

Here is a digest of CTM news since July 2009:

Directors

The Board of Directors is drawn from around the world. The benefits of this for a movement that seeks to model networking that reflects in some measure the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven are self-evident. At the same time it is a challenge to find time and ways of getting together to do justice to our responsibilities and the growing movement that we seek to serve. So telecons (a la Skype) are a staple form of meeting, with the aim of getting together face to face once a year, whenever possible piggy-backing to save money.

The next such meeting will be at the end of June 2010 in London UK. If there are things that you would like to ask or put to the directors please let me know.

CTM Australasia

Following a consultation in July 2007 a group has continued to grapple with what Child Theology means in their regional context. In June 2010 I will be meeting with members of the group in Melbourne (before the meeting of the CTM Board) and one of the issues we will be discussing is how this group might provide a model for other parts of the world, both in the way it operates, but also in how it connects with others (network/federation/coalition etc). We will keep you posted on this important development.

Refining our Vision and Mission

Child Theology and CTM are nearing their tenth birthday, and so understandably we are still feeling our way on what exactly we mean by Child Theology and the best way to embody it in the way we go about what we do. If you look at the website you will see our latest attempt at defining our aims and processes. Meanwhile the phrase “child in the midst” has gained currency in many parts of the world. It was members of CTM that coined the phrase and so in some ways we rejoice that something of the message is getting across.

But, and it is a big but, we have come to realize that as the phrase has become popular it has been cut loose from its moorings, both contextual and theological. For the child in Matthew’s Gospel was placed in the midst of a group of followers of Jesus at a particular time in his ministry. What is more the child was placed by Jesus in the midst, and without this placing by Jesus, the phrase has no essential Christological or theological meaning. So we invite friends and members of the CTM network to be vigilant in their use of the term, and to make sure we do the same!

Publications

We continue to sell and distribute copies of the Consultation Reports, the three booklets in our series, and *Toddling to the Kingdom*. We try to adjust the prices so that they are accessible to ordinary people in different parts of the world.

The texts of the reports and booklets are also available on our website.

Haddon Willmer and I continue to work hard on our book, *Reception Class: an Essay in Child Theology*. (The book is an exposition of Matthew 18: 1-14.) We had planned to introduce the content in full at a conference of leaders of the Lutheran Church in Finland in April 2010, but Volcanic Ash from Iceland prevented our flights from leaving the UK! The conference has been re-scheduled for March 2011.

The fourth booklet in the series has been sent in draft form to the editors, Marcia Bunge and Haddon Willmer, by Jan Grobbelaar. It represents his attempt to set Child Theology in an African context. Others in the series should include one comparing Child Theology with Liberation, Feminist and Black Theologies. At conferences and consultations, one of the most commonly asked question concerns how CT compares and contrasts with such theological perspectives and hermeneutics.

Website

We are currently seeking funding that will enable us to re-design the website. The current design has been with us from the start and we need to adapt to changes in technology and usage since then. We would appreciate feedback and constructive criticism and ideas from all who log on. It is going to be a core feature of the emerging international network in years to come.

Jerome Berryman: *Children and the Theologians*

There is a review of this unique and important book on our website. It draws heavily on the pioneering work of Marcia Bunge (ed.), *The Child in Christian Thought* as it seeks to tell a more continuous story to the present day. Readers are invited to comment on the book and the review via the website.

James E Loder: *The Logic of the Spirit*

CTM has been in discussion with a number of people about holding a conference on this important work in Princeton, where Jim Loder taught. The book is one of the keenest attempts to explore how theology relates to human development (that includes child development) theory. Loder was well-versed in both fields, and so his contribution could well help lay foundations for movements such as Holistic Child Development. If you are interested in such a conference, please let us know. We will keep CTM members informed as the idea takes shape.

Transform World (4-14); HCD Global Alliance; Global Children's Forum

These Christian movements, focused on children, have invited CTM to contribute to their theological thinking, and we are currently working with them to see how this might be best effected. While the ultimate focus of Child Theology is on Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven, there is an obvious point of connection with all such initiatives.

Connecting with Theologians

From the outset CTM has been clear about its intentions to involve all Christians in the process: married and single, male and female, young and old, from every continent, academics and practitioners. Our consultations have modeled this variety. As we prepare for our second decade we have been assessing where we should aim to place our resources in future. Our conclusion is

that we still have an uphill task in connecting with mainstream theologians (biblical and systematic) and with theological institutions.

It is still our experience that the words “Child Theology” convey to most Christians the idea that we are concerned primarily with a form of children’s ministry or education. To rectify this we are actively seeking seminaries, colleges or universities where it would be possible to teach a course/module on Child Theology as part of the mainstream studies of students.

And we are considering convening a conference aimed at bringing together theologians with a view to exploring with them the theological implications and challenges that Jesus brings in placing a child in our midst.

Resourcing of CTM

CTM relies heavily on the enthusiasm of a small group of volunteers: the Directors and a Company Secretary. We have no intention of developing into a large organization: in fact we see our role as an organisation coming to an end within just over a decade. This is a demonstration of how keen we are to model a radically new way of doing theology worldwide.

In addition to this voluntary help there is a very modest income from our publications and teaching.

For the rest we have been dependent on grants, notably from Compassion International. And we wish to place on record our very warm appreciation of this support.

Keith J. White
Chair of CTM

Database

This newsletter has been sent to you because CTM has your electronic contact details on its database. If for any reason you do not wish to receive further newsletters please let us know. And if there are others known to you whom you feel should be included in the process, do encourage them to contact CTM via the website.