At this year’s Annual Conference, we had a very vibrant conversation about living in an increasingly secularized or “post-Christian” culture. It is clear we need to be the light of Christ.

I recently read an article about a Pew Research Center study on the religious beliefs of Americans. There is one group that is the fastest-growing religious segment among Americans, and it’s not Islam. The fastest growing group is the “nones”. This is the label assigned to the segment of the population that identifies as atheist, agnostic, or simply not religious in general. In 2007, 16% of Americans fell into this category. Eight years later, it has grown to 23%. That’s a big jump, and the numbers are still growing.

The spiritual climate in our country is changing rapidly. The article asked, “Why is it a good thing that fewer and fewer people call themselves Christians?” The author feels that this is a good thing, and so do I.

Here’s why it’s a good thing: because in the days to come, if you choose to align yourself with Jesus, embrace his mission, and affiliate yourself with an organization like Christians in Commerce, it will mean embracing his mission, and affiliate yourself with an organization like Christians in Commerce, it will mean

Some very good answers can be found in the CIC Mission Statement: To encourage and equip Christians to be God’s presence in the workplace by the power of the Holy Spirit, exercising faith, integrity, and excellence.

Breaking the statement down into its parts, you come away with several answers. “Why do I go to that meeting? Because I am encouraged by the brothers and sisters that my work matters to God… Because I become equipped to handle the daily stresses of my job… Because I exercise my faith, knowing I can look up, take courage and know that I am never defeated in life… Because I understand that integrity is essential in the workplace and CIC exemplifies that virtue. … Because CIC helps us to do our work with excellence, and I am much more content and confident when doing so.”

Now go ahead and create your own answers! Once we can answer this question, we can become part of a life-changing conversation. Our ministry engages at the great intersection of commerce and culture. A “none,” or anyone else we reach out to, can become a great influencer in commerce and culture because of Christianity—specifically, because of Christ in you. The Vision and Mission of CIC are realized when we as Christians reflect the power and attractiveness of the gospel, drawing fellow brothers and sisters into serving the common good in our ordinary, daily lives. This is the Lord’s gift to us.

So, let us live the life of Christ, work in the power of the Holy Spirit, and unite the body of Christ in faith, integrity, and excellence.

Have a blessed New Year!

Terry Cassell is the current President of Christians in Commerce. He may be reached at cassell@cicintl.org.
REFLECTIONS

God’s Unique Purpose for Each of Us

By John E. Daly

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Our God has devised many ways to get our attention in this life. Recently, he has reminded me of our unique call to do his will through the following prayer by John Henry Cardinal Newman entitled Some Definite Service. It states, in part:

God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have a mission… I have a part in a great work; I shall do good, I shall do his work… Therefore I will trust him… if I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain. He knows what he is about.

I ask not to see—ask not to know—I ask simply to be used.

How many times do we question situations that, from a human perspective, seem to make no sense? Why did this happen, Lord? Why am I, or someone I love, still suffering? Why did you allow this to happen to this family? When faced with the many challenges in life we want answers to these questions… and we want them now!

So often we fail to trust in God, thinking he does not really understand.

Thirty years ago, our family moved from our home near Monterey Bay, California to Minneapolis. We had gone through a discernment process and truly believed that God had placed a call in our lives and we were doing his will by moving out here. Since then however, there have been many times when I have failed to understand and trust that God knew what he was doing.

How often do we remind ourselves that God has prepared unique works of service in advance, designed specifically for us? I have to admit that I rarely used to think in this way. Too often I was struggling just to keep up with the day-to-day tasks of living. However, God gave me a gift not too long ago that made me see things in a different light.

I had just finished a two-year legal case that was the most difficult and complex I had encountered in my 37 years of practice. A CIC brother sent me an email after it was over and mentioned that he thought there were many reasons the Lord had brought me from California to Minnesota. One of the most important ones, he said, was to serve the family who was involved in that case. I had never considered that God could be asking me to serve him through my legal career. I began to see more clearly my mission in life as being unique in how God created me and wanted me to serve others.

Another CIC brother once told me that if we are truly abiding and trusting in God’s will, there will be no disappointments. It is in doing his will in sickness and in health, joy and sorrow, understanding and perplexity that we allow ourselves to be used by him in everything we do.

We are all unique in the service of the Lord. You are the only one created by God to raise your children. You are the only one to give witness to the unique ways God has created you in Christ Jesus to do good works and tell those stories of how he has used you at home and in the marketplace.

Share with others the unique ways in which God has used you to serve and specific good that you have been a part of.

WORKPLACE STORIES NEEDED

This year we want to put a special emphasis on expanding the contributions to our Workday Reflection emails. We are especially looking for personal stories related to fulfilling our mission in the workplace.

Don’t worry if writing is not your talent!

We will edit all submissions as needed. If you don’t know where to begin, simply tell us your story over the phone or via email, and we will take care of the rest.

We are also looking for individuals in the local chapters who are willing to be Workday Reflection stringers/ghost writers for others in their chapters, who have inspiring stories to tell.

To serve in this capacity, or to share your story, please contact the CIC offices by calling (703) 205-5600 or send an email to info@cicintl.org.
Personal Sacrifice

By Frank Adamo

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. (Romans 12:10-11)

If you are like me, you are constantly balancing time spent in prayer and personal reflection with time at work, in ministry, and in family activities. All these things are not only good, they are necessary for our personal growth and for building the Kingdom. Perhaps we have read about the concept of “work-life balance.” I have found it does not need to be a balancing act at all. There is a way to incorporate family, church and ministry into one another. We learn to show others how to serve as Jesus served.

This past year, we in the Central Mesa Service Council asked ourselves, “What can we do to involve our families in our CIC outreach?” We decided on a family BBQ hosted in a brother’s large backyard. We invited extended family, past CIC members, coworkers and friends. CIC provided the hamburgers and hotdogs and guests brought their favorite side dishes and desserts. Kids played in the jumping castle while moms and dads visited and shared conversations. It was a chance for new CIC members to meet each other’s families. We cemented bonds that will grow as we continue to serve.

We had a similar dilemma at my church. Our men’s Bible study hosts a pancake breakfast for the church at Christmas and Easter. Rather than allowing this to become another time constraint that took Dad away from the family, we developed a different concept. We invited the men to bring their children along to help prepare the pancakes. This became a valuable opportunity for our children and grandchildren to learn to serve. They practiced putting others first and assisting the church community, all while having fun with family and friends. These are just a few simple examples of evangelizing while including the family and serving the Lord!

PRAY:

Father, show me where you want me to serve you. Put the name of someone I can serve or involve in service on my heart.

REFLECT:

How do I spend my time in my prayer, work, CIC and church activities? Ask the Holy Spirit if he wants some changes here.

DISCUSS:

What can we do to better serve CIC, our churches and our families? Where can we involve others in these activities?

Making a Difference in the Workplace

By Frank Adamo

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

Don’t you find it amazing how the Holy Spirit works through people we know and chance encounters? I do. While getting coffee at the office recently, I ran into a former colleague. I asked how he was doing, and his response stopped me in my tracks. He said, “I’m not doing well at all and I don’t like being here.”

About 12 years ago we had worked together on an international account in Kobe, Japan. I was stationed in Phoenix and he in Japan. While working there, he met a nice woman and got married. He had talked often about how he loved Japan and the lifestyle of the community in that country. Now, here he was back in the States, very much contrary to his desires.

We spent some more time talking. Presently I asked him if I could pray with him about his situation and ask the Lord to provide an opportunity for him to move back to Japan. I told him God had a plan for his life. His response shouldn’t have surprised me, but it did. He said, “Of course!” It clearly had never even occurred to him to ask God to help him move his family back to Japan.

He left the conversation with a big smile on his face, as though he had something to look forward to. This was not a chance occurrence.

Now, when going to the cafeteria for coffee or lunch, I look for him to catch up on how he is doing in his quest to move his family back to Japan. We can make our own opportunities to help elevate people’s lives and share the hope that comes through prayer.

PRAY:

Father, give me the courage to pray for and with others. Please show me someone who needs prayer today.

REFLECT:

Have I been listening in the marketplace for the opportunity to pray and share about Jesus with others?

DISCUSS:

What can we do today to reach out to someone in the marketplace who needs prayers or a listening ear?
Holding Each Other Accountable

By Frank Adamo

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and coworker in God’s service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:2)

My wife and I had the pleasure of hosting Aloysius Mugisa for a day before the 2015 CIC Annual Conference. I had met Aloysius at his first CIC conference when he was one of the speakers. I remember distinctly the video he brought to that conference and how amazed I was to see all of the families working together to bring Christ into their churches.

In our home Aloysius shared about the need for water and wells in Fort Portal, Uganda and the nearby villages. I explained that we were introducing CIC in the East Mesa area by inviting our CIC members to speak at our parish. Over the past two years we have invited Darren Handy, Joe Blanco and Jon Cassady to be guest speakers at the Men’s and Women’s Bible Study Breakfast at All Saints parish. The fruit of those talks was the men’s and women’s commuter Challenge Weekend we held in January 2015. We knew our friends at church would immediately connect with Aloysius’ story because of the 57 wells that had been provided to Uganda through one of our member’s Flowing Waters ministry.

While most folks were still asleep at 5:30 a.m. the Saturday of the 2015 Annual Conference, Aloysius and I were traveling to All Saints Church so that he could be a guest speaker at the 6:00 a.m. Men’s and Women’s Bible Study. What started as a short 10-minute talk evolved into a 25 minute sharing about CIC and its growth in Uganda.

Have you thought about involving one of your CIC brothers or sisters in your other ministries? The Holy Spirit may want to use you to build his church and to help to spread our CIC mission.

PRAY:
Lord, thank you for the men and women who mentor us in CIC and serve our families.

REFLECT:
Is there someone in my other ministries that may benefit from meeting a CIC brother or sister? What can I do to introduce them?

DISCUSS:
Where can we share about CIC? In what forums should we be promoting our Vision and Mission?

CHRISTIANS IN COMMERCE APPAREL

Christians in Commerce supports our goal to equip Christian men and women to live the life of Christ through various means.

In order to further increase our visibility and affect a larger surface area, we are providing you with the opportunity to purchase items of clothing that display our CIC logo. The items you can select from include shirts, jackets and hats, and are provided by a CIC vendor. The prices they are offering are at a discounted rate. Please click the pictures on this page to view a larger image, and our CIC logo.

To view these products, and for additional details, please visit: www.cicintl.org/cicwearables.
Personal Sacrifice  
By Brenda Fox

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

After working as a mental health professional for many years, I found myself hitting a wall and burning out this year. It wasn’t just the intensity of working with people in recovery from drugs and alcohol, but also working in an environment where I began to feel less appreciated for my expertise from the administration. This had been stressful and disheartening. My job was at a dead end and I knew I needed to leave.

I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten. (Joel 2:25)

One of my business endeavors is to teach people how to paint religious icons. Iconography is the ancient art of painting Christian images that tell the story of salvation history. For example, if you’ve ever been to Greece or wandered into an Orthodox church, you would see these stunning images of our Lord Jesus and his disciples. Part of the discipline involved in painting an icon is to pray as you paint and to do so in silence.

One of the first iconography workshops I taught was in Texas, and I will never forget one very special student. Katie was 21 years old at the time and struggled with painting due to her cerebral palsy. She worked hard on her icon, praying the entire time and never complaining. After three and a half days, she finally reached her limit and could no longer go on. She was almost finished and working on the fine detail when she asked for my assistance. We completed her icon together.

While we were spraying the finished piece with varnish, I said to Katie, “You did it! Look what you did, it’s beautiful!” Her eyes opened wide as she gazed at what her hands and prayers had created. She burst into tears and covered her mouth in awe. She said, “I’ve been told by my family that I wouldn’t amount to anything, and the doctors told me I would never be able to paint or do anything like this! You’re right, Brenda, I did it with the Lord’s help!”

Katie was proud of herself and so was I. She became my hero! I realized at that moment how the Lord would use me to bring healing to his broken world and redeem his creation through the teaching of iconography.

Lord, give me the courage to admit my dreams to you. When I am afraid, please remind me that you are with me as I step out in faith.

What are the burning desires and dreams in my heart that I am afraid to pursue?

Be courageous and share your dreams with the group. Discuss one thing you can each do to pursue your dream and step out in faith.

Lord, thank you for letting me know that you are using my gifts and talents to bring healing to the world.

What are some of my skills and abilities that could be used to heal others?

Share with the group how you hope God will use you to bring more healing to the world.
The Fruits of Our Relationships as Sisters

By Brenda Fox

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

We can’t always see how we affect others in a positive manner. Whenever I’ve been asked to write for the CIC newsletter, I often find myself struggling to identify how God has been working through me. We have had a number of wonderful women come and go in our WCIC-Phoenix Chapter over the years. I am especially grateful for my good friend Cathy, who has been attending for almost as long as I’ve been in the chapter. We got to know each other well and spent hours together for a good year and a half as she helped me find and purchase my first home. During that time, Cathy also needed my help and wisdom. For years I’d been working in substance abuse treatment centers and she would ask for my assistance, support and guidance regarding a loved one who was struggling with addiction.

Through the years we have gotten to know one another’s stories and supported one another every step of the way. When I get stuck and can’t think of anything to write about for the newsletter, I often call Cathy and ask her, “Cathy, where do you see God working in my life?” Her response is usually, “Are you kidding me? What about when…?” Or “How about the time when you…?” “Oh yeah!” I’ll reply. I can always seem to count on her to see something productive happening in my life.

I am grateful that Cathy has been there to see things happening in my life that I cannot see myself. What a blessing to have formed such a strong bond of sisterhood over the years! Today I am grateful that the Holy Spirit has woven our friendship together.

PRAY:

Dear Lord, thank you for valued and committed friendships. Help me to identify the areas where I can strengthen these bonds and be the “strand” that is not quickly broken.

REFLECT:

Which friends in and out of WCIC can I count on at any time to be there for me?

DISCUSS:

Share a time when you have been there for a friend or they have been there for you. If she is in WCIC, take a moment to let her know how much you appreciate her.

THE CIC OFFICE STAFF WELCOMES EMILY HUNT

The CIC Staff is excited to introduce Emily Hunt, who has recently joined the CIC office. Emily has been assisting the office as an Administrative Assistant. She’ll also be assisting while Theresee Rosenthal is on maternity leave. Theresee will remain on staff, and will be returning after her leave.

Emily grew up in the Northern Virginia area and is a senior at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA.

She can be reached at emily@cicintl.org.

Welcome, Emily!
WCIC BOARD WELCOMES SHARON ROSE!
The Women's CIC Board of Directors is pleased to welcome Sharon Rose!
Sharon was a witness to the writing of the first Challenge Weekend as her husband, Bud, along with CIC's two other founders, Louis Grams and John Mooney, drafted the weekend in an upper room above Mooney's shoe store in 1983. Sharon was a speaker for the Women's Track at CIC Annual Conferences prior to the formation of Women's Christians in Commerce. She is a member of the recently-established WCIC-South Bend/Elkhart Chapter, where she currently serves on the Service Council.
Sharon has a Bachelor of Arts degree from St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, IN, and was blessed in so many ways in her career teaching second grade. She has been a women's leader and done pastoral work in the People of Praise, a charismatic, ecumenical, Christian covenant community, of which she and Bud have been members since 1972. They have been married for 54 years and the Lord has given them a treasure in their 6 children, their spouses, and 30 awesome grandchildren!
Sharon can be reached at sharon.s.rose@gmail.com.

SALINAS VALLEY CHALLENGE WEEKEND
By Ken Balestrieri
I am proud to report that our Challenge Weekend that took place November 14-15 was a life-changing event for all who attended! There were 13 men in attendance, including 1 brother from the Gilroy Chapter, 4 from our Spanish-speaking Challenge Group, and 2 first-time participants.
While our chapter's Spanish-speaking weekends have always been a great blessing, it was truly delightful to be able to share a weekend with our Hispanic brothers. It added a beautiful dynamic to the group experience.
The team was faithful in their preparations leading up to the weekend and performed with courage, obedience and humility. The talks were textbook and powerful. The Spirit of God moved through each of us and we are now more equipped to answer the call of Galatians 2:20 by dying to ourselves and allowing Christ to live in us!
CHRISTIANS IN COMMERCE PRAYER

Father,
You are my Lord and Creator.
You entrust me with a place of stewardship in your creation.
Fill me with your Holy Spirit:
That he may teach me to pray and live in Christ and as Christ;
That he may teach me love for family, friends and all people.
A love that is selfless, humble, and wise;
That he may teach me stewardship of the talents, time, money and possessions you have given me.
A stewardship that serves is generous and brings honor to your name;
That he may teach me faithfulness to your call to Christians in Commerce.
A call that unites us and builds your Kingdom in the marketplace.
Through Jesus Christ who is Lord.

Amen

VISION: Being Christ in the workplace
MISSION: To encourage and equip Christians to be God’s presence in the workplace by the power of the Holy Spirit, exercising faith, integrity, and excellence
VALUES: Christians in Commerce is an ecumenical organization committed to:
• Growing and being transformed in Jesus Christ
• Manifesting the gifts of the Holy Spirit
• Building strong brotherhood and sisterhood
• Serving God and expanding his Kingdom in all aspects of our lives