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At 4,200 Members, AWOP Named Largest City-Wide Marketplace Ministry in USA

Nonprofit organizes Christian-based business events, programs

At Work on Purpose (AWOP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Christians incorporate their faith values at work, has emerged as a 'mega-church' in the world of marketplace ministry.

With a 4,200-member pool which participates in Christian-based business events, networking, roundtable and special events, AWOP is likely the largest city-wide marketplace ministry in the U.S. offering comprehensive services across all vocations, said Jason Benedict, strategist at Regent University Center for Entrepreneurship in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Benedict, an MBA, is researching the concept of a global network of business development centers to transform nations economically and spiritually.

"The At Work on Purpose model provides one of the nation's most comprehensive approaches to marketplace ministry," said Benedict. "It serves working Christians from all vocations, as well as local churches and affiliated ministries."

Benedict said there are a handful of cities nationwide like Portland, Little Rock, and Jacksonville with programs similar to At Work on Purpose, but none that operate to the order of magnitude of the Cincinnati program.

"There are a number of efforts out there, but they don't seem to be as large or as well-organized as Cincinnati," said Benedict. He estimated that there are about 185 key leaders of marketplace ministries nationwide, about 200 to 300 organizations whose efforts go beyond city or a single congregation's reach, and about 2,000 church-based efforts to help Christians connect their faith and work lives and create jobs.

Most church and citywide organizations like AWOP have hundreds of members, not thousands.

Benedict added that a national symposium on city transformation through programs like At Work on Purpose may be in the offing for the summer of 2011.

AWOP's focus is to bring the "faith at work" message to an entire city at a time, with a strategy that builds a "church at work" community across denominations.

Members become close-knit through participation in business events, executive roundtables, chaplaincy, coaching, evangelism, and social enterprise.

"Most marketplace ministries I've seen are involved with a church," said Leon Poplawski, Midwest regional director for marketplace ministry at Campus Crusade for Christ in Chicago. "When I met Chuck (Proudfit) and saw the things that were going on with AWOP, it almost made me want to move to Cincinnati. There's a great sense of momentum and excitement in Cincinnati."

A strength of AWOP is that founder Chuck Proudfit does a tremendous job gathering people and networking, Poplawski added. “When AWOP gets a speaker, it gets John Beckett (national leader of the faith-at-work movement). The quality of their gatherings and willingness to partner with people makes a win-win for both organizations.”

Os Hillman, a national leader in the Faith at Work ministry, said 14 years ago, there were 25 to 50 work-life ministries in the nation. Now there are about 900.

Hillman is the author of 12 books and a daily workplace email devotional called *TGIF Today God Is First*, which has more than 130,000 daily subscribers worldwide. His most recent book is *TGIF Today God Is First, Volume 2*. He also developed and teaches The 9 to 5 Window Workshop.

“There is a revival coming,” he said, “a revival that is returning us to our roots to understand what the early Church understood—that work is a holy calling in which God moves to transform lives, cities and nations.”

Begun in 2003 by Proudfit, president of SkillSource business consultancy, AWOP was formed as a ministry with three dimensions: to help people link their faith and work lives individually, organizationally, and societally-- one work life, one work place, and one work community at a time.

Proudfit is a Harvard University business graduate and organizational management expert who cut his corporate teeth at P&G, the Ernest and Julio Gallo Winery, and LensCrafters Corporation. His SkillSource consultancy was named a Cincinnati BBB Torch Award finalist in 2009, and is a 2010 Tristate Success Awards winner.

"Our mission is to help working Christians incorporate their faith values Monday through Friday as well as on Sunday," said Proudfit. "We spend a third of our lives at

work, but many people at work experience a disconnect between how we want to live our lives and what the marketplace demands. I see more and more that the best business practices are ethical ones with a moral underpinning—and businesses which incorporate Biblical principles succeed better than others focused solely on generating profits at any cost."

In 2009, under Proudfit's leadership, AWOP was a partner in expanding to 22 Cincinnati locations the region's Job Search Focus Groups, networking organizations for the unemployed. AWOP also helped implement the Career Achievement Network (CAN), a Web site linking the unemployed with jobs.

AWOP's executive team includes Chuck Proudfit, president; Lynne Ruhl, work-life initiatives and president of Perfect 10 Corporate Cultures; Preston Bowles, work place initiatives and COO of SkillSource; and Gerry Preece, work community initiatives and COO of Perfect 10 Corporate Cultures. Directors also include Jeff Greer, pastor at Grace Chapel in Mason and Mike Sipple, president of Centennial, Inc.

For more information about At Work on Purpose or its programs, go to www.atworkonpurpose.org.

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