
Next Generation Christian Science Fellowship in St Louis

Notes from Meeting on Thursday, August 6, 2009

- The meeting began with an overview of the new Christian Science Society being formed in St. Louis.
 - There was an explanation of the activities currently occurring and those in the planning stages. (Overview on pages 2 and 3)
 - There was also some discussion of the underlying concepts that are the core of the group. Some of these concepts are highlighted in the circles on the next page; others are incorporated into the more detailed explanations of activities on the following page.
- There was also an opportunity to comment on the discussion and share new activities at their own church. The ideas are listed on pages 4 and 5.
- In addition, there was the opportunity to offer possible names for the new group in the Chicago area. The ones suggested included:
 - Upbeat Christian Science
 - Celebrate Christian Science
 - Christian Science 2.0
 - Spiritual Solutions
 - Solutions through Prayer
 - Second Century Christian Science Fellowship
 - Next Generation Christian Science Fellowship, Chicago
- There is also a need for Christian Scientists to get connected. There was a sheet to complete to better understand what forms of connections are being used or would be considered by those at the meeting.
 - Working on social networking
 - Recognize that the world needs to be bigger

An Overview of Next Generation Christian Science Fellowship in St Louis

Christian Fellowship

- Feel listened to, valued
- Overwhelming sense of love and acceptance – it is all about love
- Group welcomes all to come as they are – without judging, evaluating, conforming to someone else's expectations – sense of unconditional love
- No one is 'policing' conversation – accepting the question behind the question, that the Christ speaks to all of us and we gain while listening to others.

Inward nurture and outward embrace

-- both need to be done.

Role of Music

- Music can speak beyond words. . . Better sense of joy in music at service – praise music with contemporary sound that is easy to relate to.
- Helps to feel included if music is from *their* generation, rather than a different generation.
- There are 2 – 3 who play guitars and look on websites and other places to find songs -- upbeat, include Christian praise music.

Contemporary Gathering
(11 am Sunday Morning)

Contemplative Service
(9:45 am Sunday Morning)

Activities

Responding to God's call

- Sharing of each person's gift of how God is calling to them – how is God inspiring you? How do you feel called?
- There are no committee assignments – each is asked to pray about what God is asking you to do and move forward with that. What you do is your response to your gift.
- Examples:
 - No ushers – everyone welcomes everyone else;
 - No 52 week Sunday School commitment, but rather offer to teach a class on a specific topic -- how to write music, specific aspect of Bible, etc.

Youth Ministry
(in progress)

Celebration
(not every week)

Small Groups
(in progress)

Role of the Manual

- Discovering how the Holy Spirit is moving us – connecting us to the Manual rather than driving us away.
- Listening to the Father

Targets

- Those who find the CS church boring, too complicated, have been hurt by someone or something, not thinking anyone care that they are there
- Young people who leave Sunday School and disappear from Christian Science
- Visitors who come for a while and disappear
- And, those not aware of CS at all

An Overview of Next Generation Christian Science Fellowship in St Louis (continued)

Contemplative Service

(9:45 am Sunday Morning)

- Follows order of service in Manual
- More informal -- hymns, Golden Text, Responsive Reading on screen for all to see. Guitar music – using other sources of music including praise hymns
- When it is time for collection, there was announcement that could add to basket at back, but asked to share what they got out of the lesson. Collecting ideas, not cash. We have a lot to give each other

Contemporary Gathering

(11 am Sunday Morning)

- Bible based but differs each week -- Interactive discussion, video, small groups, performance/drama to represent something in the lesson
- Desire to enlarge the tent –looking at different ways to do that
- Have people coming who had left the church, but not the religion.

Youth Ministry

(in progress – start in fall)

- It will include Sunday School, (manual requirement) but in a different way
- Provide a place for their spiritual energy to go – be more interactive, connect with people of other faiths. More engaging than doing the same thing for an hour every week.
- Traditionally have church and Sunday School – two groups operating fairly independently of each other with not a lot of thought about why young people so important. Goal is to create an environment where both work together.

Celebration

(Not every week)

- Third audience thought about and loved – those who know nothing about CS.
- Anyone can come to hear about CS but speaks in non-denominational way.
- (DVD) included singing, skits

Small Groups

(in progress)

- The glue for the society can be the small group that shares their deepest interests – bible study, contemporary books on religion, how to connect with other churches, etc,
- They are able to get together frequently and an email network to keep the communication going all the time. Be more caring of each other.
- They are envisioning a **Wednesday service** that is ‘prayer and share” and is expected to evolve from one or more of the small groups.

Ideas shared by those at meeting. . .

- Need to go on in thought . . . It is the 'moving ahead' committee at their church. One Wednesday, a newcomer sang during her testimony – it seemed natural to her as she sings at other churches and had never been to a Wednesday night meeting. Follow the idea of being too blessed to be stressed. Jesus feed them first – maybe we need to do that first as well. (Doris from Moline)
- There was a question about other activities in St. Louis. It was shared that Dick Davenport has given two talks on church (DVD of these were on sale at the meeting)
- Ricardo from Rockford asked, why don't we meet at the Reading Room? He shared an experience he had while visiting Sao Paulo Brazil. He was told that while church was at 10 am, they would not be eating lunch until 1 pm so to be sure to eat a good breakfast. As the Readers left the platform after the service, the back doors opened and the kids came pouring in from the Sunday School. Everyone was having a great time talking, catching up, sharing . . . Christian fellowship in action. They don't get to see each other except on Sunday so only time they can get together. A little while later, members from another CS church joined them to continue the gathering. It is a normal, natural thing to gather, it is not something they had to 'invent' – it was already in their hearts.
- From Naperville. They had gotten a tent for the church for a lecture they were planning. Then, found ways to use the tent . . . during the summer have lemonade and cookies once a month under the tent after services. This summer, outdoor services -- a Wednesday night with dessert before/after service, Sunday evening with a barbeque dinner. Also, have used bar stools on the main floor of the auditorium and in the tent for the readers rather than staying on the platform. Result – more testimonies. The new hymnal has opened up the services even more. And, on Wednesdays have used other Bible translations for the readings.

Ideas shared . . . (continued)

- Jane (Naperville). Has been inspired by the book: Thirty Years That Changed the World: The Book of Acts for Today by Michael Green. Fellowship is what these early Christians did – it was sharing of the most intimate kind and included all aspects of their lives.
- Tim (Naperville). Their youth committee decided to help their community – they helped with 5,000 meals for young people. At the end of Sunday School, they would tell them how they can change the world. The idea was introduced slowly, but it inspired the Sunday School students to take action.
- Mark (Glenview) asked what outreach they have for men? Looking around at church and at this meeting indicates that we need to appeal to the masculine thought . . . to men. There needs to be a forum where this could be discussed.
- Todd (Barrington) indicated that the lack of a masculine thought is not exclusive to Christian Science. Perhaps it is because it is just not cool to express feeling about or reliance on God. Need to release guarded thought.
- Trying to be led by the Holy Spirit. One church member volunteers with a group that counsels men who are becoming domestic batterers. She is thinking about how church members could become facilitators for the group.
- Nancy (Barrington). Lot to learn from churches of other denominations. They are already doing the things we are talking about, especially in terms of fellowship. She has found the local clergy council has been a good avenue. There was the opportunity to do grief counseling for unemployed. She hesitated when found it was going to be held at a Jesuit house, but found that they could speak about the Christ together. Opportunities are out there for all of us.