

Is there beauty in charity partnerships?

Steph Walker works at the Christian children's charity Transforming Lives for Good. She recommends businesses consider partnership with a Christian charity, partly because it enhances the business's reputation, but also often involves staff providing skills and experience to the charity, resulting in greater inclusion and engagement for staff and clients. The need is greater now because there has been a decline in charitable giving by businesses due to the lockdown, and she has found that in the UK (in contrast to USA) the mention of church or Christian results in a refusal to become involved due to clauses excluding religious charities.

When Peter Heslam introduced the theme of 'Beauty at Work' as the year's topic for Faith in Business, I was struck by his statement that one of the ways that beauty exists at work is when we love. God is love. For those who are considering whether to include a partnership with a charity as part of the way your business expresses love, here are a few thoughts:

.....see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. (2 Cor 8:7b, NIV)

This verse so beautifully connects the act of giving with love. Yet in a world which is currently reflecting so much brokenness, where do we give when we see so much need all around us? I believe that God inspires his people to act where his heart is breaking. He places his passionate concerns in our hearts – so that we can act. Different needs are perceived by different people, which is a great benefit of the breadth and variation he has created amongst his people.

So, if you're struggling to see where to give, **ask God to move you with passion**

and concern for the causes that are breaking his heart. To do this, it's obvious that our focus and time need to be with the Lord. He will inspire us about where he needs us to act, as 2 Cor 8:5 (NIV) so eloquently expresses:
They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

In my experience as a corporate partnership manager, the most beautiful business partnerships with our charity come when a company is following its God-given passions and concerns. The company share



Charity Partnership

Riverford Organic Farmers Ltd in partnership with Ripple Effect (previously 'Send a Cow')

Photo: Riverford Organic Farmers

the commitment that we have for struggling children experiencing food and emotional poverty, and they passionately believe that the local church can and should be part of the solution. It's such a joy for both the business and the charity when the cause is a shared passion. We have engaging conversations and our partnerships are long-term. The company journeys with us as a charity, understands our challenges and needs, and sees our impact grow. They really engage with the stories of transformation experienced by so many disadvantaged children – and by church volunteers too! We have true engagement because 'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' (Matt 6:21, NIV).

If charity partnerships are the way you're heading, then choose a Christian charity

There are so many brilliant Christian charities! For every good secular organisation there is a Christian organisation doing the same work, but with an eternal perspective. Christian charities are addressing the needs of the world, but are doing so through God's

leading, in dependence on him, with a heart to demonstrate his love, whilst covering everything in prayer.

At the Christian children's charity Transforming Lives for Good (TLG), where I work, every day starts with all our staff in prayer for half an hour – for the kids, for the work, for God's leading, protection and blessing. We need Christians to journey with us, people who can also pray with us for those we are supporting, our cause, children's concerns and needs, protection and provision. It is striking to me that every member of staff at TLG feels led by God to be here 'for such a time as this.'

A challenging context for Christian charities

It is no surprise that statistics show the decline in charitable giving in the context of such competing worthy issues: the war in Ukraine, global disasters and the cost-of-living crisis. The impact of lockdown means that charities have been able to run fewer fundraising activities with less participation and many are finding that they are all competing for smaller pots, as corporate and foundation funds are impacted too.

The 2022 Charities Aid Foundation giving report says that:

- 1 in 8 are considering cutting back on donations to charity to help them manage their bills.
- 1 in 25 reported that they had already cancelled a regular donation to a charity.
- The trend towards fewer people donating is now firmly established.

Apart from these generic issues, Christian charities have additional problems. Here is an illustration which I experience regularly. At TLG, our programmes are all about a warm welcome, warm food and warm spaces for disadvantaged children, all while supporting children's emotional wellbeing. As a result of being so 'of the moment' I get loads of initial enthusiasm from businesses, since we're working right where the social conscience is. Then, as I discuss that we achieve this through churches, businesses drop out stating 'we can't sell that across our staff and clients.' On top of this, many companies and foundations have clauses stating they won't support religious charities, so we are also excluded from many funding opportunities.





This means that Christian organisations need more Christians to support them

The concern that staff and clients won't accept religious charities is quite ironic, as illustrated by Benevity's report 'The state of corporate purpose' (April 2021), which states that in the USA:

89% of companies include religious organisations in their (company giving) programs, and when they do, they see 52% higher donation participation, 40% higher volunteer participation and a 14% higher terms of use acceptance rate, indicating that access to these causes inspires new participants to get involved.

Contrary to widespread perception, supporting religious charities increases inclusion and engagement for staff and clients.

1. Benevity is one of Canada's first B-corps, supporting charitable donation management.
2. Mt 6:3-4

'We are Christ's ambassadors' (2 Cor 5:20)


We live in a time of huge negative press about the church but we can combat this by being active witnesses to the world. If your business supports a Christian charity, you have a chance to present a positive view of the church's impact, as well as a positive view of business beyond profit and the opportunity to shout about all the associated business benefits too! It's a chance to lead, inspire and motivate your staff and clients, and the world around you.

Some Christians believe (with some biblical support²) that we should be private about our giving. Here are some verses which provide a counterbalance to that view:

...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.' (Matt 5:16,NIV)

...for we are setting our minds on what is right not only before the Lord but also before the people.' (2 Cor 8:21, NRSVUE)

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. (2 Cor 9:11,NIV)

So, perhaps you can be Christ's ambassador through your business giving to Christian causes. Show the world the good his church is doing. Share on social media, share on your website, talk with your staff and clients about the difference that is being made through the church. In doing so, you are revealing God's nature – love – and revealing more 'beauty in work.' 



Steph Walker spent 19 years working in the blue-chip pharmaceutical company GSK. She now supports businesses to express their heart for struggling children through partnership with the Christian children's charity Transforming Lives for Good (TLG). She became a Christian on an Alpha course 30 years ago and has been a 'Walk Through the Bible' instructor, demonstrating the 'big picture' throughout the old and new testaments to both churches and primary-school children. She is married to Paul with two children.