

**WBC Conference Call  
October 21, 2008**

**Participant List**

George Limbach, Coordinator of the Philadelphia Chapter (St. Joseph's University)

Beryl Byles, Coordinator of the Philadelphia Chapter (Old St. Joe's Parish)

Thomas Danks, Coordinator of the Readings/Berks Chapter

Randy Hain, Coordinator of the Atlanta Chapter

David Krill, Coordinator of the Milwaukee Chapter (Gesu Parish)

Lance Erkhe, Coordinator of the Milwaukee Chapter (Brookfield group)

Joy Spellman, Coordinator of the Upper Saddle River Chapter

Chris Larson, Upper Saddle River Chapter

Pat McMahon, Coordinator of the Scranton Chapter

Barry Tarzy, former Coordinator of the South Jersey Chapter

John Huntington, Director Woodstock Business Conference, Georgetown

(missed the first 10 minutes of the conversation)

Tom

- . . . finishing up this year with the materials that was relative to the financial crisis and the upcoming election which stimulated our group. We're also very active with our new meeting venue where we're meeting at the Alvernia University. It was Alvernia College; they've now gone to a university status. We'll be actively as the new year unfolds, we'll be actively doing more outreach work from the WBC format and through Alvernia University and also the Jesuit Center in Wernersville, so we're pretty active with those areas.
- If I can interrupt -- Tom when do you guys meet in Reading?

Tom: We meet the second Wednesday of every month at 6:30 in the morning.

John: Thank you, Tom.

Tom: You're welcome.

John: Now let's see. Have we heard from Tom Bausch?

Tom: Lance reported for the group I will so I will defer to what he said, which is on button.

John: And Walter Kennedy.

- That would be Chris Larson. We weren't able to meet in September after coming off our summer of hiatus. There wasn't enough attendance so Wally cancelled the meeting. We're meeting this Saturday. Thus far we still are. We have had a bit of a challenge with attendance. Now historically the group has been about 12 or 15. That was some years ago. Now we're down to probably 6 to 8 that might make it on a regular basis. We didn't have 5 for the last meeting. So I'm taking notes on what some of you are saying to pass that back to the group. We've been around for about 7 years now. And we're having a bit of a challenge, I guess, keeping some of the continuity. Everybody says they want to do it but then everybody doesn't show up for our meetings. So some of you are doing quite well where you have at least a dozen attending, but it's been a while since we've had that. Other than that, Wally is quite active. He's also on the scene. Hello group and he'll be presenting as a panelist later on. Let's see – we are using the materials from WBC. We had finished off Jim's book last year and Wally is also talking to another North Jersey parish in North Caldwell about faith and work. He tends to be quite active and the rest of us are sort of radiating off of that. I guess that's the best way to put it. I guess that's it for me.

John: Okay, thank you Chris. Has everyone spoken. Do we have anyone from Seton Hall on the phone? I guess not then. If all who have joined have spoken, then can we have a little conversation about the current events, about the astonishing financial upheaval and the peculiar associated stresses of the national election. I think these are not completely uncoupled and that people will be affected by these things in various ways and to various degrees. So I'd welcome anything any of you might have to say about how your groups have engaged these issues.

- This is Barry Tarzy. Let me just kind of start it off perhaps. Most of the people that are in our group, at least half of them, are owners of small businesses. And not so much that they've engaged it, but rather economic conditions engage them tremendously. They're spending more time at their work trying to figure out how to balance the income and the expenses and how to insure that they have the finances necessary for the business to continue to move forward. And a couple of them are dependent upon the funds of banks to be able to really operate from week to week. So you can understand what's going on – you get a pretty good handle of what's going on in the financial world for them. There are a lot of stresses on this for them. From a big corporation standpoint there's a few people that have mentioned to me in this group that they're real concerned about their work and the diminishing number of people that they're able to keep employed. So you know certainly this is something that is hitting us in a lot of different ways. And it brings up a

lot of different conversations. None of them have the solution. They're just trying to do this hand to mouth at this point in time.

John: Thank you, Barry. Anyone else?

- Yes, this is Tom Danks of Reading. The way we've been handling the topic the last two months was really it was focusing on the area of ethics and values and the area of personal responsibility, where our faith-based backgrounds can help situations and how we got into this mess to begin with. With all the topics, it seems as though from our group that everything continually boils down to the personal responsibility and where we see things – how we conduct ourselves in business, politics, wherever but the ethics and values and personal responsibility really came to the fore. That's why we've continued on that path for the last, September and October meetings. We'll be wrapping that up in November. And then our meeting in December is always – we have liturgy at our meeting site. Where we don't have an actual topic, we have Mass that's open to wives or their significant others, their wives, husbands, whomever. And then we have a very loose talk of where we've been and where we're going. In January, hopefully, we'll get into another phase of topics.

John: Thank you, Tom.

- Tom Mosier. What I find with the business people I've talked to at Woodstock and elsewhere too is a deep concerned conviction that we're just not dealing with a bunch of technical issues here -- that there are a number of really deep fundamental values, ethics types of issues that we as a society, that we as a Church, that we as the business community need to be grappling with. And I think people are looking for the format in which to discuss this to reach some conclusion. Nobody much has answers. On the other hand, I don't see an awful lot – I see some sure – of finger pointing. But on the other hand, I hear an awful lot of guys and women out in the business community and in the university here and so on using the pronoun “we” as though we're all in this together and we're all at fault in some ways. I think this is a fertile ground for what we're all about.

John: Yeah. That's a point. Good, Tom We're going to get back to that question of what are some of the implications downstream of the stresses we're experiencing, especially we're going to talk about global sustainability later in this hour in the context of what we're doing here at Woodstock – looking forward. And that's one of the things we see is that one of the good things in all of this is that we're begin made to have a larger context for everything we do and to collaborate in ways that we have not in the past with. . .

- I just reviewed a paper coming out from the presidents of the Co-Roundtable which many of you in the holds of business principle are familiar with, with Co. And this paper was primarily written by Lord Dan Brennan in England who is the president of the group, and I think the paper is absolutely wonderful as it is worked out and balanced in a lot of ways.

I may disagree with some specifics in it and they've asked me if I'd distribute it to the Woodstock groups and I will send that on to you John, now that I have the final draft.

John: Oh, thank you so much; thank you so much. Anybody else have a common on the current events and how they're affecting your groups?

- David Krill in Milwaukee. We really hadn't focused on the election or the economy or financial crisis in September and I did miss the October meeting and our next meeting will be after the election. I agree with Tom. I think there's some critical deep financial values and ethics questions. I really think that the topic is going to be a very serious one in the coming months as to what happens, why, and where we can concentrate on ethics values and doing things the right way.

John: Thank you. Any other offerings or observations?

- Well just to go back to what I said before. This is Beryl from Philadelphia and specifically Old St. Joe's Church. It was the topic. When we got into the issue of authenticity and truth in leadership it went right into the current financial crisis, partly because one of our people is in fact in a financial situation. Also because two of them are attorneys and so there were live examples that were brought up to be able to accent the reality of what is happening in the "call to reality" which ultimately then helped each person because I went around the table at the end to say: "Okay, what is the awareness for you as you leave this. And what do you bring into your own experience now, into your life?" And each one just became that much more clear about the importance of integrity of the self vs. the things, which are of course very tempting and alluring and satisfying. But the integrity of the self is ultimately – and of course through one's experience of God as the true bottom line. So it was rich. It was a very rich discussion.
- This is Lance Ehrke On another point of that. We have a number of small, smaller companies involved and this goes to the issue of the bank fears and the credit withholdings and companies, even like mine, that have lines of credit where those timing of those issues were – even though you've been a customer for a number of years, the banks were pulling back and withholding funds and basically out of fear so that as an operation you may have had all of your operations in good space and been very successful in dealing with the world, but the banks were perhaps not arbitrarily but respectively across the board were saying: "Well, we're going to cut you back now until we can figure out what's going on." So while it didn't take any actions on our part\_\_\_\_ or anywhere in the world on how all of our business were doing, the banks probably fear just started throttling the flows of credit for working capital which has been pretty devastating.

John: Yes, yes.

- This is Joy, Barry Tarzy's partner in crime at St. Joan of Arc. Another thought too. I know that Barry mentioned that in our particular group we do have a preponderance of people in small businesses. But in our state of New Jersey -- and I do know that there are some fellow New Jerseyans on the line right now as well -- I never led from a statewide level and I happen to work for Government. There's that over-arching horrible existence right now in our state with huge budget cuts that are -- if not affecting everyone directly, certainly indirectly. I myself have been given notice that I've got to pull a white rabbit out of a hat, otherwise I will be pink slipped sometime in '09. So I think that if we all stop for a moment and even look at the larger picture from our own state or perhaps our municipalities, everyone that shares our commitment within our group has a cause for pause -- worrying about what kind of services are going to be cut back. And how do we express our concern as Catholic Christians? How many cuts will it take in order to right this -- well I hope not a sinking ship -- but it really is over-arching, I think.

John: Yup. Thank you, Joyce. Any other comments on this subject? If not, let me then just ask whether there are any other comments any of you would like to make about alternative topics you've been using, or have we covered that already?

- This is Lance Ehrke. I have one and I'm going to have to leave the meeting as soon as I finish this. Next month in December or November, rather, we've invited the Chairman and President of our local electric facility to speak on energy and social justice. And he's really quite well versed in this. And so we're expecting a big group and pretty good discussion going on that because we've had pretty good attendance and extremely good discussion when we've talk about this topic in the past on whether it's energy with environmental change and third world involvement. This also affects the whole energy issues with clearance(?) energy costs, barrels of oil cost reduction. But how does this lend itself to our responsibility throughout the world in third world countries and supporting folks who don't have the resources that we do. We're sprinkling some of our topic like this with outside speakers to bring a broader point of view and then to use the Woodstock material as the theme to the overarching discussion architecture. So again, that's what we've been doing. John, I'm going to talk to you later, but I appreciate all your help on this. Thank you very much.

John: Okay. I just want to say, Thank you, Lance that you're anticipating the way we're headed with what we're doing here at Woodstock that will be seen with materials that will be coming out later and so we'll be talking about that later in the hour I'm sorry you're missing that part of the conversation.

Lance: Oh that's terrific. Well, since I heard this was going to be recorded I would expect to see some minutes.

John: We will produce a transcript and we'll get it out to you.

Lance: Great, thank you.

John: Thank you, Lance.

Lance: Okay, bye-bye.

John: Bye. That's actually a very very good segue to talk about what's following onto the following material. Keeping faith with our Board of Advisors, the theme for this cycle is Steward Leadership. And so, beginning with the materials after the first four sets of readings which have been sent out, we get into specifically what the stewardship responsibilities are, and mainly we thought, of course, it seemed reasonable to work from the interior experience of the business leader – which is this first set of readings – to the engagement with the resources at say, a CEO's disposal. What resources are there here, and what are my responsibilities as a steward leader? And so the potential for talking about the stewardship of human resources is huge in terms of the theological possibilities in discussing that. And so that structure has been laid out and been sent out to you. And I think the best way to do this is if you have a comment on the sequence of topics which is coming and you want to convey it to me, probably the best way to do that is by e-mail. So my e-mail is [jhh48@georgetown.edu](mailto:jhh48@georgetown.edu) If you want to comment on any of the upcoming material in that way, I can probably more readily take it into account as we prepare the material. The idea then – the last topic that we have for the year is Looking Beyond : Beyond the Corporation. What's going on out there. And that seems, these days, to be just about everything. Because we have such interdependence. We have all of these things happening at one time in a way that is causing a transformation of consciousness regarding what really is our situation here. And the Greek word economy really means household. It's how we provide for ourselves. And well, who are we that are providing for ourselves if not the whole population of the earth. So here at Woodstock, we've been doing an immense amount of reading. I've been reading the reports of the inter-governmental panel on climate change. Been reading all of the books that have been coming out on the vast complex of things that have been happening all at once, of an impending global food shortage. Here's an example. "Unless the rice yield (i.e., kg per hectare) continues to increase, which has about quadrupled in the past 50 years, tripled or quadrupled, the rice yield – unless it continues to increase, there will be mass starvation in southeast Asia. All kinds of things like that. Drawing down the water table in great stretches of Pakistan so that in a projectable way, there will be inadequate water for irrigating the crops. And things like that. And the depletion of ocean food stocks, of seafood and on and on and on. And of the pollution of the environment. The question of climate change and all of that. This is all coming at us at once. And the thing that when you start looking at this – first of all, it's very distressing. Because in the process, if there's a conversion of consciousness that occurs in us as we contemplate this material, it's to begin with very very awkward and we have the great desire to deny so much of this because accepting it as real is difficult. It's hard for us. And then, there's a sense of helplessness. What can we really do as individuals, as say a corporation at that level, or

as a nation? What can we actually do? So what we're doing here at Woodstock we have this Friday a theological symposium of a particular kind. We have four senior theologians discussing an aspect of this before TV cameras. We have high quality television production equipment there, and it will be a facilitated discussion on energy, God, and sustainability. And so, it'll be in four parts. The first part is where these four theologians each offer their own insights into what theological issues are raised, specifically by the energy issue and the larger context of the issues of global sustainability. But to offer freely their theological insights and then each of them having done that, we have a discussion of how these insights play together and contrast and so on in each other's offering. We then in the third session will be going into what are the ethical implications from the point of view of senior theologians. What are the ethical implications of all of this? And then in the fourth segment of the conversation, it would be: Well, now, what as theologians who are not out in the world as business leaders, but as theologians, how would we offer questions that might be useful and helpful to people who are business leaders? So that will be the nature of the thing that happens Friday from 9 in the morning until noon. And we're going to collect this. The idea is that ultimately we will have a product which will be in the form of an edited DVD so this is all material to be edited. In the room with me will be a guest who is Prof. Jim Stoner from Fordham who has an endowed chair of global sustainability at Fordham University in the Business School. He's a very senior business professor there. And the idea is that he and I would become collaborators in . . . out of this material, working up a format and content for business leaders seminars, one at Fordham, one in New York and one at Georgetown during this current academic year and then taking those discussions and integrating them with this theological discussion into a finished product with a proper introduction and the segues and all of that and some kind of a summary that would be s DVD that could be distributed. And the idea is that it would stimulate business leaders in a way that is I think uniquely Woodstock's role that is with a theological grounding and basis. And because of all of this. . .

- Tom Bausch here. Excuse me. Two things. This morning I received an e-mail from one of my students in Africa who is with the African Jesuit AIDS network. He's one of the people helping \_\_\_ to work across Africa. He's really good. By the way, the Jesuits are very key in Africa in bringing some coordination across the continent in AIDS. And one of his comments was to me was: You know, Tom, there's absolutely no solution in AIDS unless people can eat at least one good meal a day. Because of the increase in food prices here because of everything happening in the world, we're running into more and more people who had stabilized and are losing that stabilization because they cannot afford one good meal a day. Secondly, in something to read and trying to get at some of the underlying causes of what we're doing, I recently read Robert Reich's(?) *Super Capitalism* and although the book is too wordy and could be a heck of a lot shorter, nevertheless it's not typical Reich being off to the far left, but as he analyzes the impact that technology has had on all of this, including the inability of the leadership out of the business sector that we can remember in the heyday of the CED and groups like that. It's

a very powerful analysis. You may not buy all of the points by any means, but really really getting at we not only have to look at theology, we have to have a much better handle on how we've allowed technology to become our master rather than our servant.

John: Yes, yes. And one of the things that seems clear to me is that we need to have a difficult conversation. You're probably familiar with this book out of the Harvard Business School, *Difficult Conversations* – it was out of their negotiation project. It argued that they discovered that successful negotiations, when there was an awkwardness to resolve, that the successful negotiations always started with the same first questions. The question is: What happened? How did we get here? And if one can get at that. . . We talk about the call to reality. To do this with forgiveness and mercy, not with intention of blaming but with the idea of clarity of mind. It's very very difficult to plan a way forward with confidence unless you know how you got to where you are. And so I think one of the things that we can do as a community is to help those conversations to happen. These are substantially technical when it comes to matters of market and on and so forth, but they are essentially spiritual because we're talking about the character of the people who are in the decision-making positions. And for instance, in these deal makers that have got us into financial trouble need to consider people other than those who are involved in the deal. It's the same thing we see again and again. At any rate, where this is heading here is that we think we want to take the Woodstock Business Conferences deeply into this subject matter in the coming year. And what we're doing in our theological work is heading that way. And with the business leaders' seminars that we hope to do during this current year and with the DVD we're producing, along with that there's so much collateral work going on of digesting, reading and digesting what now has become an avalanche of new material. I want to say that one book that right now I have not yet read but I've thumbed through. I've just got it that seems to me that it might be of much use to us in this process in making the connection with real business leadership issues is the book by Peter Senge which just came out called *The Necessary Revolution*. So we're going to be working with that book now with the hope and expectation that it will play a key role in our laying this out. That's just a taste of what we're doing. Also, if any of you would like to make a suggestion as to how best to address these situations at our retreat in March. We have a marvelous opportunity to do something good and useful at our March retreat.

Are there any comments on that?

- This is Tom Danks. Is the format laid out for the . . . I know we have a topic for the retreat, the Woodstock Retreat and Fr. John Haughey and Jim Nolan are presenting. Do we know what the format of the days would be at this point where we might be able to sculpt that in a way.

John: No. We have the freedom to do that.

- I would think that would be helpful. The stewardship issue which is the topic for the weekend retreat is certain over-arching enough to cover what we're discussing today or at least to generate some discussion in that regard.

John: Yes. No, we're quite free to make the best use of that time.

- How much thought, John, has been given to what the balance will be this time between prayer and interaction or discussion and that sort of thing?

John: To be frank, John Haughey and I have not laid that out. But a retreat, there will be certainly plenty of quiet time, time for reflection and that sort.

- Good.

John: That's still about five months off, I think.

- John, this is Beryl in Philadelphia. My thought is that even as you describe what you're currently reading and being quite passionate about, as a matter of fact, it's a bit overwhelming. Indeed, how can one individual or how can one group or even one society address it all? I would wonder if there could be some value of looking at previous emergencies or crises and/or ways that they were addressed successfully? That's one thought. And second, how . . . is there some way to touch on hope? Because it's overwhelming and it can be de-energizing rather than energizing --. which is really the aim of the exercise, it would seem to me, is to be energizing. So somehow to incorporate the opportunity for that which seems to me to be quite important.

John: Very good, Beryl. Where's hope in all of this?

Beryl: Where's hope? There's God.

- David Krill in Milwaukee. I would agree with the last comment that this could be extremely overwhelming without some form of spiritual nature to it and where is hope and God in all of this. It really is overwhelming. And I don't think. . . I don't have the background technologically or engineering wise or. . . to deal with a lot of these global warming issues and so forth. It seems to be more political than it is spiritual. And maybe that's what we need to do is shift it from politics to spirit.

John: Yes. yes. Very good. Very good. Well, we'll discuss the retreat when we talk next time and our ideas will become more focused by the next time. We have in mind a next telephone conversation on Tuesday, I think it's the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. That's the middle of the month of December. Would that be all right? Is there any reason not to choose that date?

- OK with Reading.
- Scranton's fine.

John: Okay. Good. Well just mark it down then. Tuesday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of December will be our next telephone conference then. Is there anything else anyone would like to bring up?

Beryl: Yes. One more thing. To get into the specifics, John, of the current materials that you provide in terms of the resources. Is there some way to penetrate into those resources because it's a bit overwhelming to say: OK we have four books or items. We need some guideline. E.g., what are the page numbers that the quotes come from or suggestions of the specific chapters that would be relevant or something like that.

John: Let me just chat about that for a minute. The three background readings are. . . I view them as little treasure chests. They're full of the most wonderful gems, those little books. *The Poverty of Spirit* by Johannes Baptist Metz is the best essay I have read on what it is to be a human being in relation to God. It's a wonderful thing. And so if people get that little book, then what I've found – and I've used this with undergraduates and with senior business executives in California, they would always have the book with them. It's one of those things where and if people have it and mark it up and bring it to a meeting then it can be simulative conversation. On the other hand, my idea in providing those little bits in the readings was that they could stand alone to perhaps stimulate some discussion. I would be delighted if people were to buy these books but I don't think anyone should feel that they have to. The book, *The Spiritual Life* is a phenomenal little book. It's a series of four talks that were given on the BBC in 1936 by Evelyn Underhill. And she made her name many many years before, 25 years before when she published a very big tome called *Mysticism*. And I view her also as a spiritual master of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. So that little book *The Spiritual Life* is full of gems, full of gems. And then *I Asked for Wonder* by Abraham Joshua Heschel is a spiritual anthology by a most remarkable man who reminds us constantly of our roots in Judaism by not referring distinctly to Judaism or Christianity but simply by speaking out of his own spiritual life in the most compelling and brilliant way. So that's a wonderful treasure chest, that book *I Asked for Wonder*. And as I say, I used this in California and people will bring things up and have something underlined they want to talk about whether it's in a class or meeting or a monthly meeting of some kind. There are things that this thing here just seems to address this. So in the process in this natural and unforced way, people's spirituality matures because they come into conversation with these three spiritual masters. So this is a very light touch. The idea is it's kind of a background resource for the entire year and so I think it really works best for people to own and to thumb through rather than to use in a lecture form in a didactic way. Then the fourth book, which is edited by John Haughey which is called *Revisiting the Idea of Vocation*, that's in there only for the first chapter which was authored by John Haughey and which is, I think, a very very well written essay on the three conversions and the experience of call, the experience of vocation. This is Lonerganian; it comes from

Loneragan. The thing has such a powerful ring of truth for me that I found it a natural thing to follow that in the first sessions of the material that we put out for the current year. That's probably not for everyone, but I think maybe the group leaders might like to have that, even though it's \$25. That's a more expensive book, because that one chapter on the three conversions is so beautiful. So that's, you see, those are resources that you can make use of any way you want.

Beryl: All right. Okay. That answers my questions for me, John. By the way, I did find John Haughey's book on Amazon at half the price. Well, if you buy it new, we get a royalty for us here at Woodstock, just to let you know. Because the vow of poverty means the royalties go to the common enterprise here.

- I'd like to ask you to repeat the name of that first book.

John: It's called *The Poverty of Spirit* by Johannes Baptist Metz M-e-t-z. And it is the Paulist Press. It's a tiny little red book and it's absolutely wonderful.

Beryl: I found all of them on Amazon.com

John: Good. So they're all inexpensive except for John Haughey's book which is \$25. Is there anything else then? I wish you all every happiness and success and I thank God for your good service.

Beryl: And you as well, John.

All: Thank you very much.

John: Good-bye.