A Fresh Start
By Joe Bolil

Four years ago I found myself in an ICU hospital bed following a massive snowstorm that had hit the DC area. I soon learned that I’d been there for three weeks and could not recall the events of the previous month.

My diagnosis was cancer: B cell lymphoma of the brain. It was then that I learned of the Blessing of C. Yes, a blessing. I witnessed God’s people pour out support—physical, emotional, and financial—to me and my family. My colleagues and brothers in the Lord provided meals, rides, gifts of money, overnight stays and they helped keep my dental practice running.

Prayers came from longtime and new friends—nearby and across the globe. I never felt alone or abandoned. And I was comforted by the book It’s Not About Me by Max Lucado.

Then the next Big C came. Change. My dental career of over 35 years was abruptly sold in three months and I found myself on disability, which I thought I would never need to use. For three years I poured myself into physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery following months of hospital stays for chemotherapy to survive brain cancer.

During this time, the image of a tapestry came to me. One side had a beautiful scene designed by an artist and the other side was a mess of string and yarn that seemed all tangled up with no order. In life we live on this seemingly messy side. Continued on page 5

The Fruit of Good Communication

A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools. (Proverbs 26:3-5)

Proverbs can be blunt. A fruit of good communication is our own willingness to listen and learn. This is especially true in our relationship with the Lord where he desires our willing cooperation.

It’s important to be open to God’s voice and guidance in everyday situations. Each reflection tells a story of a challenging work situation and the learning that takes place. The writers share how they experienced the Lord’s counsel and grew in wisdom and love.

Animals can be tamed and trained, but they don’t really “get it.” Psalm 32:9 warns us, “Do not be like the horse or mule who have no understanding.”

Instead, the Lord promises in Psalm 32:8, “I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

Let’s not be mules! Let’s rely on his lovingkindness so we can experience understanding—the fruit of good communication with the Lord.

Continued on page 5

March Reflections: Pg 2-4

5 New CIC President
6 WorkLight Transformation
7 New Board Member
Who may live on your holy mountain?
... one who... casts no slur on others...”  
(Psalm 15)

Best practice in communication assumes an honest motivation in others. My favorite prophetic words about knowing the heart of God proclaim: “Seek me First. Seek me Early. Seek Me Often.”

My first job was in a rural Christian school, teaching third and fourth graders. One Monday morning, after a big basketball game, I was approached by two students and an adult concerning an incident at the game. Apparently, one of my young boys started a rumor that the coach was an alcoholic. Although it seemed out of character for him, I felt that I had to act on this information for the good of our school community.

Sometimes, I take action before searching for the heart of God or listening to the Holy Spirit. This was one such time. I confronted the young man privately, but very tersely considering his age. After all, the hearsay had been corroborated.

He was crushed that I thought he'd gossiped. My parent aide arrived and I brought her into the confrontation. This was God's saving blessing. She had been present at the event and testified he had been quoted incorrectly. The coach was his hero. In fact, his words had only boasted the Coach was a “milk-o-holic.”

Gossip is a sword that brings a measure of death when wielded without proof, without letting the accused explain their words, meanings, and intentions. It leaves a void until trust can be rebuilt.

Communication demands a tender spirit of love that assumes an honest motivation from all parties, seeks the Lord immediately, primarily, and continually before determining a course of action.

Vivian Tragesser and her husband, Mike, were married in 1995 and have three daughters. Prior to children, Vivian taught ENL and English in suburban-urban schools for 12 years and again for the last seven years. She can be reached at vidaluz@indy.rr.com.

**PRAY**

Lord, please encourage all of my communications to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

**REFLECT**

Do I always approach communication with a spirit of love?

**DISCUSS**

Share a time when you spoke without first listening to the heart of God.

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**FLAME**

The WorkLight.org is coming soon.
We hope it will spark a movement of the Holy Spirit by:
• Uniting Christians across traditions, occupations, and positions.
• Providing practical, on-demand resources.
• Assisting Christians in forming small groups.

To see an introductory video, go to WORKLIGHT.ORG
**REFLECTIONS WEEK 2**

**A Clean Sweep**

By Rob Thomas

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)

For almost 15 years I worked from home in tech. A number of years ago, I had been praying to God about who he wanted me to work with next. He put the name of a particular man on my heart, so I prayed for him and his business.

A few weeks later the phone rang and it was the man that God had named. He asked me to come to his office to repair his computer because his regular guy couldn’t make it. I was thrilled that God had given me this opportunity. Shortly after the work was done, the man offered me a contract.

Several months later, I was in the process of an upgrade to a server where many people had access to folders and files. I ran into a large chunk of data that was reserved for older documents when I found the worst possible content. Pornography. Within minutes I knew why God had sent me. After plugging his phone into his computer to charge it, the man’s files were automatically backed up and stored onto the corporate network. He had no idea what he had done but his sins were revealed. I immediately removed the files and put them onto a flash drive. I called to schedule a meeting but he was so busy it was two weeks until we could meet. My stomach was turning the entire time.

At the meeting, I handed him the flash drive and told him what was on it and where I found it. He was embarrassed and angry. I told him about how God had put him on my heart months earlier and that I was put there to protect him. Much worse things could have happened if I had not found the files first. I shared that I had been praying for him, his family, and for his businesses. He was thankful for my words and prayers and I still pray for them often.

Rob Thomas is president of the Chapter in South Bend/Elkhart, IN. He and his wife, Suzanne, have raised five children. He works for an IT service provider. He can be reached at rwt711@gmail.com.

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**PRAY**

Lord, give me ears to hear. Fill me with courage to speak your name into conversations when you direct me.

**REFLECT**

Have you ever been in a difficult situation where you needed to act courageously for God?

**DISCUSS**

Share about a time when you needed to do the right thing and how it made an impact on you or others.

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**REFLECTIONS WEEK 3**

**Pride Before the Fall**

By Vivian Tragesser

Then Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice, you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept. (Mark 14:72)

Many years ago I taught English to a high school class of 40 students from 15 countries. Then a new student arrived. He consistently arrived five minutes late and found every excuse to interrupt and not pay attention. He would work a little and then wander around and be a nuisance.

I prayed continually. However, I never quite trusted God would answer me. On the last day of school, the student asked if I would grade his final right away. I was put off by this request. Later, he returned to see if I had read his final. I told him I could not guarantee it that day. A third time he came. I was curt and told him that I would get to it when I got to it. I resolved to grade his exam last. I finally graded his final at two a.m. He had written a poem, in perfect English: Thoughts of you are always leading me toward honesty, sincerity, and caring. That moment the cock crowed twice for me, one for each morning hour. I had denied the student three times. God had offered me a moment to rejoice over a miraculous change of heart, and connect to him personally, and I had denied all avenues of communication. I, like Peter, wept. My hardness of heart and lack of faith in God’s answer to prayer had led me to disown him. I had forgotten that what we do to the least of our brothers we do to Christ. Communication is a matter of heart and being present to others.

I could have wallowed in my failure, but as Paul said, another law wages war against my mind and makes me captive to sin... Wretched that I am! Who will deliver me...? (Romans 7:23-25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” The Lord does not hold our sins against us. I would never see challenging relationships in the same way again.

**PRAY**

Lord, please help me to discover the valuable lessons that can be hidden in challenging relationships.

**REFLECT**

Have you ever been in a relationship that was so frustrating it prevented you from seeing the good in the other?

**DISCUSS**

Consider a time when you missed an opportunity to rejoice over someone’s change of heart.
Bringing Light to Darkness

By Rob Thomas

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. (Philemon 1:6)

I started out 2019 with a new job. It had been 20 years since I worked with other people in the same office space. I spent the first four months locked in a room learning the ropes, watching training videos, testing, developing my process, all the while getting to know my nine teammates at the water cooler and during lunch breaks. They all eventually knew that I followed Christ, but I had been cautious about bringing Christ into conversations. I would talk about going to CIC/WorkLight meetings and other Christian social events but never really opened up to anyone.

The next seven months were hard on our team. One man’s mother died. Another lost his grandmother. Someone else lost his brother and cousin (on the same day). Another man began divorce proceedings. Several of us were sick for weeks at a time with bronchitis and the flu. Our bookkeeper fell into a 4-foot hole and broke her shoulder. My boss’s sister closed her business and while he was helping her he got sick and coughed so hard that he collapsed a lung. We were certainly under attack by the demons in this world.

As these things were happening, I was able to speak to each member of our team that was struggling and tell them how we brought these events to our CIC/WorkLight Challenge Group where we prayed for them and their situations. In one instance, I was able to close the office door, and lay hands on my teammate and pray aloud for God’s intervention, wisdom, and grace upon his family.

During this time of hardship God was faithful. We brought in two new members from my team to WorkLight. Now half of the team attends our weekly Challenge Group meeting and the man who was planning to divorce is back together with his wife. Glory to God!

PRAY
Father, give me the courage to pray with my coworkers so that it will bring you glory.

REFLECT
What do I do when I hear that people are struggling at work?

DISCUSS
Springtime is a great time to celebrate what God has planned for the coming months. How are you going to help him spark a movement of the Holy Spirit at work?

Nine to Five Podcast
Listen to conversations with Christians about aligning our careers and workdays with God’s mission.

Learn from others, subscribe, and share with friends.

To learn more go to BIT.LY/NINETOFIVE
Christians in Commerce is pleased to introduce Wesley Farrow as our new president. Wes has an extensive background in education, public affairs, and nonprofit strategic planning and board governance. In his own words, he is “a practitioner of theology, prayer, curiosity, and compassion.”

Wes has held numerous leadership roles on the boards of nonprofit organizations and has been deeply involved in supporting local communities, working with educational organizations, coaching incarcerated men to improve their lives, and working for human rights in Northern Uganda.

Wes completed his Master of Divinity coursework at Northwestern Theological Seminary and is obtaining his Doctor of Philosophy in Ministry. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Psychology from the University of Michigan and a special education teaching credential from California State-Dominguez Hills.

“In response to this opportunity to work with CIC,” Wes notes, “It is a profound blessing to join you all at Christians in Commerce to advance God’s Kingdom through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God for the opportunity to work and pray together, that all of our brothers and sisters, as well as each one of us, continue to grow and be transformed in Jesus Christ.”

CIC is excited to have Wes join the journey to build WorkLight and bring the Kingdom of God to the workplace. Wes can be reached at wesley@cicintl.org.

Continued from page 1

At times we get a glimpse of the magnificent story God is designing on his tapestry. As in Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Over time I have seen “chance meetings” or “divine” appointments occur which helped me to experience the horizontal connections of God’s family. In 2018, a divine appointment helped me reconnect with a friend from my undergraduate years at Lafayette College who had a successful dental career in academia. A new door opened—a chance to teach but far from where I had lived for the previous 30-plus years.

With much prayer, I visited Omaha, Nebraska, and during the interview process I could see God’s hand at play. From the gentleman who knelt down to pray over me before my flight, to discussing the power of faith in dentistry during the interview, to providing a homeless man a meal at a restaurant before my interview dinner with my future department head.

I accepted a position at Creighton University and many threads have been added to the tapestry of my life. God has continued to bless me and my family, and I’m grateful for the outcome of having had cancer. I’m so thankful to experience the many gifts from Jesus when seen in the light of God’s plan.

Joe Bolil and his wife, Janine, were married in 1989 and have three grown children. They reside in Omaha, NE. Joe can be reached at JoeBolil@creighton.edu.
Tell me about your CIC experience.

I have participated in CIC for over four years and it has had a wonderful impact on my life. Through my CIC experiences, I have come to approach life differently. The support and feedback from the other women and the materials opened my eyes and actions to the truth that the Lord is with me always. I went to my first Challenge meeting in Fresno during which all the attendees were given a frog. FROG stands for “Fully Rely on God” and this little reminder sits on my desk as a constant reminder. A key for me has been watching and learning about different ways of praying and experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit. That has freed me to allow the Lord to work through me, to pray with others, and to share God’s love.

What is your history of the small group experience in CIC?

One Sunday in 2015 I was attending my church in Orange County, CA, and after services a gentleman spoke to the congregation, sharing that a Christians in Commerce small group would be starting soon. I was so excited. Being a professional, I thought, “This is just what I need.” Then he noted that it was for men. I was slightly distressed. I caught him afterward and questioned him about a women’s small group. He noted that none existed and half-jokingly said I should start one. Well, I did and the core group has been meeting at a room in the church since then.

How has the group run?

Traditionally, we have followed a fairly rigid structure of meeting: same place; same format. I won’t lie—it has felt somewhat stale over the past couple of years. Moreover, we weren’t getting anyone to join and stay. I actually did a survey of people who had come, using Survey Monkey, and by and large, the response was the same. The structure of the gathering made it difficult for women to feel that they could develop relationships with the core people. If they didn’t share the church’s denomination, well, that was another stumbling block.

What changed?

About two months ago, we were inspired to change it up a bit. The first change was location—we moved to a coffee shop. It seems that the more casual, less religious location might be good. I got on Meet Up, an app that allows you to advertise your group to like-minded individuals, who can then choose to try it out. It worked! Meeting at the coffee shop increased our numbers and led us to start reserving a back room for our gatherings. Often times, they are flashing the lights at the 8:00 closing time and we say our farewells in the parking lot.

What else?

Well, the location change has facilitated a needed change in tone. We arrive a bit before 7:00 and people pick up their coffee or tea. We chat a bit before beginning the reflections in The Flame. It feels more natural, more real. We have great discussions but it doesn’t feel as stressful and we are more dynamic and free-flowing. The newer women love it. They are drawn to both the fellowship and the content. And, I believe they are more likely to bring friends and coworkers.

How do people respond to the new Flame newsletter?

We are very pleased with it. It is bright, positive, and fresh. The message may be the same, but the messenger has changed. And one key is mobile capability—this is huge. Technology is proving a blessing for us and this group is taking advantage of the ability to read the content anywhere, at any time, on our devices. In other groups I’ve attended most people would arrive not having read the paper version of the material, let alone remembering to bring it with them. Most of us come right from the office, so if it is left on the kitchen counter, it makes it challenging to contribute. Now, people have seen it, and we are able to delve into it because we can access it together.

And, we share our lives more. One woman who is transitioning from a high-stress office job to an entrepreneurial position recently shared her anxiety about the transition. We could quickly reassure her that we could relate to the struggle of letting go and handing things off to the Lord. We understand and support her and she knows she is not alone.

What are you hoping to see through The Flame and small groups?

My fervent hope is that groups will consider what new thing the Lord may be calling them to try. Change location? Connect via technology? Make sure everyone has The Flame on their devices? It’s a new time and God is in it in new ways. That is attractive.

Jennifer Frankenberg is the founder of the Orange County Women’s Chapter and she is also a board member of CIC.
CIC WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER

Vanessa Cooreman Smith, a native of South Bend, IN, has pursued life as an entrepreneur since graduating from St. Mary’s College in 2004. From 2008 to 2016 she owned and operated Flourish Boutique, a women’s clothing and accessory store. Today, she and her husband, Steve, own several local businesses including Irish Realty and Designed to Flourish, where Vanessa enjoys working as an interior designer. Of their business ventures, she says, “We work to help families buy or sell property in our town, and my passion is to make them more beautiful and inspiring places to call home.”

CIC has been an integral part of her family’s story since the 2009 recession.

The South Bend Chapter has fostered numerous fruits of the Spirit through a number of supportive relationships and business mentors, including inspiring examples of brothers and sisters in Christ.

“I felt Jesus calling me to plug into this life-changing ministry at the Annual Conference,” said Vanessa. “I am inspired to see WorkLight come alive and to help men and women in numerous professions and communities live out their careers with excellence and in Christ, change lives for the better.” She is excited to bring her passion and energy to the CIC board. Vanessa and Steve have been married since 2004 and have three young children.

Christians in Commerce sponsored a special dinner January 24 to honor Terry Cassell after 11 years of dedicated and heartfelt leadership for our ministry. Joining him were many of those who have worked closely with him through the years. (Left to right) Therese Rosenthal, Bill Dalgetty, Terry Cassell, Therese McNichol, (Back) Jon Cassady, Vince McNichol, and Margaret Crimmins.
2020
MARCH

“"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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