

WHEATON DECLARATION ON BUSINESS AS INTEGRAL CALLING

A Word of Introduction

The Wheaton Declaration on Business as Integral Calling was the product of a global consultation held in Wheaton, Illinois in October 2009 that brought together leaders from the realms of business, non-profit organizations, and Christian ministry with theologians and academic leaders in business, economics, and missions.

In the context of a global economic crisis and in light of the persistent problems posed by global poverty, this group recognizes that the 21st century will require new approaches, new practices, and a strong ethical anchor. Business has been under-valued and under-utilized in responding to these challenges.

At this critical moment, we recognize the need to anchor and engage emerging business and economic paradigms with deeply rooted Christ- and kingdom- centered theology that brings together the natural and spiritual dimensions of God's redemptive activity for creation. We also believe that in this engagement, Christians can and must lead the way in the formulation of business practices that reflect the biblical commitment to justice and equity in all areas of human activity. In essence, this focuses on a thoughtful and intentional re-centering or re-orientation to kingdom values and principles in all aspects of business. A global Business as Mission movement has emerged to give expression to this re-centering or re-orientation.

The Business as Mission issue group at the Lausanne Forum 2004 in Thailand brought together business practitioners, mission leaders, theologians and economists and produced a Business as Mission Manifesto¹ articulating key principles and values. The Lausanne process is the most significant development in this movement to date. The Business as Integral Calling consultation sought to extend the discussion underway about the Kingdom potential for business. Our goal was to explore how the institution of business can holistically transform individuals, communities, and societies.

Our conversations were organized around six central topics. We encourage individuals and groups to discuss them.

1. From a Kingdom of God perspective, what is poverty?
2. How does an understanding of the Kingdom of God re-center and anchor business?
3. What challenges and opportunities confront business seeking to implement Kingdom values?
4. From a Kingdom of God perspective, how should business, in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and government agencies, address poverty?
5. How do businesses with Kingdom values operate within environmental and natural resource constraints?
6. How can the church and business work together to develop a theologically sound and holistic view of business' role in the Kingdom of God?

We offer The Wheaton Declaration on Business as Integral Calling as a starting place for further conversation about the role of for-profit enterprise in bearing witness to God's Kingdom.

¹ See page 4

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October, 2009

During October 2009, women and men of Christian faith with diverse backgrounds drawn from sixteen countries and five global regions gathered in Wheaton, Illinois to explore the place of business in God's purposes, together with the sacred calling of a life in business. We began with an acknowledgement of God's sovereignty and Lordship over all aspects of human life, including our work, our business, our money, our profit, our economy, and our working relationships.

As a body of diverse believers, we shared a common conviction that business, as all human structures and institutions, is created, fallen and in need of transformation so that it can become an expression of the Kingdom of God for the establishment of justice and *shalom*.

1) Lamentations

- We lament that the church and business itself have undervalued business as a vehicle for living out Christ's calling, and have relied excessively on non-profit approaches that have resulted in dependence, waste, and an unnecessary loss of human dignity.

2) Celebration of Faith and Hope

- We celebrate the growing movement of people seeking to be used by God and to deploy business economic activity for God's Kingdom.
- Business can create value, provide the dignity of work, and transform communities by improving livelihoods.
- Business can be an integral calling to proclaim and demonstrate the Kingdom of God by honoring God, loving people, and serving the world.
- Business can also provide a powerful opportunity for the transformation of individuals to achieve their full potential for creativity and productivity and to flourish and experience a life of abundance as envisioned by the Kingdom of God.
- Business can be used to help restore God's creation from its degraded state.

3) Foundational Principles

- In business, practicing the values of the Kingdom of God should be characterized by operational virtues, including:
 - **Passion** – a zeal for mission that expresses other-centered concern.
 - **Humility** – a commitment to serve others with respect.
 - **Faith** – a willingness to take bold risks.
 - **Wisdom** – the application of truth to complex circumstances.
 - **Integrity** – the alignment between our words, deeds and values.
 - **Hope** – the joy of expectation, especially in the midst of hardship, that comes from a conviction that God's Kingdom is already present and will be fulfilled in eternity.
- The question then becomes: What is truly valued? In particular, we call for further reflection and experimentation on how to measure areas such as:

- Promoting human dignity and flourishing.
- Encouraging the development of the whole person.
- Ensuring every voice is heard.
- Aligning of mission, values and practice consistent with Kingdom purposes.
- Restoration of justice through right relations with God, others and the rest of creation.

4) Commitments – We commit to:

- The creation of a culture within the church to address the training of pastors, evangelists and the priesthood of all believers, to affirm, equip, and support business people for faithful discipleship in business.
- Collaborate and network with one another and with other networks to continue our process of learning and discernment.
- Affirm and advocate for Kingdom-centered corporate governance and responsible governmental action within our individual contexts.
- Strive to change our consumption patterns and personal lifestyles as
- Christ’s body, responsibly stewarding creation for God’s glory and the common good.
- Encourage one another and our faith communities to implement the principles and values expressed above.

It is our deep conviction that businesses that function in alignment with the core values of the Kingdom of God are playing and increasingly should play an important role in holistic transformation of individuals, communities and societies.

Participants:

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Paul Robinson

Richard Schroeder

Kent Seibert

Kim Tan

Dennis Tongoi

Mats Tunehag

Two Middle East businessmen

THE BUSINESS AS MISSION MANIFESTO

The Lausanne (LCWE¹) 2004 Forum Business as Mission Issue Group worked for a year, addressing issues relating to God's purposes for work and business, the role of business people in church and missions, the needs of the world and the potential response of business. The group consisted of more than 70 people from all continents. Most came from a business background but there were also church and mission leaders, educators, theologians, lawyers and researchers. The collaboration process included 60 papers, 25 cases studies, several national and regional Business as Mission consultations and email-based discussions, culminating in a week of face to face dialogue and work. These are **some** of our observations.

Affirmations

We believe that God has created all men & women in His image with the ability to be creative, creating good things for themselves and for others - this includes business.

We believe in following in the footsteps of Jesus, who constantly and consistently met the needs of the people he encountered, thus demonstrating the love of God and the rule of His kingdom.

We believe that the Holy Spirit empowers all members of the Body of Christ to serve, to meet the real spiritual and physical needs of others, demonstrating the kingdom of God.

We believe that God has called and equipped business people to make a Kingdom difference in and through their businesses.

We believe that the Gospel has the power to transform individuals, communities and societies. Christians in business should therefore be a part of this holistic transformation through business.

We recognise the fact that poverty and unemployment are often rampant in areas where the name of Jesus is rarely heard and understood.

We recognise both the dire need for and the importance of business development. However it is more than just business per se. Business as Mission is about business with a Kingdom of God perspective, purpose and impact.

We recognise that there is a need for job creation and for multiplication of businesses all over the world, aiming at the quadruple bottom line: spiritual, economical, social and environmental transformation.

We recognise the fact that the church has a huge and largely untapped resource in the Christian business community to meet needs of the world – in and through business - and bring glory to God in the market place and beyond.

Recommendation

We call upon the Church world wide to identify, affirm, pray for, commission and release business people and entrepreneurs to exercise their gifts and calling as business people in the world – among all peoples and to the ends of the earth.

We call upon business people globally to receive this affirmation and to consider how their gifts and experience might be used to help meet the world's most pressing spiritual and physical needs through Business as Mission.

Conclusion

The real bottom line of Business as Mission is AMDG - ad maiorem Dei gloriam – for the greater glory of God

Business as Mission Issue Group October 2004

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¹ Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation