

September 6, 2010

Dear fellow statisticians in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord! The purpose of this letter is to update you on the meeting of our Christian Statisticians Informal Discussion Group (CSIDG) at JSM last month and the changes which are in the process of being implemented. This letter is also attached as a Word document, for your convenience. The sections are: (1) Meeting minutes, (2) Follow-up: message from new coordinator, (3) Opportunities to help, (4) Survey results.

In Christ,

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1. Minutes

- There were about 18 people present, including Linda from the Netherlands, Graham from Australia, and Thomas from New Zealand.
- Jim Ward introduced Jason Wilson as the new group coordinator and editor of the CSIDG newsletter, 'Counted for Righteousness' (CFR).
- Jason thanked Laszlo Pallos for his help in running the CSIDG table
- Jason explained that Bobby Mee (former coordinator) and Novie Younger (former newsletter editor) had expressed a desire to step down in 2005 and that Bobby had asked him to take the role during summer 2010. Jason had then sent an email survey to the group, and passed a paper copy in the meeting, in order to gather information about where the members wanted it to go.
- Jason read Rev 5:9 (the same verse read at the first CSIDG meeting in 1990), followed by reading the opening article of the first issue of CFR explaining how it originated. Next, he gave a narrative of the history of the group, pieced together from his reading of back issues of CFR. The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing the purpose and future activities of the group. Ideas included:
 - CSIDG is an "oasis" of believers in the midst of a secular environment
 - "We make a statement [to the rest of the statistical community] just by being here"
 - Interest in Bible verses that relate to our profession and how we understand them
 - The group was a place to share with like-minded believers
 - The present purpose and activities (annual meeting, table, website, and newsletter) were all generally affirmed as valuable and to be maintained, if not expanded
 - The book, 'Christian and Humanist Foundations for Statistical Inference: Religious Control of Statistical Paradigms' by Andrew Hartley (one of our members, although not present) was highly recommended. It was suggested he be invited to speak on it at JSM 2011.
 - The list-serve could be used for online prayer requests
 - Spent some time discussing the merits of Facebook vs. Linked-In vs. an email group, Jason asked Sam Whitlock to research this and report back on the options
 - Several liked the idea of participating in a service project one day before or after JSM
 - Provide a list of church services to the group for the Sunday of JSM

- The meeting ended with a prayer by Lazslo after which 12 members enjoyed fellowship over dinner at a local Greek restaurant.

2. Follow-up: Message from the new CSIDG coordinator

It is an honor to be entrusted by you and, I believe, by the LORD, to serve you as the new CSIDG coordinator. With the LORD's help, I commit to serve you faithfully to the best of my ability. I believe that our email list, repository of CFR articles, website, and ASA status are valuable assets that can be strengthened and grown in the years to come. Far more important, however, as I was freshly reminded at our meeting, is our precious common faith,

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

This year will be a transition from the gap where Bobby and Novie were seeking to pass on the ministry to my seeking to learn from the LORD how to do it. My role is to serve you, and so I welcome your feedback of all kinds. The basic priorities that I plan to focus on this year are:

- Maintain what we have established: annual meeting, table, website
- Produce the first issue of our newsletter, Counted for Righteousness (CFR), since 2006
- Increase member connectedness via a list-serve
- Lay the groundwork for expanding our activities according to our Christian distinctives, as the Spirit leads members

I ask for your prayers, and that you bear with my shortcomings. May the LORD richly bless you in this next year.

3. Opportunities to Help

I am well aware that this group is a pure ministry to most of you, and that is what it is supposed to be – be released from any obligation! Some, however, will be led by the Lord to help in your own distinct ways. Here are the things that I have on my “to do” list for this year that I could use help with:

- Contribute an article to our newsletter, CFR
- Assist in editing CFR
- Collect back CFR articles #8,9,10,11,19 and upload them to the website
(If someone could put me in touch with Linda Davis, I think that would do it.)
- Create new logo (for brochure, newsletter, table banner)
- Create brochure
- Create table banner
- Research Sunday services for JSM 2011 in Miami
- Research service opportunities following JSM 2011 in Miami

4. Survey Results

If you would like a copy of the survey and data, please email me. The main observations I would like to draw from it are

- The sample size of 19 is very small (email list = 200 people), interpret accordingly
- People either knew of the group for 10+ years, or ≥ 3 years. The 10+ years members tended to attend less than half of the meetings possible whereas the ≥ 3 members attended half or more possible.
- All who responded affirmed the purpose statement, save one who wanted to “avoid the assumption of narrow sectarian views of Christianity”
- “On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being lowest and 10 highest, please respond to both parts for each item. The first part is your level of awareness of the item *prior to* this survey. The second part is your expected level interest in the item *after* this survey.” Items in the boxes are means.

	Item	Awareness Level	Interest Level
a.	The purpose statement of CSIDG (see question 3)	4.7	7.3
b.	Annual newsletter (published 1-2 times/year from the 1990 to 2006)	5.1	7.7
c.	Website (www.christianstatisticians.org , started 2006)	3.2	8.1
d.	Email group / list-serve	N/A	6.4

- “What purposes or activities, besides the annual meeting at JSM and the items mentioned above, do you believe might be worth the consideration of the CSIDG?” % responding indicated
 - a. 37% Social gatherings within US states
 - b. 26% Face-to-face group discussions within US States
 - c. 37% Local Mission trips
 - d. 32% International Mission trips
 - e. 37% Worship sessions
 - f. 21% Other
- The implementable “other” items in the previous question were:
 - Prayer breakfast / worship session Sunday morning at JSM / list of church services
 - Local mission trip following JSM (Habitat for Humanity? Feed homeless?)
 - Mentoring program: pair junior and senior members from similar specializations
 - Promote Christ-centered statistical consulting (e.g. Biblical-theological work or clearing-house for Christian statistical consulting)