

Corporate Social Responsibility and the Common Good

*In this address to the Faith in Business Conference **David Barclay** produces some creative ideas to make Corporate Social Responsibility of greater value to a business. He questions whether self-interest for a business is too narrowly defined if it is just making as much money as possible. He concludes by suggesting that businesses would do well to cultivate closer relationships with their neighbours.*

Good morning and thank you for the invitation to speak to you today about community organising, CSR and the common good. First of all a disclaimer that unlike the other distinguished speakers at this conference I am not able to talk from a wealth of experience and achievement in the business world, but rather as someone who has engaged with businesses from the perspective of civil society, and so I come to you in trepidation but perhaps just a glimmer of hope that an outside perspective can sometimes be a helpful stimulation. Let me first introduce myself and my organisation a bit. I am the Faith in Public Life Officer for the Centre for

Theology & Community, and we are a charity based in East London with the mission of equipping churches to transform their communities. We're just over 10 years old, and we grew out of Christian engagement in something called Citizens UK, which is an alliance of civil society organisations – faith groups, charities, schools, universities, trade unions – who all work together on issues of the common good. And they do so using the methodology of something called community organising, which I will explain as we go today. The most famous thing that Citizens UK has done is the Living Wage, which started with churches and others in

East London putting pressure on Canary Wharf businesses to pay cleaning staff more than the minimum wage, which of course in London is nowhere near enough to actually live on and support a family. And the Living Wage is I think a great example of the kind of business practices that have been highlighted this weekend, where by treating staff as real people who have families to support and see, and paying them accordingly, what businesses eventually found was that productivity and staff retention went up. So what started perhaps as a CSR exercise – how do we get these local communities to stop campaigning and pressuring us – has been



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The case for a Living Wage