
The ChrisCorps Operation

*Increasing the Presence of Christ
By Mobilizing and Multiplying the Body of Christ*

"...this is my body which is broken for you..."

A ministry manual providing the basis and blueprint for a statewide lay ecclesiastic collective per each county.

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Dear Friend of Christ and His Body,

As the thick darkness of unrelenting evil swells around each of us and our families, our local communities and our beloved nation as well as every other nation on the globe, the need for the light of Christ's increased presence has never been greater. It is the conviction of this spiritual imperative that this light comes only through a body of believers (a faith community), which is His physical presence on the earth today.

Accordingly, the pages that follow represent the comprehensive framework for a lay ministry initiative dubbed ChrisCorps, the nomenclature for derivatives that come from their original languages: in Greek. "Christus" means Christ and "Corpus" means body, while "Cor" in Latin means heart. A ChrisCorps, then, is simply **an organic Christ-body that beats with Christ's heart to increase Christ's presence**. What this can mean for homes and churches as well as for schools and communities, is reflected in the subsequent pages.

Some of the most isolated, lonely places on earth are within the very walls of so many struggling homes and some of the darkest, most painful places in our homes are within the very hearts of so many hurting people. Moreover, the Bible describes only three personal entities in the universe: the divine, the human and the demonic. One of the inescapable spiritual realities of our world and the human heart, acknowledged or not, is that all of life is about the constant conflict that takes place in the unseen realm between those three entities.

Suffice it to say, a concerted, strategic effort is desperately needed to mobilize His Body for the redemption and healing of hearts and homes in crisis, as well as entire communities and countries, "... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19) The three-fold nature of this sacred charge is one attempt to meet that need.

Please take the time to read every page and give it careful consideration. A word of caution however: if you jump around, what is being presented here may not make sense. Only a page-by-page, sequential reading will clarify the layered and logical approach of this manual.

To the extent you find something here that resonates with your own journey, you may be the person who would give serious consideration to some level of participation, cooperation or support, either now or in the future. The stakes are as high as they've ever been, human hearts are breaking and the glory (the presence) of Jesus Christ Himself merits the deepest levels of urgency and commitment.

Christus et Corpus,

Brian Schroeder
January, 2025

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ChrisCorps

Foreword

Increasing the Presence of Christ
By Mobilizing and Multiplying the Body of Christ

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A Christology

Basic beliefs about the Person of Christ

As a proposal and a ministry, ChrisCorps begins and ends with Jesus Christ, who He is and what He's all about. The identity of this initiative is wholly tied into the identity of Christ Himself. Accordingly, the following affirmations are core to who He is, who we are and increasing the presence of both.

Jesus Christ was a real person who really walked the earth back in the first century. "He was in the world..." (Jn. 1:10) and "...his dwelling was amongst us..." (Jn. 1:14). His earthly existence was documented by a host of secular classical historians, including the most well-known: Josephus (Jewish) and Tacitus (Roman). The historical data is so secure, in fact, that most credible modern historians do not debate or question Christ's existence.

Jesus Christ was the visible counterpart of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). He was Almighty God incarnate (in the flesh - Isa. 7:14, Isa. 9:6, Jn. 1:14), the promised Messiah who was prophesied to come thousands of years before it happened, way back in the Old Testament (Isa. 7:14, Micah 5:2, Num. 24:8, Isa. 53:4, Isa. 53:12, Ps. 34:20). As a man he experienced temptation, as God he never sinned. As a man he got hungry, as God he took a little boy's lunch and fed 5,000 people with it. He was the God-man -- completely God and completely man (Jn. 10:33; Romans 9:5) -- sent to rejoin God and man.

Jesus Christ was born of a virgin woman named Mary. No physical/sexual union had taken place between Joseph and Mary - the conception was wholly miraculous (conceived by the Holy Spirit). "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). To be fully God and fully man, and to rejoin both God and man, he had to have been born this way.

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Triune Godhead (the Trinity), the beloved Son of God and God the Son. "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Jesus and his Father were one (Jn. 10:30), yet he was subservient and obedient to the will of his Father even unto death, the death of the cross.

Jesus Christ is the Living Word (logos) of God. He was the active agent in creation (Jn. 1:3) and by him all things are held together (Col. 1:7). As the Savior of the world, he was sent to communicate with humankind something of God's provision for our salvation, bearing our sin and judgment so we could be justified ("just as if we never sinned"), becoming the righteousness of God in him (II Cor. 5:21).

Jesus Christ physically died for the sins of mankind through a Roman crucifixion, was buried in a borrowed tomb and three days later literally came back to life. His death satisfied God's holy sense of justice ("for the wages of sin is death") and made a relationship with God possible again. Christ's miraculous resurrection not only confirmed his deity, defeating death and hell, it also gave our faith substance and hope in the hereafter. We believe the historical and legal evidence for Christ's bodily resurrection, if honestly and objectively investigated, is quite convincing.

He is "the One and Only" and His identity is confirmed through Scripture, creation, tradition, history, His Spirit and His Body. Moreover, who the person of Christ is should inform who the body of Christ is, which leads to the next page, some basic beliefs about the Body...

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A Corpus Philosophy

Basic beliefs about the Body of Christ

Since He is the head and we are the body, our theology of the person of Christ should inform our philosophy of the body of Christ, the foundations of which are highlighted below:

The Body of Christ, *local & global* ... the church as Christ's physical, visible, tangible presence on earth has both a universal and local expression, the former consisting of all Christians around the world while the latter consists of a visible, self-governed assembly of believers who are called out (*ecclesia*) and connected by (*koinonia*) the Spirit of God, under the authority of Christ and His Word, to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, for the dual purpose of fulfilling the great commission and the great commandment.

The Body of Christ, *light & salt* ... the redemption of souls and the restoration of society; "being the church" instead of doing church, playing church or merely going to church. As "the light of the world," the believing community will split the darkness of people's lives with hope and direction. As "the salt of the earth," it will penetrate and preserve every arena of our culture, from business to government to the arts to education.

The Body of Christ, *broken & healing* ... embracing His brokenness as well as our own means no more denial, pretending or performing. We reject our inherent self-righteous tendencies and resist our need to impress each other with how spiritual we are. We readily acknowledge our flaws, our faults, and our fallen natures. We confess our sins and strongholds rather than cover them. Why? So that we "... may be healed." (James 5:16)

The Body of Christ, *diet & climate* ... regarding diet, God's Word as the bread of life feeds and energizes His Body; regarding climate, the household of faith should be a "place of grace" - affirming, safe, relational, encouraging, empowering, redemptive and restorative - not cold, detached, oppressive, controlling, inflexible, judgmental, divisive or legalistic.

The Body of Christ, *health & growth* ... the Christian community should be the safest place on earth wherein the lost are reconciled, believers are nurtured, broken hearts are mended and shattered lives restored; moreover, where new believers are added and new fellowships emerge.

The Body of Christ, *connected & committed* ... an organized organism, as connected, systemic and interdependent as the members of the human anatomy are and bound by the covenantal commitment that a Christian community requires.

The Body of Christ, *thinking & praying* ... the Church is both a school of thought and a house of prayer, where people of faith are taught to "think His thoughts after Him" and learn to pray as the Lord prayed.

The Body of Christ, *caring & sharing* ... relating to each other and to unbelievers in such a way as to truly know and be known, reflecting an honest, human and humble faith. As His physical presence in this world, by fulfilling our God-given mandate to care for the poor and homeless, the fatherless and the widows, the disenfranchised and the disillusioned, we literally care for Him.

Christ and His Body have a distinct identity - so should Christians and Christian ministry. The one shapes the other, the latter flows out of the former, which is what gives ChrisCorps its roots.

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ChrisCorps
Introduction: Ministry Roots

Increasing the Presence of Christ
By Mobilizing and Multiplying the Body of Christ

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The Work of the Ministry

The entire faith experience is made up of three spiritual dynamics: discipleship, fellowship and worship. The work of the ministry is to go as far as possible with each. In terms of increasing His presence, the following synopses summarize the mission, vision and passion of the ChrisCorps mandate.

The Mission: Increasing His Presence thru a Fuller Sense of Discipleship

Following Jesus Christ involves an identity crisis: coming to grips with who He is, who we are in Him and how we become like Him. In the gospels, Jesus called specific individuals to become disciples as well as to make disciples -- not just one, not just the other - it was a parallel proposition. The former was rooted in the commandment to love God and care about people (Matthew 22:36-40), the latter in the commission to invest in the spiritual lives of a few and then prepare them to do the same (Matthew 28:19-20). Christ increases as we decrease (John 3:30) with all that that means. Moreover, His presence increases as the presence of the Evil One decreases (and vice-versa). And ultimately, the potential for fulfilling the formidable mission of our Lord greatly increases as we realize this fuller sense of discipleship.

The Vision: Increasing His Presence thru a Deeper Sense of Fellowship

If fellowship is at the core of Christian faith, then a "Corps" fellowship will be at the core of Christian community and a tangible means by which believers can join with His Body in a consequential way. The driving vision of meaningful fellowship (spiritual bonding) commences with the conviction that we were created to live in loving relationship with God and each other, reflecting the oneness and closeness experienced within the Trinity. But our own fractured souls and fragmented society choose detachment instead. That's why the unity and community of God's people is the personal prayer and priority of Jesus Christ himself (John 17). "Where two or three are gathered in my name," Jesus said, "there am I in the midst of them." When we gather then, we gather around Christ. When that happens, we increase His presence in our world (personal and global).

The Passion: Increasing His Presence thru a Richer Sense of Worship

What would happen if new or young believers, early on in their faith journey, became convinced that life really is all about God and enjoying Him forever? What difference would it make if worship was understood as something that spills into every area of life (work, attitudes, relationships) rather than just the "religious" areas? In our corporal church services, what if "worship" was viewed not only in musical terms alone or limited only to singing, but was reflected increasingly through all forms of artistic expression? And what if worship for Christians was once again informed by the legacy of its Jewish heritage in which a passion for the study of the Scriptures was considered the highest form of worship? Since "the Lord inhabits the praise of His people," if we are to be serious about increasing His presence amongst us, it must begin with worship.

So if the purpose of a ChrisCorps is the increased presence of Christ, a fuller sense of discipleship, a deeper sense of fellowship and a richer sense of worship must be our mission, vision and passion, which fundamentally corresponds with the essential work of any serious minister of the faith (lay or vocational) .

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The Work of the Minister

Priority, clarity and integrity sustain a minister's focus as well as his calling. If the following three dynamics establish the primary responsibilities and crucial work of any Christian minister (lay or vocational), they do so especially for one who is being developed within the ChrisCorps model.

The Mission: Parallel Discipleship

Based on the imperatives of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, life-changing discipleship involves both becoming and making disciples of Christ. This begins with some personal and sustained spiritual habits ("I am with Him to learn from Him how to be like Him," as Dallas Willard said), but must eventually lead to the spiritual nurturings of at least one other responsive soul. Hence, the parallelism of both becoming disciples **and** making disciples.

Moreover, parallel discipleship includes the tension between what past saints referred to as *contemptus mundi* and *amor mundi*. Initially, God extracts the world from our hearts (*contemptus mundi*) where we're purged of all earthly attachments and ambitions. Eventually, after we've become free of it all, God puts the world back into our hearts (*amor mundi*) where our compassion for the bruised and broken deepens.

The Vision: Pastoral Fellowship

A deeper sense of spiritual communion and community requires we invest spiritually in future lay ministers and then prepare them to do the same. When this starts to happen, you have a pastoral-based fellowship forming. But the trick is to see it reproduce rather than become an end in itself. Groups birthing groups, lay ministers birthing lay ministers.

Not only that, but doing ministry together is critical because leadership is not only lonely, it is vulnerable. The loneliness comes from isolation, the vulnerability from a lack of accountability. Hence, apart from an interdependent pastoral fellowship, leaders inevitably become very independent, which only makes them easier prey for the "roaring lion."

The Passion: Personal Worship

Worship is a very personal thing because we worship what we value most. The act of worship is to value supremely that which is supremely valuable. For people of faith, that's God. For others, it's something else. But we all worship something, we all live for something. We all value most that which is most valuable to us.

In the Christian faith, the worship experience is Christ-centered. Christians by definition value Christ most, so they worship Christ. It's not primarily about *how* we worship, but *whom*. And whether individually or corporately, Scripture says "God inhabits the praise of His people," which is central to increasing His presence in our lives. That's why worship is so personal: it's the heart of His people in love with the heart of their God.

The above three core dynamics provide the framework for the essential ChrisCorps ministry distinctives, as detailed on the following page.

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Ministry Distinctives

Though not exhaustive, the subsequent distinctives are the key elements of a ChrisCorps group as a ministry initiative and would be critical in keeping it true to its original mission, vision and passion.

Christus et Corpus -- From the Greek meaning "for Christ and the Body," the focus is on the broken Body of Christ, in both a personal and corporate sense. Through death, His and ours, comes life. Through brokenness --His and ours -- comes healing. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live..."

A Singular Purpose -- To increase the presence of Jesus Christ by His Spirit, through His Body. This needs to happen in each of us individually first, then in our families, churches, schools and communities. The clarity of this focus must not be blurred by getting side-tracked or divided over secondary issues (i.e., eschatology, spiritual gifts, music styles) that tend to strain or frustrate Christian unity. Moreover, we will seek to exercise appropriate, responsible Christian liberty (versus the two extremes of legalism or license) and allow each believer to work out those "gray areas" of the faith individually.

Laity-Driven -- The heartbeat of this vision is to empower lay believers to do the pure work of the ministry, free of the entanglements of emotional agendas, powerful personalities or institutionalized "sacred cows." The intent is to develop a vehicle through which to mobilize and equip serious lay Christians who are passionate about the Lord and well-centered by their faith (adults & adolescents) for proactive lay-driven ministry.

Group Reproduction -- The purpose of a ChrisCorps would be to invest deeply in a few people spiritually (including young people) and then prepare them to do the same. So each ChrisCorps would be reproductive in nature, which means that, in time, each group would potentially birth 2-3 new groups.

Process-Based -- Whether it's the tri-phased ChrisCorps group meeting or "the key three" spiritual dynamics of discipleship, fellowship and worship, ChrisCorps is heavy on process and follows an intentional progression. Each layer depends on the one that precedes it and prepares for the one that follows.

Outreach-Oriented - During the ChrisCorps three-year journey, consequential outreach opportunities within the community are initiated. Various forms of family and youth work as well as cultural "salt and light" endeavors such as new school launches and strategic civic involvement are part of the ChrisCorps experience.

Enemy Engagement -- Entering into hostile territory is frontline warfare and the Adversary does not fight with squirt guns. Because the Evil One and his emissaries are real, spiritual attacks are inevitable and, therefore, spiritual armor and weapons are crucial. Anyone who poses a serious threat to the kingdom of darkness must be fully equipped for spiritual conflict. And we dare not go it alone, which is where ChrisCorps comes in. Because the demonic realm operates in community, so must we.

Non-Denominational -- The ChrisCorps endeavor embraces a non-denominational identity. As a spiritual organism, ChrisCorps would seek to integrate the best aspects of each of the great historic Christian faith traditions that are deemed critical to the identity of Christ and His Body. Conversely, ChrisCorps would discard any sectarian elements of extra-biblical baggage that would hinder or frustrate a healthy faith walk, spiritual fruitfulness or ministry vision.

*Who we are determines what we do and how we're going to do it.
So out of these Corps distinctives come three Corps objectives, delineated on the next page.*

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Ministry Objectives

The three ChrisCorps objectives of spiritual maturity, spiritual community and spiritual intimacy are intentionally and strategically sequential, and each objective is integral to the overall process:

1st Year: Spiritual Maturity (Discipleship)

Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus about the importance of "... building up the body of Christ ... to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine ... we are to grow up in every way into Him ..." (Eph. 4:13-15) If spiritual maturity was such a high priority for the early church, it should be for us today as well. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. We've been good at making converts, but not so good at making disciples, and the casualties show it. Young people are leaving the faith by the droves and many adult Christians are allowing the culture to inform Scripture rather than the other way around. Spiritual maturity through discipleship, therefore, will be a prime ChrisCorps objective.

2nd Year: Spiritual Community (Fellowship)

ChrisCorps embodies what church membership really means and what it truly involves. As a small-group fellowship of Christian believers (budding lay ministers), ChrisCorps provides a venue and a vehicle through which serious followers of Jesus Christ can "join and bond" with His Body in a very invested fashion. How believers relate to each other should be grounded in the unity and community of the Trinity, best experienced through brokenness and openness. By being connected and committed, which is what community is all about, the genuine sharing and caring that happens within a ChrisCorps group fosters a more sustained quality of spiritual community.

3rd Year: Spiritual Intimacy (Worship)

The third-year focus is on worship: increasing His presence by practicing His presence. The psalmist said that God inhabits the praise of His people, linking His presence to our praise. As we personalize the reality of our praise, He actualizes the reality of His presence. Whether that happens individually or corporally — via private Bible study or public ministry endeavors, music or dance, prayer or meditation, work or rest, our attitudes or our actions — a growing sense of worship will cultivate spiritual intimacy (and vice-versa), which is what we were made for: glorifying God and enjoying Him forever.

Each ChrisCorps will seek to negotiate each of the above respective objectives within a period of nine months per year (September through May).

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ChrisCorps
1st Year: Spiritual Maturity

Increasing the Presence of Christ
Through Discipleship

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The Great Commandment

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." Matthew 22:36-38

How does a person grow in one's allegiance to and affections for Christ? Hints from the Bible suggest it begins in the deepest parts of our being -- heart, soul and mind -- where the fires of discipleship, fellowship and worship are fueled. On a personal level, we move ourselves closer to Him as we cultivate some spiritual appetites. On a practical level, we do that by developing some spiritual habits, because disciple means "disciplined one."

With all your heart...

"Heart work is hard work," said one devotional master. According to Richard Foster, the most important work is accomplished in the depths of the heart. "This work is solitary and interior," he said. "It cannot be seen by anyone, not even ourselves. It is a work known only to God. It is the work of heart purity, of soul conversion, of inward transformation, of life formation." And it is where the presence of God gets practiced, becoming grounded deeply in the divine.

With all your soul...

Becoming a long-term follower of Jesus begins in moments of silence and solitude with Him when heartfelt words and thoughts are shared (via prayer) and vice-versa (via the Word and his Spirit). The practical habit for this would be both a regular devotional time (divine appointments) and constant communion ("practicing His presence"). ChrisCorps minister-members would be regularly developing and pursuing these devotional habits and be held accountable to see these emerging spiritual commitments flourish.

With all your mind...

"Whatever things are true, honest, just, pure and lovely ... think on these things." (Phil. 4:8) A good prayer for every believer to pray on a regular (if not daily) basis is, "Lord, may your Spirit prompt me to think Your thoughts after You, and may my spirit allow You to think Your thoughts through me." This would be getting closer to what loving God with our mind means: thinking on things above versus on things below - developing a biblical worldview and becoming so heavenly-minded we're of some earthly good. In other words, having the mind of Christ or "... renewing the spirit of our minds in the knowledge of Jesus Christ" as Paul said. This ties together all three -- heart, soul and mind. Love engages all three.

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The Great Commission

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

What was it that compelled William Wilberforce to fight the slave trade in England and convicted Father Damien to live and die among the lepers of Molokai? What led Mother Teresa to work with the poorest of the poor in India and Charles Colson to start Prison Fellowship? And what is it that compels contemporary (and ordinary) believers like us to minister our lives in Christ to those in desperate need? In short, it is the heart of Christ, reflected in the Lord's timeless commission.

Go Therefore...

Making disciples of Jesus Christ begins first with "going". That means entering people's worlds and embracing their lives, which involves caring for them. It means a long-term, in-depth friendship that patiently plants spiritual seed over a period of time. It means taking the initiative, reaching out. It means leaving one's own comfort zone and going into theirs. It can even mean displacement, re-location, sacrifice and a different lifestyle. This call to believers is cross-cultural and it leaves out no one -- no nation, no gender, no age, no race, no religion. It is the Great Commission and it was given to all Christ's followers.

Baptizing Them...

The process continues with "baptizing," the outward ceremony that signifies a new spiritual identity grounded in Christ and His body. This starts when we share those areas of life that are most meaningful and valued, not the least of which is one's personal faith. When this happens, and the Spirit begins to draw and convince, a genuine saving faith can emerge. To grow and deepen that faith, the new believer must then become integrated with a fellowship of believers, sharing the spiritual journey with a spiritual community.

Teaching Them...

It ultimately comes full circle with "teaching" or building them up in their faith and preparing them for the work of the ministry. Practically and personally, this involves the art of teaching people about the art of reaching people, from the basics of declaring one's faith to the more advanced challenges of defending one's beliefs. Accordingly, ChrisCorps minister-members would be developing and pursuing faith-sharing skills and opportunities, and be held accountable to see these emerging spiritual commitments flourish.

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The Master Plan

Significant ministry more often than not begins small. The focus is not on the masses but on laying a strong foundation. It invests deeply in a few key people, eventually charging them to do the same. Remarks once made by Billy Graham reinforce the point. In response to the question, "If you were a pastor of a large church in a principal city, what would be your plan of action?"

Dr. Graham replied:

"I think one of the first things I would do would be to get a small group of 8 or 10 or 12 people around me that would meet a few hours a week and pay the price! It would cost them something in time and effort. I would share with them everything I have, over a period of years. Then I would actually have twelve ministers among the lay people who in turn could take 8 or 10 or 12 more and teach them. I know one or two churches that are doing that, and it is revolutionizing the church. Christ, I think, set the pattern. He spent most of his time with twelve men. He didn't spend it with a great crowd. In fact, every time he had a great crowd it seems to me there weren't too many results. The great results, it seems to me, came in his personal interview and in the time he spent with his twelve."

The Master Plan, then, is the plan of the Master, which essentially involved the following:

BEGIN WITH JUST A FEW

Be careful and prayerful about who you begin with – Jesus was

SPEND TIME WITH THEM, SIGNIFICANT TIME

Don't make it easy on them – make them pay the price

GIVE THEM EVERYTHING YOU HAVE, WHATEVER YOU HAVE

Make sure it's biblically-grounded, carefully thought out and effectively presented

WHEN FINISHED, COMMISSION THEM TO DO WHAT YOU JUST DID

Groups birthing new groups, participants pass on what they received

The approach Jesus took as described above made for a great master plan, which then raises some questions: Who will be a part of this? What will the selection process look like? When, where, how often and how long will we meet? And how will the meetings be structured? Enter a game plan ...

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The Game Plan

To carry out the master plan, a game plan is needed. On this page, the game plan is laid out in terms of (1st) the member selection process, (2nd) the scheduling details, and (3rd) the structural mechanics of a ChrisCorps meeting.

The Members - ChrisCorps Selections

Even as Jesus **hand-picked** "the twelve," so would selections for each ChrisCorps be carefully decided. The selection process would be based on prayer, recommendations and referrals as well as the interest and **commitment level** of each potential candidate. A ChrisCorps could be formed in three different ways: (1) adults only; (2) adolescents only (ChrisTeen); and (3) five pairs of adult-adolescent tandems (ChrisTen).

The overall ChrisCorps group experience is administered through a **leadership triumvirate** ("A cord of three strands is not easily broken." -- Ecc. 4:12), with each leader working selflessly according to his/her roles and gifts. Through a "triple three" lay ministry leadership model (1-to-3 ratio), **pastoral care** is more efficiently and effectively ministered by the lay leaders to the lay members under their respective care.

The Meetings - ChrisCorps Scheduling

Each ChrisCorps group would meet **three times a month** and each person in the group would commit to **three months at a time** (nine meetings total). Each month would represent one round and each 3-month period would represent one cycle. Nine sequential months (twenty-seven meetings), September thru May, would represent one year on the ChrisCorps calendar.

A typical ChrisCorps meeting lasts **three hours** with each hour representing one phase: 1st hour/growing closer, 2nd hour/going deeper, 3rd hour/getting ready. A typical ChrisCorps group stays together for **three years**, with each year representing one stage: 1st year/increasing His presence via discipleship, 2nd year/increasing His presence via fellowship, and 3rd year/increasing His presence via worship.

The Mechanics - ChrisCorps Structure

During that very important first hour of a ChrisCorps meeting, the group begins the process of **growing closer** by getting to know each other around the dinner table, sharing their lives as they share their food. Through progressive introductions, conversations and weekly personal updates, they grow in their understanding of and appreciation for each other.

The second hour of the meeting is about **going deeper** into the person of Jesus Christ. Through Scripture (the book of John), prayer and communion, this segment of the meeting focuses on why anyone should believe in Christ (1st week), what it means to trust in Him (2nd week) and what difference faith in Him makes (3rd week).

During the final hour of the meeting, the group will be **getting ready** to do actual lay ministry together. This vital training piece would be structured by an equal measure of preparation (content & process) and participation (observation & experience) -- teaching and learning reinforced by example and practice. It would then conclude with intercessory prayer bands to provide spiritual covering to all ministry outreach efforts.

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Entrepreneurial Teachers (Pt. 1)

A Generalized K-12 Cooperative

ChrisCorps represents a coalition of Christian believers made up of both concerned parents and local citizens. Because the local community schoolhouse is supposed to be both an extension of the home and a bridge to society, one of the main focuses of our parental citizenry becomes the scholastic community. As one of the most strategic arenas of our society, it will be one of the essential concerns of *ChrisCorps* as well.

After a ministry presence is established in a specific county, it receives special training, beginning in the first year of its three-year journey, to build an entrepreneurial scholastic cooperative through a series of micro-school options. The first leg of this alternate education network comes in the form of *generalized scholastics* (K-12 schooling). Reinforced by the small school movement, from the one-room schoolhouse to micro-schools and other hybrid variations, an array of entrepreneurial education opportunities provide innovative and high-quality alternatives to the secular government school system.

One of those hybrid models, for example, is the University-Model School, which combines the direct instruction of teachers in the central (school) classrooms with the reinforced instruction of parents in the satellite (home) classrooms. Parents partner in tandem with professional teachers in the education process of their children.

U-M Schools have two fundamental objectives: (1) to preserve the God-ordained family relationship in which the Christian faith is most effectively nurtured, and (2) to provide the best Christian education on the planet. The common goal is intentional discipleship and spiritual formation through a well-developed Christian worldview.

ChrisCorps members interested in either starting a U-M school or transitioning an existing school would get connected with Shirley Smith, Executive Assistant at shirley.smith@naums.inc. The organization's toll free number is 888-485-8525 and their website is www.umsi.or

Other micro-school models (i.e., learning centers, one-room neighborhood schools, online formats) can receive specialized training through the Herzog Foundation, another partner organization of the *ChrisCorps* Commission.

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Entrepreneurial Teachers (Pt.2)

A Specialized Post-Secondary Cooperative

The second leg of this alternate education network comes through post-secondary education initiatives in partnership with *Christian Halls International (CHI)*. Spearheading a customized model of college and trade classes, CHI allows high school graduates to earn an affordable (no-debt) college degree while staying at home. With soul formation as the ultimate goal, a Christian Hall incorporates the intellectual, spiritual and vocational aspects of accredited degree and trade-school programs.

Inspired by and fashioned after the tutorial model of Oxford/Cambridge traditions, a Christian Hall is a local, independent college community that provides Socratic-styled education in the student's own hometown. Witnessing this method during his own days at Oxford, Dr. Nicholas Ellis (CHI founder and president) led the way in planting over 500 halls in Brazil, altering the educational landscape there. Some West Texas Christian oilmen heard about this and asked Nick to come to America to do the same.

To accomplish this, Ellis contracted with a dozen Christian colleges. He explains, "We acquired the rights to all of their degree programs. So we have about 500 degrees now, and about 10,000 classes—everything from dual credit through PhD."

To create a hall, a community only needs one director, one tutor and three students. After signing up, they can utilize the CHI platform to choose coursework. For the trades, CHI partners with local businesses. For example, they have an oil and gas partner in Texas that has engineering, drilling, welding, plumbing, and diesel needs.

In some states, education savings accounts can be used for eligible students to pay for CHI dual enrollment classes towards a degree. Otherwise, Ellis explains, "... we negotiate a price point for our members so that it's nondebt, pay-as-you-go subscription style member payments. We've never had any students go into debt ..."

CHI is now training Directors and Tutors across four countries and the long-range goal is to establish one Hall in every county in America in the next ten years. To join or start a Christian Hall in your county, go to CHI's website (www.christianhalls.org) and select the tabs *Join a Hall* or *Start a Hall*.

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ChrisCorps Process

What follows will spell out in detail the three hourly segments of a ChrisCorps meeting relative to its **first year**, the purpose of each segment and what actually happens during each.

1st Year: Increasing His Presence via Discipleship/First Hour: Growing Closer

In the first hour of the first year of a ChrisCorps meeting, the fellowship would begin in the dining room, gathered around some creative snacks, appetizers & desserts (1st week), soup, salad & sandwiches (2nd week), or a special ethnic meal (3rd week). In potluck fashion, each group member would bring something tasty to contribute, sharing their bounty as they begin sharing their lives. Spontaneous chatter would morph into more structured conversation, when each person is prompted by a prepared question to solicit feedback via weekly updates, gratitudes or personal life stories.

Prompting questions would always be driven by the dynamics of identity, honesty and vulnerability. Moreover, these questions would take each person individually and the group as a whole a little further each week into each other's lives. The progression would be incremental, safe and always appropriate. Then, through bowed heads, joined hands and opened hearts, a community prayer led by one of the co-leaders would offer thanks for the food and conversation enjoyed, simultaneously turning their attention to the living Christ.

1st Year: Increasing His Presence via Discipleship/Second Hour: Going Deeper

During the second hour of this first year, the group would transition from the dining room to the living room, focusing on Jesus Christ and what it means to believe in Him. The purpose would be to go deeper into His human/divine identity in terms of His earthly/eternal existence as well as His death/resurrection. In so doing, the group would seek to *increase His presence* by grounding who they are in who He is. Through His Word (the Gospel of John) and at His table (communion), selected readings and personal musings would help them share their life in Christ together along with spoken, silent and sung prayers (moderated by the "short & sweet" principle of Ecclesiastes 5:2-3).

1st Year: Increasing His Presence via Discipleship/Third Hour: Getting Ready

The goal of producing lay ministers who are reproducing other lay ministers is fulfilled through this third-hour series of training modules, which follows a tri-course regimen of nine sessions each per year:

- 1st Module (1st Week): Discipleship Basics - the great commandment and commission is the foundation of the master and game plan for followers and leaders.
- 2nd Module (2nd Week): Discipleship Conflicts - dealing with the footholds and strongholds of mind blinds, "true lies," and inner vows that prohibit spiritual maturity.
- 3rd Module (3rd Week): Discipleship Scholastics - reclaiming education's timeless role and purpose through the scholastic investment of the *School of Thought Campaign*.

Concludes with focused prayer bands formed to protect the above preparation from spiritual attacks, preventing enemy strategies from destroying future ChrisCorps reproduction efforts.

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ChrisCorps Progress

1st Year

**ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)***

Spiritual Maturity: Increasing Christ's presence thru discipleship

* Summer: a Weekend Retreat to _____

2nd Year

**ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)***

Spiritual Community: Increasing Christ's presence thru fellowship

* Summer: a Mission Trip to _____

3rd Year

**ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)***

Spiritual Intimacy: Increasing Christ's presence thru worship

* Summer: a Pilgrimage to _____

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ChrisCorps
2nd Year: Spiritual Community

Increasing the Presence of Christ
Through Fellowship

"...this is my body which is broken for you..."

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An Ecclesian Fellowship

There are two Greek words used in the Bible for a community of Christian believers, what we have come to call "the church": one is **ecclesia**, the other is **koinonia**. Both are significant in understanding spiritual community in the Christian context. Therefore an etymology of each word will perhaps help us form a more coherent theology of what it means to *be* the Church, which can then inform our understanding and practice of spiritual community. We'll start with **ecclesia** ...

In ancient Greek states, an **ecclesia** was a political assembly of citizens. A group of Greek politicians who came to Athens to debate was an example of an **ecclesia**. The Greek **ecclesiastes** means one who takes part in deliberations of an assembly, and this is the general sense of the Hebrew word as well. We see this in Acts 19 where **ecclesia** is a town council, a civil body in Ephesus, and it is translated "assembly" all three times (vs. 32, 39, 41). **Ecclesia** is used approximately 115 times in the New Testament, and every time (except the three in Acts 19), it is translated "church."

The word is a compound of two parts: the preposition "**ek**" meaning "out of" and the verb "**kaleo**" signifying "to call." Together, they literally mean "to call out," although that usage soon passed away and was replaced with "assembly, congregation, council" or "convocation". So **ecclesia** in the secular sense was a gathering of citizens called out of their homes into some public place, forming a public assembly. Likewise, in a spiritual sense, **ecclesia** is an assembly or gathering of "the called out ones" - called by God's Spirit, called out of this present world system.

These assemblies then (which began as simple house churches) were a new community forming under a new Leader with a new agenda. This new community was in the world but not of it ("called out"). This new Leader was not a political leader (King Caesar) but a spiritual leader (King Jesus). This new agenda was to bring His kingdom to these earthly kingdoms. And ultimately, this new kingdom would operate by different principles with different values, pursuing different goals with different outcomes. It would march entirely to the beat of a different drummer. As an **ecclesia**, this is what the church was supposed to be.

Moreover, the importance of these "called out assemblies" could not be overemphasized, because the regularity and quality of these "spiritual huddles" would greatly determine how well they ran the play. The passion, vision and mission of the church (discipleship, fellowship and worship) was wholly contingent upon "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." (Hebrews 10:25)

Good football teams come together to practice; great football teams get together to practice a lot. Spiritual maturity (discipleship) as a Christian cannot happen apart from the spiritual support and community (fellowship) of the **ecclesia**. Moreover, spiritual intimacy (worship) cannot be achieved apart from meaningful spiritual connections to His people that comes from gathering with His people.

It's a paradox, this "called out assembly." We're called out *to come together* -- called out from the world to come together as the church. This intimates a response: His sheep hear his voice and they follow, which happens best as a flock, an assembly. The word "assemble" suggests it is orderly, scheduled, regular and has a purpose. And the purpose (wait for it) ... is **koinonia**, which is what the next page (p. 16) describes.

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A Koinonian Fellowship

Modern-day church potlucks and after-church chit-chat notwithstanding, fellowship in the early church went much deeper. In the original language, the word **koinonia** (fellowship) appeared nineteen times in most editions of the Greek New Testament. The first was in Acts 2:42: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the *fellowship (koinonia)*, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

In the New American Standard Bible, **koinonia** is translated "fellowship" twelve times, "sharing" three times, "participation" two times and "contribution" two times. Because we don't have the English equivalent for such a word which adequately captures its varied meanings, translators would tend to focus on a specific aspect of the nature of **koinonia**. There are at least five:

First, fellowship is about **kinship**, which means we are *related* to each other because we're in the **same family**. Paul calls Timothy his brother and Apphia his sister (Philemon v. 1-2) In the same letter, he calls Onesimus his child (v.10) Why? Because "... our fellowship (**koinonia**) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ ..." (I Jn. 1:3, 6-7) That's who we have in common, so in Him we are related to each other.

Second, fellowship is about **companionship**, which means we are *connected* to each other because we're in the **same community**. "... not neglecting to meet together ... encouraging one another ..." (Heb. 10:24-25) The litany of "one anothers" in the epistles suggests companionship. (Rom. 1:11-12, Heb. 3:13-14 & I Thess. 5:11)

Third, fellowship is about **partnership**, which means we are *committed* to each other because we're in the **same ministry**. Paul calls Philemon his "beloved fellow worker" and Archippus his "fellow soldier" (v. 1-2). The word "fellow" actually means partner. In Luke 5:7-10, a secular version of **koinonia** speaks about the partnership being formed between fishermen. Biblical fellowship involves a spiritual partnership.

Fourth, fellowship is about **membership**, which means we are *united* with each other because we're of the **same body**. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (I Cor. 12:12-13; see also Eph. 4:15-16)

Fifth, fellowship is about **stewardship**, which means we are *invested* in each other, because we're of the **same entity**. We see this kind of **koinonia** in II Corinthians 9:13: "They will glorify God because of ... the generosity of your *contribution (koinonia)* for them and for all others." Early believers took care of each other.

The church has been called a body, a bride, a family, an army, "... a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ..." (I Pt. 2:9). As His body, it is His physical presence on earth. As His bride, it is married to Christ and Him only. As His family, it makes each of us His children, therefore, kindred spirits. As His army, we are in the battle of our lives, though not against flesh and blood. As His nation, we are a peculiar people, not part of any nation, yet simultaneously part of every nation, bringing His kingdom to each society.

But the one common thread that runs through each of these is **koinonia**, community -- a spiritual fellowship unlike any other community in the world. That is because it is both in this world and other-worldly, present yet transcendent -- the only foretaste of heaven that we have on earth and a gift to guard carefully.

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The Domestic Community

So fellowship is about kinship (we're related), companionship (we're connected), partnership (we're committed), membership (we're united), and stewardship (we're invested) - all the essential elements of a family. Therefore, a biblical model of fellowship begins at home with the family, involving the core familial dynamics of caring and sharing.

Joseph Hellerman said, "When the church was a family, the church was on fire." As a New Testament scholar, Hellerman spent many years exploring the social structures of first century Christians. He discovered that the Jewish family unit ranked foremost as the most vital for those living in the ancient world. This explains why early church writers selected "the household of faith" as one of the central social analogies of the church.

That means the biblical vision for a familial fellowship not only does life and ministry together *as a family*, it makes family ministry the priority. From praying for hurting families to supporting them through practical help (groceries, babysitting, fix-it projects) to conducting strategic and high-impact family outreach events, a redemptive healing community can bring substantial peace, order and stability to broken families. **[A strategic model is taught in more detail during the ChrisCorps' 3rd hour training segment.]**

A domestic fellowship also fulfills its mission generationally, led by its elders and investing in its youth. As such, it does not put the former on the shelf or out to pasture, but honors and follows their enduring faith and maturing wisdom, simultaneously preparing the latter to take the baton and run with it.

A sacred community where one generation shares its spiritual heritage with the next generation is a fellowship that is both looking back for historic context and perspective, and looking forward with prophetic vision and hope - the body of Christ sharing the person of Christ on this earth and in people's lives. **[A structural approach is taught in more detail during the ChrisCorps' 3rd hour training segment.]**

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The Civic Community

A civic-focused model incorporating and integrating the following intrinsic circles of community through the *Homefront Vanguard*:

1st Circle - The Homestead

- *Attachment & Presence* - the difference both make and how they change familial dynamics for better or for worse.
- *Support & Intervention* - pregnancy, adoption, foster care, parenting, mentoring, single and married, as well as elderly and hospice care.

2nd Circle - The Hometown

- *Social Responsibility* - cultivates the local conscience regarding the dignity of all human life and the protection of all human rights.
- *Municipal Accountability* - formulating regimented methods and measures of systematic city leadership accountability.

1st Circle - Home State

- *Commercial Liberty* - inculcates free market precepts and the socio-economic differences between capitalism and socialism
- *Financial Literacy* - infuses free enterprise concepts through voluntary financial instruction in our schools supported by Junior Achievement.

2nd Circle - Your Homeland

- *The U.S. Declaration* - American citizenship and founding principles regarding the rights of liberty (religious, civil and economic)
- *The U.S. Constitution* - American statesmanship and founding principles regarding rule of law and the proper role of government.

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Grassroots Leaders (Pt. 1)

A Social Service Collaborative

Thousands of children have no permanent family, but there are multiplied thousands of homes who would step up and take these kids if they knew of the need. Every child deserves a loving home and family, and believers are privileged to provide for the "orphans" in their community. The critical challenge, then, becomes the mobilization of the Christian community. The concern amongst people of faith for these forgotten children is growing, but the need is still very great.

As cited by the Michael Reagan Center for Advocacy and Research (of The Arrow Project), "... according to the latest federal AFCARS report, there are over 79,000 children in foster care who are immediately available for adoption. These are children whose parent's parental rights have already been terminated."

The report continues: "There are over 105 million households in the United States. An estimated 80%, or 84 million, of those identify themselves as Christian homes. That is over 1,000 Christian homes for every foster child immediately available for adoption. Unfortunately, most of these homes are not aware of the need, are discouraged by perceptions of the difficulty and complexity of the adoption process, or lack the support necessary for a successful adoption."

Churches play a critical role in educating their families about foster care and adoption, and in encouraging and supporting their families at every stage of the adoption process. But churches, like most families, lack critical knowledge. For example, who and where are the children available for adoption? How does the foster/adoption process and child welfare system work? What resources are available to help achieve successful adoptions?

Armed with this awareness, many Christian families would be willing and available to provide permanent homes for these foster children, if only they had access to the information and support they need to be successful.

ChrisCorps is dedicated to fulfilling this need. Working together with churches, families and community agencies, we can provide a permanent, loving family for every available orphaned child.

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Grassroots Leaders (Pt. 2)

A Public Service Collaborative

*Some of us will be in the game playing, some of us will be on the sidelines coaching and some of us will be in the stands cheering. Whatever be the case, when it comes to public service, let's make sure we are at least **at** the game! Quality people are needed for public service, especially quality people of faith. Not everyone has leadership capabilities, but those who do should be encouraged and equipped to step up and get in the game -- those who don't should follow. Here are just a few ways to do so:*

- **City Council** – governance is done best when it is done closest to the people, and Christians better than anyone should understand the meaning and value of “community,” both faith and civic. All that is needed is the right kind of leadership.
- **Political Office** – running for any local, state or federal office is a huge commitment, but one to which some are surely called. Those with the means, stature, intelligence, passion and personal integrity must step up. If a gentle nudge is needed, ChrisCorps will be that gentle nudge.
- **Law Enforcement** – serving as one of the guardians of a free society – be it as a police officer, an FBI or CIA agent, or simply as a private investigator or building security guard – keeping the peace and protecting the public is another highly crucial form of front-line ministry.
- **Military Service** – whether it's active service or the reserves, our regular branches (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines) or our special forces (Green Beret, Rangers, Navy Seals or Delta Force), the Coast Guard or the National Guard, military service is one of the most noble forms of public service.
- **Cultural Influence** – from a savvy and effective billboard campaign addressing some aspect of cultural decline to an engaging newspaper column on relevant social issues to various kinds of strategic and intelligent pro-life efforts, influencing the moral character of society is our responsibility as well.
- **Public Education** – since the schoolhouse in one generation shapes the statehouse in the next, public education is prime real estate, whether serving as a front-line educator or a school board member.
- **School Start-ups** – given the adverse ideologies that permeate progressive education, an alternate network of entrepreneurial school initiatives are needed to offer parents support and options. If this is your burden and calling, don't flinch. ChrisCorps will help you advance the ball.

"All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Those immortal words by Irishman Edmund Burke parallel Flannery O'Connor's challenge: "When the culture pushes hard against you and your family, you must push back just as hard." If light vacates or surrenders, darkness always fills the vacuum. So let's get some skin in the game, mobilize together and support those who serve in the public arena!

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ChrisCorps Process

What follows will spell out in detail the three hourly segments of a ChrisCorps meeting relative to its **second year**, the purpose of each segment and what actually happens during each.

2nd Year: Increasing His Presence via Fellowship/First Hour: Growing Closer

In the first hour of the second year, the meeting begins in the dining room, gathered around some appetizers & desserts (1st week), soup, salad & sandwiches (2nd week), or a special ethnic meal (3rd week). In potluck fashion, each group member shares their bounty as they begin sharing their lives. Spontaneous chatter eventually yields to the structured prompts of a thoughtful question from one of the ChrisCorps leaders that solicit a life-update response or testimonies of joy and gratitude.

As the prompting questions are centered around issues of identity, honesty and vulnerability, these inquiries would be designed to take each person individually and the group as a whole a little further each week into each other's lives. The progression would be incremental, safe and always appropriate. Then through bowed heads, joined hands and opened hearts, a prayer of thanksgiving led by one of the co-leaders (for both the food and the fellowship) would turn their attention to the resurrected Christ, God's One and Only.

2nd Year: Increasing His Presence via Fellowship/Second Hour: Going Deeper

In the living/family room, the second hour would seek to increase our awareness of His presence by going deeper into Christ's identity as the God-man (via the Gospel of John), what it means to "believe" in Him, and how faith in Christ makes the difference. Who Jesus is and who we are in Him is the basis for the transformation of our own identity, but faith is the vehicle that makes it happen. Therefore, not only is a deeper awareness required of *who Christ is*, but also a deeper understanding of *what faith is* and how His death and resurrection signifies the former and necessitates the latter, all of which is highlighted and reinforced through the communion elements.

2nd Year: Increasing His Presence via Fellowship/Third Hour: Getting Ready

The goal of producing lay ministers who are reproducing other lay ministers is fulfilled in this third-hour, which follows a tri-course regimen of nine sessions each per year:

- 1st Module (1st Week): Fellowship Basics - ecclesian and koinonian fellowship is the foundation of a domestic and civic communion for the home and the community.
- 2nd Module (2nd Week): Fellowship Conflicts - dealing with the heart-hurts of emotional wounds, soul ties and unforgiveness that preclude spiritual community.
- 3rd Module (3rd Week): Fellowship Civics - self-government of town and country through the domestic engagement of the *Homefront Vanguard*.

Concludes with focused prayer bands formed to protect the above preparation from spiritual attacks, preventing enemy strategies from destroying future ChrisCorps reproduction efforts.

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ChrisCorps Progress

1st Year

ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)*

Spiritual Maturity: Increasing Christ's presence thru discipleship

* Summer: a Weekend Retreat to _____

2nd Year

ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)*

Spiritual Community: Increasing Christ's presence thru fellowship

* **Summer: a Mission Trip to** _____

3rd Year

ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)*

Spiritual Intimacy: Increasing Christ's presence thru worship

* Summer: a Pilgrimage to _____

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ChrisCorps
3rd Year: Spiritual Intimacy

Increasing the Presence of Christ
Through Worship

"...this is my body which is broken for you..."

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Worship Defined

A generic dictionary definition of worship as a "... reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power ..." comes up short in the Judeo-Christian tradition. There "worship" means to lay down prostrate, to bow low, to crouch down. So while praise involves lifting Him up, worship is about laying ourselves down. Combine that with the familiar first query from the Westminster Confession, "What is the chief end of man?", followed by its enduring response, "*The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*", and we see how worship, when properly defined, ends up defining us — our posture as well as our purpose and priority.

Regarding the latter, a timeless maxim from Jonathan Edwards has been helpful in both understanding and explaining the nature of worship: *valuing supremely that which is supremely valuable*. So worship becomes a life-long endeavor of placing God as the highest priority in our lives. When we do that, we worship; when we don't, we descend into idolatry. This tells us that worship is not only about what we do, but what we don't do.

Scottish runner Eric Liddell at the 1924 Olympics in Paris refused to run the 100 meter race for which he was scheduled because it was on Sunday, sacrificing the gold medal he was destined to win in that event. He instead opted for the 400 and 200 meters (not his strongest events) later in the week. He ultimately did win a gold & bronze medal ("... they that honor me will I honor ..."), even though his godly sister challenged him to give up running altogether. In doing so, she said, he could avoid these conflicts and pursue his other passion (mission work in China). His response: "Jenny, no, I have to run, because when I run, I feel God's pleasure." So for Liddell, the choice to run and the choice to not run were both an act of worship.

But the Bible itself still holds the best definition of worship conveyed in the Great Commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matt. 22:36-38) And Jesus Himself made worship the priority when he said our prayers should begin with "Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed be thy name.*" True worship puts both the worshiped and the worshiper in their rightful place - He is God and we are not -- which simultaneously requires both humility and honesty, which simultaneously makes us more human. (Incidentally, the opposite is equally true: the more we worship ourselves, the less human we actually become. Worship frees us from being obsessed with ourselves, absorbed with ourselves and focused on ourselves.)

Moreover, we limit ourselves (and God) when we relegate the worship experience of our Sunday morning services to the confines of song and music. For the Jews, study was in fact the highest form of worship, whether that was via biblical revelation (Scripture) or natural revelation (nature). But not for the Jews only. Centuries ago, famed astronomer and devout believer Johannes Kepler was observing the stars in the heavens one evening through a crude telescope, when he found himself spontaneously exclaiming, "My God, I am thinking thy thoughts after Thee!" That's worship.

Suffice it to say, when the human and the divine intersect, the potential for worship emerges in ways both pronounced and obscure. The problem is not that this rarely happens, because it happens all the time. The problem is that most of us (most of the time) don't recognize it when it does happen, as was the case with the Samaritan woman - a story recorded for us by the Apostle John in chapter four of his Gospel (see next page).

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Worship Described

Jesus made an arresting statement in John 4:24 when He said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The context of course was a conversation that ensued between Jesus and a Samaritan woman, which by itself was no small thing. Such interactions were a major taboo in that culture ("For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans," much less with Samaritan women).

Notice that Jesus didn't hesitate to break some basic social norms through this dialogue. Why? He was obviously about to teach her not only who He was, but what worship was. And why was that so significant? Because the two cannot be separated. Who God is and what worship is cannot be understood apart from the other -- the better we know God, the deeper our worship goes; the deeper our worship goes, the better we will know God.

Notice finally that for the woman at the well, like most people no doubt at that time, worship was viewed in very institutional and geographical terms ("... Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship...") It was all about **where** you worshiped and **how**, thus, obviously quite legalistic. Jesus was about to explode that paradigm.

He said to her, "The hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him." And then comes the connection between who is being worshiped and who is doing the worshipping: "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Then notice how the Samaritan woman immediately references the Messiah, whom she points out is yet to come, signifying that she does not yet understand to whom she is talking in that moment. So Jesus helps her, "I who speak to you am He." There it is, the key to all true worship: recognizing Jesus' presence. That's what it means to worship in spirit and in truth.

Jesus said His Father is looking for true worshipers. This suggests there are false worshipers, which suggests there is such a thing as false worship. And how is a true worshiper distinguished from a false worshiper? True worshipers will worship in spirit and in truth, which means that false worshipers will not worship in spirit and in truth. False worship is externalized (showy, ritualistic or tied solely to a specific place or location); true worship happens in your heart ("worship God in spirit"), which can happen anywhere, anytime. It is a personal and internal thing, which can't be manipulated, faked or contrived. It's one-on-one, you and God - the crowd can't carry us and we can't be fractured in our focus.

Another thing it speaks to is the essence or nature of worship. If the very essence of God is **spirit** as Jesus states, then the only way to worship Him is **spiritually**. That requires a spirit, a spirit that is alive, not dead; awake, not sleeping. And that requires a spiritual quickening or awakening, something called regeneration. Only when we recognize who Jesus is and invite Him to live inside of us does He do so through His Spirit. The very presence of His Spirit ignites our own spirit, which means we can now worship God in spirit (a similar dynamic to "praying in the Spirit").

So to come into the presence of God, we need God's presence to come into us. That's where it all begins, and that is what Jesus means about worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Apart from the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit in our own spirits, we can only engage in false worship, which is not worshipping "in truth." To worship in spirit is to worship in truth, and to worship in truth is to worship in spirit. Jesus was saying that when it comes to worship and worshipers, no counterfeits and nothing superficial will do. So that rules out all forms of false and forced religion.

How this fleshes out in one's personal life can be through either a regular devotional time, the employment of various worship vehicles or a contemplative mindset that "practices His presence" throughout the day in an extemporaneous manner. These are explained on the next page (p. 9) and encouraged throughout the ChrisCorps journey.

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Personal Adoration

The infinite varieties of misplaced worship notwithstanding (fame, riches, career, people, material things), at the very base it boils down to only two: God and ourselves. At the heart of everything is a love of either God or Self. Apart from grace, our default setting is to worship self. The work of grace and His Spirit, however, is to liberate us from the bondage of self-worship (narcissism). Conversely, the work of the enemy is to fan the self-flame, which is why life can be such a struggle. What follows are the means that help us cooperate with the work of grace in fulfilling the Great Commandment to love (adore) God with all our beings:

I. Devotional Habits

We "renew the spirit of our minds in the knowledge of Christ" through scheduled and structured times of personal devotion when we give ourselves privately to Bible-reading (the Gospel of John) and Christian studies (on inspiration, worldview and warfare) as well as various prayer disciplines. Effective ways to do this in terms of content, process and methods are explored during the training segments of the ChrisCorps meetings.

II. Worship Vehicles

God has provided a litany of tangible transports that can take us effectively down the avenue of worship:

- o Mind & Body -- " ... present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship ... be transformed by the renewal of your mind ..." - Romans 12:1-2
- o Silence & Solitude - practiced often by Jesus, these two worship vehicles are the two keys to fostering individual devotion in a deeper way.
- o Nature & Recreation - the great outdoors has always been wonderfully therapeutic on every level, but especially spiritually. It rouses the senses, frees the spirit, and stirs within us a deep longing. We feel closer to the Creator in some mystical yet tangible way as we get closer to His creation.
- o Music & Dance - some prefer song, some prefer movement, some prefer both; regardless, these are two of the most powerful worship vehicles known to the human spiritual experience.
- o Serving & Giving - Jesus said, "As much as you have done it to one of these, you have done it to me."
- o Study & Meditation - the highest form of worship in the Jewish tradition.
- o Feasting & Fasting - while feasting is more enjoyable, fasting goes deeper, but both can spark worship.
- o Work & Rest -- "I glorified you ... having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." (Jn. 17:4)

III. Practicing His Presence

What Jesus called "abiding," Paul called "praying without ceasing." What Jews called "walking with God" and Christians referred to as "walking by faith" or "walking in the light," Brother Lawrence called "practicing His presence." Whatever one calls it, this is where we want to be because this is what heaven will be.

Worship is a focus, a posture, a mindset, an attitude, a way of life -- indeed, a human's strongest affection. What we worship (or whom) determines and reveals our deepest priorities and passions. When we worship God, we increase His presence; when we increase His presence, we worship God. And since "God inhabits the praise of His people," individual worship is complemented by and reinforced not only through the above three ways, but also in the corporal context, which is unpacked on the following page (p. 26).

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Corporal Adoration

The psalmist said, "Let them extol Him in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders." (Ps. 107:32).. Accordingly, corporate adoration should have some indispensable elements which can greatly enhance community worship to be both inspirational and edifying. Whether the service is in a church, prison or outdoors, the following essential qualities will help bring the depth and freshness that is needed to lead a larger group of people into the presence of God:

Well-prepared - the development of this service should be prayed over and wrestled with like any good preacher does with his sermon all week. Moreover, entertainment is not the goal, engagement is. Every part of the service must be compelling, not just the sermon. The more thought and preparation that goes into it, the more meaningful it will be.

A Spiritual Feast -- a tasty, palatable meal, spiritually-speaking. It must be fit for a king, as if we're serving up royalty, because we are! He is the audience of One for whom this service is being prepared. Quality and excellence must be the priority: seamless transitions, sufficiently rehearsed musical numbers, creatively-presented Scripture readings, thoughtful public prayers, sound cues ready and timely, accessible sermons that are both meaty and engaging.

A Unique Music Experience -- fresh, creative and utterly beautiful in terms of the selection, arrangement and substance. Avoid the "traditional vs. contemporary" debate, the issue is whether the congregational worship experience is fresh or stale, creative or tired, deep or shallow. By mining the musical talent from the Christian community at-large, the musical worship portion can avoid the ruts and routines that sometimes plague it. Alternate between a worship band one week to a choir the next to a simple song service led by one solo individual with a guitar or piano. Mix it up between contemporary Christian, Southern gospel, classical sacred and ethnic praise songs from other countries or people groups.

A Sprinkling of Creative Arts -- drama, dance, painting, photography, poetry - anything that reflects the creativity of the Body of Christ and points to the creative nature of God Himself. Color, variety, beauty and expression is critical and integral to any worshipful service that engages the mind, captures the imagination and touches the heart.

Testimonials -- real-life stories from real people about a real God in the real world. Coming from the people in the pews or the people in the streets, these personal accounts do not always have to have story-book endings. Let people share "the fellowship of His sufferings" as well, the night of the soul someone might still be enduring.

Engaging Messages -- milk and meat, passionate and compassionate, grace and truth, theological and relevant, expository and topical, God and His Word, prayer and God's Spirit ... engaging mind and heart.

Thoughtful Prayers - this may be the most neglected part of the service and one that typically receives the least attention and preparation. For public prayers to be truly thoughtful, they often have to be prepared. The pastor(s) will need to lead the way until the people get the idea. Also, there needs to be several kinds of prayer times within a public service: silent prayers as well as the spoken and sung ones, coming from both the leaders and the laity.

Team-Developed -- all of the above is consistently achievable if the service is developed by a skilled ChrisCorps committed to an optimum community worship experience. This group will not only craft the service but will also be involved in leading the service in one way or another.

A Godward Focus -- His eternal existence, incomprehensible and incomparable nature, trinitarian identity, divine presence and mysterious glory ... it will all be about Him because it is all about Him. The service should not be developed and prepared primarily for people, but for God. Craft it as if God Himself was going to be there, because He will be!

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Lay Ministers (Pt. 1)

A Tactical Collective

JoAnn Ballard arrived in segregated Memphis in the summer of 1965, sent by the Nazarenes to revive a defunct African-American church. She cleaned up the run-down church and informed the neighborhood it was open for business. Nobody came. She eventually discovered the reason was they lacked decent clothes to wear to church. So she took every cent she had, bought clothing from the Salvation Army and distributed it to the neighbors. Children began coming and the church started to function.

From that humble beginning, Ballard went on to build a network of dozens of small, inner-city churches, as well as train hundreds of missionaries to care for the Memphis poor. Her organization grew to a \$2 million enterprise with over 40 paid staffers running services for youth, children, married couples and single mothers. It expanded to become one of the best-known nonprofits in the Memphis area.

Centered around such community concerns as homelessness, unemployment, the medically uninsured, sexual chaos, the abortion holocaust or the abuse/neglect of children, this two-pronged approach to witness -- proclamation matched with service - has the potential of uniting Christians and area churches as well as prompting support from community leaders.

In Fort Lauderdale, they focused on foster care. In Minneapolis, it was a door-to-door food drive and medical outreach program. In Los Angeles, one pastor founded Imagine LA, which recruited one church at a time to wrap around one homeless family at a time.

In Washington D.C., it was an extensive cleanup of the inner-city schools, while in Houston, impact teams launched service projects. And in Rochester, Minnesota, a unique local church men's ministry helped their neighbors with landscaping, painting, fencing, cleaning gutters, and moving. Suffice it to say, the opportunities will be endless, whether it's snow-plowing for the elderly, mentoring a misguided teenager, taking a fatherless boy fishing, or tutoring a struggling student.

The Salvation Army has been leading the way in this complementary approach for over 150 years. Likewise, other groups like Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse, Compassion International, World Vision and a host of City Rescue Missions provide premier examples of how to both share the gospel and meet the needs of the hurting. Caring for the community through a significant presence will not only make a profound difference in people's daily lives, it will also make a measurable difference in community life, which is part of the ChrisCorps charge.

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Lay Ministers (Pt. 2)

A Strategic Collective

Where congregational life is strong and vibrant, ChrisCorps becomes the little church within the church ...

The long-term aims: brightening the light of the Body of Christ in one's locale through discipleship, fellowship and worship.

The means of achieving them: by developing *the ecclesiola in ecclesia* ("the little church within the church.") Quoting Richard Foster, "It is not sectarian in any way. No separation. No splitting off ... we stay within the given church structures and develop little centers of light within those structures ..."

Where the congregational dynamic may be waning or faltering, ChrisCorps becomes the para-church alongside the parish church ...

The long-term aims: savouring the salt of the Body of Christ in one's locale through discipleship, fellowship and worship.

The means of achieving them: Through the mobilizing and multiplying vanguards of scholastic cooperatives (starting a school), civic collaboratives (serving the community) and ecclesiastic collectives (strengthening the Church).

Where the congregational witness is dead or dying, ChrisCorps becomes the mother church birthing a baby church ...

- The long-term aims: increasing the presence of the Body of Christ in one's locale through discipleship, fellowship and worship.
- The means of achieving them: ChrisCorps is the engine, the work of the ministry is the vehicle and people are the journey.

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ChrisCorps Process

What follows will spell out in detail the three hourly segments of a ChrisCorps meeting relative to its **third year**, the purpose of each segment and what actually happens during each.

3rd Year: Increasing His Presence via Worship/First Hour: Growing Closer

In the first hour, the fellowship would begin in the dining room, gathered around some creative snacks: appetizers & desserts (1st week), soup, salad & sandwiches (2nd week), or a special ethnic meal (3rd week). Each group member would bring something tasty to contribute, sharing their bounty as they begin sharing their lives. Spontaneous chatter would morph into a more structured conversation, when each person is prompted by a thoughtful question from one of the group leaders that seeks to solicit a life-update response and reports of joy moments.

Prompting questions would center around issues of identity, honesty and vulnerability, and would take each person individually and the group as a whole a little further each week into each other's lives. The progression would be incremental, safe and always appropriate. Then through bowed heads, joined hands and opened hearts, a co-leader would return thanks for both the meal and the interactions, transitionally turning the group's attention to the person of Jesus Christ.

3rd Year: Increasing His Presence via Worship/Second Hour: Going Deeper

For the second hour, we move to the living/family room and begin working our way through the fourth Gospel of John, exploring who Christ is (1st week), what it means to believe in Christ (2nd week), and how faith in Christ makes the difference (3rd week).

Reinforced by an in-depth look at the fabric of faith and all the threads that make it up, every cycle (3-month period) would unpack another aspect of this spiritual vision, including the nature of faith, the dynamics of faith, the anatomy of faith, analogies of faith, definitions, descriptions and distortions of faith, as well as examples and eclipses of faith.

3rd Year: Increasing His Presence via Worship/Third Hour: Getting Ready

The goal of producing lay ministers who are reproducing other lay ministers is fulfilled through this training series, which follows a tri-course regimen of nine sessions each per year:

- 1st Module (1st Week): Worship Basics - defining and describing worship is the foundation of personal and corporal adoration for ministers and members.
- 2nd Module (2nd Week): Worship Conflicts - dealing with the deception and delusion of personal idols, toxic worldviews and false religions that prevent spiritual intimacy.
- 3rd Module (3rd Week): Worship Ecclesiastics - increasing Christ's presence and Christian influence through the ecclesiastic development of the *ChrisCorps Operation*.

Concludes with focused prayer bands formed to protect the above preparation from spiritual attacks, preventing enemy strategies from destroying future ChrisCorps reproduction efforts.

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ChrisCorps Progress

1st Year

ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)*

Spiritual Maturity: Increasing Christ's presence thru discipleship & scholastics

* Summer option: a Weekend Retreat to _____

2nd Year

ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)*

Spiritual Community: Increasing Christ's presence thru fellowship & civics

* Summer option: a Mission Trip to _____

3rd Year

ChrisCorps Meets: 3 Hrs./Mtg. ----- 1 Mtg./Wk. -----3 Wks./Mnth
(a 9-month period)*

Spiritual Intimacy: Increasing Christ's presence thru worship & ecclesiastics

* **Summer option: a Pilgrimage to** _____

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ChrisCorps
Conclusion: Ministry Wings

Increasing the Presence of Christ
By Mobilizing and Multiplying the Body of Christ

"...this is my body which is broken for you..."

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The Mobilization Dynamic

The ChrisCorps charge is a statewide ministry operation, education campaign and community vanguard. It forms a coalition of faith-filled parents and citizens in two ways: (1) rallying the troops for a county-wide presence, and (2) providing a catalyst for city-wide impact. Hence, the mobilization dynamic and challenge.

Challenge: to see the **convicted Christian community** assert itself in a **concerted, strategic** and **perpetual** manner as the much needed **light** and **salt** within our state, counties and communities.

1st Key Word/"Convicted" - convicted Christians are *deeply convinced, highly concerned, totally committed*: fully persuaded, seriously burdened and relentlessly tenacious.

2nd Key Word/"Christian" - to be distinctively Christian is in contrast to secular religion, cultic religions or cultural Christianity. It's about the historic (not generic) Christian faith, made alive by one's personal "convicted" faith in Jesus Christ.

3rd Key Word/"Community" - Implies two things: (1) the Body of Christ, Christ's physical presence on the earth today, and (2) solo efforts or lone rangers won't cut it.

4th Key Word/"Concerted" - Jointly arranged, carefully planned and strenuously coordinated; intentional and done with great effort.

5th Key Word/"Strategic" - Intelligent, proactive; stealth (undetected, under the radar).

6th Key Word/"Perpetual" - long-term, never ending, never changing (in terms of focus and commitment), which means *for the long haul*, i.e., at least 21 years.

7th Key Word/"Light" - Just as the person of Christ is the light for the human soul, so also is the body of Christ the light for human society. When light diminishes, darkness increases; when light increases, darkness dissipates.

8th Key Word/"Salt" - salt does 3 things: it stings, heals and preserves - the same effect the body of Christ has on culture. One makes society uncomfortable, the other makes it healthier, and the third actually sustains and maintains it.

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The Multiplication Dynamic

To produce **lay ministers** who reproduce a **lay ministry** that produces other **lay ministers** who reproduce another **lay ministry**, ad infinitum.

To establish a **growing mission presence** in each county via a ChrisCorps group (twelve like-minded individuals) who are dedicated to **increasing the presence of Christ** via a 3-in-1 mandate: (1) Christian ministry, (2) classical pedagogy and (3) constitutional society.

This would **result in a statewide network**, spawning fresh forms of lay shepherding, entrepreneurial schooling and grassroots governing.

At the end of three years together, a mother ChrisCorps group would birth three new daughter ChrisCorps groups.

Then in three more years, those three daughter ChrisCorps groups would each **birth three granddaughter groups**, resulting in nine ChrisCorps groups.

In **21 years**, there would be **729 groups**, resulting in **7,668 lay leaders** in one county (all doing transformative ministry, education and community work).

Each group would become well-trained to begin a *School of Thought*, guard the *Homefront* and shepherd a *ChrisCorps*.

As a result, in **the 1st Year**, members launch the *School of Thought* campaign by beginning an entrepreneurial education cooperative (K-12 and/or post-secondary).

In **the 2nd Year**, members execute the *Homefront* challenge by building a grassroots civics collaborative (hometown and/or homeland).

In **the 3rd Year**, members honor the *ChrisCorps* charge by birthing a lay ministry collective (local church and/or para-church).

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County by County

The long-term goal would be to bring *the ChrisCorps proposal* to every county in the state, ultimately establishing a functioning ChrisCorps in each.

The best way to go about reaching this goal is to get a ChrisCorps started in as many counties as possible, and then let them be responsible for working their way through the ChrisCorps process to the point of reproducing at least 2-3 more ChrisCorps in their own respective county.

Regardless of the number of ChrisCorps groups operating in each county, they will all be working towards the same goal and eventually be working together as co-laborers, keeping whatever outreach efforts they pursue well-coordinated.

After one ChrisCorps has been formed in a specific county, that ChrisCorps will have to decide (when the time comes to birth a couple more ChrisCorps) whether the new groups will be birthed in a neighboring community in its own county or in a neighboring county.

As a new ChrisCorps emerges and the process continues to unfold, the lead ministers from that county's original ChrisCorps may have to communicate with and help coordinate other emerging ChrisCorps initiatives within that county so as to avoid unnecessary conflicts and facilitate complementary and cooperative efforts.

Each ChrisCorps, if independent, will be self-governing. If a part of a local congregation, it of course would be accountable to the leadership of that church. Each and every ChrisCorps that is in close approximation, whether in a local church or in a local community, must work together in a spirit of harmony and camaraderie. There can be no place for territorialism or an "us vs. them" attitude within this ministry or within the larger Body of Christ.

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City by City

The long-term goal would be to bring *the ChrisCorps proposal* to every city in the county, ultimately establishing a functioning ChrisCorps in each.

The best way to go about reaching this goal is to get a ChrisCorps started in as many cities as possible, and then let them be responsible for working through the ChrisCorps process to the point of reproducing 2-3 more ChrisCorps groups in 2-3 more nearby cities.

Regardless of the number of ChrisCorps groups operating in each city, they will all be working towards the same goal and remaining in close communication with each other so as to keep their outreach efforts well-coordinated.

After one ChrisCorps has been formed in a specific city, that ChrisCorps may have to be sensitive, careful and strategic (when the time comes to birth some new ChrisCorps groups), whether to birth the new groups in the same community or a neighboring community.

As new groups emerge and the process unfolds, the lead lay ministers of those newly established groups may need to communicate with and help coordinate all emerging outreach initiatives in nearby and surrounding communities so as to avoid unnecessary conflicts and to facilitate complementary and cooperative efforts.

Each ChrisCorps in each city, if independent, would be self-governing; if part of a local church or para-church organization, it of course would be accountable to the leadership of that authorizing ministry.

Each and every ChrisCorps that is in close approximation, whether in a local church, local region or para-church ministry, must work together in a spirit of harmony and camaraderie. There can be no place for territorialism or an "us vs. them" attitude within this ministry or within the larger Body of Christ.

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Afterword

Increasing the Presence of Christ
By Mobilizing and Multiplying the Body of Christ

"...this is my body which is broken for you..."

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Increasing His Presence

"He must increase, but I must decrease," said John the Baptizer, the beloved cousin and forerunner of Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:30). What did he mean by that? Is it possible to increase who the Lord is? No it is not. Can we actually increase His presence in our lives, our homes, our communities, our world? Yes we can, based on the depth and quality and yieldedness of our own faith.

It is of course not God's presence that increases but our spiritual sensitivities to increasingly "sense" His presence. Spiritual arrogance and spiritual ignorance have a profound dulling effect on those spiritual senses. When we increase, He decreases. The more self-absorbed we are, the less absorbed we are with Him ... and vice-versa.

Sometimes He hides Himself from us, sometimes He reveals Himself -- what makes the difference? Sometimes He fills us with His presence, sometimes He seems distant. Again, what makes the difference? Sometimes He speaks to us, other times He's silent -- or our ears are plugged.

When John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease," he was obviously talking about who was on the throne of his life, who was in first place, who was valued supremely. And his point, no doubt, was that Christ must be valued supremely because He is supremely valuable! And He is supremely valuable because of who He is, God the Son and the Son of God. In John Piper's words, "He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." This is no doubt, at least in part, what John meant when he penned those immortal words: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

When we do value Him supremely - in our hearts and in our world - and actually live our lives in accordance with that conviction, in that sense we increase His presence. When that happens, the light of His presence shines brighter in our lives and in our world, which then (of necessity) chases away the darkness of those unseen evil presences that bring such oppression, pain and grief.

Moreover, the more I am crucified with Christ, the more Christ is resurrected in me; the more I die to the old self, the more the new self lives. Or as the Apostle James said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up." This must have been what John was not only trying to say, but what he had also personally experienced - he believed it because he had lived it.

Paradoxically, we also increase His presence in this world (and in our world) by increasing our presence! As believers, we are the Body of Christ, His physical presence on this earth at this time in history. This means the more we move in and let our lights shine (i.e., increase our presence in every arena of this world), the more we increase His presence! This is the work of the Spirit of Christ in our lives and this should be the work of the Body of Christ in this world.

Increasing His presence, therefore, in our lives, our homes, our churches, our communities, our nation and our world must be the passion, vision and mission of the Body of Christ just as it is the Spirit of Christ. This is what this proposal is all about because this is what "the work of the ministry" is all about.

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Practicing His Presence

Reviving the life and influence of Brother Lawrence, a French monk from the 17th Century, and missionary/educator Frank Laubach from the 20th Century, the following select excerpts from the letters and writings of both help explain what "practicing the presence of God" meant as a way of life.

Brother Lawrence, writing in third person about himself ...

"He is now so accustomed to that Divine presence, that he receives from it continual blessings upon all occasions. For about thirty years, his soul has been filled with joys so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their outward appearance. If he is a little too much absent from that Divine presence, God presently makes Himself to recall him.

"He answers faithfully to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart towards God, or by a meek and fond regard to Him, or by such words as love forms upon these occasions. For instance, he may say, 'My God, here I am all devoted to You. Lord, make me according to Your heart.' And then it seems to him that this God of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the depth and center of his soul.

"The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that God is always in the depth or bottom of our souls, and renders him incapable of doubting it. God, he says, has infinite treasure to bestow. We often hinder Him, and stop the current of His graces. But when God finds an open and faithful soul, He pours His graces into it plentifully. There they flow like a once-blocked river, which finds a passage, and spreads itself with abundance."

Frank Laubach's testimony ...

"I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things is what so astonishes me, for I never have felt it this way before. I need something and turn around to find it waiting for me.

"... I feel convinced that for me, and for you who read, there lies ahead undiscovered continents of spiritual living compared with which we are infants in arms ... I feel like one who has had his violin out of tune with the orchestra and at last is in harmony with the universe.

"I disapprove of the usual practice of talking "small talk" whenever we meet, and holding a veil over our souls. If we are so impoverished that we have nothing to reveal but small talk, then we need to struggle for more richness of soul. As for me, I am convinced that this spiritual pilgrimage which I am making is infinitely worthwhile, the most important thing I know of to talk about."

ChrisCorps is a group of believers struggling together for the same "richness of soul." Accordingly, Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach's emphasis will be central to our journey, because increasing the presence of Christ within our families and communities begins with the reality of *increasing His presence* in us.

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