

SITG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CHURCHES

What is Stand In The Gap?

MISSION: We are a prayer-based, church-driven, small group movement, focused on helping a group member rise above overwhelming life challenges through a loving, spiritual family experience.

Stand In The Gap™ is a unique group-mentoring model developed for the Church to utilize members of their congregation to form a support group to serve those in need. Clients are prescreened and if qualified become a "neighbor" in a "spiritual family". Each participant signs a written covenant to meet together at least twice a month for at least one year. The essence of this mentoring model is Christian fellowship and prayer.

Our VISION is to facilitate 100,000 spiritual families who answer God's call to love their hurting neighbors and experience God's transforming love.

Stand in the Gap is a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 organization. We are 100% donor funded from the private sector: individuals, private foundations, churches, businesses, etc.

How can Stand In The Gap benefit Pastors and their Churches?

The Stand in the Gap ministry model or method provides many potential benefits:

- Lessens the overall counseling burden
- Provides a vehicle to help those in your church who would normally require a lot of your resources (Pastor time, staff time, benevolence \$)
- Engage more of the congregation outside of the typical 20-ish% that provide all of the volunteer time and participate in church activities
- Develops prayer warriors and gives existing prayer warriors a powerful and effective ministry model to plug into
- Deals with root cause issues in a way other ministry models do not and leads to transformation (sustainable/holistic)
- Can enhance church culture and the attractiveness of your church to the community and prospective congregation members
- Expands/completes/enhances your continuum of care, that is the collection of ministries/services that represent a more holistic continuum of care
- Provides a topic for sermons (annual, quarterly) and powerful testimonials
- Provides a vehicle to enable your small groups/take your small groups to the next level or is the next step in evolving/maturing small groups
- Promotes the spiritual development/maturity of participants
- Promotes deep and significant relationships within the congregation which could also factor into less attrition from SITG participants
- WWJD - what would Jesus do: SITG!

What is SITG's core strength - what makes our ministry unique?

Our core strength is our methodology, which is continuously improved and enhanced, based on years of experience and is proven to be highly effective. Although simple, our method can be utilized on a broad spectrum of life issues such as those recovering from substance and gambling addictions; experiencing health, financial, mental health issues or marital crises; raising families as a single person or fatherless children to name a few examples. Life issues vary across a wide spectrum and are less important to the process than our methodology, which provides the flexibility to address varying issues. Key agents for change in our method are the volunteers that form the family/support group and are trained to function as “wise counsel” as they surround and support the neighbor (client). This group will meet with the neighbor twice monthly for a year (lasting change isn't quick) and is comprised of 4+ adults who counsel, sympathize, empathize, advise, and model for the neighbor. This group provides a healthy “family” to the neighbor, perhaps for the first time. This allows the neighbor the opportunity to create a healthy self-image, develop new coping behaviors, and learn different alternatives to living life versus simply surviving. The neighbor receives significant practical, emotional, and spiritual help and in most cases, profound transformation occurs. Just as compelling, this is a life affirming, enriching process for volunteers and neighbors. More than 1,000 volunteers have participated, of those surveyed 95% said that they will do it again because they experienced God as never before and observed true life change.

What has Stand in the Gap achieved for persons in our programs?

The work of Stand in the Gap does not take a “broadcast” approach by spreading services across a large percentage of the population. Rather, our strategy is to serve a small number well and make a long term, lasting impact. The unique factor in Stand in the Gap is our commitment to surround our ‘neighbors’ (clients) with 4 or more trained volunteers who meet with them at least twice monthly and work with them for an average of 28 months. In most cases, the clients we have served experience a life transformation from their participation as this unique model allows the client the opportunity to create a healthy self-image, develop new coping behaviors, and learn different alternatives for living life.

From 2007 to 2009 approximately 411 clients were in some stage of being served in a training program, being mentored or in a spiritual family. In addition approximately 51,322 volunteer hours were contributed to Stand in the Gap programs during this time, representing a value of \$923,796 if you applied an hourly volunteer rate of \$18/hour. We have also expanded our footprint by giving our model away to church/agency partners in five states and thirteen cities including Muskogee, Claremore, Oklahoma City, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas, Austin, Houston, Springfield, etc. Additionally, in our Women in Transition program, fifty ex-prisoners have participated in our training program and then subsequently as clients in Stand in the Gap ‘families’ while completing the one-year commitment, and **NOT ONE** has returned to prison to date.

Is SITG a denominational ministry?

No we are not denominationally focused ministry. Our mission is to equip the church for this ministry across multiple denominations.

Does SITG have any programs to address specific life issues?

Part of our strategy is to “incubate” several key programs that focus on national issues impacting our country. Our plans are to eventually identify partner organizations with a singular focus to deploy the following programs on a regional and/or national basis; 1) Women Impacted by Domestic Violence in partnership with the DaySpring Villa Women and Children’s Shelter (Tulsa), 2) Youth Aging Out of Foster Care and 3) Women Transitioning out of Prison for which we operate a program at the David L Moss Tulsa County jail teaching our women’s prison curriculum.

Does Stand in the Gap have or are you pursuing partnerships to serve those in need?

Our ministry model has received strong interest and traction in the “marketplace” as evidenced by program partnerships with the Catholic Diocese of Eastern Oklahoma, David L. Moss Tulsa County Jail, DaySpring Villa Shelter for battered and abused women, Boys and Girls Town of Missouri and the Missouri Baptist Children’s Home, the Tulsa Boys Home and the Bair Foundation. We are also in the midst of forming a strategic alliance with Prison Fellowship International to pilot our method to enhance the continuum of care that they provide their clients who are transitioning out of prison. Additionally, we are in current discussions with the Anglican Church of North America about a program partnership.

Does Stand in the Gap have an independent Board of Directors?

Yes, our Board of Directors is comprised of twelve or more individuals who represent a broad and diverse set of backgrounds, experiences, skills, abilities and ages. You can find a listing of board members and their backgrounds on our website at www.sitgm.org.

What Churches in Tulsa has Stand in the Gap been involved with?

We have or have had in the past, programs with the following churches: Bread of Life, Southern Hills Baptist, Sanctuary Fellowship, Sanctuary Church, Faith United Methodist, Catholic Diocese of Eastern OK, Parish of Saint Bernard, Muskogee Church of Christ, First United Methodist Claremore, Church of the Holy Spirit, Harvard Avenue Christian, New Visions, New Heart Fellowship, St. Dunstan's Episcopal, St. John Episcopal, First Baptist/Muskogee, Abiding Harvest UMC, Believer, Fellowship Bible, Cornerstone Church, Liberty Church, Christian Chapel, Redeemer Covenant Church, First United Methodist Tulsa, Asbury United Methodist, Winnetka Baptist, Happy Hill Church (BA) and Saint Paul’s AME Church. Additionally, churches in five states and twelve cities use the SITG method to serve those in need.

IMPLEMENTATION FAQs

**Note that many of the following questions are dealt with in detail in our implementation manual.*

Is there any cost to my church?

There is no cost to partner churches. Stand in the Gap's goal is to see this ministry model utilized throughout the church community in our country and beyond our borders. We act as stewards of this ministry model and we give the model away to the Church and facilitate its launch and implementation.

What are the implementation steps involved in starting this ministry?

The seven basic implementation steps are:

- Step 1: "LET'S DO THIS" Decision
- Step 2: Two Key Leaders Appointed; Director and Spiritual Formation Coach
- Step 3: Program Presented to Entire Congregation or Organization.
- Step 4: Neighbors in Need Are Identified
- Step 5: Spiritual Families Are Formed
- Step 6: Spiritual Families Are "Trained."
- Step 7: Initial Spiritual Family Meeting Is Held

What are the different roles that are involved in implementing Stand in the Gap?

The Stand in the Gap methodology has five roles:

- Senior Pastor or CEO of a para-church organization to champion the ministry
- A church's Stand in the Gap Director who is the person who drives the implementation of the SITG methodology in your church
- A church's Spiritual Formation Coach (the SITG Director and the Spiritual Formation Coach may be one and the same individual) who serves as a resource and spiritual mentor for the Spiritual Family leaders
- Neighbor in Need
- Volunteers from the Body of Christ (4 or more)

Profiles and expectations for each of these roles are described in detail in our implementation manual.

When recruiting Spiritual Family members are there any do's or don'ts?

The Senior Pastor needs to sign off on who comprises a Spiritual Family – this can be difficult. Spiritual Family members need to focus on waiting and praying, not being a 'fixer.' It is important to ensure that volunteers are "healthy" people. One good way to do this is to tell someone No and see what happens. Healthy people will say, "Do I have an issue?" Unhealthy people will run – they can't deal with someone saying no to them.

If you have a general interest meeting where you are recruiting family members it is a good idea to have the Covenant so members can understand what they are committing to. This program will typically be a good fit for about 20% of your church members. It will attract a lot of co-dependents, which is not a good thing because they have a tendency to over-achieve while letting others under-achieve, which defeats the purpose of holding the neighbor accountable.

Regarding the one-year commitment, it generally takes a year for true safety and freedom to blossom leading to consistent transformation for everyone. If you want to make a difference in someone's life you have to commit, get right next to him or her, and get to know them. When you do, you will find out that that they are not that different from you. This relational dynamic only comes with time and familiarity and disagreement and resolution.

Who would normally be our “neighbor”?

The key question is this: Whom are you called to help? There may be a particular region or area of your city toward which you feel drawn...a particular segment of the greater population you seek to serve...or an awareness of individuals, or relatives of families, in your midst, toward whom your hearts are drawn. Our experience indicates that there are typically many within the walls of the church that feel they need help and are drawn to the ministry if they are made aware of it.

When recruiting neighbors, what key aspect of the program should be emphasized?

There are a lot of hurting people who are looking for help, however, most are looking for a hand-out versus being willing to really work on themselves and accept a hand up, i.e. the Stand in the Gap program. A lot of people who read the Covenant and see ‘no money’ get washed out immediately and that's what you want, as those individuals will not be successful in the SITG program. All prospective neighbors should read the Information for Neighbors section of the Implementation Manual with one of the leadership team and fill out the Rapid Assessment Instrument (RAI). Once this has been completed they have a pretty good chance of becoming a neighbor unless there is an obvious mental health problem (severe depression, suicidal ideation) for which you should refer them for psychiatric evaluation.

What if someone applies who has an active addiction? Can we help them?

Over time we have learned that unless someone is going through a 12-step recovery program and has completed the 5th step they are not ready for the SITG model. So the key message is “We Love You, but this is not the program for you.” Assure those with active addictions that you will be there for them once they have progressed through the step program. Make sure to send them somewhere to get help.

When and where does a Spiritual Family meet?

The Spiritual Family determines where it will meet, preferably in a home or in a private church fellowship area. The Spiritual Family determines when it will meet (setting specific dates and times, with a minimum participation level of two meetings a month for one year).

What takes place at a Spiritual Family meeting?

- Invite the Holy Spirit to lead
- Review last meetings prayer journal requests. Discuss God sightings.
- Present where each member needs to see God move in their life today
- Have a healthy family discussion regarding the presented needs
- Pray and wait, no action is to be taken unless the family is of one accord

How do you know when the end has been reached with your neighbor?

At the end of 12 months, have a family meeting and discuss “Do we continue or not?” Ask the Spiritual Family to pray about it and seek God’s will prior to the meeting. Once again, this decision will be on a case-by-case basis.

In your experience, do the families and neighbors usually drift apart after the yearlong program?

No, friendships and families are formed. In several instances once the formal family meetings cease, the family celebrates holidays together or members of the family (with the neighbor) go on vacations together. One of the wonderful and powerful results of this program is that a lot of the neighbors eventually become Spiritual Family members, thus fully completing their transformation.