



Salt!

■ THE CHRISTIAN AID
BUSINESS NETWORK

March '19 edition

BUSINESS AND CREATION

A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

Welcome to the March edition of the Salt Network News. Within this edition we will be exploring the question of Business and Creation.

Many of our regional Network events have been exploring the issues surrounding business and creation and the role our faith plays in influencing our business decisions when it comes to our care for creation.

For many of us when we think about creation care we think about environmental issues. And of course, the Environment is key to a theologically accurate creation care strategy. However, it is also important to note that scripture makes it abundantly clear that God's creation is everything we see and do not see; therefore creation care is about environmental concerns **and** care for the rest of the cosmic order too. I would like to suggest that authentic creation care is primarily about honouring the nature of God within his created order and that we do this by being 'courageous stewards' willing to open our eyes to brokenness and beauty of that which surrounds us, as well as open our hearts and tool-bags in order to be bringers of hope, healing and acceptance amongst the human and non human world.

How are you being a courageous steward and how can the Salt Network support you?

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An Ethic of Thriving

By Helen Howe

This month The Christian Aid Salt Business Network ran a session on business ethics at the Thrive Conference in Aberdeen. At Thrive, Christians from across the UK gather to explore how to make an impact in the workplace. Delegates considered how businesses and market economies can contribute to both the material and spiritual wellbeing of society.

All too often conversations about business ethics revolve around relationships. Essential values such as honesty, integrity and reliability are vital for building and maintaining good relationships with those we do business with: our work colleagues, suppliers and customers.

However a solely relationships-based approach to ethics cannot adequately respond to macro business issues such as inequality, economic dislocation, information overload, ecological damage and financial instability. As we move forward into the fourth industrial revolution, we need to ensure that business is not only harnessing the benefits of globalisation, communication and technology but, more importantly, that it is serving the common good.

Through the **Salt network** we encourage members to open their eyes to a wider view of business ethics. What does it mean to run a business that champions dignity, equality and justice? How can a business ensure it positively impacts people and the planet and strives to be truly transformational whilst not disproportionately compromising financial value generation?

Businesses that champion dignity, equality and justice sound like an idealistic notion, but they are part of our heritage. At the turn of the century, Christian business leaders embraced a business ethos which worked for the common good. Cadbury had a transformative effect on conditions and social benefits for British workers. Social Bite's mission is not just to serve great food but to end homelessness in Scotland. Brewgooder pour their profits into providing clean water for 1,000,000 people in Malawi.

Those of us invested in business and in the world around us can create a new business model for the 21st century. We can do this by investing our values, as the assets they are, into our businesses and by ensuring that we deliver good goods, good work and good wealth.

- **Good goods:** Do our products or services meet human needs and serve the common good? Are they doing this whilst taking responsibility for the social and environmental costs of production?
- **Good work:** Do we provide meaningful work, recognising the dignity of our employees and their right and duty to flourish in their work
- **Good wealth:** Do we use resources wisely to create profit and well-being, to produce sustainable wealth and to re-distribute it justly?

This fast-moving, and increasingly interconnected global village in which we live and work offers huge opportunities and threats to businesses. For business leaders of faith, it offers the ways and means to be to be salt and light in our workplaces, working together for the good of all.

*The Salt Network's newest regional hubs were launched in **Aberdeen on 16th March** and **Edinburgh on 18th March**. If you would like to find out more email salt@christian-aid.org.*

Getting to the heart of business: doing what we do for the glory of God.

By Samuel Williams

"We do what we do because of the money we get for doing it, so let make sure that the money is what we deserve", chimes the upbeat voice of a *Work and Wellbeing* podcast I'm listening to on a pair of headphone as I sit on the train. It is 5:45am and I am on my way to a Christian business breakfast near Oxford, where I've been asked to speak about the work of the Christian Aid Salt Business Network. Whilst my audience slurp coffee and tucks into sausages and eggs, I share about the exciting new network that invites Christian business leaders from across all sectors and company sizes, from sole-traders to multinationals, to unite together in the pursuit of a fairer and more just world, where poverty is a thing of the past. I share with them that aid is not the answer to the eradication of poverty and sustainable global growth. I suggest there is a need for a paradigm shift in business practices so as to benefit people and the planet and not just the bottom line; and that we should be seeking to maximise the good, not simply minimise the negative impacts of our businesses. I insist there is a need for business to play a part in bridging the \$2.5 trillion per annum funding gap needed to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and I suggest how blended financing models and investment in grassroots social enterprises in the poorest communities can provide real solutions to poverty whilst securing financial return to investors too. As I finished, believing I had presented a convincing argument against the self-centred work and wellbeing podcast mentality an audience member raised his hand and before I had time to do anything said "so you're suggesting we can make a real difference in the world, within and beyond our offices". Pausing to let his words settle, he smiled and said "this is good, we're Christians in business, this is what we are called to do, we are called to serve with what we have".

"whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"

1 Corinthians 10:31b

New Hope in Bangladesh

Rifat ties up his lungi so that it hangs no longer than a pair of underpants, chequered greens and blues twisted in a knot at his waist. His feet are bare and thick soled, clearly no stranger to long days and no shoes. The chain around his neck and rings on his fingers catch the light and send golden patterns dancing across the water that surrounds us. He wears an ever generous smile behind his dark eyes which squint back at me for just a moment through the afternoon heat as he slides down the muddy trench and over a bamboo fence into the cloudy green pond in which he rears his livestock and makes his living. Crabs.



Between 23rd and 26th May 2009 Cyclone Aila formed over the bay of Bengal and proceeded to sweep inland up the east/ west border between India and Bangladesh. Aila followed in the wake of Cyclone Sidr in 2007 and foreshadowed the trend of devastating weather events to hit southern Bangladesh over the past two decades. By 29th May 2009, Cyclone Aila had claimed at least 339 lives across Bangladesh and India leaving more than a million people homeless and the Bangladeshi Health department confirming an outbreak of diarrhoea which was to affect a further 7,000 people and killing 4. It was thought that up to 20 million people were at risk of post-disaster diseases whilst the environmental

impact of the Cyclone remains difficult to establish. The southern Bangladesh Sunderbans, mangroves, which plays home to the Bengal tiger was submerged in over 20ft of sea water brought inland by Aila, sparking international concern for the endangered species. However the rush of salt water did not remain within the Sunderbans but rushed kilometres inland swamping crops and in some instances decimating whole villages. In the days and weeks that followed the scale of the impact was slowly revealed from beneath the subsiding flood waters. "the soil is still too salty" Dipty, a dynamic Christian Aid programme officer explains; her long black hair tumbles down her back over her rucksack and 'CAID' branded gilet, she has an American twang in her accent and is fresh from university with insights which seem to surpass her years. "Most people eat rice and sell what they don't need, but Aila changed all that, the salinity level in the soil even now, 9 years later, means that many crops fail no matter how much you try; and the amount of saline resistant seed is simply too few. Farmers have had to find another way to make a living, they've had to learn new skills, try new things; and that's where we can help."



With a sweep of his arm Rifat throws out his nets, nothing; he smiles, turns and throws again and this time he's in luck and as he turns out the net 2 good sized fish and 3 or 4 crabs fall into the bucket. He is as visibly proud as I am impressed. Between the cyclones and floodwaters, Rifat had struggled on growing rice as best he could until his son had broken his leg and needed medical assistance. "we had to find a better way to make money," he said "we needed more than just rice to eat." It was at this time that Rifat met Shushilan, a Christian Aid partner organisation. Christian Aid and Shushilan had established an eco-demo farm as a facility for local innovative farmers looking for new opportunities. Based in Satkhira on the banks of the Kholpetua river

where the watery web of the Sunderban meets land and the night is never silent for the crickets. The eco-demo farm offers hope as a local community research centre to find practical solutions for farmers to manage salinity and water-logging. The main objective of the eco-demo farm is to develop and demonstrate technologies that are suitable for the tidal and flood prone eco-system.

"Its not that complicated" Dipty explains to me, "they dig the old paddy fields deeper in to ponds and then let the floodwater fill them. The ponds can then be filled with fish and crabs and you can even grow vegetables like beans, aubergines and chills on frames over the ponds, and you go from a single failing rice crop to a diverse ecosystem of alternative produce within just a season or 2, and it doesn't matter about the high salinity levels.

Soft shell Crab farming across Sothern Bangladesh has been a growing market for over a decade because it offers farmers a real alternative to rice, not only through food production, although Rifat tells me "Bangladeshis don't really like crab", crab farming generates the opportunity to grow a profitable business and enter a multimillion dollar international export market with a product in high demand across East Asia, where aptitude is growing for these crustaceans; deep-fried, curried and even in burgers. With the initial start-up support and ongoing skills training programmes of Christian Aid and Shushilan; within an acre pond and a time scale of 15 – 25 days (an average crab growing term) farmers are turning as much as 100.000Tk (£890) profit each harvest, around £5000 per year. "people were starving before and we needed help, especially after the big storms" Rifat says, "but now, crabs are giving this community life".



Salt Conference 2018

On crisp Westminster morning in October 2018, Christian Aid welcomed business leaders from across the United Kingdom to join together for the first annual Salt Business Network conference. With keynotes from Amanda Mukwashi of Christian Aid, Paul Gerrad, from The Co-operative Group, Sophi Tranchell MBE of Divine Chocolate, Lord Dr Michael Hastings of Scarisbrook CBE, of KPMG International, David Conner, founder of 2030hub and Martin Rich from Future Fit Foundation as well as many workshops getting into the nuts and bolts of current issues such as modern slavery in supply chains, value-based business strategy, work / life balance, benchmarking better business and biblical views of business practice. It was clear something was happening; something is happening amongst the business world, no longer is it ok, or rather we are releasing that it never was ok to simply take from creation's rich resources and privatise gains at the cost of others.

The Salt Network began with a vision to support business leaders reconsider the purpose and method of their work in light of their faith; offering resources and support to re-frame business as a force for good in the world. In just 2 short years since 2016, this vision has turned into what is fast becoming a movement, tapping in to the very roots value based activism at the heart of the Christian faith and Christian Aid – the belief that we are called to be the change we want to see in the world. Over 80% of Salt Network members have pledged to reform business practices and implement a values based strategy. As a network Salt is relatively simple, through Network Hubs, resources, peer to peer mentoring and conferences we support business leaders wherever they are on their own journey – whether their business is big or small – all that matters is their commitment to build a business that is good news. With five UK Network Hubs are already active with two more launching over the next few months, and the first international hub in Ghana scheduled for 2019. This movement of action focused game changers and world shakers, of which you are invited to become one is growing and making a difference.

As Christians in business we, like any other Christian, are called to do what we do for the glory of God, whatever that might be. The decisions we face that challenge our faith present us with an option to stand firm or turn and run. I say let's stand, not alone but together with our sisters and brothers across the globe united by the belief that business is a force for good with the ability to

transform lives, communities and habitats, to eradicate poverty and generate prosperity. To two are not mutually exclusive but are held together by the ones who are courageous enough to say, together, with the little we have, can be the change.

This article was first published in Faith-in-Business Quarterly edition 19.3. to find out more about FiBQ visit: <https://fibq.org/>

Your Voice Member Profile: *Cal Bailey*



Cal Bailey

Sustainability Director NG Bailey Group

I've been a Christian since being a teenager, and have felt called to be in business since I was a student. I'm now in my 50s and have spent my life in business, and also in church. Yet I have felt unsupported, even disparaged, as a businessman at church.

When I ask why this is, I have three answers:

- 1) My calling is ignored generally – i.e. not taken seriously – and challenged occasionally: the business world isn't somewhere the church sees as having any role in growing God's kingdom

- 2) I think this is because business is generally distrusted; it is seen as putting greed before customers – so it serves money, not God

- 3) There is a general silence about Monday to Friday activities from “church professionals”; there is implicit support for caring professions – but never anything about business more than a warning not to “pinch the paperclips”.

Yet I need help to be a Christian in business. I need friendship, support, ideas and challenge. Salt provides all these and provides them in a context of God’s purposes for his world. Especially his suffering world, the real one, which is invigorating and full of both learning and opportunity.



Upcoming Events

North West:

Putting Values to Work with *David Connor and the 2030hub*

- 3rd April from 16:30 – 19:00

North East:

Business and Creation

- 24th June from 15:00 – 18:00

Sponsored Walk
Saturday 27 April, 2019

Discover Manchester's historic places of worship

Join us to celebrate Christian Aid Week - and raise money to end poverty with each step you take.
Explore some of Manchester's best-loved sights and places of worship, and enjoy pop-up exhibitions, music and activities.

Book your place now, as a group or an individual, at ctcmanchester.eventbrite.co.uk or call 01925 582 817

East Midlands

Measuring Values

- 21st May from 15:00 – 18:00

West Midlands

Business and Creation

- 11th June from 16:00 – 19:00

London:

Business and Creation with *Martin Slocome*

- 13th June from 16:00 – 19:00

To find out more details about all the upcoming events and book your place visit:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/business-network/salt-events>