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### About Dr. Meredith J. Sprunger

Dr. Meredith J. Sprunger, a retired minister in the United Church of Christ, served congregations in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Dr. Sprunger was President of Indiana Institute of Technology. During his tenure, he served as a professor, head of the Department of Psychology and chairman of the Division of Liberal Arts. He also taught at Elmhurst College where he headed the Psychology Department.

Dr. Sprunger has been President of URANTIA® Brotherhood, chairman of the Education and Fraternal Relations Committee and a Field Representative. Today, Meredith is the Executive Director of Ministry of the Jesusonian Foundation while serving on the Board of Directors. He also founded and directed The Christian Fellowship of Students of *The Urantia Book*.

Written especially  
for teachers, leaders, and  
outreach ministries

# The Imperative of Outreach Ministry

by Meredith J. Sprunger, Ph.D.

The foremost priority of the Urantia movement is outreach ministry. We have the message the world most needs to hear. Missionaries of the Fifth Epochal Revelation must seriously ask, "How do we go about this task?"

When the revelators were asked for guidance in answering this question they advised that we study Jesus' plan of outreach ministry and be guided by his example. Jesus spent approximately a year training his apostles and then began a public ministry. For two years this ministry was largely confined to Palestine. Jesus then instructed his apostles and disciples to proclaim the gospel throughout the world. This initiated the greatest missionary movement in history.

## Beginning Public Ministry

To date, we have not always followed the advice of the revelators of *The Urantia Book* nor the example of Jesus. I believe it's time to initiate a public ministry designed to introduce *The Urantia Book* to receptive segments of society. Methodologies should be devised by our highest wisdom and modified by experience and prayer.

### Levels of Ministry

I suggest five levels to communicate the gospel. Choose the one you feel most comfortable with and strive for excellence in your execution.

*First Level*—Living the Gospel - doing good as we pass by. The Living Level.

*Second Level*—Social Service - amplifying the gospel through social action. The Social Level.

*Third Level*—Traditional Concepts - communicating the gospel through traditional Christianity or other religious teachings. The Traditional Level.

*Fourth Level*—Contemporary Concepts - communicating the gospel using contemporary resources, including sharing *Urantia Book* concepts without mentioning the book. The Contemporary Level.

*Fifth Level*—*The Urantia Book* Concepts - communicating the gospel through the Fifth Epochal Revelation. *The Urantia Book* Level.

We should engage in outreach ministry on all five communication levels. The level we use should be determined by the evolutionary readiness of those we minister to. It is my judgement that the majority of the people of the United States are evolutionally prepared to receive the gospel message on the first three levels.

### Many are Ready

I estimate that twenty-five to thirty-five percent of our population is socially and culturally ready for the gospel on the Fourth Level of intellectual-spiritual comprehension. Philosophical materialism and skepticism, however, causes a substantial minority of this group to be psychologically or spiritually unprepared to accept it. A large number of those at the Contemporary Level are prepared for the concepts and cosmology of *The Urantia Book*.

I believe that ten to twenty-five percent of the population of the United States is ready to receive the gospel message on the Fifth Level of conceptual understanding; however, very few of this group are psychologically or socially ready to consider the possibility of a "new revelation." Some degree of public exposure or confrontation will be necessary before the majority of this segment becomes aware of *The Urantia Book* and believes it is real.

### A New Era Dawns

Our public ministry should be geared to the nature of our contemporary culture. We have shifted from an industrial society to an information society. As citizens of the world's leading provider of information, we have many tools at our disposal. High technology is isolating us from dependency on neighbors and work groups; therefore, people are hungry for the human touch. Participation in small groups becomes increasingly important to our identities and well-being.

The transition from national economies to a global economy sets the stage for world wide social and religious fellowship. The failure of short term planning in our economic, social, and moral life points to the necessity of long range planning. The decentralization of Western Civilization lessens the importance of hierarchies and power structures while increasing the significance of local communities and specialized networks. Society builds from the bottom up. Less reliance on central-institutional help develops greater local direction and individual initiative. Small units of society characterize our culture into close-knit, participatory groups governed by a central purpose. Either/or society (religious/secular, educated/uneducated, proper/improper) is passing and cultural diversity is taking its place. Increasing choices typify consumer options in all walks of life.

We live in transitionary times. In this social and cultural ambiguity, we need the innovative ability to venture boldly into the future. Those with vision, courage, initiative, and high spiritual goals will have extraordinary leverage and influence in shaping the world. In this shifting society, we need to plan and execute our public ministry as heralds of the Fifth Epochal Revelation.

### Taking the Spiritual Path

How we conduct our outreach ministry is more important than when or where we introduce people to *The*

*Urantia Book*. Indifference and social opposition must be met with love, intellectual candor, and good humor. Since we are not starting a new religion, our public ministry is realistically benign. Jesus assures us, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” This mission bears the simplicity of Philip’s invitation, “Come and see.” We are simply introducing people to a new book and encouraging them to read it. Their response is in the hands of the Spirit. If the message of *The Urantia Book* does not sell itself, we should cheerfully allow the reader their own interpretations and evaluation. If this new vision of spiritual reality does not inspire people, our arguments won’t either.

### **Seven Principles of Ministry**

The essence of *The Urantia Book* is important and the hope of the world rests upon it. Therefore, I would urge you to adopt the following seven principles of ministry.

#### **1. Use Wisdom**

Use wisdom and balance in all of your service. Avoid extremes, exhibitionism, oversell, and the spectacular. Learn to distinguish between artistic good taste and the theatrical. Personal contact is more effective than impersonal mass media. Understand the wisdom and effectiveness of small groups. These groups form coalitions and networks more open and dynamic than hierarchical and self-serving cults. Such a network is many times greater than the sum of its parts. It has multiple leadership, pluralistic policies, and its center is everywhere.

Start where people are, not where you are. Communicate in their frames of reference and anticipate their reactions. Combine expert knowledge with high values in your ministry. Master your mind through the power of the Spirit. Be strong in the Spirit; know that in liaison with God nothing can defeat the spiritual purposes of your life. Be fearless but act with discretion.

#### **2. Let Love Create**

Let love create the atmosphere of your interpersonal relationships. You cannot effectively communicate with others unless you accept them with their imperfections. Strive to prevent your biases and limitations from interfering with or distorting your

service. Support, encourage, and help people; do not coerce them. See your fellows as persons of worth and build their self-respect. Be natural, genuine, and enjoy their company.

Serve out of love, a thankful heart, and joy of the act itself. Ministry is an internal activity of the creative mind and the loving soul. External motivations of service compromise the spiritual value. Serving God solely for external purposes such as building your study group, society, church, or a spiritual renaissance limits its spiritual value and personal satisfaction. Minister out of love; the repercussions will take care of themselves. Serve with intelligent dedication, do not try to manipulate people.

#### **3. Cultivate Openness**

Temper your convictions with philosophic objectivity. Be honest and open. Cultivate freedom of opinion and respect the right of others to disagree with your convictions. Honor each person’s God-given right to self-determination. Establish common ground and do not contend with others. Let your enthusiasm for truth animate your discussions. Never put people down or offend them.

#### **4. Cooperate with Evolution**

Recognize that evolution works slowly. Do not expect immediate results. Growth is unconscious and has mustard seed beginnings. Be patient but do not become the victim of a “do-nothing” psychology. Don’t bury your talents by stagnation or cult obscurities. Be concerned about ministering effectively but relatively unconcerned about results. Realize your ministry must be planned and conducted according to the law of evolutionary readiness.

Evolution, the plow of history, eventually breaks the crust of individual resistance and moves the clods of social stagnation. Be loyal and persistent in your service without needing to be honored by success. It is your privilege and responsibility to minister; the results are in the hands of God the Supreme. Cultivate in yourself the mind and attitude of the Supreme. The vicissitudes of time do not change the goals of eternity.

#### **5. Live with the Commonplace**

Be actively involved in commonplace experiences. Grow, bloom, and bear fruit in the soil where you are



planted. If possible, keep your old social and religious ties strong and healthy. Share at the level of spiritual acceptance. When you are a tadpole don't pretend to be a bullfrog. Dedicated tadpoling will bring you inner satisfaction. These activities will bring a sense of proportion, genuineness, and integrity to your ministry. Forget the failures of the past and do not become preoccupied with the future. Live in the present. Revitalize yourself with constant communion with the Father.

## 6. Develop a Sense of Humor

Cultivate a sense of humor. Humor helps us maintain a proper sense of perspective. You can carry useful loads when you get the world off your shoulders. Do not take yourself too seriously even though you are participating in important work. Be unconcerned about prestige and status. Strive to avoid self-contemplation and cultivate self-forgetfulness. Finite personalities can become tragic figures when they lose their sense of perspective and fail to appreciate the comedy of life. We need to laugh at ourselves and the frustrating, ridiculous, and absurd situations we encounter. A lighthearted spirit can be a great asset in carrying heavy burdens.

## 7. Serve with Joy

Live and minister with joy in your heart. You belong to the Father's family and you face an eternal future of unimaginable adventure. Nothing can prevent fulfillment of your ardent spiritual hopes and fondest dreams. All who experience this faith in an eternal destiny live with irrepressible joy even in the midst of material hardship, social conflict, and seeming personal defeat. As you free yourself from materialism, the adulation or criticism of others, and preoccupation with self, you will experience the liberating joys of service. You will discover that you are free from the egocentric social pressures of being successful and enhancing your reputation.

When your will is in harmony with the Universal Father, the joy of service brings a deep inner peace. You feel that you are where you belong, where your Heavenly Father wishes you to serve.

## Personal Spiritual Growth

I close with the most important aspect of our ministry. Since outreach is the main imperative of the Urantia movement, take personal action and carry the good news

of *The Urantia Book* to the farthest corners of the earth. But if you lack the talent or calling for outreach ministry, there is another call we all must respond to. This is the Father's loving appeal that you dedicate yourself to spiritual growth.

Nothing in your life is more important than your active cooperation in achieving the Spirit's mastery of your mind and body, your attitudes and appetites, your emotions and actions. This is not accomplished by merely willing it; it demands active participation. Growth can entail suffering, transcending egocentric pride, or even experiencing social humiliation. The rewards and joys of a Spirit controlled mind and a Spirit mastered body far outweigh the birth pangs endured in evolving the soul. The enlarged freedom and inner peace of your bring the great joy and a profound sense of fulfillment. Not only have you actualized your inner self, you have developed a quality of being capable of accomplishing greater service for your fellows and the Father's kingdom. It is my prayer that each of you may grow in the Spirit. For the life of the Spirit is the well-spring and creative source of outreach ministry.

## Living Faith Acts

Our society desperately needs an enlarged spiritual vision to give guidance and stability to the new era struggling to be born. *The Urantia Book* has been given to you to provide the spiritual fulcrum to lift our world into a new era of human achievement. Our Sovereign Master speaks to you as to Peter, "If you love me, feed my sheep."



For literature related to *The Urantia Book*, or for additional copies of this brochure, please contact:

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