Building a Better Future

This year the Salt Network and the Church of England’s Faith at Work campaign are teaming up to deliver a programme of inspirational, pioneering and courageous lessons from transformational leadership, to boost your impact in the workplace and across your spheres of influence.

As the world looks to rebuild from the impacts of Covid-19, many of us are asking:
- What might ‘building back better’ look like?
- How do we re-imagine a society that meets our needs, while addressing the injustices that have been made clear during the past year?

As we look towards building a better future, it is clear that business as usual is not going to be enough. Paul Polman writes in the foreword to the conference brochure that, “We cannot be bystanders to a failing system. There is, after all, no business case for poverty.”

He goes on to say, "We can only achieve these ambitious goals (to end poverty and improve lives everywhere) in partnership across industry and with government and civil society. Only then will it lead to greater, more widely shared prosperity for all by 2030."

The Building a Better Future conference will explore what role our leadership, faith and influence holds as we navigate these challenges of creating a New Social Contract.

Don’t miss this opportunity to network with like-minded leaders from across the country as we journey together into unchartered territory in an attempt to build back better. You will hear from top class speakers like our own CEO, Amanda Mukwahsi, John Elkington, developer of the triple bottom line accounting, Martin Rich, Co-founder of Future-Fit Business, and more.

Book your ticket now at: https://saltcon2021.eventbrite.co.uk
'It's Time to Pay the Taxman'

'It's Time to Pay 'The Tax Man'' is the header of a recent email from my accountant. ‘Protect Yourself From ‘The Tax Man’ is the subject of another. 'The Tax Man' is portrayed as a nefarious figure, akin perhaps the 'The Grim Reaper', and why not? Since, as the saying goes, 'only 2 things in life are certain – death and taxes' with the obvious implication being that both are bad and to be avoided as much as possible!

Why do we forget that paying our tax is part of the social contract? That this money is used in part to pay the salaries of the teachers who educate our children; the firefighters who risk their lives to save our own; the refuse collectors who keep our streets clean; and for our National Health Service.

Perhaps this negative bias toward taxation helps to explain our incredible tolerance towards tax evaders; sure, Richard Branson is a tax exile but he’s still a national hero right? It may also help to explain why the vast majority of our population have no serious qualms with continuing to support businesses known to avoid paying corporation tax (thus in most cases adding no real value to British society beyond a lot of minimum wage jobs).

As one of the founding members of Partners for Progress – the U.K. arm of the Patriotic Millionaires, I believe that it is time to change the dialogue around taxation in the U.K. and that it is way past time to reset the expectations upon those most able to pay. Those, like myself, lucky enough to make up the 1%.

As in nearly every country on earth, the UK is in desperate need of a political and economic overhaul if it is to address our crisis in economic inequality; arrest the erosion of our democracy; ensure a just economic and inclusive economy. - Gemma McGough

'I Paid My Taxes' is seen as a badge of honour. And it’s time that the wealthy are seen as part of the solution rather than the problem. It is time for change.  It’s time that those who are benefitting most from our economic system be the ones putting the most back in, that the revenue raised from millionaires, billionaires, and corporations make up a significantly larger proportion of tax receipts.

It's time that every citizen, irrespective of class, gender, ability, race, or ethnicity, should enjoy political power equal to that enjoyed by the wealthy. And it's time that #IPaidMyTaxes is seen as a badge of honour.

Join me at this year’s Salt Conference to learn more about the scale of inequality in the U.K. the importance of progression taxation on the wealthy to raise the funds needed to build a better future and my perspective on why the wealthy need to join the fight for a more stable and inclusive economy. - Gemma McGough

Empathetic Leadership: Hebrews 4:13-16

A few years ago, for the first time in my life, I experienced burnout, anxiety and depression. In hindsight, there were a combination of factors rights of so many of our citizens and to the accelerated effects of the climate crisis at home but far worse overseas.

And all this suffering set against a backdrop of an unprecedented increase of the wealth of the lucky few. In 2020 alone, the wealth of the people featured on the Times Rich List increased by 22% to nearly £600 billion.

We now live in a country where 4.3 million children live in poverty while we have 171 billionaires. A country in which one in twelve of all households were experiencing food insecurity even before the pandemic, while during the pandemic, the wealth of our billionaires increased by an incredible £290 million per day!

I am a millionaire not a billionaire, but I can confirm that similar phenomena of significant wealth increase during the pandemic exists further down the food chain. The fact is that we are not all in this together and since the advent of capitalism we never were.

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A few years ago, for the first time in my life, I experienced burnout, anxiety and depression. In hindsight, there were a combination of factors
that led me to that place, and it was a horrible place. As with every other painful or traumatic event in my life, the biggest lesson for me has been one of grace. I am able to empathize with a whole new set of people with whom previously I could only try and sympathize.

In the midst of the darkness, I found that most people were sympathetic; listening, nodding, and hugging (when we were allowed to do that). However, the conversations that I appreciated the most were the ones with those who had experienced something similar. They were able to empathize in a way others couldn’t – they had been in my shoes. They knew the right questions to ask. They understood that judgement was unhelpful and even detrimental. When they asked how I was doing, "fine" was not an acceptable answer. They were also the ones who stayed in touch and proactively messaged, called and asked to meet up. Sympathy requires understanding, empathy requires understanding, an emotional connection, and the ability to feel someone else's pain.

So, how does this work in leadership? For far too long we believed that leadership required a significant separation between leader and follower. I grew up in an environment where often the leader was feared. The follower did what was required out of a fear of penalty instead of out of a sense of loyalty to the person they were working for (this even applied to families); The leader/parent expressed what was required and the follower/child obediently performed or suffered the consequences. Unfortunately, there are some leaders, even Christian leaders, who still operate in this way.

Empathetic leadership is different. Empathetic leadership seeks to understand and connect with the emotions of the follower. Empathetic leadership is humble. In Hebrews 4:13-16 (NLT) we are told, "13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. 14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. 15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

As the leader in your sphere, people are accountable to you. As such, people will necessarily approach you. How they do that, physically and emotionally, is largely up to you, even if unstated. The God of creation is the ultimate leader. For years, and even now for some, people would approach him in fear. The holy of holies in the temple was a place where priests went in fear of death. However, God’s plan was always compassion. We see many Old Testament examples of that. And, we know that his love and forgiveness culminated in the coming of Jesus. Jesus, therefore, is our prime leadership model.

These verses in Hebrews express the depth of empathy that Jesus shares with us. His humility in becoming "flesh and blood" and moving "into the neighbourhood" (Peterson, The Message, John 1:14), means that he understands our struggles and pain from an experiential knowledge, not a theoretical one, and he loves us anyway. Therefore, we can approach God with boldness knowing that we have received grace and mercy.

Do those who follow us feel the same? Are those who follow those who follow us confident that they will be treated with grace and compassion? Habit 5, in Stephen R. Covey’s, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, reads, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Are we as leaders modelling an "understanding first" approach?

As we begin to recover from the events of the last 18 months, modelling empathy and grace could be more important than ever. Those whom we lead will have faced, and may still be facing, challenges that have had a major impact on their wellbeing: physical, emotional and material. Our empathy could be the thing that rescues them at this critical time. That's a lot of responsibility. Are you in?

Values should be stated as verbs and as we move forward post-Covid (hopefully), a commitment to Empathetic Leadership would fit well at the top of our values list. - Buddy Owen

Join us in welcoming our new Chair, Former Archbishop of York, Dr. John Sentamu who has been outspoken on issues of poverty and justice in the UK and globally for many years. Born in Kampala, Uganda, he will be the first person of African descent to take up the position of Chair in Christian Aid’s 75-year history.

Coming up: You are invited to join us at our online prayer event ‘HEAR OUR PRAYER’ on the 4th Thursday of every month from 7:45-8:15am. This is open to Salt members and other Christian Aid supporters around the world. The next two events are: October 25th November 28th

For more info and to sign up for all our events go to: https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/salt-business-network/salt-events

THE PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT FUND: Corporate and philanthropic capital has a vital part to play in addressing injustice, and in establishing sustainable solutions to some of the world’s most pressing issues. Whilst emergency aid remains essential in some circumstances, we continue to strive for sustained social and economic development.

Christian Aid has experience in over 40 countries establishing long term solutions through creating jobs, growing the economies, strengthening political stability, and equipping and empowering communities to build the futures they want.

The Philanthropic Capital Fund strategically directs your giving so that it has impact for generations to come by focusing on sustainable market-based solutions to poverty.
One World, One People

"One world, one people." If you are a Marvel fan, you may recognise this as the rallying cry of the Flag Smashe...