

Prayer Works

■ by Beverley Shepherd

What do you believe about prayer? In the first quarter of 2012, which has been designated a year of prayer for the UK, this question – and our response to it – is key. As headlines scream dire warnings – ‘CBI slash UK growth forecast’, ‘Profits drop for first time’, ‘Banks drag FTSE down’, ‘Jobs not cuts’ – how should Christians respond? Rarely have our organisations, workplaces and government been more in need of prayer and the intervention of our God who answers prayer. And yet many Christians face increasing pressure to work longer hours, wearying commutes, the tyranny of the urgent, and exhaustion. We may feel that we scarcely have time to think, let alone pray.

Prayer is vital but traditional ‘prayer meetings’ are suited to very few work environments today. Prayer as individuals, without the sustaining influence of a group, becomes subject to more fluctuations than the FTSE – dependent on work pressure, felt need and physical energy. Time to wait for anything, even on God, is seen as a luxury. Fresh and creative ways of praying in and for our workplaces are needed; the ‘virtual’ fellowship and encouragement of other Christians on similar prayer journeys is vital; the fresh wind of the Spirit re-envisioning us through the celebration of answered prayer is crucial; and a renewed awareness of God’s presence and activity in our places of work, our one true hope.

The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity’s response to this need is PrayerWorks. Launched in January, PrayerWorks invites Christians to join 40 day prayer journeys for their workplaces. Each day they receive a short ‘Prompt to Pray’ via email, Facebook or Twitter backed up by biblical teaching on the LICC website. The theme for the first of these prayer journeys is

blessing – blessing our organisation, work, relationships, God’s presence and our witness. There has been an amazing response - already over 1500 have signed up to pray and, in addition, three churches are following the journey of blessing for the 40 days of Lent. One quote from our Prayer Journey Wall captures the enthusiasm that Prayerworks has generated: ‘I sat in a supermarket cafe and prayed blessings of encouragement and motivation for the staff, especially the always-sour looking woman who works there. Next day, she smiled - first time I’ve seen that in all the years I’ve shopped there. And, yesterday, I sat in a university coffee shop (yep, I drink too much coffee) and wondered how to pray for God’s generosity to overflow - which led to a conversation that wouldn’t otherwise have happened, and a person going away feeling loved and blessed by God. This is an exciting prayer journey!!’

Many of us struggle with prayer. ‘To adapt G K Chesterton’s quotation about *the Christian ideal*: ‘Prayer has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried. Prayer is difficult! Prayer forces us to face our own lack of control; it challenges our desire to be seen to be doing something; it drives us to seek His wisdom rather than lean on our own understanding; in short, it confronts us with our total dependency on our loving, all powerful Father and our need to submit to His timing. Ouch! Yet prayer also gives us the amazing privilege of co-labouring with God to transform our workplaces and the UK economy. PrayerWorks, by linking us with others, sharing creative ways to pray, and celebrating the stories of answered prayer can help us make this privilege a reality. It’s not too late to join the journey – visit www.licc.org.uk/prayerworks/join-the-journey/



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