language, with 61% of residents speaking Chinese as their mother tongue, followed by English at 24%⁵. It is a mixture of wealthy and poor, and gentrification is taking place – currently 59% live in low-income households and 85% are renters⁶.

Our greatest challenge over the first 2 years was to secure permanent housing in the Downtown Eastside, and we moved every two or three months. This battle gave us first-hand insight into the housing problem in Vancouver and some of us have become involved in housing activism with the Citywide Housing Coalition and Streams of Justice. In 2007 two of us spent 7 days and nights living on the streets as homeless men, seeking to understand a little bit more about what it is like to sleep outside in the Downtown Eastside (see Appendix 2 for a write-up on this experience). We encourage others who feel called to learn in this way, to talk to us about doing a similar "street retreat".

In late 2008, we finally found more permanent housing at 430 East Hastings St [A], two blocks from Main and Hastings. We lived together in two apartments with a total of four bedrooms. In late 2010, some members of the team were able to get a mortgage to purchase a property with two houses at 646 East Cordova St. [B] So, currently we have two hubs (one on Hastings and one on Cordova). The map shows the location of these two households as well as the area we seek to live within (red).

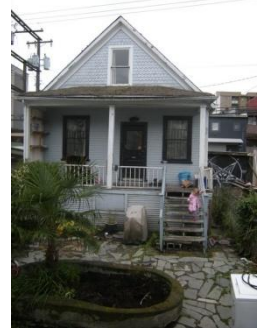


⁵ Vancouver Public Library, Strathcona Branch

⁶ 2001 Census Data

COMMUNITY

Unlike Asian slums where it would be unwise for a group of expats to live together, the Vancouver community and interns are able to intentionally live close to each other or even in the same house (most Canadian houses have been sectioned off into two or three self-contained units - which works very well for a mixture of privacy and community). We have developed a strong ethos of intentional community, drawing on our experiences in Asia, where we learned about community from our neighbours in the slums, the experiences and writings of the new monasticism movement in North America as well as similar communities around the world. As previously described, we use the metaphor of spokes of a wheel to help us think about our commitment to building community with each other. More information about how we do community follows in other sections.



WHOLISM

The rim of the wheel is literally and figuratively where the rubber hits the road. This is symbolic of our holistic ministry amongst the people at the bottom of the heap in our surrounding community, it is the relationships we build with our neighbours and the ministries we help with at local churches or agencies or establish ourselves. This ministry can only come out of our core relationship with God and each other in community. Early on, our “Man of Peace” (see Luke 10) in Vancouver has been Grandview Calvary Baptist church, which is committed to many of the same principles as Servants. Initially we volunteered with their ministries in order to learn from their experience and build relationships, as well as serve the local church and community. We are also involved with other groups in the neighbourhood such as 614 and the UGM Drop in center.

SERVANTHOOD

A large number of organizations and service providers, as well as churches are already attempting to meet the basic needs of the people in the Downtown Eastside, with mixed success. We don't want to duplicate what they are doing. What we do bring that is unique is an incarnational and highly relational approach. We try to let our ministry flow out of our relationships rather than arriving with a fixed project or plan. So the first step has been simply to move in and make friends with our neighbours and those on the streets around our home. As we have found our feet, God has been birthing new ministries through us such as the community garden we started in an unused parking lot on our block, and the “prehab” program for folks trying to enter drug treatment.

SIMPLICITY

We commit ourselves to lifestyles of inner and outward simplicity so the resources we need are kept to a minimum. There are three possible ways community members will support themselves financially. Firstly, some might have enough money saved for the period of time that they plan to join us. Others will raise support from church and friends. This allows supporters to participate in our journey and contribute to the work of God's Kingdom. It also frees us up to be full time missionaries. Thirdly, if these options are not possible we are open to exploring with people the possibility of working or studying up to 20 hours a week, after their first year on the team. We don't pool all our money, but there is a Servants tithe which all members pay⁷ and a partial common purse called the Team Fund. The amount each contributes to the Team Fund is decided together and covers team expenses such as rent, food, utilities, pastoral care etc. We seek to encourage and be accountable to one another in how we use our financial resources by bringing important purchases (not gifts to others) to the team for input and discernment together, as well as other significant items such as technology, to determine together whether they are necessary.

⁷ 3% to the sending office, 1% to struggling workers in other parts of the world, and 6% to the Vision Fund for advocacy & advancing the Servants vision: total 10%

SERVANTS 5 COMMUNITY VALUES

1. **Grace:** All that we do and are is rooted and sustained by God's lavish, unearned love, favour and forgiveness towards us. This profound grace delivers us from unhealthy striving, competition and condemnation of ourselves or judgment of others.
2. **Celebration:** Directing our celebrations to God in worship, we look for excuses to throw parties, consciously marking every milestone and achievement – no matter how small! We want to be known as people of generosity, who refuse to take ourselves seriously.
3. **Beauty:** In our lives, in our homes, in our communities and in our world, we honour God and renew our souls by seeing and creating beauty. In particular, we seek to obey God's call to see and celebrate the beauty inherent in ourselves and in each other.
4. **Creativity:** By allowing our senses, our imaginations, our minds and bodies to fulfill their God-given potentials for creativity, we glorify God. We believe it does our souls good (and pleases God) when we create, through writing and storytelling, cooking, poetry, painting and other art forms.
5. **Rest:** God calls us to regular cycles of work and rest – weekly Sabbaths and regular holy-days (holidays). We seek to obey God's command to rest in order to be refreshed, to be still and to deepen our relationship with him and one another.

WHO JOURNEYS WITH US?

We are committed to practicing the radical welcome of Christ. Recognizing that those who want to journey with us have different needs and expectations, we have identified 4 main types of people who we welcome to spend time living and participating in our community life and ministry:

1. **Guests.** Firstly, we practice radical hospitality for guests. Most will spend anything from a couple of days up to 2 weeks living with us. A few, after discerning together, will be invited to stay longer. These may be homeless friends from the street, those considering an internship or simply people interested in knowing more about Servants.
2. **Interns.** A Community Exposure will usually be for 1, 3, 6 or 12 months. Interns participate fully in the life of our community, complete readings and assignments, volunteer at local ministries and meet weekly with a mentor from the team.
3. **Preparers.** Thirdly, we welcome those who are working towards joining another Servants team somewhere in Asia. These Preparers are focussed on gaining the skills and experience needed before they go overseas. They will complete the usual internship formation materials, any remaining Steps to Joining as well as additional activities based on gaps in their experience/skills. We ask preparers to take no more than 3 months to discern which team they wish to join (if they have not discerned already). After that, a preparer will sometimes stay another 3 to 12 months depending on their circumstances.
4. **Core Team Members.** The final group of people are long term core team members. These team members have completed the Steps to Joining, have been with us more than one year, and are committed to participating fully in the life, vision and ministry of the Servants Vancouver community. This includes investing in the lives of our neighbours, guests, interns and helping in the Servants Office.

STEPS TO JOINING US

In Vancouver we use a “come and see” approach, welcoming people who are interested in joining our Western communities (or Asian teams) to spend from 1 to 12 months with us as a time of Community Exposure Internship. If you are interested in applying please contact us for an informal discussion and check out our website (servantsasia.org) for application steps and forms.

At the end of the agreed period of Community Exposure, we will discern together whether God is calling us to journey further by making a commitment of 1 year to each other (Formation Year).

After twelve months, there will be an evaluation and, if agreed upon by the core team, the person/family will be invited to voluntarily commit to staying with the community for a period of three to five years. In committing to the community for 3-5 year the person/family becomes part of the core team. Although interns and those in their first year are invited to contribute their thoughts and opinions, core team members are the decision makers of the community ie vision, mission, rhythms, ministry etc.

LEARNING TOGETHER

Each intern and new team member is given a "mentor" from the Servants Vancouver team. The mentor helps guide the intern through community rhythms and expectations, helps with orientation around the DTES/Vancouver, shares their struggles and joys, journeys spiritually, helps explore giftings, and is an accountability partner to pray with. This mentoring relationship is confidential and anything shared is kept within the mentoring relationship.

In addition, every new community member and most interns undertake a learning and formation process during their first 12 months. The Servants Vancouver Formation Manual lays out, week by week, the entire first year's formation process which is based on the previously discussed metaphor of a wheel, made up of a hub, spokes and rim.

The first theme, the hub (or cloister), represents solitude and in this learning context, our **spiritual formation**. That is, time alone with God in prayer, meditation and study. As a foundation curriculum for this theme we use Richard Foster's classic book *Celebration of Discipline* to look at a different spiritual discipline (one chapter) each month of the year. This book presents one of the most compelling and readable visions of Christian spirituality published in the past few decades. Foster observes that, *“Superficiality is the curse of our age.... The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”* He explains the disciplines people must cultivate in order to achieve spiritual depth. The book is succinct, urgent, and sometimes humorous. We find it immensely helpful for our growth into a deeper relationship with God.

Secondly, the spokes of the wheel represent our **community** with each other in Vancouver and the wider Servants body. In this learning context, it is our formation into an intentional Christian community along the lines of Acts chapter 2. Each member of our community commits to a weekly and monthly rhythm of meeting together, eating together, learning together and serving each other. Each of the 12 months of the formation year we look at a different one of the “12 Marks of New Monasticism”, the growing movement of intentional Christian communities (especially in North America). Our community is not limited to the local Vancouver team, we are also committed to the wider Servants community of teams. So we will also dedicate time in this theme to learning about and praying for the rest of Servants.

Thirdly and finally, our **ministry** or hospitality is represented by the rim of the wheel, literally and figuratively where the rubber hits the road. This is our holistic ministry amongst the poor in our surrounding community and overseas. It is the relationships we build with our neighbours and the ministries we help with. During the Formation Year we learn together about the 5 ministry principles of Servants (incarnation, holism, community or teamwork, simplicity and servanthood) as well as other important ministry principles such as discipleship, radical hospitality, non-violence and community development.

The third week of each month has a slot for a “Special Ministry Focus” this is an individually chosen topic that each person focuses on learning more about throughout the year. It should be decided in advance in conjunction with the rest of the team. It could be a particular language or Asian culture. Other special topics might include children at risk, community development, leadership, church planting etc. These themes are pulled together in weekly activities and readings, culminating in a weekly discussion and learning session. Each month there is one set book to read which we discuss on the last week of the month.

OVERVIEW OF THE FORMATION YEAR

	Spiritual Formation	Community Formation	Ministry Formation		
	from book <i>Celebration of Discipline</i>	from book <i>Community and Growth</i>	Servants ministry principles and values	Special focus	Set book
Month 1	Meditation	One Heart, One Soul, One Spirit	Incarnation	Downtown Eastside	<i>In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts</i> (Gabor Mate)
Month 2	Prayer	Walking Toward the Covenant	Wholism	Addiction	<i>Addiction and Grace</i> (Gerald May) or <i>Breathing Under Water</i> (Richard Rohr)
Month 3	Fasting	Mission	Community	Community & Team Work	<i>12 Marks of New Monasticism</i> (Rutba House)
Month 4	Study	Growth	Servanthood	Radical Hospitality	<i>Making Room</i> (Christine Pohl)
Month 5	Simplicity & Rest	Nourishment	Simplicity	Simplicity & Finances	<i>Freedom of Simplicity</i> (Richard Foster)
Month 6	Solitude	Authority as a Gift		Mental Illness	<i>Souls in the Hands of a Tender God</i> (Craig Rennebohm)
Month 7	Submission	Other Gifts in Community	Rest	First Nations	<i>One Church Many Tribes</i> (Richard Twiss)
Month 8	Service	Welcome	Beauty	Non-violence & Reconciliation	<i>Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way</i> (Walter Wink)
Month 9	Confession & Grace	Meetings	Grace	Evangelism	<i>Living Missions</i> (Scott Bessenecker)
Month 10	Worship & Creativity	Living with Every Day	Creativity	Community Development	<i>Rich Thinking about the World's Poor</i> (Peter Meadows) <i>Cross Cultural Servanthood</i> (Duane Elmer)
Month 11	Guidance			Discipleship	<i>Theirs Is the Kingdom</i> (Robert Lupton)
Month 12	Celebration	Celebration	Celebration	People Movements & Justice	<i>Bury the Chains</i> (Adam Hochschild)

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

Each of us recognizes the frailty and sin found in churches. Some have been hurt. However, we commit ourselves to remaining engaged on a weekly basis with local churches (particularly in the DTES) for the following reasons:

- 1. We dare not bypass the local church.** God's mandate to Christians to love the poor does not exclude or bypass local Christians. In fact, God's plan for building his kingdom in Vancouver probably places Canadian Christians in a central position. Being part of a local church sends a signal to local believers that our life and our ministry here belong to them as well.
- 2. We are committed to accountability to local spiritual leadership.** Basically, we need humbling. The Bible urges us to submit to the authority of spiritual leaders, within the boundaries of God's Word (Heb. 13:17). As Servants, we uphold the principle of servanthood and submission necessitates a commitment and relationship to a local body of believers and to their spiritual leaders.
- 3. We can have an influence.** As outsiders, our humble participation in the local church helps them avoid domestication. In other words, our presence and alternative perspective provides a constant challenge to them and helps avoid syncretism or other forms of cultural infiltration.
- 4. We need fellowship with local Christians.** One of the most important reasons that we go to a local church is to practice love toward our fellow believers in the form of fellowship. Our perspective can become distorted if we lack fellowship with local Christians. It is hard to maintain a right relationship with God unless we also do so with the local family of God (1 John 2:9-10).
- 5. It is a simple act of obedience.** Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." A great part of the purpose of gathering together with local believers is for their benefit, coming together to help motivate and encourage one another. This is a responsibility charged to every Christian.
- 6. We want to partner with the local church in all Servants ministries.** Servants is committed to partnership and submission to the local church, and we cannot do what we do alone.
- 7. Fellowship with other believers combines our spiritual strength in prayer.** The Bible is clear that agreement in prayer with other believers has special favor with God (Matt. 18:19). We need to be praying with other Christians for transformation.
- 8. We are encouraged when we see God working.** For all its faults and frustrations, God still works in the local church. All of us have experienced the encouragement and inspiration of seeing lives transformed through various church ministries.
- 9. The church, as a movement, will be around a lot longer than Servants will.** For 2000 years, every manner of movement and organization has arisen and disbanded but the church, Christ's body, continues. In the days and decades to come, there will come a time when Servants will probably cease to exist but the church will still be around. We know from the words of Jesus that it is the most sustainable community organization in the world today.
- 10. We need to develop the spiritual disciplines of perseverance and faithfulness.** The words of James describe what God wants to do in our lives: *perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature...*



HOW WE BUILD COMMUNITY WITH EACH OTHER

'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one bodythere should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored every part rejoices with it.' (1 Corinthians 12: 12, 25-26)

We recognize that our lives as individuals, couples and families are entwined with our role within the Servants Vancouver community. We want to live in a way that enables us to trust, be honest and be vulnerable with each other. We want to encourage and build up one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11). In order to do this we have developed a community approach to the following areas:

DECISION MAKING

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph 5:21)

Before making commitments, we bring those decisions that involve a high (more than a day) or regular (an hour or more a week) time commitment, or those that interrupt community rhythms, to the community for group discernment in the spirit of mutual submission. This helps us stay accountable about not becoming too overburdened with activity and to maintain the community as the central place of belonging. Other major decisions that we try to bring to each other for discernment include: what church to join, non-gift purchases over \$200, future plans, romantic relationships, housing, holidays, etc. Often these decisions will be made at the Monday morning team meeting (although there will be times when talking through these decisions may take place at alternative times). If there is an agenda item that might require deeper thought by other community members, we ask that it be signaled by email at least four days before the meeting to give others a chance to think and pray about it. If an item comes up during the Monday meeting that has not been signaled in advance, we will sometimes choose to defer the decision until people have had a chance to consider it. If there is disagreement, we may ask someone to discuss the issue with their spiritual director and then bring it back to the community. For major team decisions we usually set aside an evening for listening prayer. If there is still disagreement we may ask the Board (minus team members currently on the Board) for input.

CONFLICT

If a brother or sister sins, go and point out the fault, just between the two of you... (Mt 18:15)

If you have a disagreement with or feel frustrated by someone else's behaviour within the Servants Vancouver community we advise you first to address the person directly without an audience (Matt 18:15). If you are unhappy with the response, seek the advice of your mentor or team leader. Sometimes the situation arises as a result of a misunderstanding, other times it may be due to either or both of you being caught in a sinful mindset or interaction. We believe that 'if someone is caught in a sin, [those] who are spiritual should restore them gently' (Galatians 6:1). Therefore we commit ourselves to accountability and being open to hearing the feedback of others in the team. We recognise that at times it may be necessary for you to seek the advice and insight of mature individuals outside of the Servants Vancouver community e.g. pastors, spiritual directors or accountability friends. We trust each other not to speak badly of team members behind their back in a way that tears anyone down, and as far as possible avoid using names when discussing any conflicts with outside advisors. Whenever discussing a frustration or disagreement the focus should be on how you feel about the situation and what, if any actions you might undertake to move towards the resolution of a situation.

If conflict cannot be resolved with the help of your mentor / team leader, or if the conflict is with your team leader, you can bring the conflict to the team for discernment. If you feel that the conflict cannot be resolved within the team, you can bring it first to the local Servants board, second to the International Leadership Team.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In our commitment to going deeper in community we try to be vulnerable and pray regularly with each other, and at times we share things that we would not want to be widely known. In order to nurture this culture of openness and vulnerability we are careful to respect each other's confidentiality by not speaking about any of these issues shared, either directly or within the hearing of those who are not members of Servants Vancouver.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Each community member is accountable to his / her mentor and will meet with him / her weekly for mentoring. Every six months, there is a review of the past half year. Mentors are accountable to the team leader, who is accountable to his / her co-leader and to the International Leadership Team. Regular feedback from the team and peer-reviews ensure quality leadership.

OUR SCHEDULE

To help us keep track of each other's comings and goings we have a team update notice board that includes chores, cooking schedule, regular and one off commitments for the week. Here are some of the main parts of our schedule:

COMMON PRAYERS

As a community we meet daily (except Sundays) at 9.00am and 9.00pm, Monday to Saturday for common prayers. It is expected that community members will attend when they are home - although we hold this expectation with a lot of grace! The Morning Prayer time is in the office and follows the Anglican lectionary (daily bible readings) and the Anabaptist Prayer Book call to intercession and benediction. Evening prayers usually include a Taize song and a reading from the Psalms which is followed by the Ignatian Examen (a time of silent prayerful reflecting on our day). These common prayer times usually last between 15 and 25 minutes.

MONDAY MORNING MEETING

We meet every Monday morning between 9 am and 12 noon. All community members and interns are expected to attend. Non-attendance may be acceptable in exceptional circumstances e.g. you're away on holiday or a trip, you're attending a court appearance of a friend in the DTES, a very special family occasion, you are in jail....

The meeting is split into two parts:

- **Community Sharing and Listening Prayer:** This time is the opportunity for all of us to take turns to share with each other how we're doing spiritually, emotionally and physically. It's a time to reflect over the previous week and outline our thoughts about the coming week. Prayer requests are made by each team member as they finish their time of sharing. Other team members listen carefully without asking questions or offering solutions



(that's the idea anyway!) The meeting ends with us praying for each other in a listening prayer stance.

- **Community Business Meeting:** This time is to ensure all members are up to speed on events taking place over the next weeks, topics that have been planned for discussion and to evaluate any community activities that have taken place during the previous week. This includes the comings and goings of community members, interns and guests. It is the time when decisions that will have a significant impact on the community are brought forward for group discernment. Community finances and budgets are also discussed. Minutes are taken and sent out by email during the following week.

CHORES

We want our community to be a place that is welcoming and a pleasant place to spend time in. To help us maintain a clean house we have developed a number of chores that need to be carried out at a minimum of once a week. These include cleaning the kitchen and bathroom, vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, dusting, garbage, compost disposal etc. All community members are given chores and are responsible for keeping their own rooms clean. We operate a 'above and beyond' mindset in that if we see something needs to be done then do it. Ending up with some chores being done twice is better than waiting for someone else to clear up the mess.

Until lunchtime community members are responsible for washing up their own dishes and those of any guests. Beyond this, we then expect each person to do the dishes or clean up after a meal once every day, except the cook for that day. Once again this is in the spirit of 'above and beyond'. Clearing the dish draining tray is also a task that regularly needs to be completed throughout the day. This task can easily be done while you're waiting for the kettle to boil!

MEALS

Eating together is an important part of building community. Breakfast and lunches are usually informal, with community members coming in and out of the kitchen during the morning and around midday. We fend for ourselves for these meals and often there are plenty of leftovers in the fridge.

For the evening we aim to eat together around 6pm and there are usually a number of friends from the neighbourhood who join us. Our motto is "Cook too much food, invite too many people". Although sometimes we are unable to all join the meal due to other commitments, we try to plan our diaries so that we are not out too many nights. Community members are allocated an evening meal each week to prepare food, though we all need to pitch in to help when needed.

On Tuesdays we hold our weekly potluck gathering where we welcome friends from the wider city. All community members and interns are expected to be there. Following the potluck meal we have our Creative World Justice meeting where a group of about 20-30 of us meet to learn and worship the God of Justice, as well as plan creative actions to address injustices that God has laid on our hearts.

Our evening meals on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, are times when friends we know from the neighbourhood are invited to join us for fellowship and family. Often we will have up to a dozen or more guests from the streets for dinner and we encourage everyone to pitch in and help with dishes and cleaning up afterwards. It is a great way to get to know people and offer them a peaceful, family-oriented space away from the chaos of the streets. As these relationships grow and develop, we pray that God will work in our friends' lives and we have been encouraged by seeing many small steps towards transformation.

FINANCES



The community has a joint house account that covers rent, utility bills, car co-operative, internet, team fund and food expenses. Servants community members are asked to ensure that their contribution to these expenses is paid into this account by 25th of the preceding month (currently \$500 per month for singles). If you arrive partway through a month then please transfer as soon as possible. When you have transferred your rent, tick off your name in the red community book that has a chart for this purpose.

We sometimes make gifts to individuals from this account. At present Nay has signing authority for cheques. These are always made in consultation with other members of the community which will usually take place at the Monday morning team meeting.

Food and small community expenses are purchased throughout the month by individual members of the team and receipts are placed in the wooden box in the kitchen with the name of the person who made the purchased written on them. At the end of the month these receipts are reimbursed from the team account. We also receive regular food donations from various individuals and organisations.

Vancouver General Expenses (Single)	Monthly
Rent	350 (shared) 550 (not shared)
Food and Sundries	60
Utility Bills (gas, phone, internet, power)	60
Team Purse	30
Total Monthly Board (paid to team account)	500/700
Extras to budget for	
Health Insurance & Medical	100
Miscellaneous (eg. toiletries, snacks)	30
Transport	20
Servants Tithe (10%)	?
Home Country Tax	?
Retirement/Flights/Setup/Insurance	?
Total	700/900++

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

GRANDVIEW CALVARY BAPTIST

During their time in Vancouver, a member of the Servants Board of Elders, Charles Ringma and his wife Rita established a strong link with a local church in East Vancouver, Grandview Calvary Baptist. As a result, a number of Regent students have made Grandview Calvary Baptist their home church. Grandview is a community-based church which reflects the diversity of its neighbourhood with people from many different cultural and life situations. The church seeks to be prophetically connected to the brokenness of the neighbourhood in which it finds itself through a range of community initiatives. Some of us are members of Grandview Calvary Baptist.

UNION GOSPEL MISSION

Union Gospel Mission (UGM) is located on the same block of East Cordova St. and has been a good source of connection in a range of ways. UGM has a very good drug rehab program and we have sent a number of men there, and been asked by UGM to house men before they enter the program. We also spend time getting to know people at the UGM drop in centres. Finally, we “glean” free food donations from UGM once a week as they give away their excess.

REGENT COLLEGE

Regent College is a graduate school of Christian Studies, located on the campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Regent is familiar to many of us in Servants as the place where Charles Ringma (Servants elder) taught as Professor of Missions and Evangelism from 1998 to 2005. Nearly 700 students are enrolled in full and part-time studies at Regent College, (about 40% Canadian, 40% American and the rest from Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America and Africa)⁸. Past faculty members include J. I. Packer, Eugene Peterson, Gordon Fee and Michael Green. The Servants Canada rep, Jennifer Singh, is currently enrolled at Regent College.

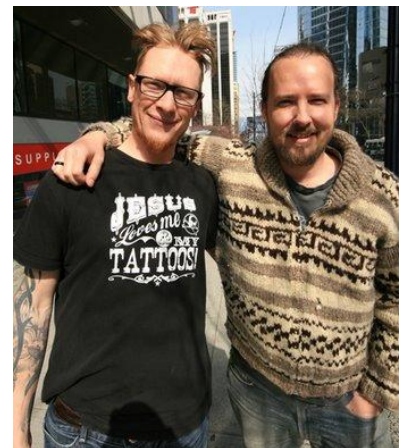
MINISTRIES

PREHAB

Access to addiction treatment programs is a significant problem for our homeless friends in the Downtown Eastside. Difficulties arise due to long waiting lists and in some cases, conditions of entry, such as the need to have several days clean before entry.

We take guys in to live with us in our community house and help them get through that initial tough period of detoxing and waiting to get into a recovery program (we call this “prehab”). During this time we pray and support them 24/7. *Prehab Companions* (volunteers from outside the community) help us carry this load by coming in for 4 hour shifts to hang out and help out.

Over the past year, more than 70 men and a handful of women have completed prehab with us and gone on to drug rehabilitation programs.



⁸ http://www.regent-college.edu/about_regent/index.html

DROP-IN CENTRES

Some of the women in our community regularly go to the DTES Women's Drop In centre. A couple of us have been quite involved with Union Gospel Mission and we have committed to participating in their drop in centre several mornings a week. Usually we just sit and talk with people, getting to know them as friends and neighbours, rather than "servers" or staff. A couple of us play guitar for a worship time that happens at 7:30am there, or share a message from the scriptures. Others in the community have committed to regularly visiting other drop in centres in the neighbourhood. These regular hang outs are places where we can build relationships and invite people into our community for meals and encouragement.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Abandoned lots and litter-strewn pathways, graffiti-marked walls and desolate bus stops. What transforms a dingy, inhospitable area into a dynamic gathering place? How do individuals take back their neighborhood? Neighbourhoods decline when the people who live there lose their connection and no longer feel part of their community. Recapturing that sense of belonging and pride of place can be as simple as planting a community garden or placing some benches in a park.

Many of us believe that struggling communities can be revived, not by vast infusions of cash, not by government, but by the people who live there. Using a technique called "placemaking"-the process of transforming public space- in early 2009, we initiated a community garden in an unused parking lot on our block. Neighbours and local groups quickly got involved and now there is now a daily flow of people hanging out, watering the garden and tending to the plants. The garden has been another good way of building relationships and a number of our contacts there have joined us for meals and become friends.



CREATIVE WORLD JUSTICE

Combining worship, prayer and creativity with justice and activism, we have been meeting on Tuesday nights with folks from the neighbourhood and beyond to plan holy mischief and learn about God's heart for the poor. So far, we have organized 30 days of prayer for Burma, which 1000 people participated in from all over the world, protested land evictions in Cambodia, actions outside Singaporean embassies (we dressed in chains and cleaned the embassies) to protest the treatment of foreign maids in Singapore. Our latest focus is the treatment of lower level cruise ship employees who work in virtual slavery with no days off which we have addressed through our Pirates of Justice flash mobs as well as documentaries and a photo exhibition.



SERVANTS CANADA OFFICE

Some of us are involved in the international leadership, advocacy or administration of the wider Servants body. This overlaps a bit with the training of preparers that we commit to as a community. Our office is located on the same block and is used for a range of activities for Servants. As the office grows there are lots more opportunities for ministry here too: design, advocacy, communications, finance, admin, writing, web stuff etc.

NIGHT VISION (WOMEN'S MINISTRY)

Some of the women on the team spend the time from 9-11pm every Wednesday meeting women where they work and inviting those that are willing back to the Servants Office for some tea, talking and friendship. We are also eager to move forward in different ways to invite women into relationships eg preparing a Woman's only dinner before most of the women go out to work, in hopes that it may be a way of breaking into some of their daily routine. Also we are continuing to encourage each other in our follow-up and outings with women we meet, recognizing that the relationships that have moved to a deeper level have been outside of the Wednesday night time, and yet the Night Vision time has provided a point of contact for these relationships.

POTTERY

A number of us are host pottery in the basement of Grandview Calvary Baptist Church for the Thursday Potters House drop-in. We greet and welcome friends from the neighbourhood facilitating an atmosphere of community, acceptance, welcome, healing, dignity, and creativity. People from many walks of life come together to pot and create with clay.

APPENDIX 1: DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE VANCOUVER

Located on the ocean and bordered by snow-capped mountains to the north, Vancouver is one of the world's most beautiful cities. As Canada's gateway to the Pacific Rim, Vancouver has become increasingly ethnically diverse and Asians now constitute 25% of the population.⁹

The area known as Downtown Eastside is the oldest neighbourhood in Vancouver and the poorest in all of Canada. The Downtown Eastside is an inner city neighbourhood, with disadvantaged and displaced populations, high occurrences of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, and a relatively high crime rate. However, the neighbourhood has a rich and colourful history, diverse culture and a strong fabric of community.

DRUG ADDICTION

Fuelled by cheap, potent and available heroin and cocaine, including crack cocaine, and - increasingly - crystal methamphetamine, the Downtown Eastside's drug scene has exploded over the past decade. Drug dealing now takes place in full public view - as do the drug overdoses. Vancouver averages about 150 illicit drug overdose deaths per year¹⁰. Most of these in Downtown Eastside.

⁹

http://www.bcpwa.org/articles/issue_18_23_asians_in_vancouver.pdf

¹⁰

http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/2001/doc_25996.html

HIV/AIDS

The Downtown Eastside has the highest rate of HIV infection in the Western world, largely attributable to the sharing of infected needles by intravenous drug users¹¹. Hundreds of people have contracted HIV and hepatitis C from injection drug use. In fact, injection drug use is responsible for half of new HIV infections and 80% of newly identified hepatitis C cases¹².

HOMELESSNESS

Downtown Eastside is the third most densely populated place in North America¹³. In 1999, the City Council declared homelessness a national disaster¹⁴. It is estimated that more than 1200 people are homeless on the streets of Downtown Eastside on any given night. First Nations people are disproportionately represented and it is estimated that at least two-thirds of those on the streets suffer severe addictions to drugs and/or alcohol.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Police report that 49% of their calls in the Downtown Eastside are mental health related¹⁵. Since the closure of the Riverview Institution several years ago, hundreds of people with mental illnesses have ended up living on the streets in the Downtown Eastside. Many of them also end up addicted to drugs.

¹¹ <http://www.answers.com/topic/downtown-eastside>

¹² CCENDU, 2000

¹³ after New York and San Francisco (<http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Vancouver>)

¹⁴

<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/990518/a1.htm>

¹⁵ *Lost in Transition: How a Lack of Capacity in the Mental Health System is Failing Vancouver's Mentally Ill and Draining Police Resources* (<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/police/>)

SEX WORKERS

Women involved in sex-work are dramatically evident in the Downtown Eastside, where the majority live in extreme poverty. Many sex workers sell sex in order to meet subsistence needs such as food and shelter. In 2007, Robert Pickton was convicted of the murders of dozens of Downtown Eastside sex workers. He is alleged to have murdered 49 women.

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

The area has a large prevalence of First Nations people: 30 percent of the residents of the Downtown Eastside are indigenous, 10 times higher than the national average¹⁶. The majority of the more than 65 sex workers allegedly murdered or missing from the Downtown Eastside are of Aboriginal ancestry.

¹⁶ <http://www.pivotlegal.org/dtes2.htm>

APPENDIX 2: THOUGHTS FROM THE STREETS - MY 7 DAYS OF HOMELESSNESS

By Craig Greenfield

I am sleeping on the ground. Well, on cardboard really. One of more than 2000 people who are homeless on the streets of Vancouver tonight. The majority of these homeless folks hang around a small inner city area called the Downtown Eastside. It's the ghetto to go to in Vancouver if you are looking to score crack cocaine or hook up with a prostitute... or if you want to learn more about God's heart for the urban poor in Canada's most dysfunctional neighbourhood.

Servants' charism is the incarnational approach, and we are committed as a community to intentionally living in the Downtown Eastside, rather than popping down once a week to give out sandwiches. But what does it mean to be incarnational amongst the homeless, especially when you have a family? Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, "You can't expect a man who is warm to understand a man who is cold" and Jesus, who left his own comfort zone to live and minister amongst us, prayed that we would follow in his footsteps: "as you have sent me into the world so I also send them."

So, a couple of us decided to spend 7 days and 7 nights living and learning as homeless men on the streets of our own neighbourhood, the Downtown Eastside. A week on the streets doesn't make us experts on homelessness. I don't even pretend to know what it's really like to have no safety net and nowhere to turn, for days, months or even years on end. But theologian and activist, Robert McAfee Brown said, "Where you

stand determines what you see" and he's right. This week I want to stand alongside our homeless friends, gain some insight, and hopefully get a glimpse of the streets the way God sees them.

We have no money in our pockets and no wallets, (though I have somehow accumulated 26 cents by the end of the week). We don't have a change of clothes, but I do make my friend Jason bring deodorant. And we have chosen not to stay in shelters because there is a chronic shortage of beds. Instead we are sleeping on the ground or on park benches, huddled in doorways and on sidewalks, wherever we can find some respite. We follow others' lead and use pieces of cardboard retrieved from dumpsters for bedding, insulation from the creeping cold that makes our bones ache.

We eat in soup kitchens – and I do mean we eat soup. Soup, soup, soup – breakfast, lunch and dinner. Nothin' but soup...and bad coffee. Supplemented by stale donuts. No-one ever starves in the Downtown Eastside. Though you might get sick of soup and starch. There is free food at 7:30am, 8:30, 9:30, 11, 12, 1pm, 2, 3:30, 5, and 7pm. You just gotta know where to go, and at some places be willing to sit through a sermon first. (Note to new homeless people: get a list of freebies from Carnegie Hall on the corner of Main and Hastings.)

After the first two nights of shivering on park benches, chased away from almost every good spot by park sprinkler systems and security guards with blinding lights growling, "Time to move along guys," we are almost ready to pack it in. The words of Jesus, "take up your bed and walk" take on a new meaning. It is

desperately hard to sleep and we find ourselves wandering around at 5am waiting for public toilets to open (at 7am). We are like zombies, the living dead.

Thought #1: Have we criminalized homelessness?

One security guard chases us from under a bridge and my new friend Lex asks him where we can legally sleep. He replies with a roll of the eyes and a sarcastic voice, "In a house. Duh!" Lex, a guy about my age with ill-fitting clothes and feet full of blisters from trudging the streets, just shakes his head and turns away. He has nowhere to go and no money but is full of plans and hopes to get back on his feet soon. The next morning I see him again, sound asleep..sitting up. Public toilets, and even portable loos brought in for special events are locked up at night (people no longer need them at night, right?), public spaces are out of bounds for sleeping (even libraries, drop-ins and community centres will kick you out if you snooze there during the day). Busking requires a license. Everywhere we turn we find ourselves breaking the law just to get through the day and carry out normal human activities such as sleeping and going to the toilet.

"Get a job you homeless bum!" – Gladly! If I could just wake up and stop feeling like someone had injected me with horse tranquilizers. I can hardly muster enough brain cells to read my Bible and pray, let alone do anything productive – and this is after just a few days on the streets!

Thought #2: No-one chooses to be on the streets, and its really hard to get out of the Downtown Eastside vortex once you're here.

Everyone we speak to, like Emily – about 16 and pregnant, either has hopes of trying to get some kind of housing, or has pretty much given up after a series of failures. The housing market in Vancouver is real tight, and the amount you get for accommodation on welfare (\$375 a month) will only stretch to a tiny cell in a Downtown Eastside rooming house slum – no kitchen, shared bathroom, (cockroaches are free though). With nowhere to prepare food, and little money for eating out, you are forced to live in an area with lots of soup kitchens and charitable services like the Downtown Eastside. Just one of the reasons the Downtown Eastside is such a trap.

Before experiencing this shortage myself, my entrepreneurial side might have gotten excited about the heated housing market in Vancouver, and tried to figure out a way into the property speculation game. But now I think a little more hesitancy is in order. Its not right to profit from a system that spirals a basic human need like shelter out of the reach of so many.

We struggle to sleep, but the Downtown Eastside never sleeps. Even at 4am there is a gaggle of drug dealers and prostitutes congregating around the corner of Main and Hastings. The back alleys are darker and scarier at night, with people either in the throes of drug-induced ecstasy or drug-reduced agony. During the day, Hastings Street throngs with people pacing and looking for their highs. The dealers whisper as you walk by: “rock”,

“morphine”, “T3’s” and “BC bud”.

I walk inside to get off the street. And I notice it is full of addicts as well. People rushing around looking for the next high, eyes glazed. Everywhere we turn, the dealers offer tempting things designed to dull our pain and make us feel good again if only for a while: “plasma-screens”, “iPods”, “designer clothes”. Luckily, disheveled people like I am this week aren't really welcome in upmarket shopping malls and so I turn back to the street, and a different kind of drug addict.

Thought #3: We all do drugs and its only the drug dealers who win.

It's seems to be a fundamental characteristic of human existence that we are driven to dull our pain and emptiness. For some, it's the box in the corner of our living room that helps us to switch off from life's stresses and watch “reality”. For me its often junk food (and boy would I kill for a Big Mac and a coke right now). For others it may be shopping, alcohol or prescription drugs. The difference between us and the folks on the streets is that a line has been drawn whereby our drugs are legal (though still quite harmful), and their drugs are not (that line has been drawn in different ways at different times in history like the prohibition era). Our drug-taking is hidden and we do it in privacy because we have homes. Today I read the words of Jesus in Luke 6 (I planned to read the whole gospel of Luke this week but I'm only up to chapter 6): “Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned.” And I think of my drug-addicted friends (the crack-addicts and the shopping addicts). Judge not

Craig for there but by the grace of God you go.

The wide-spread drug use is one way of coping with the harsh life of the streets. Especially for the many with traumatic pasts or mental illness. One friend was abused as a little girl by a sick mother and her Satanic pals, and drugs became a way of forgetting that past... and her present. Once you use, it's desperately hard to wrestle free.

Mostly though, drugs seem to be the main means of making relationships in the Downtown Eastside. Bonding over a beer, or a joint, or a crack pipe is the only way many people know how to connect with others.

It's 10pm and I'm lying on the sidewalk reading a book, when a homeless girl asks if she can sit beside me. I hesitate because I am married. She sits anyway and pulls a can of beer out of her pocket. “Here you can have this”, she says hopefully. I actually like beer but there is something tragic about this situation. A young girl, maybe 20, is so desperate for connection with someone tonight that she will approach a complete stranger and offer them a beer in exchange for friendship. I am pained by her pain.

Thought #4: People long to belong.

The people I am meeting in the Downtown Eastside are not starving for food. They are starving for friends. And the isolation of folks in the drop-in centres and soup kitchen lines is heart-breaking. There are hundreds of service-providers here. Free food, free clothing, free this and free that. And its much appreciated. But at the end of the day its still one-way charity: disempowering and demotivating. The deepest need in the

Downtown Eastside is not more soup kitchens, shelters or hand-outs. Its the need to be loved and to have someone know your name. Someone who gives a toss if you live or freeze to death tonight. In our charitable quest for efficiency, to reach the most people, and to outsource the hospitality that used to be provided to the stranger from our own homes, we have lost something critical. We have lost relationships with the poor. We feed them by the thousands. But we no longer know their names or their stories. And so they long to belong. And its precisely that breakdown of relationships, with family, friends, a support network, that makes it so hard to get off the street.

I close my book and turn over to go to sleep on my patch of cardboard and I wonder if that girl will find someone to love her, or if she will just find someone to abuse her.

Morning comes and its our last day. I never thought we'd make it but somehow we have. We have stumbled into the mind-numbing routine of drop-in centres, parks and soup kitchens that gets us through the day, along with hundreds of others.

It's Sunday, so we go to a Downtown Eastside church and someone tells Jason to take his baseball cap off 'cause its disrespectful. The vicar talks about how the Jesus we follow was homeless (Luke 9:58) and asks what does that mean for us.

I don't think it was an accident that Jesus chose to identify himself with the homeless and the poor. Remember the blind panhandler in the gospels? The disciples asked Jesus, "Who sinned here?" but Jesus

rebuked them saying, "You're missing the point. This is not a chance for you guys to play the blame-game. This is an opportunity for God's love and mercy to flow." (Jn 9:2) And that's exactly what I think he'd say about the Downtown Eastside.

APPENDIX 3: MOVING FROM SOLITUDE TO COMMUNITY TO MINISTRY

by Henri Nouwen (abridged)

Jesus established the true order for spiritual work.

The word discipleship and the word discipline are the same word - that has always fascinated me. Once you have made the choice to say, "Yes, I want to follow Jesus," the question is, "What disciplines will help me remain faithful to that choice?" If we want to be disciples of Jesus, we have to live a disciplined life.

By discipline, I do not mean control. If I know the discipline of psychology or of economics, I have a certain control over a body of knowledge. If I discipline my children, I want to have a little control over them.

But in the spiritual life, the word discipline means "the effort to create some space in which God can act." Discipline means to prevent everything in your life from being filled up. Discipline means that somewhere you're not occupied, and certainly not preoccupied. In the spiritual life, discipline means to create that space in which something can happen that you hadn't planned or counted on.

I think three disciplines are important for us to remain faithful, so we not only become disciples, but also remain disciples. These disciplines are contained in one passage from Scripture with which we're familiar, but one that we may be surprised to find speaks about discipline.

"Now it happened in those days that Jesus went onto the mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came, he

summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them and called them apostles: Simon, whom he called Peter; and his brother Andrew; James; John; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, son of Alphaeus; Simon, called the Zealot; Judas, son of James; and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor." "He then came down with them and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples. There was a great crowd of people from all parts of Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and be cured of their diseases. And people tormented by unclean spirits were also cured. Everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him because power came out of him that cured them all" (Luke 6:12-19).

This is a beautiful story that moves from night to morning to afternoon. Jesus spent the night in solitude with God. In the morning, he gathered his apostles around him and formed community. In the afternoon, with his apostles, he went out and preached the Word and healed the sick.

Notice the order - from solitude to community to ministry. The night is for solitude; the morning for community; the afternoon for ministry.

So often in ministry, I have wanted to do it by myself. If it didn't work, I went to others and said, "Please!" searching for a community to help me. If that didn't work, maybe I'd start praying.

But the order that Jesus teaches us is the reverse. It begins by being with God in solitude; then it creates a fellowship, a community of people with whom the mission is being lived; and finally this community goes out

together to heal and to proclaim good news.

Discipline means to prevent everything in your life from being filled up.

I believe you can look at solitude, community, and ministry as three disciplines by which we create space for God. If we create space in which God can act and speak, something surprising will happen.

You and I are called to these disciplines if we want to be disciples.

Solitude is being with God and God alone. Is there any space for that in your life?

Why is it so important that you are with God and God alone on the mountain top? It's important because it's the place in which you can listen to the voice of the One who calls you the beloved. To pray is to listen to the One who calls you "my beloved daughter," "my beloved son," "my beloved child." To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being, to your guts, and let that voice resound in your whole being.

Who am I? I am the beloved. That's the voice Jesus heard when he came out of the Jordan River: "You are my beloved; on you my favor rests." And Jesus says to you and to me that we are loved as he is loved. That same voice is there for you. When you are not claiming that voice, you cannot walk freely in this world.

Jesus listened to that voice all the time, and he was able to walk right through life. People were applauding him, laughing at him; praising him and rejecting him; calling "Hosanna!" and calling "Crucify!" But in the midst of that, Jesus knew one thing - *I am the beloved; I am God's favorite one.* He clung to that voice.

There are many other voices speaking - loudly: "Prove that you are the beloved." "Prove you're worth something." "Prove you have any contribution to make." "Do something relevant." "Be sure you make a name for yourself." "At least have some power - then people will love you; then people will say you're wonderful, you're great."

These voices are so strong in this world. These were the voices Jesus heard right after he heard "You are my beloved." Another voice said, "Prove you are the beloved. Do something. Change these stones into bread. Be sure you're famous. Jump from the temple, and you will be known. Grab some power so you have real influence. Don't you want some influence? Isn't that why you came?"

Jesus said, "No, I don't have to prove anything. I am already the beloved."

I love Rembrandt's painting *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. The father holds his son, holds his daughter, and touches his son and his daughter and says, "You are my beloved. I'm not going to ask you any questions. Wherever you have gone, whatever you have done, and whatever people say about you, you're my beloved. I hold you safe in my embrace. I touch you. I hold you safe under my wings. You can come home to me whose name is Compassionate, whose name is Love."

If you keep that in mind, you can deal with an enormous amount of success as well as an enormous amount of failure without losing your identity, because your identity is that you are the beloved. Long before your father and mother, your brothers and sisters, your teachers, your church, or any people touched you in a loving as well as in a wounding way - long

before you were rejected by some person or praised by somebody else - that voice has been there always. "I have loved you with an everlasting love." That love is there before you were born and will be there after you die.

A life of fifty, sixty, seventy, or a hundred years is just a little moment in which you can say, "Yes, I love you too." God has become so vulnerable, so little, so dependent in a manger and on a cross and is begging us, "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you really love me?"

That's where ministry starts, because your freedom is anchored in claiming your belovedness. That allows you to go into this world and touch people, heal them, speak with them, and make them aware that they are beloved, chosen, and blessed. When you discover your belovedness by God, you see the belovedness of other people and call that forth. It's an incredible mystery of God's love that the more you know how deeply you are loved, the more you will see how deeply your sisters and your brothers in the human family are loved.

Now this is not easy. Jesus spent *the night* in prayer. That's a picture of the fact that prayer is not something you always feel. It's not a voice you always hear with these ears. It's not always an insight that suddenly comes to you in your little mind. (God's heart is greater than the human heart, God's mind is greater than the human mind, and God's light is so great that it might blind you and make you feel like you're in the night.)

But you have to pray. You have to listen to the voice who calls you the beloved, because otherwise you will run around begging for affirmation,

for praise, for success. And then you're not free.

Oh, if we could sit for just one half hour a day doing nothing except taking a simple word from the gospel and putting it in front of us - say, "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want." Say it three times, and we know it's not true, because we want many things. That's exactly why we're so nervous. But if we keep saying the truth, the real truth-"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want"-and let that truth descend from our mind into our heart, gradually those words are written on the walls of our inner holy place. That becomes the space in which we can receive our colleagues and our work, our family and our friends, and the people whom we will meet during the day.

The trouble is, as soon as you sit and become quiet, you think, *Oh, I forgot this. I should call my friend. Later on I'm going to see him.* Your inner life is like a banana tree filled with monkeys jumping up and down.

It's not easy to sit and trust that in solitude God will speak to you not as a magical voice but that he will let you know something gradually over the years. And in that word from God you will find the inner place from which to live your life.

Solitude is where spiritual ministry begins. That's where Jesus listened to God. That's where we listen to God.

Sometimes I think of life as a big wagon wheel with many spokes. In the middle is the hub. Often in ministry, it looks like we are running around the rim trying to reach everybody. But God says, "Start in the hub; live in the hub. Then you will be connected with all the spokes, and you won't have to run so fast."

It's precisely in the hub, in that communion with God, that we discover the call to community. It's remarkable that solitude always calls us to community. In solitude you realize you're part of a human family and that you want to lift something together.

If we create space in which God can act and speak, something surprising will happen

By community, I don't mean formal communities. I mean families, friends, parishes, twelve-step programs, prayer groups. Community is not an organization; community is a way of living: you gather around you people with whom you want to proclaim the truth that we are the beloved sons and daughters of God.

Community is not easy. Somebody once said, "Community is the place where the person you least want to live with always lives." In Jesus' community of twelve apostles, the last name was that of someone who was going to betray him. That person is always in your community somewhere; in the eyes of others, you might be that person.

Why is it so important that solitude come before community? If we do not know we are the beloved sons and daughters of God, we're going to expect someone in the community to make us feel that way. They cannot.

We'll expect someone to give us that perfect, unconditional love. But community is not loneliness grabbing onto loneliness: "I'm so lonely, and you're so lonely." It's solitude grabbing onto solitude: "I am the beloved; you are the beloved; together we can build a home." Sometimes you are close, and that's wonderful. Sometimes you don't feel much love, and that's hard. But we

can be faithful. We can build a home together and create space for God and for the children of God.

Within the discipline of community are the disciplines of forgiveness and celebration. Forgiveness and celebration are what make community, whether a marriage, a friendship, or any other form of community.

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is to allow the other person not to be God. Forgiveness says, "I know you love me, but you don't have to love me unconditionally, because no human being can do that."

We all have wounds. We all are in so much pain. It's precisely, this feeling of loneliness that lurks behind all our successes, that feeling of uselessness that hides under all the praise, that feeling of meaninglessness even when people say we are fantastic - that is what makes us sometimes grab onto people and expect from them an affection and love they cannot give.

If we want other people to give us something that only God can give, we become a demon. We say, "Love me!" and before you know it we become violent and demanding and manipulative. It's so important that we keep forgiving one another - not once in a while, but every moment of life. Before you have had your breakfast, you have already had at least three opportunities to forgive people, because your mind is already wondering, *What will they think about me? What will he or she do? How will they use me?*

To forgive other people for being able to give you only a little love - that's a hard discipline. To keep asking others for forgiveness because you can give only a little love - that's a hard discipline, too.

It hurts to say to your children, to your wife or your husband, to your friends, that you cannot give them all that you would like to give. Still, that is where community starts to be created, when we come together in a forgiving and undemanding way.

This is where celebration, the second discipline of community, comes in. If you can forgive that another person cannot give you what only God can give, then you can celebrate that person's gift. Then you can see the love that person is giving you as a reflection of God's great unconditional love. "Love one another because I have loved you first." When we have known that first love, we can see the love that comes to us from people as the reflection of that. We can celebrate that and say, "Wow, that's beautiful!"

In our community, Daybreak, we have to do a lot of forgiving. But right in the midst of forgiving comes a celebration: we see the beauty of people who quite often are considered marginal by society. With forgiveness and celebration, community becomes the place where we call forth the gifts of other people, lift them up, and say, "You are the beloved daughter and the beloved son."

To celebrate another person's gift doesn't mean giving each other little compliments-"You play the piano better"; "You are so good in singing." No, that's a talent show.

To celebrate each other's gifts means to accept each other's humanity. We see each other as a person who can smile, say "Welcome," eat, and make a few steps. A person who in the eyes of others is broken suddenly is full of life, because you discover your own brokenness through them.

Here is what I mean. In this world, so many people live with the burden of self-rejection: "I'm not good. I'm useless. People don't really care for me. If I didn't have money, they wouldn't talk to me. If I didn't have this big job, they wouldn't call me. If I didn't have this influence, they wouldn't love me." Underneath a successful and highly praised career can live a fearful person who doesn't think much of himself or herself. In community comes that mutual vulnerability in which we forgive each other and celebrate each other's gifts.

I have learned so much since coming to Daybreak. I've learned that my real gifts are not that I write books or that I went to universities. My real gifts are discovered by Janet and Nathan and others who know me so well they cannot be impressed any more by this other stuff. Once in a while they say, "I have good advice: Why don't you read some of your own books?"

There is healing in being known in my vulnerability and impatience and weakness. Suddenly I realize that Henri is a good person also in the eyes of people who don't read books and who don't care about success. These people can forgive me constantly for the little egocentric gestures and behaviors that are always there.

All the disciples of Jesus are called to ministry. Ministry is not, first of all, something that you do (although it calls you to do many things). Ministry is something that you have to trust.

If you know you are the beloved, and if you keep forgiving those with whom you form community and celebrate their gifts, you cannot do other than minister.

Jesus cured people not by doing all sorts of complicated things. A power went out from him, and everyone was

cured. He didn't say, "Let me talk to you for ten minutes, and maybe I can do something about this." Everyone who touched him was cured, because a power went out from his pure heart. He wanted one thing - to do the will of God. He was the completely obedient one, the one who was always listening to God. Out of this listening came an intimacy with God that radiated out to everyone Jesus saw and touched.

Ministry means you have to trust that. You have to trust that if you are the son and daughter of God, power will go out from you and that people will be healed.

"Go out and heal the sick. Walk on the snake. Call the dead to life." This is not small talk. Yet Jesus said, "Whatever I do, you can do too and even greater things." Jesus said precisely, "You are sent into the world just as I was sent into the world - to heal, to cure."

Trust in that healing power. Trust that if you are living as the beloved you will heal people whether or not you notice it. But you have to be faithful to that call.

Healing ministry can be expressed in two words: *gratitude* and *compassion*.

Healing happens often by leading people to gratitude, for the world is full of resentment. What is resentment? Cold anger. "I'm angry at him. I'm angry at this. This is not the way I want it." Gradually, there are more and more things I am negative about, and soon I become a resentful person.

Resentment makes you cling to your failures or disappointments and complain about the losses in your life. Our life is full of losses - losses of dreams and losses of friends and losses of family and losses of hopes.

There is always the lurking danger we will respond to these incredible pains in resentment. Resentment gives us a hardened heart.

Jesus calls us to gratitude. He calls to us, "You foolish People. Didn't you know that the Son of Man - that you, that we - have to suffer and thus enter into the glory? Didn't you know that these pains were labor pains that lead you to the joy? Didn't you know that all we are experiencing as losses are gains in God's eyes? Those who lose their lives will gain it. And if the grain doesn't die, it stays a small grain; but if it dies, then it will be fruitful."

Can you be grateful for everything that has happened in your life - not just the good things but for all that brought you to today? It was the pain of a Son that created a family of people known as Christians. That's the mystery of God.

Our ministry is to help people to gradually let go of the resentment, to discover that right in the middle of pain there is a blessing. Right in the middle of your tears - that's where the dance starts and joy is first felt.

In this crazy world, there's an enormous distinction between good times and bad, between sorrow and joy. But in the eyes of God, they're never separated. Where there is pain, there is healing. Where there is mourning there is dancing. Where there is poverty, there is the kingdom.

Jesus says, "Cry over your pains, and you will discover that I'm right there in your tears, and you will be grateful for my presence in your weakness." Ministry means to help people become grateful for life even with pain. That gratitude can send you into the world precisely to the places where people are in pain. The

minister, the disciple of Jesus, goes where there is pain not because he is a masochist or she is a sadist, because God is hidden in the pain.

"Blessed are the poor." Jesus doesn't say, "Blessed are those who care for the poor"; he says, "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the mourning. Blessed are those who have pain. There I am." To minister, you have to be where the pain is. Sometimes that pain is hidden in a person who from the outside might look painless, or successful.

Compassion means to suffer with, to live with those who suffer. When Jesus saw the woman of Nain he realized, *This is a widow who has lost her only son*, and he was moved by compassion. He felt the pain of that woman in his guts. He felt her pain so deeply in his spirit that out of compassion he called the son to life so he could give that son back to his mother.

We are sent to wherever there is poverty, loneliness, and suffering to have the courage to be with people. Trust that by throwing yourself into that place of pain you will find the joy of Jesus. All ministries in history are built on that vision. A new world grows out of compassion.

Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate. It's a great call. But don't be fearful; don't be afraid. Don't say, "I can't do that."

If you know you're God's beloved, you can deal with an enormous amount of success as well as an enormous amount of failure.

When you are aware that you are the beloved, and when you have friends around you with whom you live in community, you can do anything. You're not afraid anymore. You're not afraid to knock on the door while

somebody's dying. You're not afraid to open a discussion with a person who underneath all the glitter is much in need of ministry. You're free.

I've experienced that constantly. When I was depressed or when I felt anxious, I knew my friends couldn't solve it. Those who ministered to me were those who were not afraid to be with me. Precisely where I felt my poverty I discovered God's blessing.

Solitude, community, ministry - these disciplines help us live a fruitful life. Remain in Jesus; he remains in you. You will bear many fruits, you will have great joy, and your joy will be complete.