



CONCEPT PAPER NOTES

July 2015

FORUM about the FUTURE at the Church of the Heavenly Rest

BACKGROUND

For a rather long time, I have been thinking about a way that I might do something useful for the Church of the Heavenly Rest (CHR) within the limits of my money, my time, my skills and my energy ... furthermore, something that interests me, motivates me and at the same time, has the potential to do some significant good.

CHR ... the Third Founding

At this time, the Church of the Heavenly Rest is looking forward in a new way, taking advantage of the opportunities now available as it is being possible for the physical space at the church to be substantially rearranged for the first time since the '2nd Founding' about 75 years ago.

Dream

CHR has amazing space. CHR is also located in an amazing city which plays host to some of the greatest events in the world, one of which is the annual General Assembly of the United Nations in September each year. All sorts of interesting people pass through New York all the time. Most important, all sorts of interesting young people live and work in New York. Arguably this community of young people in New York City has the potential to be the most influential group of people anywhere in the world.

What does CHR have to do to attract 1,100 of these young people into CHR's amazing space ... not once, but over and over again ... and be a community that really can be a huge power for good in a world that, broadly speaking, does not seem to have its priorities right.

How does the power of GOOD become as important in the life of New York and the World as the power of GREED?

Maybe ... just maybe ... CHR and a FORUM about the FUTURE could be the answer.

The dream is that such a Forum could be part of a systemic solution to the multiple complex issues that we have to face as we struggle with an increasingly dysfunctional global socio-economic system. A Forum in New York City has the potential to be efficient and to be very influential. Others have been successful, with a lot less 'going for them'!

WEF, Davos

The World Economic Forum (WEF) meets once a year in Davos, Switzerland. The rich and powerful congregate and share thoughts some of which are reported publicly. It is a must for the business and political elite. In January 2002, after the World Trade Center disaster of 2001, the WEF met in New York. More recently, additional WEF events are now being organized in different locations around the world taking advantage of the WEF brand identity.

One-off events in New York

Quite frequently there are one-off events in New York. Places like Riverside Church have one-off events from time to time that attract many participants. One of these was about opposition to the Iraq War in 2003. The building was packed to capacity.

High profile visitors to New York are given opportunities to make presentations from time to time in a variety of venues. Various churches do this as do the Universities in the New York area. Many high profile visitors come to New York in connection with UN events like the annual General Assembly and attend a variety of side events.

TED and TEDx

TED talks ... Technology, Entertainment and Design ... have become popular, together with TEDx, the independently organized TED like events. There is an appetite for thoughtful dialog about interesting and important things.

Aspen

There are various forums that convene in Aspen ... by a variety of groups. Interesting subjects, but not efficient, by any measure.

A CHR FORUM about the FUTURE (CHRFF)

Not one off. Not limited to the rich and powerful. Rather a program that serves as a catalyst for anyone and everyone of goodwill to participate in building ideas and initiatives that might potentially change lives and change the world for the better. A forum where there can be a spiritual dimension, a cultural dimension, a financial dimension, a technical dimensions, an urban dimension, an international dimension ... all at a potentially high level and all mixed together into a holistic coherent whole

Perhaps it should meet once every three weeks. Every week is probably too often. Every month might work, but the same day every month might eliminate some possible participants. The once in three week cycle avoids this problem. When there are schedule conflicts the timing can move plus or minus one week.

Maybe a time slot on Sunday afternoon would work ... like 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm.

The CHRFF should set itself challenges. It might want to write a book about the future to be published sometime in 2016. It might want to organize some 'side events' in connection with the UN General Assembly in September ... maybe just one this year and maybe a whole series the following year.

While this forum is about the future, it is grounded in the history of the Church. The idea that the message of the early church reached to every corner of the world in very short order in the first century AD, always amazes me ... and modern messaging should be even more powerful. The early Church was very relevant for its time and has proved to have a certain amount of timeless power, and, I would argue, it is has the opportunity to look forward into the future in a particularly powerful and creative way.

Anyone (of goodwill) interested in the future should be welcome. The age group should mainly be those who are under 35 ... in mindset though perhaps not in physical age.

Themes for the meetings should be anything that has the potential to make the world a better place ... anything that is serving to constrain the world from being as good as it can be and should be.

In general, politics, ideologies and the various conventional 'isms' ... many of which are from the 19th century ... are not welcome. On the other hand 'out of the box' thinking about disruptive possibilities are totally welcome and the purpose of this initiative. Americans went to the moon in the 1960s and in the last few days a man-made-device passed close to Pluto informing us about the universe in wonderful ways. Meanwhile we know far too little about the problems facing ordinary people around planet earth whether in our close neighborhood or on the other side of the world and in general we do precious little to change things for the better.

All sorts of things are possible ... I am driven in part by the fact that there has been absolutely amazing technical progress in the 50 plus years since I completed my formal education. I was responsible to a computer system installation in the 1960s which had 4K of main memory ... nowadays, a modern smart phone is a million times (or 10 million) times more powerful ... but society as a whole is only modestly better than 50 years ago. This is caused by a massive systemic dysfunction ... but we have the technology to do much better ... and there is a huge opportunity for people of goodwill to do something substantial to change this situation.

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