

## **Some views concerning the local church as mission, working in support of its members in the work place**

**An Antipodean view – based on a review of Pentecostal churches in Wellington NZ –and the researcher’s experience working in Central Government, Wellington.**

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June 2008**

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# 1. Introduction

## Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to explore the statement of Mr. MacKenzie with a view to forming an alternative opinion on its veracity.

First, the essay will establish the foundations for work and working from the Bible and other sources (Sections 2 & 3). Then it will provide a profile of the current issues faced by people in the work place (Section 4). It concludes with an analysis and review of current sermons as a reflection of the extent of equipping and supporting church members for their workplace ministry (Section 5).

The appendix is included to provide a positive note ending, containing some ideas and suggestions, uncovered during my research, which could be used for developing initiatives in the area of church-based mission activity in the places of work

## Alistair MacKenzie writes in the Executive Summary of his thesis<sup>1</sup>:-

*“The largest force which the church has is mobilized in the world each day of the week as Christians go about their daily work.  
Yet the church finds it very difficult to prioritise the equipping and support of its members for these everyday ministries.”*

MacKenzie’s overall assessment of the New Zealand situation is:-

*“The evidence strongly suggests that the church in general seems uninterested in, unaware of or unsure of how to help the laity integrate their faith identities and teachings with their work-place occupations, problems and possibilities”.*

## Background

*It was in the train, on the way to work early one morning, when the Holy Spirit spoke to me about a blood disease in one of the family members of my fellow worker Mrs. J in Housing New Zealand Corporation. I saw the disease as serious. I enquired of the Holy Spirit if I should share this with Mrs. J, and He said yes.  
So after getting settled at work, I asked my fellow worker if any one in her family had a serious blood disease. The response was negative so I shrugged and put the experience down to the plate of Muesli I had for breakfast.*

*Then, a week later, Mrs. J called me out of the office, and asked me to repeat the question which I had put. It transpired that in the weekend, she had received a call from family in Australia that her auntie was critically ill in Australia, after contracting a rare blood disease while on Holiday in Bali.*

*I was able to pray through the situation, as the Holy Spirit had revealed it to us, and together we claimed healing and thanksgiving for the Lord’s graciousness towards Mrs. J’s family.*

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<sup>1</sup> Alistair Mackenzie *Faith at Work – Vocation: the Theology of Work and the Pastoral implications* , MTheol Thesis, Otago University, 1998

This is one of many instances in which the Holy Spirit helps and assists myself and my colleagues at my place of work.

This example demonstrates that there is a role for God's people, to fulfill His purpose amongst His people working in Central Government, in New Zealand.

Not only to bring healing and glory to His people, those who do not know Him, but to work within government in such wide-ranging projects which further Kingdom living – in a secular and spiritual sense (meaning both the work I perform for Government, and how I perform it).

What we do in the workplace Monday through Saturday is true Ministry. Believers who are bus-drivers or farmers, electricians or shop assistants, school teachers or government officials, or stay at home mothers are all doing ministry – they are missionaries- in their workplace – meeting people in a myriad of situations, creating a continual opportunity for touching lives.

I found agreement in the above assertions from Ed Silvano<sup>2</sup> who argues that spiritual gifts that God gives to us through the church apply primarily to the marketplace! He writes that the supernatural gifts are for the marketplace, not necessarily for use within the church alone.

In similar vein, Rich Marshall<sup>3</sup> lists the requirements of workplace missionaries as being:-  
*“They perform signs and wonders, break bondages, exhibit authority, transfer wealth, hear the voice of God, function as biblical entrepreneurs, and reach nations”.*

With this in mind, Church members all need to be equipped and supported for the ever present potential for interacting with people.<sup>4</sup> The church is the place where the equipping and supporting of church members must take place because, as we shall see, the church is the knowledge-base, caretaker receptacle and interpreter of spiritual gifts – as being God's Word, His will, and His gifts. .

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<sup>2</sup> Ed Silvano, *Anointed for Business* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books 2002) –p34

<sup>3</sup> C. Peter Wagner *The Church in the workplace* – Ventura Ca; Regal 2006 – p33

<sup>4</sup> C. Peter Wagner *The church in the workplace*, Ventura Ca: Regal 2006 –p157

## 2. Why work at all?

### Introduction

The section outlines principles for and examples of work from the Bible and other related sources.

Work is good. By working we are able to provide for the welfare and ongoing needs for ourselves and for our families. In working we equip the poor and needy, by way of provision, either by service or goods. By working, we extend goodness and possibilities for neighbourhoods, cities and countries.

Alan Richardson presents the reality of a world where we did not have to work as:-<sup>5</sup>

*“To dream of a workless paradise is to seek something other than the purpose and plan of God”<sup>6</sup>*

### First, some general comments

#### The meaning of work<sup>7</sup>

In the context of this essay, I will use John Maxwell’s definition of work. He writes

*“Work means any activity by man or woman, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he is predisposed by his very nature, by virtue of humanity itself.”*

#### There are four common myths about work:-<sup>8</sup>

- Work is a four-letter word – it has a bad connotation within some circles –because it is associated with hardship, being uncomfortable, effort, sweat and tears.
- Work is often regarded in church circles as being enemy territory – worldly – part of the secular system, controlled by demons, principalities and powers, essentially evil.
- Work is salvation – we must work – because of Adam, to outwork our salvation – it’s a punishment for his disobedience– for each one of us, a necessary evil.
- Work is the last priority, after church, family, recreation – there is work: – and yet to work is Godly.

#### Peter Stuart writes on the spirituality of work - consider the possibility of the two worlds<sup>9</sup>

People of faith must learn to be comfortable, valuable, and intentional in two worlds; the world of the kingdom of God and the world of the commerce – both faith and work

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Richardson –*The biblical doctrine of work* –(London SCM press, 1952 )- p36

<sup>6</sup> Gen 2:15 and 3: 17,19

<sup>7</sup> John C Maxwell, Stephen R Graves, and Thomas G Addington; *Life@work Marketplace success for People of Faith*; (Nashville, Tennessee –Nelson Business 2005)

<sup>8</sup> John C Maxwell, Stephen R Graves, and Thomas G Addington; *Life@work Marketplace success for People of Faith*; (Nashville, Tennessee –Nelson Business 2005) p15-17

<sup>9</sup> Peter Stuart – Christians in the workplace – Occasional paper –Latimer foundation of New Zealand -2000

We come closer when we contrast work with prayer and worship. Yet even here the categories overlap. The distinction is not absolute, for our daily work can (and should) be offered as an act of worship – worship as the work of God, and prayer and worship can and often are experienced as hard work.

Since work in its subjective aspect is always a personal action, it follows that the whole person, body and spirit, participates in it, whether it is manual or intellectual work. It is also to the whole person that the word of the living God is directed, the evangelical message of salvation, in which we find many points which concern human work and which throw particular light on it.

These points need to be properly assimilated: an inner effort on the part of the human spirit, guided by faith, hope and charity, is needed in order that through these points the work of the individual human being may be given the meaning which it has in the eyes of God and by means of which work enters into the salvation process on a par with the other ordinary yet particularly important components of its texture.

### **Pope John Paul 11 develops the case for a clear call for man and woman to work.<sup>10</sup>**

Through work, man must earn his daily bread<sup>11</sup> and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family.

Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself<sup>12</sup>, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth<sup>13</sup>

From the beginning therefore he is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work.

The People of God might be likened to the labourers in the vineyard mentioned in Matthew's Gospel: *"For the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard"*<sup>14</sup>.

The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord's vast vineyard and the multitude of persons, both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labour in it. The vineyard is the whole world (cf. *Mt 13:38*), which is to be transformed according to the plan of God in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>10</sup> Christifideles Laici – Pope John Paul 11 – Post Synodal exhortation – 30 December 1988

<sup>11</sup> *Ps 127(128):2*; cf. also *Gen 3:17-19*; *Prov. 10:22*; *Ex 1:8-14*; *Jer 22:13*.

<sup>12</sup> *Gen 1:26*.

<sup>13</sup> *Gen 1:28*.

<sup>14</sup> *Matt 20:1-2*

## **According to Pope Paul 11 – the call to work is universal and wide-ranging.**

*You go too*<sup>15</sup>. The call is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world.

In preaching to the people of his time Saint Gregory the Great recalls this fact and comments on the parable of the labourers in the vineyard:

*"Keep watch over your manner of life, dear people, and make sure that you are indeed the Lord's labourers. Each person should take into account what he does and consider if he is labouring in the vineyard of the Lord"*.

## **Alan Richardson writes**<sup>16</sup>

*"God calls doctors, engineers, and school masters, to be prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers as laymen in his church"*.

If this assertion is true, then it is in the church where the members reside in which these gifts are deposited, discovered, developed, and honed.

The gifted members in the work force are the snipers and the assault force of God's army. The church is ideally placed to become the place of nourishment, of healing, and re-commissioning for these "missionaries". The skills which we are talking about here (Prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and administrators, etc) are also needed in the leadership of the church – to expand and give power and authority to the church.

## **Martin Luther concludes:**

*"Who then can comprehend the lofty dignity of the Christian? By virtue of his royal power he rules over all things, death, life, and sin and through his priestly glory is omnipotent with God because he does the things which God asks and desires"*<sup>17</sup>

## **Summary -"Hi ho Hi ho – it's off to work we go"**

We all go out from our churches, into our places of work – and Christ goes with us too – MacKenzie suggests in his Thesis that this "going out" should be a significant concern of the church! Work is good, it is necessary, and this fact should be evident in Church teachings for its members.

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<sup>15</sup> Matt 20:3-4

<sup>16</sup> Alan Richardson –*The biblical doctrine of work* –(London SCM press, 1952) – p36

<sup>17</sup> Martin Luther – '*The freedom of a Christian*, 1520' Quoted in A.E.McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*-Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985)

### 3. Biblical doctrine of work - an overview

**Pope John Paul II writes that we co-operate with the Creator – by our work**<sup>18</sup>

The word of God's revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the Creator and that, within the limits of his own human capabilities, man in a sense continues to develop that activity, and perfects it as he advances further and further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation.

We find this truth at the very beginning of Sacred Scripture, in the Book of Genesis, where the creation activity itself is presented in the form of "work" done by God during "six days"<sup>19</sup>, "resting" on the seventh day<sup>20</sup>.

Besides, the last book of Sacred Scripture echoes the same respect for what God has done through his creative "work" when it proclaims: "*Great and wonderful are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty*"<sup>21</sup>; this is similar to the Book of Genesis, which concludes the description of each day of creation with the statement: "*And God saw that it was good*"<sup>22</sup>.

**We have a view of God Himself as a worker from the Old Testament, which is rich in metaphors to describe God as:-**

Worker <sup>23</sup>	Builder/architect <sup>24</sup>	Teacher <sup>25</sup>
Composer and performer <sup>26</sup>	Metalworker <sup>27</sup>	Potter <sup>28</sup>
Farmer <sup>29</sup>	Shepherd <sup>30</sup>	Warrior <sup>31</sup>

While these examples are not exhaustive, they do together offer a correspondence between the work and nature of God, and the work as understood by humankind. Together, they suggest that our work is a point of real connection with God – working like Him is God-like and therefore a source of meaning and spirituality.

#### Old Testament references to God's people at work

The books of the Old Testament contain many references to human work and to the individual professions exercised by man: for example:-

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<sup>18</sup> John Pope II *Laborem exercens* 1981

<sup>19</sup> *Gen* 2:2; *Ex* 20:8, 11; *Dt* 5:12-14.

<sup>20</sup> *Gen* 2:3

<sup>21</sup> *Rev* 15: 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Gen* 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Gen* 1-2, *Job* 10:3-12, *Psalms* 139:13-16

<sup>24</sup> *Prov* 8:27-31

<sup>25</sup> *Matt* 7:28-9

<sup>26</sup> *Deut.* 31:19

<sup>27</sup> *Is* 1:24-6

<sup>28</sup> *Is* 31:9

<sup>29</sup> *Hos* 10:11

<sup>30</sup> *Ps* 23:1-4

<sup>31</sup> *Ex* 15:3

the doctor<sup>32</sup>, the pharmacist<sup>33</sup>, the craftsman or artist<sup>34</sup>, the blacksmith<sup>35</sup> we could apply these words to today's foundry-workers-the potter<sup>36</sup>, the farmer<sup>37</sup>, the scholar<sup>38</sup>, the sailor<sup>39</sup>, the builder<sup>40</sup>, the musician<sup>41</sup>, the shepherd<sup>42</sup>, and the fisherman<sup>43</sup>.

### **The New Testament contains references to work, also.**

The words of praise for the work of women are well known<sup>44</sup>.

In his parables on the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ constantly refers to human work: that of the shepherd<sup>45</sup>, the farmer<sup>46</sup>, the doctor<sup>47</sup>, the sower<sup>48</sup>, the householder<sup>49</sup>, the servant<sup>50</sup>, the steward<sup>51</sup>, the fisherman<sup>52</sup>, the merchant<sup>53</sup>, and the labourer<sup>54</sup>. He also speaks of the various aspects of women's work<sup>55</sup>. He compares the apostolate to the manual work of harvesters<sup>56</sup>, or fishermen<sup>57</sup>. He refers to the work of scholars too<sup>58</sup>.

### **On the subject of Jesus Christ and work - Pope John Paul II has this to say...<sup>59</sup>**

The truth that by means of work man participates in the activity of God himself, his Creator, was given particular prominence by Jesus Christ - the Jesus at whom many of his first listeners in Nazareth "were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? Is not this the carpenter?'"<sup>60</sup>

For Jesus not only proclaimed but first and foremost fulfilled by his deeds the "gospel", the word of eternal Wisdom, that had been entrusted to him. Therefore this was also "the gospel of

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<sup>32</sup> *Sir* 38:1-3 (Note – Book of Sirach is retained by Roman Catholics as one of the books of the Bible)

<sup>33</sup> *Sir* 38:4-8

<sup>34</sup> *Ex* 31:1-5; *Sir* 38:27.

<sup>35</sup> *Gen* 4:22; *Is* 44:12

<sup>36</sup> *Jer* 18:3-4; *Sir* 38:29-30

<sup>37</sup> *Gen* 9:20; *Is* 5:1-2.

<sup>38</sup> *Eccles* 12:9-12; *Sir* 39:1-8.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ps* :107(108): 23-30; *Wis* 14: 2-3

<sup>40</sup> *Gen* 11:3; 2 *Kings* 12:12-13; 22:5-6

<sup>41</sup> *Gen* 4:21.

<sup>42</sup> *Gen* 4:2; 37:3; *Ex* 3:1; 1 *Sam* 16:11

<sup>43</sup> *Ezk* 47:10.

<sup>44</sup> *Prov* 31:15-27.

<sup>45</sup> *Jn* 10:1-16.

<sup>46</sup> *Mk* 12:1-12.

<sup>47</sup> *Lk* 4:23. . *Mk* 4:1-9.

<sup>48</sup> *Mk* 4:1-9.

<sup>49</sup> *Mt* 13:52.

<sup>50</sup> *Mt* 24:45; *Lk* 12:42-48

<sup>51</sup> *Lk* 16:1-8.

<sup>52</sup> *Mt* 13:47-50

<sup>53</sup> *Mt* 13:45-46.

<sup>54</sup> *Mt* 20:1-16

<sup>55</sup> *Mt* 13:33; *Lk* 15:8-9

<sup>56</sup> *Mt* 9:37; *Jn* 4:35-38.

<sup>57</sup> *Mt* 4:19.

<sup>58</sup> *Mt* 13:52.

<sup>59</sup> John Pope II *Laborem exercens* 1981

<sup>60</sup> *Mk* 6:2-3.

work", because he who proclaimed it was himself a man of work, a craftsman like Joseph of Nazareth<sup>61</sup>.

Work is the point of contact with God; Jesus Himself says<sup>62</sup>.

*"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work"*<sup>62</sup>

### **Paul's commentary on work**

Paul boasts of working at his trade (he was probably a tent-maker)<sup>63</sup>, and thanks to that work he was able even as an Apostle to earn his own bread<sup>64</sup>. *"With toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you"*<sup>65</sup>.

Paul writes of a clear call for us to continue to work – even after being saved.<sup>66</sup>

Hence his instructions, in the form of exhortation and command, on the subject of work: *"Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living"*, he writes to the Thessalonians<sup>67</sup>.

In fact, noting that some *"are living in idleness ... not doing any work"*<sup>68</sup>, the Apostle does not hesitate to say in the same context: *"If any one will not work, let him not eat"*<sup>69</sup>.

In another passage he encourages his readers: *"Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward"*<sup>70</sup>.

### **Summary**

In these paragraphs, I have used references and extracts which combined establish the importance of work – from God's point of view.

If it is important to God, then in the context of Alistair MacKenzie's hypothesis, work and the workplace should be important in the life of the church. We would assume that things of God are important to the church.

Then you could expect to see this reflected in church activities, support, and teachings.

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<sup>61</sup> Mt 13:55

<sup>62</sup> John 4:35

<sup>63</sup> Acts 18:3.

<sup>64</sup> Acts 20:34-35

<sup>65</sup> 2 Thess 3:8. Saint Paul recognizes that missionaries have a right to their keep: 1 Cor 9:6-14; Gal 6:6; 2 Thess 3:9; cf. Lk 10: 7.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor 7:17

<sup>67</sup> 2 Thess 3:12

<sup>68</sup> 2 Thess 3:11.

<sup>69</sup> 2 Thess 3:10.

<sup>70</sup> Col 3:23-24.

**4. Why we need church** – to equip and support our daily lives – and because the need of people out there is very great – and God has a heart for His people!

The scenario is of a sick and dying world – the needs are represented by the wide variety of fish in the pond – our world which can be any or all of at home, in the train, shopping, or at work...

Our need and the churches need is to fashion the bait for the particular type of fish we are reaching out to – catch, land, disciple – we need the right tools for the task.

This section outlines a range of problems which face Christians in the workplace, on a daily basis. To gather the material, I have used local sources.

The picture presented is diverse and complicated; it describes the scenes of a sick and dying world. It also describes the type of fish in the pond of life – and I hope, raises an awareness of the need to fashion the bait for the type of fish we are catching.

We as workforce church members, need to know and believe that Jesus has won the full victory over all of the issues facing us and described below<sup>71</sup> –nothing is too big for the Lord to cope with; that we take this message of victory into our places of work, to share with our work mates for our lives and for theirs – at the most opportune time – for them and for us..

Through prayer, fasting, good works/witness, and the power of the Holy Spirit we seek opportunities to set free, to restore, and to deliver (because we are there – alongside – for significant periods of the day or night) these people - bosses, colleagues, stakeholders, customers, service people, and even clients!

#### **Overall assessment of situation – some revealing statistics<sup>72</sup>**

Most of us spend almost 40% of our waking time at work.

In contrast, the average Christian spends less than 2% at church during their working years. Yet the church puts most of its energy into that 2%, almost nothing into the world of work<sup>73</sup>

The largest force which the church has is mobilized in the world each day of the week as Christians go about their daily work. They leave the church to enter into their mission field.

#### **First, some biblical concepts and terms that describe the powers and principalities – which we face in everyday life – “its hell out there!”<sup>74</sup>**

- **The Divine Council** – a heavenly hierarchy<sup>75</sup> - these have authority and they reign in the heavenlies
- **Angels** – invisible spiritual beings who are messengers of God<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Heb1:3-4; Col 1:13-20,

<sup>72</sup> Alistair Mackenzie *Churches supporting Christians at Work* a work in progress –April 2008

<sup>73</sup> Alistair Mackenzie – *Faith at work: Vocation, the Theology of Work and the Pastoral Implications* – MThEol Thesis, Otago University, 1998.

<sup>74</sup> R.Paul Stevens – *The Other Six Days* – Eerdmans 2000 –p219

<sup>75</sup> Psalm 82:1

<sup>76</sup> Gen 3:24; Rev 1:1

- **The devil/Satan** – a malevolent spiritual being who is totally opposed to God and God’s purposes – he owns all kingdoms (except the Kingdom of God)<sup>77</sup> and he is envious of the position of heirs which we are entitled to through Jesus’ victory<sup>78</sup> and sets out to disinherit us from the promises.
- **Demons** – a variety of evil forces and beings operating under a single unified head<sup>79</sup> whose effort is also aimed at distancing us from the inheritance as Christ’s brothers.
- **The world** – the world system organized against God and His purposes<sup>80</sup>
- **Principalities and powers** – socio, political, educational and spiritual pressures<sup>81</sup> also working against God and His purposes for mankind.
- **Mammon** – Money (and possessions) that are perceived to give security – and take a lot of our attention and resources<sup>82</sup> - away from God and from our heavenly inheritance.
- **The flesh** – the self turned in on itself, source and end of (ephemeral) pleasure<sup>83</sup>
- **The law** – the good gift of Torah that has been twisted by sin into a way of gaining righteousness – and with it grace, God’s favor, and (eternal) reward<sup>84</sup>. Death – Not merely the cessation of life, but a power that holds people in lifelong fear<sup>85</sup>.

**We have problems – in an unsaved world – The type of fish in the pond (who will present the Redeemer and Saviour, to His people?)**

I am setting out two lists of issues which ordinary people working with me come up against on an everyday basis. The summary of the issues is taken from a report from the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)<sup>86</sup> – which is a consulting service working within Central Government providing professional support to staff in need both at work and home – where it might effect work.

The problems enumerated are another view of the biblical powers listed above – sometimes, but not always, the problems can be related to the existence and influence of the spiritual powers and authorities. And the people of God, the church members need information, competency, and competencies in recognising and dealing with all of these issues, in themselves and in their work mates around them.

Each referral group listed below represent problems, all in their own right which need a response; be it listening, referring, agreeing, or resolving, one way or another.

The list of issues is taken from a 12-year survey of referrals to EAP services. Referrals which are made by work mates because of the issue being serious for them and because they have made a conscious decision to deal with it.

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<sup>77</sup> Mt 4:1

<sup>78</sup> Heb 1

<sup>79</sup> Jas 3:15

<sup>80</sup> Jn 15:18

<sup>81</sup> Eph 6:12

<sup>82</sup> Lk 16:9

<sup>83</sup> Gal 5:16-17

<sup>84</sup> Rom 7:12; 8:2

<sup>85</sup> Heb 2:15

<sup>86</sup> 2005/06 Annual report of Employee Assistance Programme – Psychological and Counselling Management – National Average Statistics of Referrals for all Organizations – Dec 2006.

### **Referrals for assistance by staff members over 12 years for personal issues**

Relationship	29.38%
Anxiety disorders	14.43%
Depression	11.66%
Family	11.42%
Grief	9.36%
Health/Medical	6.06%
Low self esteem	5.31%
Children	5.30%
Other personal issues	7.08%

### **Referrals for assistance by staff members over 12 years for work-related issues**

Career	21.07%
Relationship with Manager	14.40%
Relationship with co-worker	14.40%
Work environment	11.95%
Work performance	9.14%
Work conditions	7.79%
Work load	6.02%
Harassment	5.98%
Work trauma	4.66%
Other work issues	4.59%

It should be noted that personal issues arise at work, as well as work-related issues – all requiring a response as appropriate as and when they present themselves.

**The “range of human issues” problem is exacerbated by a diminishing group of persons able to bring Christ’s transforming love to the people and the situations.**

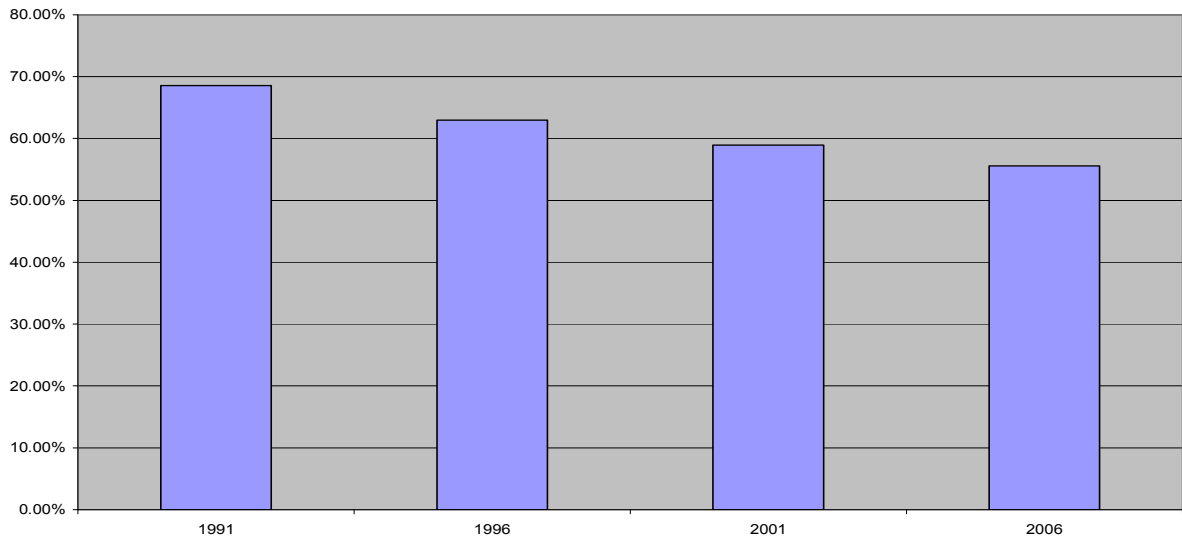
While the above groupings showed a wide range of issues which have to be faced almost daily in the work force, the following information from **Census NZ** shows that the people with issues are increasing, while those who do have the Gospel to represent Christ in workplace people’s lives are decreasing, thereby creating a resource gap.<sup>87</sup> The population of Christians within the total population has fallen from 68% in 1991 to 55% in 2006.

There is a need to be far more effective in bringing Christ into the workforce – for a more effective and extensive establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

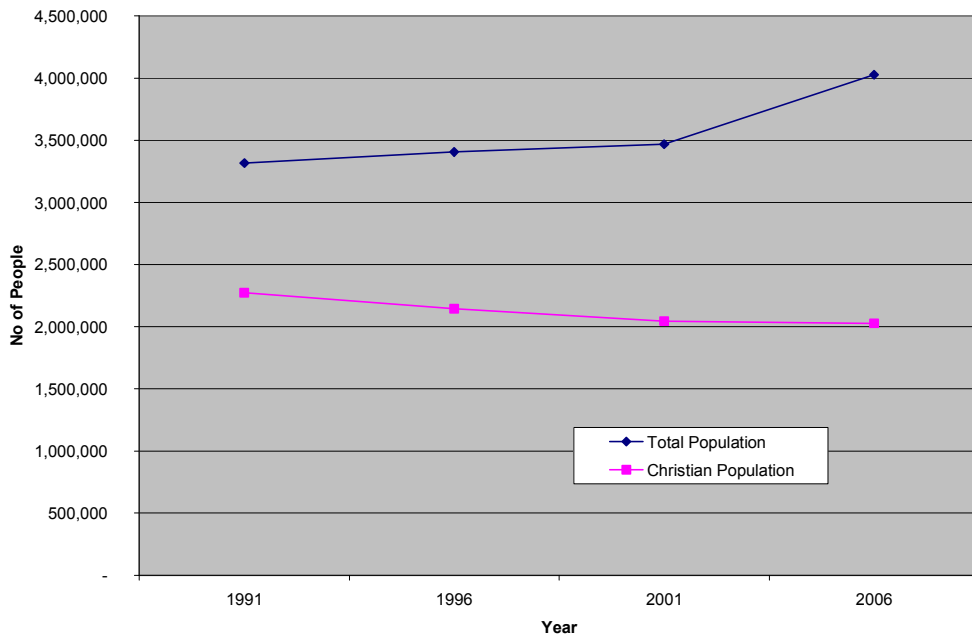
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<sup>87</sup> Data retrieved from Statistics NZ.. The references are:2001 Census - Social Economic and 2006 Census - Individual Part 2

**Christian Population as % of Total Population**



**Decline of Christian Population**



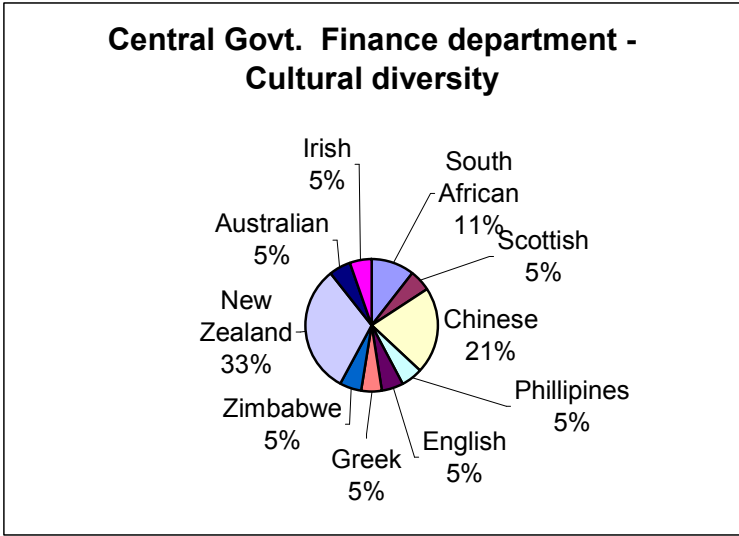
**Cultural diversity**

This fact of work force life demands a greater tolerance amongst peoples and presents a unique challenge for any social transformation which might be based on Christ’s Kingdom principles

The following chart is a cultural view of a typical Central Government office in Wellington, New Zealand, an overall staff of 32. It shows the extent of cultural diversity, and the need to be culturally sensitive, in presenting, among other things, the Gospel message in all its forms and aspects.

The question is:-“The way we know may not be necessarily the best or even right – the bait for recruits for Jesus Kingdom needs to be put in a contextual way, both relevant and attractive.”

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In summary then, the existence of a life in a church and a life in the work place cannot be divorced from one another. Training and development to cope with the intricacies of the journey of life in one arena is most essential for outworking in both arenas.

**Summary**

The above evidence suggests that there is a desperate need for development of fuller Christian maturity in both church and work lives. The church needs to be aware of the issues facing its members in the work-place – outside of the church as Alistair MacKenzie has suggested.

In terms of Alistair MacKenzie’s hypothesis; this awareness of the wide-ranging issues outlined above is necessary for the church members to respond in a relevant way in their lives outside of the church.

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## 5. The acid test.

During the course of my review for this essay, I contacted three local churches. The three churches each have regular Sunday attendances in the vicinity of 200- 400. I obtained the details of their past twelve months sermons and analysed the content and other issues.<sup>88</sup>

The purpose of my analysis was to determine three aspects to aid in forming a conclusion of Alistair MacKenzie's hypothesis. The three aspects were:-

- (1) The assessment of relevance of content of sermons to "equipping and supporting members for workplace mission activity.
- (2) An analysis of sermon category to elicit a high level grouping of sermon content.
- (3) A collation of occurrence of sermons against topics established as relevant to workplace mission. The topics have been described within this essay

The Sunday sermon(s) is not the only vehicle expressing the "mission" and values of the church, nor do sermons represent the only church-related educational input. The sermon(s) can indicate the effort and concentration of weekly spiritual input (teaching) on a regular basis for most of the members.

It could well be, that a larger time-scale sample, would produce different results, perhaps more indicative of the seasons and spiritual development of the church. However, in the context of the twelve month time period, one could expect a good score in the review, where the needs for equipping and supporting the members was a priority for the church and deemed important in its role and life.

### The review and analysis methodology employed

My first analysis was to allot scores for each sermon based on the coverage and content.

I used a simple formula of 1 score for each of the first two and 2 for the latter aspects

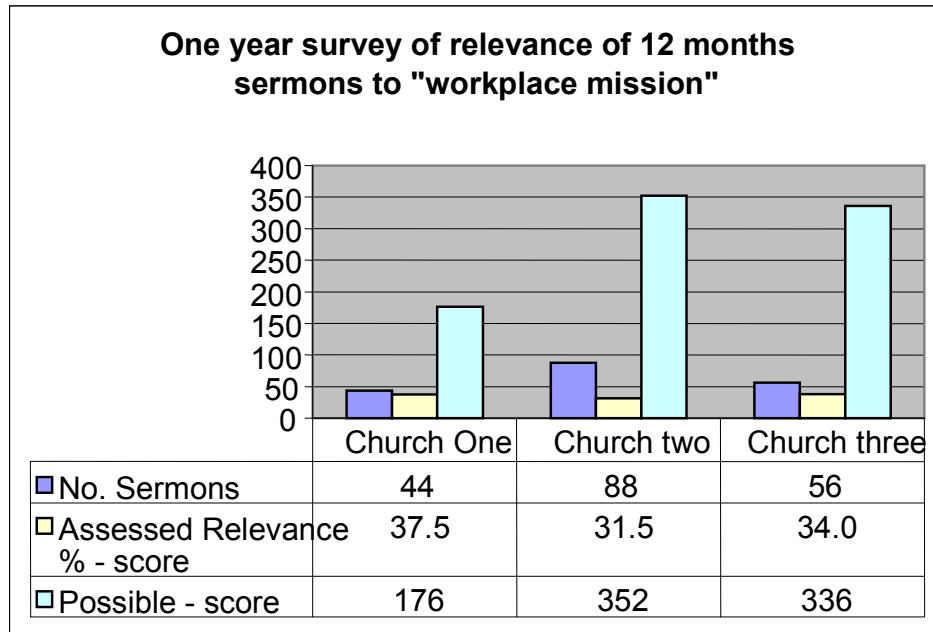
- 1--**equip** – (make people aware of the Biblical aspects of living as a Christian),
- 1--**support** (- actively encourage, share and support people in their trials, tribulations, and success – from a Christian viewpoint),
- 2--**mission** – going out, beyond yourself, in response to a calling – of God - evangelism), and
- 2--**workplace** – (the place where you spend lifetime activity for gain -&/or in support of family and society).

The best score which contained all elements would attract a 6 – the sum of each element with a double score for Missions and Workplace coverage – as this was the two specific aspects the review was seeking to establish information about.

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<sup>88</sup> Church one had a DVD for each sermon, I obtained the list of DVDs and I listened to 80% of the sermons. I personally knew the presenters and I was able to provide that analysis. Church two had a pod cast of the sermons. I listed the title and description of the pod casts, and I downloaded and listened to 10%, the church administrator provided me with the analysis of the presenters. Church three had available a list of sermons with a description and commentary of each on its web site

Here are the results of the review:-



**Commentary on relevance and content of sermons as reviewed**

From my sample analysis, above, the effectiveness ranking for equipping and supporting local members for their mission in the workplace (through sermons) was in the 31-38% range.

This result suggests ineffectiveness on the part of church sermons when one considers the fact that most of us spend almost 2 % of our waking time at church, and 40% of our waking time at work.

Church one had 44 sermons, two with a score of greater than 2 (three or more), and none with a score of greater than 3. This means that this church had no sermon on equipping and supporting its local members for their mission in the workplace. Further, no non-pastors presented material; there were 5 instances of female presentations.

Church two had 88 sermons for the same period. 14 sermons scored greater than 2, and 2 greater than 4 (that is a full score of 6). Six were presented by females, and 3 by non-pastoral peoples. Outside of the sample period, this church presented a series on work, work ethics, and scriptural aspects of work.

Church three had 56 sermons for the year. 10 sermons scored greater than 2 and none greater than 4. One was presented by a female, lay minister.

From the sermons surveyed, the church puts almost nothing into the world of work. This assertion is endorsed by R.Paul Stevens.<sup>89</sup> So where is the time and effort spent?

### Commentary on sermon category

A further and slightly different analysis of sermons from the churches reviewed around the equipping aspect of church teaching revealed significant differences in the composition, objectives, and direction of the church teaching within a twelve month period. I analyzed all of the sermons in the above sample into one of four groups

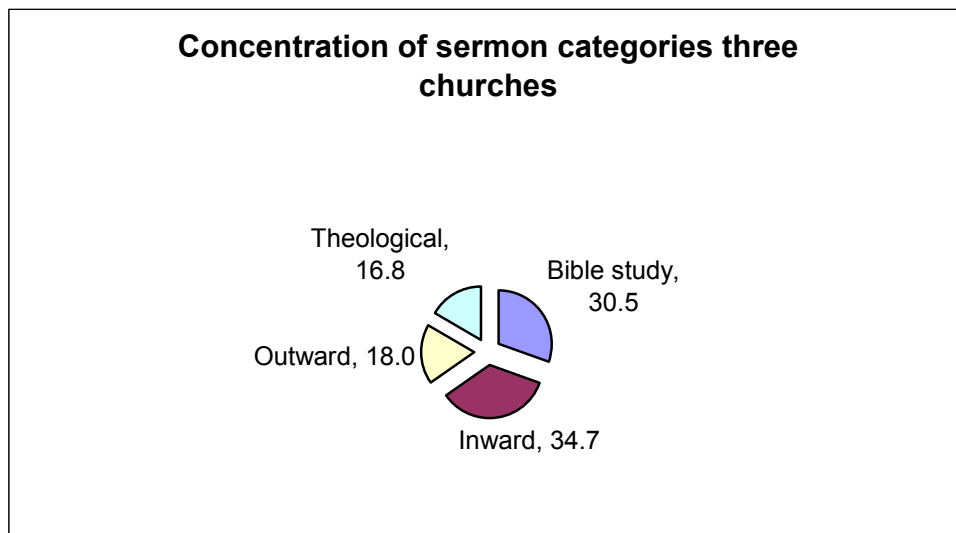
**Theology** – predominant message on the aspects of the Godhead and the missions and plans of God. History of the Church.

**Bible Study** – exegesis and explanations of Bible Passages – to elucidate the meaning in context

**Inward** – the review of Man as God’s creation, our history, behaviour, our sin, and how to deal with it.

**Outward** – our duty and responsibility towards others in the community and in the world – Missions.

The results were:-



The sermon content for the three churches over the twelve month period was predominantly equipping its members with Biblical teachings, elaborating on theological issues and looking inwards at member’s attitudes as Christians and their personal living (82%). Very little time and effort was spent on taking the Gospel message outwards, beyond the church boundaries.

<sup>89</sup> R.Paul Stevens – *The Other Six Days* – Eerdmans 2000 – p3

**What was of relevance of sermons for the missionaries in the work place –assessed by frequency?**

Finally, I analysed each sermon to try and find the extent of inclusion of an element of supporting and equipping workplace missions in terms of the topics and aspects of mission which I have developed in this essay.

The following table shows a dearth of relevant issues being shared through Sunday pulpits, from a viewpoint of equipping and supporting members for missionary activity. Only 28 (14.8%) of all sermons delivered (188 in all) in the twelve month period contained material which could be deemed to be directly relevant to workplace missionary work.

**The results of the analysis are contained in the table below:-**

<b>Topic – relevant to workplace ministry</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>	<b>Topic – relevant to workplace ministry</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
The meaning of work	0	Role and responsibility of lay people – to make disciples	2
God’s call to work	0	Features of success of Christian transformation in the workplace	0
Developing spiritual gifts -in and for the work force	6	Sermons talk on market-place friendly language about being salt and light at work	0
View of God Himself as worker	0	Bible characters are painted in all their humanity and daily living	5
Old testament view of God’s people at work	5	Illustrations and examples are from work-a-day world experience of the church (lay) members	0
Jesus Christ at work	0	Celebrate as community, members success at work	0
Paul on work	0	Principalities and powers – recognizing and dealing with them	2
Missio Dei – Missionary nature of God	0	Cross cultural communication	0
The Church as Mission	6	Cross denominational work	2
Make disciples – evangelise and disciple	0		

In the sample, there was no evidence of emphasis on clear and consistent Mission teachings as you would find within the context of discussions relating to *Mission dei*, the *Great Commission*, or the *Church as Mission*.

In the sample surveyed, not a lot of sermon time was spent on developing and maintaining relationships with saved or unsaved peoples. (Only two sermons directly related to issues around making of disciples).

One could question if the picture from this review is the direct result of the theological training and background experience of current preachers and pastors?

Further, as part of previous work for this course, I reviewed and analysed five years of articles in three prominent Mission publications. Of the 434 articles reviewed in total, only one article was published concerning missionary activity in the workplace.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Phil Lundman – *Reconciliation of Business vocations with Church Missions* –Article in *Transformation*  
Dec 2004

## 6. Conclusion

This review found that there was nothing contradictory or inconsistent in the hypothesis of Alistair Mackenzie in his paper dated 1998. The evidence collected within the environment and extent of the study undertaken clearly suggested that his conclusion still held true.

From the research and review which I undertook, I am able to strongly support his conclusion that:-

*“The evidence strongly suggests that the church in general seems uninterested in, unaware of or unsure of how to help the laity integrate their faith identities and teachings with their work-place occupations, problems and possibilities”.*<sup>91</sup>

Within my essay, I have demonstrated that the subject and participation of work is important to God. I have described some of the difficult issues faced by Church members in their workplaces. I have demonstrated from a sample of sermons that little is included in church material for the direct purpose of equipping its members for life in the work-place.

Alistair MacKenzie’s hypothesis, and the writings of others referenced within my essay, represents clear prophetic messages to the Church, today.

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<sup>91</sup> Alistair Mackenzie *Faith at Work –Vocation: the Theology of Work and the Pastoral implications* , MTheol Thesis, Otago University,1998

## 7 Appendix

### Ending on a positive note- Consider what a work-placed missional church looks like

This section provides a description of churches which undertake work-place missional activities for its members. It provides a series of guidelines which could be useful for those readers looking to embrace some or all of the activities. The series will also be used for analyzing and ranking activities of some churches studied during the research for this essay.

What all the examples of churches and ministries outlined below recognise in common is that God is at work in the world and the role of the church is to get people better connected with this work that God is doing in the world. All of the authors quoted within this section agree that God has got people mobilised in the world through their work - for a reason.

Where the authors quoted differ is in their understanding of that reason and the roles that Christians can play in the world through their work. Many authors are still discovering and defining the role that the church has to play in resourcing Christian people for this mission. Most have not yet articulated a well-developed theology of work and of mission related therewith.

Hendrik Kraemer<sup>92</sup> puts it this way:

*“If the laity of the church, dispersed in and through the world, are really what they are called to be, the real uninterrupted dialogue between Church and the world happens through them. They form the daily repeated projection of the Church into the world. They embody the meeting of the Church and the World.”*

### Some characteristics of a “Mission -oriented” local church<sup>93</sup>

- The daily life of those in the church is the mission, or the going out – it has an external focus.
- Sermons talk on market-place friendly language about being salt and light at work
- Bible characters are painted in all their humanity and daily living
- Illustrations and examples are from work-a-day world experience of the members
- Church structure is simplified to free leaders to fulfill their callings, and for members to use their gifts, within and outside of the church.
- Health is measured by the impact of the church’s footprint in the community
- The church initiates training, relationships, and development programs for members out in the marketplace
- Spiritual formation includes work-life issues of calling, serving, skill and character development and cultural awareness in the work-force
- Training and mobilization includes facilitating spiritual entrepreneurship, and being Christ-like in the work-force, including use of range of Holy Spirit Gifts.
- Training and support for best use of time including traveling to and from work.
- Celebrate as community success at work – testimonies abound and are enjoyed by all – to the Glory of God
- Stand strongly against unemployment.
- Share resources amongst the church community – so that no-one is in need.

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<sup>92</sup> Henrik Kraemer, *A theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958)

<sup>93</sup> John C Maxwell, Stephen R Graves, and Thomas G Addington; *Life@work Marketplace success for People of Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee –Nelson Business 2005) –p235

- Knows the members, meets their needs, supports them as necessary, and equips them – in an ever-changing environment.

#### **Some examples of activities within a ‘Mission-oriented’ local church<sup>94</sup>**

- Church members are coming to Sunday worship dressed in their workday clothes and bringing some objects from their workplaces with them to put on display.
- Digital photos of members in their work settings are being screened during a time of meditation and prayer, while a song about the value and meaning of work is played.
- One large church has 200 work-place groups that meet weekly, in addition to its mid-week home groups; a person is contracted to prepare studies specifically for these workplace groups.
- A pastor is being paid by his congregation to spend one day per month working alongside some of his parishioners in their workplaces.<sup>95</sup>
- Church in Auckland – prays for people to find employment, when they have a job, church again prays for them and commissions them into their new job as “Christ-centred Checkout operators”.<sup>96</sup>

#### **Changes noticeable from implementation of workplace` ministries<sup>97</sup>**

- These churches are starting with a vision of God at work outside the walls of their church buildings and the other places where Christians gather.
- These churches understand that most of the time the people of God are strategically placed in the world to work as the salt of the earth there.
- Church attendance and growth is no longer relevant; gathering is about resourcing Christians to go – and need equipping and support.
- They have redefined their priorities and are reallocating their resources to support ministry in daily life.
- They realize that this is where faith is needed and lived out, in front of the people of the world every day. Where the future of the church is being decided.

#### **Five factors of good workplace pastoral ministry<sup>98</sup>**

1. A ministry of presence and listening in the work sphere, by visiting people in their workplace.
2. A ministry of preaching and prayer that intentionally and constructively addresses faith and work issues
3. A ministry and teaching designed to address faith and work issues, also using the experience and expertise of other church members for input
4. A ministry personal integration that ensures that church members are trained to utilize personal prayer and devotional study in their daily lives
5. A ministry of gatherings of business people perhaps in partnership with other marketplace ministries

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<sup>94</sup> Alister Mackenzie – *Faith at work: Vocation, the Theology of Work and the Pastoral Implications* – MTheol Thesis, Otago University, 1998

<sup>95</sup> Marc Gunther – “God and Business: the surprising quest for Spiritual Renewal in the American Workplace” *Fortune* July 9, 2001, p61

<sup>96</sup> Pacific Gospel Mission, Ponsonby, Auckland – by permission of the Pastor

<sup>97</sup> Alister Mackenzie – *Faith at work: Vocation, the Theology of Work and the Pastoral Implications* – MTheol Thesis, Otago University, 1998.

<sup>98</sup> David Millar-*God at Work* –Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007

### **And finally -Some good news!!**

Reported results in terms of outcomes in the areas of social transformation, observed in a range of different American cities, included; reduction in crime, access to affordable housing, removal of alternative power sources (Psychics), closing of brothels and gay bars, drug busts, reduction in unemployment. Why can't cities be born again?<sup>99</sup>

Business Edge<sup>100</sup> were privileged to go to Argentina in late 2003, at the invitation of Ed Silviso to observe how “marketplace Christians” had changed cities from places of corruption and greed to places of “God’s glory” where they have influence with city leaders because of their demonstration of God’s love in the marketplace. How encouraging!!!!

### **NZ Church work-force example - Christians at work – Business edge -a Hamilton based New Zealand alternative<sup>101</sup>**

The group is different... by being a “paid” ministry, with a “Business Pastor” at the head, Business Edge has developed its own niche areas of influence and the organisation spans many congregations.

The vision of Business Edge is to be the business group of choice in our city and nation, unlocking all your potential for good and for God. We aim to achieve this by linking together Christian business people from many congregations in supportive relationships, and encouraging them in their daily walk with God.

Business Edge Pastors are individually experienced in running successful businesses, and have a keen understanding of the unique challenges and lifestyle demands that business people frequently face.

Business Edge actively supports members in a number of ways, including:

- Pastoral care for you and your business
- Structured monthly prayer support
- Fortnightly fellowship groups
- Business Edge After 5 events hosted by members’ businesses
- Professional development seminars and resources
- Inspirational seminars and resources
- Social events

Business Edge is a membership funded ministry and is open to all business men and women who seek to serve God in the marketplace.

Business Edge includes, cell groups, motivational events, business speakers, educational seminars, resources like books, tapes, CD’s, merchandise, weekly Pastoral contact, direct prayer within the business, email prayer requests and praise points daily etc.

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<sup>99</sup> Luke 19:10 “ *For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost*” – includes all of creation, not just souls

<sup>100</sup> Business Edge – <http://www.businessedge.org.nz> – accessed 10 May 2008

<sup>101</sup> Business Edge – <http://www.businessedge.org.nz> – accessed 10 May 2008

Business Edge pastors are privileged to be able to visit and pray with business leaders daily at their place of work, and encourage them to excel in their “marketplace” for God, their area of ministry outside the Church walls.

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