

# You can't fish for people without

# BAIT

[www.uccny.org/CastingYourNets/](http://www.uccny.org/CastingYourNets/) January 2010

Welcome to your monthly CYN support guide. Each issue offers direction to help you grow CYN in your church. Topics come from you, so don't be shy! Contact Rev. Lex Liberatore at [stpaulunited@verizon.net](mailto:stpaulunited@verizon.net).

## 2010: The Year We Make Contact

### *Special Double Issue*

**A**rthur C. Clarke's follow up to the wildly popular "2001: A Space Odyssey" was entitled "2010: The Year We Make Contact." As the NY Conference marks the beginning of the first calendar year of a reorganized CYN program, why not make this the year your church "makes contact" in every possible way so church can become vital again. If we've been doing something a certain way in the life of the church and the results no longer meet our needs, why not consider a different way? Still, when so many pressing things demand our attention, many churches find it hard to prioritize a CYN campaign. When we're so used to the way things have always been done, it can be hard for us to see the "new thing" (Isaiah 43:19a) God wants to do, especially when we fall prey to the all too human desire for instant pain relief. In this New Year, let me make the case for why patience and focus on CYN in your church can help turn things around.

**Congregational Growth** (building a strong and powerful witness to Christ's presence) is a desired outcome for any church. Many churches expect the charisma of the pastor, the fact they were located in a neighborhood, a sign at the corner, a few ads and a brochure, one or two public events, and their mere presence to draw new people into the life of the church. It's been my experience such congregations expect the pastor to be the sole driving force behind working to build the church. Yet, without a willingness to see the work of being the church as the job of every member, the church cannot and will not grow. CYN is an integrated effort to provide tools to the local church so they can create a plan to realize the growth they desire.

In my conversations with conference churches in decline, the most often cited goals to jump start growth include: *increasing outreach work, expanding the geographic area served by the church and greater membership diversity*. It's important for the church to use CYN retreats to focus on deepening their understanding of CYN and building the congregational buy-in, while exciting the church with a real sense of hope that they can make growth happen (key to new member recruitment is the rank-in-file member seeing the work of church growth as their personal mission). A big part of CYN Retreat #2 is to map out the area we see as the "footprint" of our church. Where do our current members live? What is the area we consider as the primary boundary

of our church? Where do we want to reach out for prospective new members? What populations in our church "footprint" are not represented in membership at present? Once we've identified locations and groups, we need to ask ourselves, "What do we need to do to reach these people?" Some churches have used door hangers; others have actually split up into teams and had one-on-one conversations with neighbors to find out if they attend a church and what they are looking for in a faith community. Other churches have done more general outreach at community events.

**S**uccessful churches in CYN have not gone off into individual aspects of the program; instead each has plotted an integrated plan of action. For example, a major outreach effort into an identified population the church wants to attract is less effective if we haven't first envisioned and developed our Invitation ministry. If we do a great job reaching out to new people, but aren't really ready to welcome them (including signage in and around the church, trained hospitality ministers, a welcome table for new folks can get name tags and information, "ambassadors" assigned to sit with visitors to answer questions and host, replacing the old church information rack with specific information right in the pew rack addressing the concerns and needs discovered in outreach to our neighbors, weekly coffee hours or other events for newcomers to get to know members, and the creation of new ministry to address unmet neighborhood needs), they won't stay. In my current church, a family of five came to visit. After they were welcomed, they asked the greeter, "Do you have a youth ministry?" The greeter simply said, "No, we do not." This family stayed for worship, bypassed me in the greeting line, and never returned. We were willing to promote our church, but were unaware what newcomers wanted in their faith life, so we weren't prepared to "close the deal."

**B**ut, even if we have a fully formed **Invitation** ministry, it will fail if we don't pay attention to **Fellowship**. **Fellowship** means deepening our relationships with each other. We can spend energy and effort to be ready for guests, but if we haven't taken time to develop our sense of being the church together (pulling in the same direction, getting excited about church, and sharing this excitement with others) we could lose the newcomers and also some of our current members.

People leave church over little things – for example, when congregational meetings don't allow diverse voices to be heard and respected. Or when the governance structure of the church is top-heavy and burdensome (Some churches have turned to team ministry in an effort to replace ineffective leadership structures that don't keep pace with the current size and needs of the church). Or when worship no longer meets the needs of many of our current members in the face of a modern world. Or when we're unwilling to confront each other and speak the truth in love. No matter what, greater membership participation in church activities doesn't happen without thought and effort.

**M**ission is another important component of CYN. My current church had a commitment to youth and young adults all over its profile. However, this turned out only to be their “better angels.” Although the church wanted to see such expression in their ministry, they were unwilling to personally act to make it happen. Call is the most important aspect behind any ministry. If the church can look beyond their wishes, to what God is calling them to personally get out there and do, this is growth ministry that lasts.

**Mission** is about invitation to new friends, exciting the existing membership to embrace their call to ministry and generosity in time, talent and treasure. Overall, CYN helps us bear the other aspects of the campaign in mind to avoid tunnel vision. It all works together or it doesn't work at all.

**T**his brings me to the tough nut of *building the endowment fund and balancing the budget*. If all other aspects of CYN are working, then members are coming and staying, old friends are renewed in what it means for them to be the church and the worship is drawing the Spirit to renew the hearts and imaginations of the people. The money will follow. **Generosity** is an important part of CYN. People love and will support a winner.

However, even if a church desires to grow for the future, when a majority members refuse to embrace new ways to be the church in their community, little growth is realized. It's no surprise members in these churches are inconsistent in increasing their financial support, with many unwilling to even consider a stewardship campaign. Overall, if we aren't excited about what we're a part of, we vote with our feet and pocketbooks.

**W**hen a church gets behind a fully functioning CYN effort, even a five figure deficit can be erased in 5-6 years. If members are excited, they will come and they will give. Here's a simple formula. Take 100 loyal envelope givers. If they agree to add \$2 a week to their giving and stay accountable to giving regularly, that's \$200 of new giving each week. After a year, it's \$10,000. If this is the only new money we get, over 5 years that's \$50,000 of new money. This is by far more money and less work than all the chicken barbeques, dinners, strawberry socials, rummage sales, raffles and other labor, time and resource intensive fundraisers combined. If we add new people, it gets even better. But first, we have to build before the money will follow. **Generosity** is about becoming giving people, people who embody God's radical welcome. **Generosity** is a way of being; the money is a natural result of people filled with God's hope and thanksgiving. We already know all the people we need to know in order to raise all the money we need to raise. The first step is for our people to have a reason to want to give to the church, then we can ask them and they won't disappoint us.

*Get on-board CYN.* Then, instead of another routine year, 2010 could be the year you begin to make contact with the future.

*So, get fishing!*

*Lex Liberatore—for your CYN Steering Committee*

### **See for yourself at a Regional CYN Winter Meeting**

#### ***Southeast: Jan. 23rd, 9-3pm, Wantagh Cong. UCC***

This one day event is designed to invigorate both seasoned CYN'er and new churches alike. Registration begins at 8:30am. An entire day of specific focus on making CYN work in your church, plus lunch, is only \$25 for adults and \$15 for teens. And every dollar you spent will be credited back to your church if they decide to join the statewide CYN program in 2010!

For more information and to register, contact your CYN Consultant, *Bonnie Miller: (914-997-7322) Bonni333@aol.com*

#### ***Upstate: Feb. 13th, 10-3:00pm, Emmanuel Friedens, Schenectady***

Do you want to know more about the Casting your Nets initiative? Would you like some practical resources for carrying out your ministries? Come to the Upstate event and learn how the 5 ministry areas: worship, mission, invitation, fellowship and generosity can focus your vision for creatively envisioning congregations with greater vitality for the future. All this for only \$25 per person, lunch included, with every dollar credited to your full church CYN subscription fee if you join in 2010. For more information and to register, contact your CYN Consultant, *Marcia Tolman (518-374-4114), dcemtolman@nycap.rr.com.*

#### ***Western: Feb. 27th, 10-3pm, Church o/t Nativity, Buffalo***

Come and experience the energy a vital CYN hospitality ministry brings to your visitors! A special worship and CYN workshop will highlight the morning of the Western Area Winter Meeting. An afternoon workshop will demonstrate how invitation and mission can work together.

For more information, contact your CYN Consultant, *Lex Liberatore (585-300-8211), stpaulunited@verizon.net*

#### ***GVA: March 13th, 9:30-2:30pm, Lakeville UCC (More info soon!)***