Life is nuts for me right now. This month at work is the busiest we’ve had in a couple of years. With one of our team leaders on maternity leave and one of our projects being extra-complicated and demanding, it’s all-hands-on-deck trying to keep all the balls in the air.

Home life is hectic too. Our newborn joins her four older brothers and all that comes along with a young boy “culture,” plus hockey camps, birthday parties, and house/yard projects.

Then there are volunteer obligations (I mean opportunities) that felt like the right thing to do when I committed to them but feel quite different right now. My hectic month is not unique to me. We all have stretches of extra responsibilities, and increasingly, it may seem like the new normal. Keeping one’s sanity feels like a victory, although feeling actual peace as chaos swirls around seems like a pipedream.

This is not what God intended for us.

God wants us to thrive in his overwhelming love and peace in a way that isn’t possible through earthly means. He has given us the tools to rise above the chaos to find this true peace. How do we navigate, prioritize, and integrate all the facets of life into one that serves our Father, while helping our world and ourselves flourish? That’s what this year’s annual conference is all about—Work-Life Peace.

I am beyond excited for the conference this year. Our conference committee and board worked hard and prayed harder to structure the conference to continue the momentum we’ve seen through our growth initiatives. There’s been a strong focus on outreach this year to grow the influence of CIC and still deliver the benefits we’ve all come to value from belonging to the ministry.

Minneapolis is a new destination for us and it’s a great fit. The fall in Minnesota is about as good as it gets weather-wise. More importantly, we’ve made strong inroads with a number of local company Christian employee groups, churches, and other organizations that will enable us to welcome many fresh faces, ready to be impacted by our mission and example.

We’re also introducing engaging new formats. On the first day, a number of experts will give lightning talks (8-minute presentations) and participate on panels. There will also be presentations of powerful personal stories. Day two will feature highlights shared by members from across the organization. And there’s a lineup of afternoon workshops that are so good, you’ll have a hard time picking which ones to attend. Still included are praise and worship, fellowship, Emmaus Walks, Lord’s Day, etc. that make the Annual Conference a much-anticipated event.

Throughout CIC we are experiencing a new energy and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. Join me and hundreds of others at the conference on October 5-6. Discover ways to find that peace in your own life and experience the energy of all that God is doing through CIC.

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God’s work is never done. There’s always something that needs to be taken care of at home or at work. There’s always someone who needs help too. There are lost people all around us who need Christ.

Since there’s so much to be done, we all must do our share of the work. September 3 is Labor Day but for Christians, January 1 to December 31 are all labor days for God. Let’s focus 24/7 on our labor for him.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:4-5).

This scripture encourages us as the body of Christ to work together as we labor to build his kingdom. With that comes challenges, but it also brings a work-life/peace, the peace of Jesus Christ in our labor for him.

My peace I give you! Join us at our annual conference in October as we journey toward true peace in the Lord.

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Luke Cahill is a member of the Minneapolis-South chapter and is a member of the CIC Board of Directors. By his own admission, his participation in CIC has had a life-changing impact. Luke lives in Eagan, MN, with his wife, four young sons, and a new daughter. He owns REAL Insight, a market research company based in Minneapolis. He can be reached at lcahill@real-insight.us.

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**Where Three are Gathered**

By Rick Ridenour

*I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.*  
*(John 14:18)*

I reported to the 101st Airborne Division to begin my Army career in January 1975 having been commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant the previous May. The US involvement in Vietnam was winding down; part of the division was redeploying to Fort Campbell even as I arrived on post.

In college I had been part of a Christian charismatic community. Away from my “Christian Community lifeline” I felt very much alone. I knew the Lord would be with me but I was a little apprehensive about how I would fit in.

The first Saturday at Fort Campbell I went to a nearby church in Clarksville, TN, to pray. My prayer was specific: “Lord I need a Christian friend as I am not sure how I can live this life without one. I want to do your work but I can’t do it alone.” Soon after a young man about my age walked in, carrying a Christian book about the charismatic renewal that I had read in college. I waited for him to leave and I followed him out.

His name was John and he was also a 2nd Lieutenant. He worked in the building next to mine and it turned out we were in the same unit. He lived a block from me so we carpooled back to the base. Wasn’t it just like the Lord to provide me “Christian support” in the building right next to mine?

John invited me to a weekly prayer meeting in Nashville, something I would not have attended on my own, especially since we had to travel a dangerous route to get there and morning PT started at 6:30. We attended the Nashville meeting for a number of months until the Lord led us to start our own prayer meeting at Fort Campbell.

One day I needed to drive John’s car from Fort Campbell to Clarksville during “rush hour.” I had just learned to drive a stick and was self-conscious about driving. Suddenly a car behind me honked and pulled up next to me. The driver, another soldier, gestured to me to roll my window down.

He said, “Praise the Lord Brother, pull over.” I did and this 1st Lieutenant, also dressed in fatigues, jumped out of his car and gave me a big hug (while the rush hour traffic inched past). His name was also John and he had recently been assigned to Fort Campbell. He had prayed a prayer similar to mine and when he saw the Christian bumper sticker, which was unique to Charismatics, he assumed I was Charismatic.

I told him it wasn’t my car but I was delighted to meet another brother in the Lord. This John and his wife became family to me and they helped lead the prayer group at Fort Campbell. We remain close friends to this day.

In hindsight, none of us would have been effective in building the kingdom at Fort Campbell on our own. But the Lord brought us together and for three years we built a prayer group of military and civilians that touched many lives. We worked across denominations and helped sponsor many events for single soldiers. I met my wife through that prayer group.

Jesus said at the Last Supper that he would not leave the disciples “orphans” but would send his Spirit to be with them at all times. Little did I know that, for me, the Holy Spirit would also be named John.

**PRAY:**

Lord, send me a friend who I can lean on for support as I build your kingdom.

**REFLECT:**

Am I perhaps not seeing the people around me with the eyes of Christ?

**DISCUSS:**

Share a story when someone you least expected became an ally for the Lord.

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**2018 Annual Campaign**

We continue 2018 with a **BOLD VISION** for a **BRIGHT FUTURE**. With a goal to influence 20,000 lives by 2020, let’s invest in our mission together with prayers, financial support, and personal effort.

We’ve opened doors to thousands of Christians at several large corporations. We continue to grow our social media outreach. The Annual Conference will provide inspiration and a sense of renewal for attendees to face future challenges. We have launched the Nine to Five podcast series. Join us in realizing this bold vision to support others in being Christ in their workplaces.

**How can you help?**

Encourage a new generation of Christians to meet the call to align their careers with God’s mission by donating online at [www.cicintl.org/agc18](http://www.cicintl.org/agc18). Thank you for your continued prayers and support!
Growing Into a Job

By Jo Clark

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (I Corinthians 15:58)

A few years into my job as a teacher and the Head of School at a small, Christian junior high and high school, I started to resent and doubt my work. As the school flourished, I struggled with feeling overwhelmed and unprepared. I loved teaching and interacting with students, teachers and parents, but I was exhausted and experiencing the administrative side of my job as a burden.

When I took this burden to the Lord in prayer, he reminded me of a few things.

Don’t you actually really like to work? “Well, yes Lord. I love some kinds of work—working in my yard, giving my house a good cleaning, caring for my family, working to help someone else. In fact, I would often choose ‘work’ over many other ‘leisure’ activities.”

Didn’t I ask you to do this work of building a school and you said ‘yes’? “Yes, Lord, you are right again. I did thoroughly discern this work with you and with my husband and we said ‘yes’.”

Have I ever asked you to do something hard and not helped you? “No, you haven’t. I can look back and see your help and guidance in every challenging task we have worked on together!”

With the encouragement of the Holy Spirit I have embraced my work. I realize that this work is a blessing from the Lord and one that I freely said “yes” to. It’s an opportunity to work with him and for him. Simply changing my outlook on this work has freed me from experiencing it as a burden.

Great Expectations

By Eric Shreves

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

Early in my career, I somewhat bought into the Gospel of Disney’s beatitude “do what you love and you will never work a day in your life.” Like any false gospel, it contains some truth but it’s missing something. In this case it’s missing the centrality of redemptive suffering revealed through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

Fresh out of law school, I started my career at an exciting international brokerage firm working with a high flying glamourous team of colorful and larger than life executives. Immediately, I was able to cut my teeth on corporate accounts and fast-paced business development with high stakes meetings, fascinating lifestyles, and complex analytical work. It was exciting. I loved it.

Then came four kids in one year (another story), a relocation to the other side of the country, and a change in jobs to better align with this new season of life. The new job would meet our needs and build on my previous work but it was much more tedious, predictable, and boring. In the big picture, it was the perfect job for my family but the perpetual honeymoon I expected with my career was ending.

As I prayed more on my experience and expectations, the Lord gently challenged me to see this phase of boredom as a kind of cross to refine my heart and mind. Over a few years of persevering, I was promoted and came full circle back to working on more complex and exciting assignments but with a very different heart.

At home, I see my roles as a husband, father, and provider are all part of laboring for the kingdom. In the workplace, I see the Lord present in the more hidden parts of my daily work, in the little sufferings of monotonous tasks, routine meetings, and ordinariness. Putting love into what I do rather than seeking to do what I love has proven a firmer foundation. I find comfort knowing the Lord is present in my ordinary times of quiet faithfulness and I am doing my best to work with him.

Eric Shreves is a commercial real estate professional located in Portland, OR. He has been married to Hilary since 2000 and they have five children. Eric can be reached at ericshreves@hotmail.com.
Teaching to Learn

By Jo Clark

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

Julia, a young teacher with a heavy work load, spent a lot of time prepping, grading, and trying to make her classroom lively and productive. She had other school responsibilities and commitments outside of work. She was doing a wonderful job, but she was tired and stretched thin.

A few months into the school year, Julia told me about a student who was struggling in her math class. Claire listened, took notes, and attempted her homework, even if she couldn’t complete it. But she failed miserably on quizzes and tests and left blank pages or wrote answers that made no sense. She never spoke or asked questions in class.

Julia was frustrated because she had no idea what Claire was thinking or how to help her. She decided to invite Claire to meet one-on-one after school twice a week. Claire eagerly accepted and opened up to Julia in these meetings. Claire was able to communicate what she understood and what still confused her. She admitted she was reluctant to speak in class because she was afraid others would see how little she knew. Writing numbers and symbols was particularly challenging for Claire, but she could show what she was thinking through conversation, an opportunity provided in the tutoring sessions.

Joannah Clark is the Head of School at Trinity Academy in Portland, Oregon. She and her husband, Patrick, have three daughters. When not working at Trinity Academy she is probably working at home or baking with her girls. She can be reached at joannah.clark@trinityacademyportland.org.

2018 Annual Conference Registration Rates

The theme of this year’s Annual Conference focuses on bringing God’s good order into our lives. Registration is now open. Early bird registration rate is $205 and runs through September 6. Beginning September 7 the rate is $225. The spouse rate is $155.

The Annual Conference will be held on October 5-6 at the Embassy Suites Bloomington, MN. Please mark your calendars!

Room reservations are now being accepted at the conference hotel. Contact Embassy Suites at http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/M/MSPWEES-CIC20181003/index.jhtml or call them at 952-884-4811 or 1-800-Embassy. Ask for Group: Christians In Commerce or Group Code: CIC.
Using Our Talents

Each of us individually has different gifts and talents. God wants us to grow in our own abilities and increase the good we're able to do. A parable that illustrates this well is the parable of the talents. (Matthew 25: 14-30) There are many insights we can gain. Some surprise us. Let's put ourselves in the servant's role.

Parable of the Talents

In Jesus’ day, talents were the way money was measured. A talent was a lot of money. It was based on a little over 100 pounds of silver, which was more precious than gold at the time. One talent in today's dollars would be worth between 500,000 and a million dollars. It was real, tangible currency you could touch and feel. We often think this parable is referring to the “soft” skills and individual abilities but it is really about real, hard assets being cared for and developed.

The master entrusts these hard assets into each servant’s hands. Each receives a different amount and then the master goes away. Each is unique with their personal tendencies, abilities, and liabilities. What will they do? What will their results be?

They had been entrusted with these resources to advance the work of the master. They would be held accountable when he returned. The master expected them to be courageously faithful to him, no matter what others thought of him or the situations they would face.

Two demonstrate they can be trusted to make good use of what he has given them. They yield an increase.

The story is different for the third servant. Fearing his master’s reputation, he buries what was put into his care. He was more concerned about protecting himself, than serving his master. He discovers he didn’t know his master very well.

Three important takeaways:

1. It wasn't about the financial increase. The master's response says what was important. "Well done good and faithful servant." It's not about being successful in the world's eyes; it's about being faithful and serving God’s purposes. It's about care and advancing the master's goal.

2. The successful servants are humble. They attribute their success to the resources the master supplied rather than their hard work or personal talents.

3. Finally, their reward for good work was more work, so they would... "enter into the joy of [their] master."

Working for Our Father

The perspective of working for our Father changes everything. Success is in God's hands, faithfulness in ours. God wants our joy to be complete no matter how challenging or hostile our work environments might be.

As stewards of his creation all the details of our lives are important and of concern to God. Humbly we cry out with the Psalmist:

"May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands." (Psalm 90:17)

We need his direction, grace, and strength.

The solutions lie rooted in us, what we do, how we choose to use the resources entrusted to us. The areas we influence are assigned to us, areas in which God calls us to faithfully maximize resources both human and material.

We should start by ensuring that we do our work with excellence. The reality is Christians should be the best workers in the world. We've been freed from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit. We should continue to grow in our practical skills and abilities as well as the fruit of the Spirit.

The work begun by the disciples continues in our day. Over the centuries it has done well, it has done poorly. Doing what is right is a long and unfinished process.
Feeling Forgiveness

Work is God’s great gift to us. It’s a call to work for our Father, 24/7, 365 days a year, especially where we spend 60 percent of our waking hours – our workplace.

I work for a Christian company, a distributor of religious education materials. Several years ago, when I was a young programmer, I made a mistake that virtually shut our company down for three days. When I removed some testing language, I failed to tell the program when to stop. I knew something was wrong the moment I stepped off the elevator. Several people informed me they couldn’t access the computer system. I rushed to the computer room, dropping all my things outside the door, including my excellent lunch of leftovers.

When I got inside, it was clear that my program had run amok. I was devastated. My boss joined me and soon the company president and vice president came in as well. After we killed the program, the president’s first response was to lead us in a prayer for wisdom in figuring out the extent of the damage and how to repair it. He patted me on the shoulder and assured me it would work out.

It was bad. I had combined two-thirds of our item database into a single item. The order takers couldn’t take orders because most of the items didn’t exist. Accounting couldn’t invoice our customers. We couldn’t receive or ship items at our warehouse. Every aspect of our business ground to a halt.

By 2 p.m., we had a plan. To recover all the lost data, we had to go back to our last good backup and slowly apply each change to the database until everything was back to the way it was right before I started my program. It would take three days.

While we waited for our offsite backups, I stepped out of the computer room for the first time in six hours. I saw my long-anticipated lunch and realized it would be foolish to eat it unrefrigerated. Just as I was trying to figure out what I was going to do, one of the order takers came around the corner with a bag from Burger King. She had seen my poor leftovers and knew I would need help. It was an excellent lunch.

Throughout the next three days, no one said a critical word to me. At least once an hour, a coworker would stick his or her head in with a prayer or word of encouragement. I was covered in kindness.

Once the system was back up, I had to go to the warehouse. George immediately came up and thumped me on the back and said “Have you ever seen the warehouse so clean? We were able to get a lot done while we were down.” That was the extent of it from the warehouse.

The next Friday as my boss was heading out the door, she reminded me to double check my code one more time and start my program before I left. I can imagine a workplace where a person making such a mistake would be punished for years. It could have been brutal. That wasn’t what happened. Throughout the whole experience, I was forgiven over and over by the words and actions of my coworkers.

The Working for Our Father series uses professionally-developed, engaging videos to capture the imagination of attendees, opening up to them a world of possibilities in working for our Father, as coworkers in Christ, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the videos, the program is complemented by 20 brief audio podcasts that draw insights from first-hand accounts of faith in the workplace.

If you are interested in previewing the series and learning more go to www.workingforourfather.com/wfof-series
It’s not too often you come along a word as rich as entrust. It’s a bigger word even than the word trust. Let me tell you why (besides the two extra letters).

Hopefully, we have each worked with people we could entrust with tasks. Conscientious, considerate, determined individuals who want to do their best, no matter what comes their way. Those we cannot only emphasize how much we appreciate those we can rely on.

On the most basic level entrust means to give responsibility for doing something to a person. But it means so much more.

Having received this authority and ability, they entrust back to you that you will have their back and give them whatever help they might need if roadblocks beyond their authority come their way.

I had a supervisor who would give me the most challenging tasks to do. When he would see the fear in my eyes of what lay ahead, he’d smile and say, “All things are possible for he who doesn’t have to do it.” Even though I was shaken by my own limitations, inevitably we found our way through.

Wherever God has placed us, we are called to be good and faithful stewards. Stewards of the responsibilities, people, and relationships he has put into our hands. Jesus has entrusted his own mission from the Father to us in our homes, workplaces, and communities.

We likewise entrust our labor and results into his care. Entrust conveys a charge (we are entrusted to bring his life and kingdom into our world). Entrust conveys an act of bestowal (he entrusts us with the power of the Holy Spirit). And, entrust conveys a release (we entrust the results into his hands).

What has the Lord entrusted into your care at work, at home, in your community, and in your church?

We should be faithful to his entrustment, no matter the challenge. “In all things, we are more than conquerors.” (Romans 8:37)
Sometimes we wonder if what we wish for aligns with what God desires. When it comes to a career there are three things that need to come together - ability, affinity, and opportunity.

**Ability.** Do you have the skills to do the work? It's not just what we think. Will others confirm it? I might think I can sing, but can others stand to listen?

**Affinity.** Is the Spirit urging me to do something? Will others help me confirm that my motives are pure?

**Opportunity.** Am I being given an opportunity to do what I desire? Are people opening doors? Are they willing to offer me a job?

All three need to come together. Two won’t do. Ability, affinity, and opportunity.

Seeking God’s will isn’t about obtaining a detailed plan. God responds to what is happening around us. Life has twists and turns. Things we control. Things we don’t. God doesn’t always operate in a straight line.

Often we’re afraid of making a wrong turn, or bad choice, being left out, missing the boat. It’s more about trusting God and responding to the choices in front of us. Finding God’s will is more about learning what God desires and pursuing that. If we do, our decisions will line up with his plans.

Ability, affinity, and opportunity need to come together. They don’t need to happen in any particular order. In fact, they can happen in any order.

How has God worked in your life to put your skills and abilities to use? How can you make yourself useful to others?

Father, help me to see more clearly the skills and abilities that you have given me. Guide me in my present circumstances to see what you desire and what you are calling me to pursue, as well as who I can help find their way.

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**NEW PODCAST**

Check out the latest Nine to Five podcasts—conversations with Christians aligning their careers with God’s mission. Two new podcasts added monthly featuring Christian men and women sharing their work experiences and experts offering valuable insights. Listen, share with friends, and let us know what you think!

**AVAILABLE NOW:** iTunes: https://apple.co/2F8e8QG  Our Website: http://bit.ly/NinetoFive
2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE TAKES ON A FRESH LOOK

Minneapolis is beautiful in the fall and details for our Annual Conference are coming together. We’ll feature experts to provide fresh insights, members to share personal stories from the front lines, and a stellar lineup of special workshops—all with the goal of helping attendees experience God’s peace in the face of the demands of work and modern life.

The first day will appeal to long-time members as well as newcomers participating in local programs with churches and employee groups—including the Christian Community at ExxonMobil.

Experts will give “lightning” talks on subjects including “Sunday Matters on Monday,” “Falling in Love with Your Life,” “Intentional Living for a Purposeful Life,” and others. First-hand accounts of facing daily life challenges will be presented along with panel discussions.

The second day will include members’ accounts as well as three breakout sessions with six workshops. Workshops include:

- Facing the Unexpected Storm
- You’re Too Busy Not to Pray
- The Christian Approach to Conflict
- Letting God Lead to the Greater Good
- Drawing Others to Christ in a Post-Christian Culture
- Making the Most of our New Resources

Louis Grams (CIC co-founder) and his wife Nancy promise to be a special addition to the conference. They will lead the “Unexpected Storm” workshop inspired by years of facing significant challenges and working to overcome them.

The conference will provide plenty of opportunity for song, worship, and fellowship, with music led by worship leader Jim Rolland and members of the People of Praise music ministry.

In keeping with tradition, the Annual Conference will conclude with a special Lord’s Day celebration.

As talks and presenters are finalized, we’re updating the agenda on our website. A special “early bird” rate is available through September 6. Registration will close on October 2.

For registration and links to the Conference Flyer and updated agenda, go to www.ChristiansinCommerce.org/2018Conference.
2018 SEPTEMBER

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

Galatians 2:20

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

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