

“It’s only 2007”

In early October, I was pleased to dine with a colleague and his family. His ten-year-old son had a youth-group assignment to interview a missionary, and I was honored to fill the bill. After learning that I was directing a conference called “Following Christ 2008” he pointedly asked, “Why is called Following Christ 2008? It’s only 2007.”

What a good question! Though others may be hesitant to ask it flat out as he did, I think it’s probably surprising to plenty of people how long we’re spending to plan the next Following Christ (FCO8). Is investing so much time really necessary? In a word, absolutely. There are three reasons: lead time, staff-hours, and high standards.

When it comes to the world-class hotels we needed to visit, the internationally known speakers we’re lining up, or even the phenomenally busy academics and professionals we’re inviting to attend — lead time is the name of the game. If you don’t book early (and get into delegates’ calendars), you often can’t book at all.

Even when long lead time isn’t the key factor, there’s simply lots of work to be done! Naturally, one great way to supply the large number of staff-hours needed is to bring on helping hands. This is why I’m so pleased that my colleague Anna Gissing has signed on to serve as Tracks Coordinator to help pull off our fifteen programs of tracked seminars — which are really like fifteen simultaneous conferences in their own right. Between the two of us, the time we have will stretch much farther.

Finally, we need so much time because we want FCO8 to be truly excellent. If our music didn’t need to be top-notch, for instance, we wouldn’t need to work so far out with our worship leader, Brian Moss of Seattle, to plan themes, pick music, and recruit and rehearse with a band. High standards take time to implement.

As of today, there are 436 days left till FCO8, and you better believe I’m counting. I constantly pray for a clear outlook on what one thing (or two or ten) must be handled today. One day at a time!

Tidbits

- ◆ This week, we launch *The Well*, the website of InterVarsity’s Women in the Academy & Professions (WAP). I’ve been involved in the project through its planning, and what a joy to work with these great colleagues! (Ann has also joined the WAP team long-term to help shepherd the online-community features of *The Well* and to serve as art director.) Dip in at <http://tothewell.org>! You can also sign up there to receive the monthly *Well* newsletter.
- ◆ We’ve put together an all-star team for the FCO8 Steering Committee, a dozen InterVarsity colleagues who will help us make the conference’s **biggest strategic decisions** and carry them out. What should our musical worship be like? What seminars should we offer? What Scriptures should lay a foundation for the conference? We met at the Chicago Marriott (site of FCO8) last month to consider these and other matters, and to salt our planning with prayer, too.

Coming Up

- ◆ Next week, all the staff directors for InterVarsity’s Graduate & Faculty Ministries (GFM) will gather in Evanston, Ill., for three days of planning and collaborative training. The forty of us will learn from Prof. Christine Pohl as well as from one another. Our standing goal is to **keep getting better** at what we do. Please pray for our minds to be attentive and hearts warm to follow Jesus in our ministry.
- ◆ Right afterwards, we’ll convene a **task force** that will tackle the major fund raising that’s needed for FCO8. Please pray that we’ll work effectively together and move out to connect well with donors who can help us provide what’s needed for the conference. If you are aware of a foundation or donors able to give \$5,000 or more, I’d love to discuss how we might collaborate with such a partner.

Site Seeing

No one even knows how many websites there are, but here are two:

- ◆ You know those dozens of catalogs you get in the mail that you’re never, ever going to order from? Stop them from coming at catalogchoice.org, a free service dedicated to saving trees and fuel.
- ◆ Get started on your own website without pulling out your hair! Use the cutting-edge software WordPress by signing up for a totally free (and ad-free) site at wordpress.com.



Boyd’s Eye View

The biggest news in these parts is that we’re looking ahead to a new arrival: around March 27, Lucy should be a big sister! She has taken to eagerly making the sign-language for “baby” every time the subject comes up. We’re all very excited.

Lucy reaches 18 months next week, and she could hardly be sprouting more delightfully. Her vocabulary is up near 100 words (but who’s counting?), though my personal favorite is how she has taken to exclaiming, “Go Cubs!” every time she sees a Cubs logo.

I’m pleased to have had a review essay published this fall in *The Common Review*, the quarterly journal of the Great Books Foundation. (It’s on two books about the environment: one about the giant Coast Redwoods and the other about the history of agriculture’s impact on the planet’s soil.) I hope to have many more publishing opportunities like this. I’m well suited to a book reviewer’s life: I like free books, I can read, and I’m judgmental. It’s a perfect fit!

Prayer Requests

Please pray with me:

- ◆ For “one day at a time” each of the next 436 days until FCO8
- ◆ For the FCO8 fund-raising task force meeting 10/25-26
- ◆ For health and strength for Baby (due 3/27/08) and Mama

Facts

Jonathan Boyd

Associate Director
Graduate & Faculty Ministries
Conference Director
Following Christ 2008
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

5231 N Saint Louis Ave
Chicago IL 60625-4705
(773) 321-8161
jboyd[at]intervarsity[dot]org ≈
jboyd[at]octothorp[dot]us

Off-Line is sponsored by the
Hypatia Sans Pro Black schwa: ☺

To make a tax-deductible contribution to support my ministry, make checks payable to InterVarsity and mail to PO Box 7895, Madison WI 53707. Please include a note saying “For Jon Boyd.” You can also give securely online; for info, visit JonBoyd.org and click on “Donate.”