To lead we must first follow, who do you follow?

Leadership is a test of character and purpose. Day after day whether leading in your business or sports team, ministry or family, the way we lead is informed by how we learn, and directed by that to which we look.

John Berger in his book, Ways of Seeing, insightfully suggested that “the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight.”

In other words, echoing Ralph Waldo Emerson, we must fix our sight both on what lies before and beyond us so that we might see what is within us. In looking to what lies before us we will encounter the colourful creative inspiration of creation, yet we must also rest secure in the truth that lies beyond what we see and encounter in the world around us, through which the picture is completed.

The apparent oxymoronic nature of the person of Christ is that he is the personification of what Berger is alluding to. Jesus is both, before us as a vision of discipleship offering to us a blueprint for life lived in service of God; yet at the same time he is the very truth, which, beyond our earthly vision holds together the very fibre of existence.

Hebrews 12:1-3 calls us to Fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

As leaders of organisations and teams, it is for us to pursue this dual vision that both looks to the person of Jesus so that we might follow in his footsteps and grow in his character; whilst also seeing beyond into the eternal purpose of God, and so with confidence as we work, build and grow we know that we are co-creators of the Kingdom, with Christ.
Our Purpose is Clear but we Must Invest in New Models of Development

By Paul Stuart, CEO, Send A Cow.

I began my career in accountancy at Ernst and Young before moving into several different business roles, so my understanding of the importance of relationships for successful business was developed in that sector. However, whilst living in Mozambique, the culture of sharing skills and seeing how communities and people support each other further deepened my understanding.

I moved there during a year sabbatical from my position as the Commercial Director of Reader’s Digest Children’s Publishing and took a voluntary placement within the charity Oasis Mozambique. During my time there, I found that good relationships were fundamental to successful programme outcomes, and they were also what people held dear, above all other basic needs at times.

On my return to the UK, I joined the charity Send a Cow, becoming CEO in 2017. The importance of relationships has stayed with me from my time in Mozambique and is embedded within Send a Cow’s culture.

Since the organisation came to life in 1988, Send a Cow has helped over two million people lift themselves out of poverty, across the six African countries where we work. The practical approach we take provides families with training in sustainable farming techniques, gender equality and business skills. Our focus is on supporting people out of poverty, with better family and community relationships as the foundation to our training. These relationships are the truly valuable ‘currency’ of Send a Cow’s work, allowing success to multiply from family to family, and beyond.

Now more than ever, cross-sector collaboration between governments, business, investors and NGOs is essential in order to create the fairer and better world that we envision. It’s the relationships that we build with one another that will be crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

In Corinthians 12, we’re reminded that:

‘Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ… If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.’

So what can charities offer to this wider ‘body’ of work to achieve the fairer and better world that we all envision?

Send a Cow has a wealth of cultural and local knowledge from our projects. Our staff have also worked with the same people on the ground for years at a time, helping families to secure their own futures and adapting projects to culturally and environmentally specific needs. This expertise we can offer; it is our ‘part’ of the wider body.

The business sector also has a variety of possible roles to play. For a business to thrive, it must provide something that stands out from the competition, delivering excellent products to customers reliably, long term. This expertise and focus, when combined with the experience that NGOs possess of working in the field, can help us to approach problems from different angles and so solve them for good.

One of the models we are now exploring is a development impact bond, with the goal to raise £2.5 million over the next four years to tackle the serious issue of malnutrition in western Kenya. To create the model, we invited people into a room from various backgrounds including social finance, nutritionists, government agencies, and looked at how we can best use our resources to deliver change.

All were seeking to invest in programmes where impact is not only visible but can be measured, reviewed and adapted, in what might seem a more ‘commercial’ approach. By accepting that the solutions to complex problems will not be simple, we have begun to collaborate in new ways.

The issues that we face today in the third sector go beyond filling funding gaps, and into changing the way in which we think about development. In the words of Albert Einstein:

‘The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.’

> Join the WhatsApp Group

Access the experience of fellow game changers and stay informed of Network News by joining your regional Salt Network WhatsApp Group.

We have now set up WhatsApp groups for all regional Salt Hubs. These groups enable you to be more connected to the network, receive event details and network with fellow members.

> Invite friends and colleagues

Leadership is certainly no easy task. With the weight upon your shoulders and the buck stopping firmly at your feet, ensuring that we remain action focused and purpose driven is a challenge to even the most seasoned.

Supporting one another is key to successful faith based leadership. Why not invite a friend of colleague to one of the next Salt Network Events. See page 4, for more details.

> Get involved

if you would like to get more involved in the Salt Network we have lots of opportunities from writing for Salt News, to speaking at and leading events, offering resources and anything else you can think off.

Get in touch to find out more about all the above via: salt@christian-aid.org
Our vision is of a thriving and enterprising Africa. If we open our arms to working in cross-sector collaboration, and truly listen and value what others can bring, we can enable far greater change for the people of rural Africa, and facilitate more businesses to become a force for change.

Paul Stuart is CEO of Send a Cow, an international development organisation helping people grow their own futures.

Reimagining, reversing and reinventing the concept of vocation

By Dr Nick Shepherd
Programme Director for Setting God’s People Free

Close to London Waterloo Station, where thousands of commuters come and go to their city workplaces each weekday, is a simple mosaic picture the face of a smiling man and the words:


Who was Dave Squires? Why was he loved? Who put the plaque there and why? I will leave it between you and Google to find those answers, but seeing this plaque recently got me thinking about the notion of vocation and how we might need to reinvent this for the age we live in.

For many Christians identifying and living into a sense of vocation is difficult. There are two principle reasons for this. No. 1 our church culture, especially in the Anglican church, has developed such that the idea of vocation is often reduced to fulfilling a limited set of roles as ministers or clergy. For many Christians affirmation of a wider sense of calling is limited. However, this isn’t the only issue. The second is that where once there might have been a broader cultural affirmation of vocation as being engaged with certain professions, this too is on the wane – certainly changing at least. Yet, a sense of vocation, calling even destiny is however something that matters to people, it certainly matters to me. How then might we reinvent vocation for a contemporary age?

An understanding that vocation is for all Christians and has been at the heart of all major Christian denominations since the Reformation (and was present before this time as well). Something has happened over the years that has limited this imagination such that our 9 to 5’s or portfolio lifestyles are rarely included. This is a common experience across Western denominations – even within the Lutheran or Reformed traditions that have espoused this notion more fulsomely.

The underlying cause of this in my view is the dominant secular culture of the west which ‘pushes’ the activity of God into a narrower private world and makes discussion of God’s activity in our world harder to articulate. In response rather than seeking to find ways to reimagine and recount God’s activity, the Church retreats to explain this as ‘ministry’. The upshot being to privilege ministerial roles as the places in which we can truly engage with God’s transforming presence in the world. We don’t mean to do this. Some reading this will protest that we don’t. Yet I ask you to notice what we talk about, pray about and celebrate in church as a gauge of this?

Reinventing vocation then firstly requires a reimagining of where we expect God to be ‘at work’. This is the premise of our Everyday Faith resources from the Church of England. They invite us to take time to notice how we each ‘find and follow’ God in everyday life. As church communities these resources also offer seven practices to help put the reality that all Christians are called to serve God’s mission in God’s world at the heart of the life of the church.

This re-imagining is a vital step, but it is not enough in an environment where talk of vocation is declining more broadly. One option is of course to sidestep the term. However, perhaps we can reinvent it in a way that helps people - Christians in particular – to serve us better in our sense of identity with regards to the role of work.

There is some good evidence that the concept of vocation retains a resonance for many people. It still relates to people placing an understanding of their work within a sense of higher purpose or calling, but it is not unsurprisingly less likely for this to be in a religious sense. Vocation seems to serve a personal need to frame a bigger meaning in our work than our daily tasks and management objectives alone. This is most likely to be seen in roles where such purpose is identifiable – where a clear benefit
to society is seen, or an artistic element is involved. But what if you’re a street sweeper, shop assistant or a minute clerk? Is it possible to transform this role based notion of vocation and redefine vocation in the light of ‘the call’, or more precisely, the one who calls – God. Vocation therefore does not relate to our role description, but for the fact that God has called you to serve him within the roles you do. Living out our Vocation is an act of obedience to God’s call and not fulfilling any particular role be it priest, banker or street sweeper, per se.

Usually when I see plaques in London they relate to the good and the great; all fine individuals who have done much for society. It isn’t hard to look at these and find ourselves dreaming of the day we might have such a marker of our own contribution to society. This however is not vocation. There is a strange almost eschatological realisation in the nature of vocation, in that through the act of worldly service we participate in the kingdom building activity of God and not merely the fulfilment of our potential or career goals. God calls people to all fields of society because God’s kingdom pervades all and in this process of obedience some of us may be known as great and successful, others might by priests or teachers. However, whatever we do, our vocation is found in the unbridled pursuit of and obedience to the one who calls. So whichever street he leads us on we are to pick up our broom and may never know what response obedience to that call will leave, but we will know we are living in the centre of our vocation.

**Pledging to be the change: Salt Membership**

As the Salt Network has continued to grow, and support faith motivated, values based business leadership we have been challenged by members and the sector to more actively make our voices heard and leadership felt. Therefore following significant crafting, initiated during the Salt Network annual conference, I am delighted to launch the Salt Network ‘Pledge for Change’. Becoming a signatory to the ‘Pledge for Change’ is an important part of network Membership, signalling your commitment to journey along the path of faith and values based business leadership.

This is an exciting moment for the Salt Network and we encourage everyone to become a signatory and join the movement. Whilst you can continue to enjoy the benefits of the Salt Network without signing the Pledge we hope that it is not seen as an additional, onerous or impossible task, but rather as a statement to the ”direction of travel” that we seek to lead in and an opportunity for visionary, collective and faith aligned leadership. Signing the pledge is neither a contract, nor an obligation to which you will be held accountable but rather a vision of a future in which we commit to play a part in forming.

The Pledge for Change ensures that the Network is purposeful, whilst the Network itself enables us to support one another through training, support, fellowship and prayer.

This Pledge is a recognition of the core challenges and opportunities that we as Salt members recognise future fit business leadership must engage with, the Salt Network Pledge for Change commits to the following areas in order to transition towards a sustainable economy.

> Ensuring the Protection of Human Rights:
> Ensuring the Protection of the Environment:
> Ensuring Equality for All:
> Ensuring the Provision of Good Work:
> Ensuring Business works towards a Good Society:
> Ensuring the Creation of Good Products and Services
> Ensuring Sustainable Partnership

**To read the full pledge and join the movement email salt@christian-aid.org**

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**Upcoming Events**

**West Midlands Hub**
*Bringing Kingdom into Business - Combating modern slavery*
> Date: 29th January
> Location: Anthony Collins

**East Midlands Hub**
*Finding faith in the workplace and imbedding values.*
> Date: 22nd January
> Location: Malt Cross, Nottingham

**London Hub**
*Defining a Purpose Driven Brand*
> Date: 16th January
> Location: CCLA Investment

**Liverpool Hub**
*Vision, Values and Culture - building transformational business*
> Date: 5th February
> Location: 2030hub

**Newcastle Hub**
*Building values into Business*
> Date: 28th January
> Location: Muckle LLP

For all Salt hub event details visit the Salt Event pages of the website:

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

Join us for a unique event, bringing together business leaders, entrepreneurs, aid workers and thought leaders from across the UK, unified around a single goal: to maximise the common good through developing successful and sustainable business enterprise.