**World Cafe: Mission Drift: The Changing Landscape of Higher Education**

**GFM National Staff Conference 2016**

**Description**: This World Cafe will offer an opportunity to engage in important and current conversations in the university about the changing landscape of higher education and the purpose of the university in society. This conversation will explore how universities today are grappling with these tensions (played out in arenas such as: the decline of the humanities, the increasing reliance on adjunct faculty, the trending away from liberal education to job preparation, etc.), and what it might mean for Christian grad students/faculty to engage as salt and light in these conversations about the direction of the university.

**Readings:**

*The Coup That Failed: How the Near-Sacking of a University President Exposed the Fault Lines of American Higher Education*, by Talbot Brewer. The Hedgehog Review: Vol. 16, No 2 (Summer 2014).

*The University Today: Challenges and Opportunities*, a message given at IFES World Assembly 2015 by GFM staff Bob Trube.

**Questions**:

1. How does "The Coup that Failed" underscore and illustrate the issues discussed in "The University Today"? What, as Christians do we bring to a discussion of the defense of the humanities and the interests of STEM education? How (practically) can Christian grad students and faculty be a redeeming influence in this struggle about the direction/purpose of the university?

2. What are the opportunities for our mission if the spiritual hunger and aspirations of students are not acknowledged and the “big questions” are not explored in their education? What might this look like in practice?

3. How might we and our grads and faculty advocate for shalom and justice in the university as it struggles with issues of cost, particularly when many grad students and even faculty feel like cogs in the wheel of the university system? What have you tried, what’s worked/not, and what have you learned?

**Details: 3 rounds of conversation; 20 minutes per round.**

Round 1: discuss question 1

Round 2: share highlights from round 1 with your new group, and discuss question 2

Round 3: share highlights from round 2 with your new group, and discuss question 3

For each round:

* Each person takes a turn being the talker.
* The other three people serve as listeners.
* After each person in the group has had an opportunity to respond to the question/s, take the rest of the time for group discussion.

**World Cafe Guidelines:**

Speak with your mind and heart

Contribute your thinking

Focus on what matters

Listen to understand

Have fun!

Play… draw… doodle…

Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper connections

Link and connect ideas

Slow down… so you have time to think and reflect.