We kick off the year with a new look. This month’s issue builds on our 2017 Annual Conference, *Coworkers in Christ: Being a Servant Leader*, and continues to explore CIC’s history while looking to the future.

New elements include:
- A front page that will focus on current business trends
- Combined men’s and women’s reflections
- Reflections built around a single theme
- Special features, quotes, and insights supporting us in our call
- Monthly inserts to be pulled out and shared with others beyond CIC.

CIC embraces storytelling to show how God is active at work. Personal stories are relatable and memorable. To help grow CIC and reach out to the next generation, the redesigned newsletter offers clear, workplace-focused reflections to draw younger men and women into your sphere of influence. The first change was to consolidate the men’s and women’s reflections.

To help focus our message, each monthly reflection will relate to a theme. The theme of this issue is leadership. Upcoming themes include stewardship, forgiveness, and redemption. In this issue, we are grateful for the contributions of CIC Chairman of the Board Rich Preuss.

Inspired by his experience at the 2017 Annual Conference, Rich has generously shared four reflections on leadership that encourage embracing the benefits of change, establishing attainable goals, promoting CIC, and working in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and taking practical action steps to spread CIC’s mission.

Future issues of the newsletter will feature new content as well as stories that draw upon the wealth of the CIC archives. Three writers will contribute to each issue.

We’re excited to launch a new section that will feature posts, articles, and stories of Christians applying faith to the workplace. We will include insights by experts in the field and firsthand accounts of working for our Father. As described in Colossians 3:23, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”

Another new feature crucial to expanding CIC’s outreach efforts is the addition of newsletter inserts designed to be shared with others beyond CIC. While the newsletter will still lead chapter meetings and Challenge Groups, the inserts will provide a valuable single-page resource that we can pull out and give to coworkers, businesses, churches, men’s and women’s fellowship groups, friends, or family members with practical applications for being Christ in the workplace.

Please join me as we utilize the gift of this new and informative newsletter in building God’s kingdom in the workplace.

I pray 2018 will be your best year yet and you will be blessed abundantly.

Terry Cassell is President of Christians in Commerce. He has been married to his wife, Alicia, since 1989 and together they have five children. He may be reached at cassell@cicintl.org.

By Terry Cassell

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Every year, around 45 percent of us seize upon the desire for a fresh start at the New Year. We make one or more resolutions regarding a project that we plan to tackle or a habit that calls for some kind of change.

Over the years, you’ve probably heard some clichés about change. In the words of a song, “A change would do you good.” Accepted wisdom says, “The only thing that never changes is change,” and “the more things change, the more they stay the same.”

Change has come to the *Challenge Newsletter*. I encourage you to embrace it and use the new elements to help spread the mission of CIC. This is the start of many changes ahead for CIC that will benefit the entire ministry.

Amidst all this change, there is one constant we can always count on—our never changing Lord. As described in Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

May you continue to experience the power, grace, and love of God our Father, his son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

I wish you all a very Happy New Year!
Checkups and Change  
By Rich Preuss

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? (Luke 14:28)

In September 2016, I went to the doctor for a physical. One of the forms I signed allowed them to release information to my wife, Beth. A few days later, I came home from work ready to cook steaks on the grill. As I went to get the steaks, Beth told me that she got me some fish for dinner. I told her that I was looking forward to steak. We compromised and I had surf and turf. The next morning Beth told me the doctor had called the day before. “Based on the information, you have a 60 percent chance of a heart attack in the next 10 years. That is why I was pushing the fish last night. I really need you to stay alive for a long time,” she said.

I had to lose weight and lower my cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. No longer could I have a vague goal of losing weight. I had to get serious.

At the same time, we were looking at goals at work. We needed to move beyond goals to leading indicators—those things, that when done, lead to achieving the goal. I knew I needed to set up leading indicators in my own life—including portion control, no dessert, two glasses of wine per week, and 45 minutes of exercise four times per week. By the end of the year, I had lost 27 pounds, dropped 80 points off my cholesterol, and moved my blood sugar and blood pressure into normal ranges.

Like me, Christians in Commerce needs to change. The CIC vision is “Being Christ in the Workplace.” Our mission is “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.” Those are integral to our ministry and don’t need to change.

What needs to change is each of us. CIC members have to connect our goal of growing and bringing Christ into more of the marketplace. He does that through us. We need to start thinking about market penetration.

PRAY:
Lord, open my eyes to the possibilities in front of me.

REFLECT:
Is my CIC involvement one of good intentions? Am I all in and willing to do what it takes to build the kingdom of God within the circumstances of my daily life?

DISCUSS:
What are some opportunities in front of you for connecting your work and your faith?

Personal Plans of Action  
By Rich Preuss

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (Luke 14:31)

A reporter once asked Mother Teresa what was the biggest problem in the church. She turned to him and said, “The biggest problem in the church is you and me.”

If we ask what the biggest problem is facing CIC, the answer is the same: you and me. Our Father rules the world and we are his stewards. He has sent us out to bring in a harvest. And when he comes to collect the harvest, he isn’t interested in our excuses. He has given us a vision along with the resources, skills, and incentives to make his presence a reality in the workplace. He is waiting for each of us to implement a personal plan of action.

Every business has multiple challenges. In my business, I’ve always found it helpful to focus on a few goals. Trying to change too much at once can result in paralysis and can lead to abandoning the goals. If I focus on a few goals at a time until I see them to completion, I usually can achieve success.

In your group, discuss what you can do to bring Christ into the workplace. Have each member write down three things they want to focus on next year. Then put your goal out there and make yourself accountable. Accountability raises the stakes. Are you full of hot air, or pursuing excellence? As Christians, we should always be about excellence.

Begin to pray about people these leading indicators should connect to. Think about whom you should be reaching out to as you work on these goals. Ask the Lord to put people on your heart and then list the names that come to mind.

PRAY:
Holy Spirit, help me to see the possibilities and to overcome my fears.

REFLECT:
What can I specifically do to move the CIC mission and vision forward?

DISCUSS:
What concrete actions can you take and are you willing to be accountable?
The Gift of Goals  
By Rich Preuss

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. (James 1:23-25)

I have a stock certificate in my drawer which I have been meaning to frame for quite some time. When I was a 22-year-old college student, back in 1980, I purchased 500 shares of Temp-Stik Corporation. It was $.25 per share and I was sure I was going to get a tenfold return over the next few years like I had done with the $150 purchase of Computer Consoles. Temp-Stik was a no-brainer. They had developed a medical thermometer which gave a patient’s temperature within 10 seconds. Having grown up enduring thermometers stuck in my mouth for 3 minutes, I was sure a 10 second reading would be so much more efficient for the medical community and definitely more patient friendly. I watched with excitement as it went to $.50/share, then $.75/share. Within a year I had tripled my money. Two years later it was gone. Temp-Stik went belly up. It was a great idea, but the sales and marketing department must have been really bad.

I don’t want CIC to be like Temp-Stik. We have great products: Working for Our Father series, podcasts, a dynamic Challenge Newsletter, and life changing Challenge Weekends. Combine those with effective Challenge Groups and Chapters, and the possibilities are endless.

Here in South Bend, the CIC chapter has experienced exciting growth in the last year. It began with a Service Council willing to live in the creativity of the Holy Spirit. Led by Randy Raciti, the Service Council was willing to admit that we needed to change. The chapter had not grown in years and the average age of our members continued to climb. What changed?

• We decided to put on a Working for Our Father series. We did it at a local business so it wasn’t perceived as a church program. We invited lots of people and we sent out the trailer video to the people invited. It was posted on Facebook. We thought we’d have about 10 chapter members and 10 guests. We ended up with almost 50 people; 35 of them had never been to a CIC meeting. The end result was two new dynamic Challenge Groups.

• We decided our main focus would be on Challenge Groups. The most important thing that can happen in CIC is for a small group to gather weekly, focus on the newsletter reflection, and have a meaningful conversation about how that reflection personally affects them and how it is challenging them to stretch and change. The challenge groups are focused; there isn’t discussion about sports, politics, or current items in the news. The primary purpose of the groups is to bring Christ into the workplace and to encourage and equip each other with the necessary tools to be agents of change. It has been incredible to see how many people move from saying “I could never pray with someone” to “I prayed with this person last week and it was awesome.” Men are sharing their struggles and challenges, too. There isn’t sugar coating in the groups.

• Chapter meeting attendance was stagnant. Meeting at 6:45 on Thursday mornings just didn’t work for a lot of younger people who had to get children off to school. We changed our meetings to evenings once a month. Attendance has been 50 percent higher with the new meetings and we are getting the younger members to attend and understand there is a bigger picture beyond the Challenge Group.

Great prayer, reflection, discussion, and openness to the Holy Spirit—along with honest self-evaluation—has led to success in the South Bend chapter. Unlike Temp-Stik, it has resulted in a great product effectively being brought to market.

Watch CIC President Terry Cassell deliver his General Session talk “Being a Coworker in Christ” from the 2017 Annual Conference at https://vimeo.com/241420425
Increasing Christ's Presence

By Rich Preuss

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away…(Acts 8:39)

The growth of CIC is totally dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. Like Philip in the Acts of the Apostles, our job is to be available when the Spirit moves. But we also work in the world of the Incarnation. Our Father isn’t manipulating people like marionettes. He depends on us to do the heavy lifting.

Over the last couple of years I have seen almost all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifested in our Challenge Group. The discomfort of some over these gifts has given way to an extraordinary openness because of the fruit resulting from the exercise of these gifts.

The incarnation came about through the Holy Spirit’s action. It continues in us. Our Father is asking if we are willing to be the presence of Christ in the world today.

What are some things we can do to increase awareness of Christ’s presence? Here are a few things that I considered:

- Pray daily for 30 minutes—it will change you over time like sand paper on rough wood
- Send a personal weekly encouragement to attend a chapter meeting or Challenge Group
- Make a list of people and commit to having breakfast, lunch, or coffee with one person on the list each week to share about CIC
- Call on one small business a month for the purpose of putting on a Working for Our Father series
- Forward the daily reflection to someone at least once a week
- Host a Working for Our Father series in my home for a small group
- Start a second Challenge Group with a new time and location (without leaving your current group)

- Make a commitment to pray with one person a month for the baptism of the Holy Spirit or healing
- Commit to excellence in the workplace. Be the best worker/manager/owner you can be to reflect Christ’s presence.

We all have things we can do. We need to pray about what we can do and then act.

Rich Preuss serves as Chairman on the CIC Board of Directors. He has been married to his wife, Beth, since 1983, and together they have 10 children. He, along with four others, is an owner of the Healy Group, a full service financial and risk management firm. Rich may be reached at richpreuss@alumni.nd.edu.

PRAY:

Holy Spirit, I’m available. Remove the obstacles, fears, and doubts that prevent me from being all in.

REFLECT:

What is holding me back?

DISCUSS:

What are the possibilities you have in front of you and the obstacles you need to overcome?

Working for Our Father (WFOF) series are now listed and promoted on our CIC Website event page www.cicintl.org/events. Each chapter can now promote their upcoming WFOF series event by listing them on their chapter website. The WFOF series assists Christians in aligning their careers with God’s mission.

To preview and learn more about the series and how to obtain materials, please go to www.cicintl.org/wfof or contact the CIC Home Office, info@cicintl.org or (703) 205-5600.
SOCIAL MEDIA

In last month’s newsletter, we outlined our new focus on social media. This month we provide a more detailed approach to our strategy and the benefits of each platform.

INSTAGRAM
The first platform to note is Instagram, an application that is primarily accessed through handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets. Instagram makes use of photography and videos, two significant forms of communication used by the next generation. In an effort to reach this younger audience, CIC has begun posting a wide range of content including promotions for our podcasts, clips from our conference speakers, and inspirational quotes or scripture. This tactic has proven successful as 52 percent of CIC’s followers on Instagram are between the ages of 18-34.

FACEBOOK
Facebook is another social media site that CIC is leveraging to expand our audience. This platform is more of a community-based site in which individuals can interact and learn from their friends and family, as well as their favorite organizations. Through Facebook we can offer people a glimpse into our community and the numerous resources we offer. Unlike Instagram that is limited to photos and videos, Facebook allows for direct links to our website, audio from our podcasts, and even the ability to live stream. This new approach increased our audience reach sevenfold over the previous three weeks on Facebook.

LINKEDIN
The final platform is LinkedIn, an online social media forum for professionals. As CIC’s mission is being Christ in the workplace, this site is ideal. LinkedIn facilitates a community of members to connect by sharing links or graphics that are more specifically workplace driven including topics such as sharing our faith in the workplace, relationships with coworkers, or other challenges in the workplace.

All three social media sites allow CIC to propel our message to a multitude of individuals to provide resources to not only benefit their workplace, but also their faith.

HOW YOU CAN HELP
Last month, we encouraged you to connect with us on Facebook and the other platforms and to “Like” and “Share” our content. By doing so, the number of individuals who see our material will increase significantly.

An example of this was clearly demonstrated in two images we shared on our Facebook page. One image had only two likes and no shares, while the other image had 20 likes and was shared four times. The image with only two likes was seen by 66 people while the latter image was seen by close to 600. The more engagement that we have on our posts, the greater the reach our message will have.

For this reason alone, join us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to help spread CIC’s message.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

recent post featured on Instagram and Facebook
How should Christians respond to hostility to their faith in the workplace? Some people believe that faith should be private, not to be shared or otherwise evident in the workplace. Others object to hearing talk about Jesus, complaining that they do not want Christians imposing their beliefs on them. They contend that the workplace should be a religious free zone.

St. Paul has a beautiful and comprehensive definition of love in his first letter to the Corinthians. He says love is patient and kind, does not engage in envy, nor boasts of being proud. It is not rude or self-seeking, easily angered, or keeps a record of wrongs; love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth. He says that love should always protect, trust, hope and persevere. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

**PEOPLE WILL NOTICE**

There is no law against love in the workplace. There is no employee handbook that can object to conduct exhibiting these characteristics. If as Christians, we adhere to these actions, we will stand out; people will notice that we are different; they will seek our counsel and advice on both business and personal matters. When I worked at Mobil, there was a certain executive who, when he learned of my affiliation with a Christian ministry called Christians in Commerce, would mock my Christianity when we were with other colleagues, but when we were alone would ask me numerous questions. With others present he would contend that Christians in Commerce was an oxymoron, but privately, he would ask me what we did, and seek my opinion on things in the Bible he did not agree with. Whether he realized it, he was searching for God, and because of the credibility established in our relationship over many years, the Lord may have given me the opportunity to plant some seeds.

**A BETTER WITNESS**

Our initial witness to Jesus Christ is usually better accomplished with conduct than words. The conduct establishes the credibility and opens the door for the words to have more impact when the opportunity arises. The expression, “talk is cheap” applies to Christians too. If you want the opportunity to witness to Christ with your words, witness first with your conduct. Hostility to Christians in the workplace is often a reaction to words that come before the credibility of affirming conduct.

What workplace can object to patience, kindness, humility, forgiveness, truth, protection, hope, trust, and perseverance—in other words, love?

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**SNAPSHOT PODCASTS AVAILABLE ONLINE**

To complement our Working for Our Father video series, we have created 20 new audio tracks called Snapshot Podcasts. They start with a snapshot of a true experience of being Christ in the workplace and then draw additional insights into working for our Father. Snapshot Podcasts share the experiences of other coworkers and provide insights designed to help you apply them to your own situation. Listen to them during your commute, or whenever convenient. They are short and easy to listen to.

We hope that you enjoy our current series:

- Series 1: Accepting the Father’s Gift of Work
- Series 2: Triumphing over Toil, Trials, and Temptations
- Series 3: Aligning Your Career to God’s Mission
- Series 4: Operating in the Fruit of the Spirit

For more information, go to www.cicintl.org/snapshot.
REACHING 20,000 BY 2020

The goal of Christians in Commerce as an organization is to change 20,000 lives by the year 2020, and social media can play a vital part in accomplishing this goal. As noted at this year’s annual conference and in the December newsletter, we have renewed our social media efforts. This focus is instrumental in reaching the next generation of CIC members, many who engage largely through social media.

In the past two months, we have seen consistent growth in our social media outreach. On Facebook, we have seen a 134 percent growth in the number of unique individuals that we have reached with our content as compared to the previous two months. The two major reasons for this increase are a rise in engagement and new content from the conference.

Prior to these last two months, we had an average follower growth on our Facebook page of 1.5 percent. During these most recent two months, this number jumped to 15 percent each month. With more people following our pages, and liking, sharing, or commenting, our posts will be seen by more users than we were able to reach before. At the conference, we live streamed many of the speaker sessions and promoted them on Facebook. Since then, over 4,000 unique individuals have watched these videos—over 25 times the number of people that attended the conference!

We have seen similar growth on our Instagram page. As noted in last month’s newsletter, 50 percent of our followers were between the ages of 18-34 and this percentage has continued, even as we have grown in our follower count. In addition, we have seen a 50 percent growth in people liking our posts. As with Facebook, more likes and comments on our content means more users will see our posts.

A special thanks to those of you who have been following us on social media, we appreciate your help in spreading the CIC workplace movement. We encourage those of you who have not yet followed us on Facebook and Instagram to join us on these sites to help promote CIC’s mission of being Christ in the workplace.

If anyone needs help in getting started, please contact Alex at soholt@cicintl.org.

With 907 attendees, the three-day Uganda Bible Conference was a huge success. To find out more, go to www.cicintl.org/2017-uganda-bible-conference.
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

Galatians 2:20
As described in Matthew 20:1-16, a prosperous and successful vineyard owner goes out to hire the workers he needs for the day. Unlike other owners, he goes himself. He knows how many he needs and hires the exact number. He hopes the others will find work.

But, he can’t stop thinking about the ones he left behind. Throughout the day, he returns to where workers still wait to be hired. He doesn’t return just once but four additional times to see if others are still waiting for work. Each time he hires more.

Then, with only an hour of the workday left, he goes one last time. He finds a handful still waiting. His compassionate heart is moved. He hires them all. They have not given up...they did not want to go home empty handed. He wants to help and gives them work to do. He will let them contribute and receive pay for their labor. They will be able to return home, heads held high, respect and dignity intact.

When it comes time to be paid, only the first have an agreement to be paid a day’s wages. The others trust him to do what is right. He surprises everyone. Starting with the last hired he pays everyone the same, a full day’s wages.

To some it seems unfair to those who have worked longer; but they are only looking at things with the world’s eyes. The Father brings the kingdom’s view of justice to the forefront and his justice is cloaked in mercy.

The Father knows the importance of work in his plan. He is eager for all to find dignity in being useful to one another—to experience together the gratifying, satisfying experience of working together, solving problems and being fruitful. And, to share together in the fruit of their labor.

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**Aligning Our Careers with God’s Mission**

In our own work, our Father calls us to align our careers with his mission to restore all things. In addition, he desires we draw others into the good labor of his vineyard. To give them the dignity of applying skills and growing in abilities.

Working in the Father’s vineyard is also a metaphor for our own role as Christian laborers. The work of agriculture takes what nature has to offer and makes something of it.

Our occupations are similar. Like Adam, we are put in God’s garden of creation. We are called to work the soil entrusted to our care, to get our hands dirty. We take the raw materials God provides and draw potential out of them. The biblical perspective of this is to be a steward of creation. As Christians, we are stewards of all that is entrusted to us. For this reason, our occupations really matter. They are key to our stewardship for society and God’s creation.

**Stewards of Creation**

Many of our livelihoods are linked to meeting the needs of society—food, drink, clothing, shelter, and healthcare. Without a good economy societies don’t run well. It’s important that industry, commerce, and government work well together for the good of all.

Working for our Father is a call to be stewards of his creation; to make ourselves useful to both God and one another, each doing our part. Our Father is the compassionate employer calling us to join him in his good work—to live a life of dignity; to work with faith, integrity, and excellence. And, like him, to do it for the good of all, not for personal benefit. Life in Christ is a life of self-giving, not self-serving. As we serve him and others, he wants us to draw others into the work of restoring all things, to experience firsthand the dignity of work and being a productive worker.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, these are the choices we’re called daily to make. Daily choices are the chisels that sculpt our character. Daily choices determine how well over time we will reflect the image and character of Christ; especially, choices to live a life of faith, integrity, and excellence.

Excerpted from "Accepting the Father’s Gift of Work" video from the Working for Our Father Series.
Compartmentalization is a big thing in the workplace today. People have their private faith life and a public work life. We're conditioned to think there should be a wall between them. But that just isn’t the way I should live my life. I’m actually called to live that faith in my public life and invite Jesus into those situations that frustrate me. My Challenge Group makes a big difference. This group has been enormous for me in terms of accountability and brotherhood. I can come to my group and share with these guys who have no judgement. I know they will support me and love me, just as the Father loves us.

Charlie Singleton

When I feel overwhelmed with a situation, my Christians in Commerce sisters validate my struggles, pray for me, offer a scripture or Christian devotional reading of encouragement, and the grace they cover me in equips me to offer that same grace to myself and others. The catalyst for me to be Christ in my workplace is my love for Jesus, that he may increase and I may decrease, and that when I see my Father face-to-face, I can hear him say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant!”

Genoveva Badillo

“I BELIEVE THAT SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION IS HIGH ON GOD’S AGENDA... AND THAT THE CHIEF FORCE TO BRING IT ABOUT WILL BE CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS MINISTERING IN THE MARKETPLACE.”

BY PETER WAGNER, WAGNER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE