[Mark 4:35-41: On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, Let us go to the other side. And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased and the sea was dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?” (NRSV)]

The disciples were afraid. This Jesus, this teacher who had so beguiled them that they left their wives, their homes, and everything they held dear is asleep on the stern sheets as the storm threatens to drown them all. We know that this is God Incarnate with them, but this is only the fourth chapter of Mark’s Gospel, and they are still vague on the concept much later than even this.

Despairing, as a last resort, they wake Jesus. He calms the storm and then rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith. This always struck me as a bit much, as the disciples were simple men, and new to the disciple business. They haven't had much chance to develop their faith. We know they ain't seen nothin', yet.

The metaphor is obvious. The world is now more connected than ever, yet is still driven by the Darwinian selfishness that infuses all of life. Just as humans can be defined as the universe observing itself, we need to move beyond our material nature and rise above our selfish motivations, to calm the storm and find a better way of living.

I speak not just of us, here, at this meeting. I am thinking of all of humanity, still working from selfish motivations but with power to do unimaginably vast harm. Imagine what the world would be like if the profit motive wasn't the greatest motivator, if all people (or even just a majority) loved their
neighbors as themselves first of all. Imagine what would happen to wars if people stopped selling weapons for profit, for example. Imagine what would happen if we fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and helped the sick and imprisoned to return to full life in the community.

Who will tell people about this? Who will point out how much better things could be if we practiced what we preached? Who has had the advantage of hearing the talks we have heard, engaging in the discussions we have had, of devoting their lives to something more than survival, of seeing the universe more clearly than most?

Yet this utopia of loving behavior seems like so much pie in the sky. Certainly we are not the first to posit such a way--and always there are detractors who will deride attempts to try. You may recall the admonition yesterday to our younger members to avoid speculations such as ours until you have tenure, if not until you retire. Many a truth is spoken in jest. Our fear of detractors, of self-proclaimed realists holds us back. But who has a better understanding of reality, of the roots of motivation, than us?

"And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them." Paul’s words sum up, with startling brevity, one of the major lessons I have learned in this meeting. All of humanity needs to find a better way to live, and understanding the root of our destructive behavior is an important place to start.

We do not have the Lord Incarnate with us, calling us to overcome our fear with faith. We have His message, though, and must be Christ's hands and feet, face and voice, bringing calm to the storm tossed world as we are given grace to do. We--all of us--need to spread this Gospel.