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AWOP Miami Valley Educates Working Christians on Expressing Faith at Work

First Miami Valley gathering mobilizes Christians to incorporate faith values at work

At Work on Purpose (AWOP) sees the growth of the I-75 corridor as an opportunity to help more working Christians connect their faith lives at work in the Miami Valley.

About 50 people from religious denominations ranging from Catholics to Methodists to evangelical Christians gathered May 28 at the University of Dayton (UD) for an inaugural AWOP Miami Valley Marketplace Mobilization meeting.

AWOP helps Christians incorporate their faith values at work, transforming their jobs into platforms for ministry.

Brother Victor Forlani, Marianist in residence and director of the Center for Integration of Faith and Work at UD's School of Business Administration, greeted attendees.

Forlani said that "our faith should inform every aspect of our lives, and work is a central and often neglected dimension."

"Businesses and their associates, led by executives mindful of their obligations to society, guided by ethical social principles, and lived through virtues illuminated by the Gospel contribute mightily to the common good of all," he told the group.

The UD center was formed in 2009 because people are expressing a growing interest in incorporating their spirituality into their business lives. The center is a key to providing business students and others in the Miami Valley with an educational experience consistent with Catholic and Marianist traditions.

Cincinnati AWOP has grown from an inaugural meeting in 2003 with 50 people at Old St. George Catholic Church in Cincinnati to become the nation's largest, citywide marketplace ministry with 7,500 members. It recently began offering AWOP programming in Dayton and Dallas and will launch marketplace ministry programming in Nairobi, Kenya in June.

AWOP supports business roundtable groups it calls "collaboratories;" is developing an array of faith-at-work technology tools; hosts events; and supports sustainable businesses that dedicate excess profits to charity—all with the express goal of encouraging and educating Christians on how to incorporate their faiths into their work lives and careers.

Miami Valley AWOP organizers are Rob Bunting of Centerville, a member of Fairhaven Church; Jake Crawford, a youth pastor and intercessory prayer leader, member of Hope United Methodist Church in Bellbrook; Trevis Burkett of Centerville, a member of Southbrook Christian Church in Miamisburg; Leanne Rubosky of Xenia, a member of The Gathering in Centerville; Wini Arnold of Centerville, member of Oasis in Middletown; and Daniel Cheung of Dayton, member of Christ United Methodist Church and assistant professor of business ethics at the University of Dayton.

“We want to welcome people of all denominations, across congregations,” said Bunting.

Presenters included Darrell Geis, founder and president of Christian Blue Pages, a company specializing in a collection of online services including a directory connecting Christian consumers with Christian businesses; iChooseChristian deals, a compendium of coupons for Christian business services in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana; and an annual Christmas caroling event.

Jeff Reep, director of career services at Cedarville University, spoke on helping students see careers holistically, as mission work to make a difference in the workplace and the world.

“Always be ready to put your faith on the table and sow the seeds,” he said. “You can make a difference and help others be successful... you can have a tremendous influence, even if you are not a decision maker.”

Robert Adamson, founder of One Bistro in Miamisburg, spoke on building self-sustainable nonprofit One Bistro, a three-year-old, pay-as-you-can nonprofit eatery that

caters to everyone—“regardless of whether you are a homeless, a heroin addict or a hero,” to help fight food insecurity, he said.

The restaurant has served about 20,000 people so far. It is also expanding rapidly. Adamson said he is working on about 50 mentoring projects and plans to open One Bistros in Xenia and Middletown this year.

He is working with Joseph Bakhit of Mason, who plans to open a nonprofit coffee shop called Joseph’s Cup in Loveland this year. The coffee shop will operate based on the One Bistro business model.

“A church is not a place; it is people,” said Chuck Proudfit, AWOP founder and president. “AWOP tries to be an expression of church on Main Street.”

Bunting said he would like to form a Miami Valley collaboratory, a monthly roundtable of 8 to 12 business people who discuss issues of faith and work in a community of believers. AWOP has six collaboratories in Cincinnati. Those interested can contact him at 937-694-8501, or robbunting@gmail.com.

For more information about AWOP programs, its faith-at-work tools and events, and go to www.atworkonpurpose.org or call (800) 513-9580.

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