

David Welbourn: A Tribute

The Revd David Welbourn, one of the founder–editors of Faith in Business Quarterly, died aged 82 in May of this year. We warmly acknowledge the major contribution he made to integrating faith and work over several decades.

After an initial curacy at South Westoe on Tyneside, David spent all of his ordained ministry working in Industrial Mission. He was Durham Diocesan Industrial Chaplain from 1969–74 and Industrial Chaplain to Sunderland Churches from 1974–80. In 1980 he moved to Norfolk and Waveney Industrial Mission, based in Norwich. This included being chaplain to Colman's mustard company, which is now owned by Unilever. He convened a major conference on the impact of unemployment in Norwich, and organised a support group for the unemployed.

In 1990 David became the Churches' Officer for Industry and Commerce with the SNEHIM (Surrey and NE Hampshire Industrial Mission) team. He remained in this role until his retirement in 2006. During this time he was lead chaplain with DERA (Defence Evaluation and Research Agency), which became Qinetiq, the multinational defence technology company, at its base in Farnborough. Qinetiq clearly valued his work because they paid most of his salary. He was also Chair of IMA LASER (Industrial Mission Association: London and SE England Region,) which held residential meetings for three days every year. Dick Johnson, who was then a chaplain with Kent Industrial Mission, remembers him as one of the seasoned and wise members to whom young and raw newcomers listened carefully.

From 1980 David was in the vanguard of those industrial chaplains doing serious theological thinking and writing about the integration of faith, industry and the

economy. The context in which he did this was mainly the Industrial Christian Fellowship, of which he was a long–term member. He took over the task of editing the ICF Quarterly Papers and oversaw a significant and valuable process in deepening and widening its coverage. The journal never failed to meet its publication dates and David was not only an assiduous editor but also a thoughtful and perceptive contributor. Not least among the achievements of that period were the ICF Theme Pamphlets, which offered a wide–ranging series of discussions on key aspects of faith and work, three of which he wrote himself.

David was an enthusiast both for the notion of the stakeholder economy, which gathered pace in the 1990s, and for the Spirituality at Work movement which became popular in the early 2000s. With consultant Sue Howard he co–authored a well–regarded book titled *The Spirit at Work Phenomenon* which was published by Pilgrim Press in 2005. David had a keen sense of God's presence in the world of work, and the fact that this was not confined to professing Christians. Here are two notable contributions from his writings:


God, as creator, is active in the whole world he has made. He is available to Christian and non-Christian alike, he is at work in the world as well as the church, in the lives of individuals and institutions, in pursuit of his purpose, building his Kingdom. He is therefore the inspiration behind all good human practice, wherever it may be found. We discern God at work in every good manager, whether that manager is

Christian, or of some other faith or of no faith at all.

Our world–management task is a divine commission. That may seem a major new step for the world of business to take. But even this is beginning to sound more feasible, for there are business gurus around who are beginning to speak, not just about mission and values, but about spirituality. It is up to us in the churches to ensure that they look to us and not to New Age sources for their inspiration.'



When ICF and Faith in Business (then called the Ridley Hall Foundation) came together in 1996 to set up Faith in Business Quarterly, the decision was made that we would have editorial representatives from both organisations. David was the natural choice from ICF and willingly volunteered, the ICF Quarterly Papers then ceasing. He joined Richard Higginson and David Murray as founder editors of FiBQ. John Lovatt (also representing ICF) joined in 1998 and David Welbourn stepped down in 2002.

As an editor David was thoughtful, reflective and easy to work with. While he was from a theologically more liberal stable than his colleagues, this did not prove a stumbling–block: our common commitment to the cause of integrating faith and work – and seeking to offer a coherent Christian commentary on what was happening in the business world – was a strong uniting factor. We know that David continued to receive and read FiBQ well into his retirement, retaining a keen interest in what was going on in this area. We offer condolences to his wife Jenny in her bereavement. 

**Several different people who knew David have contributed material for this tribute:
Richard Higginson, John Lovatt, Ann Wright, Bill Mash, Dick Johnson and Peter Cope.**