INTRODUCTION

A World in Need

The world holds fresh opportunities and challenges for the global Church. In regions where Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are dominant and where 90% of the world’s unreached peoples live, you also find 80% of the world's poorest populations. Unemployment in these countries ranges from 30% to 80% and it is even higher among Christian minorities. Furthermore many Christians and others in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin American are living in poverty because of lack of jobs and unjust economic systems.

Over the next 20 years, more than 2 billion people will enter societies where there are few churches and very few jobs.

What should be the response of the Church and particularly Christian business people to such challenges?

What the poor want is not aid, but jobs – real jobs, not subsidised ones. This is the dignity and self-reliance they deserve.

Business as mission – a Renewed Call

There is a wave of thousands of Christian business people from all continents who are experiencing a dynamic move of God as part of a renewed call to His kingdom work. God is on the move in Latin America, Asia, Europe, North America, Africa and the Pacific regions, calling His global church to rediscover His heart and intention for business.

God established the institution and practice of business as a means of fulfilling His creation mandate to steward and care for all of creation. He is releasing the power of business to aid in the task of fulfilling the great commission making disciples of all nations. God longs to be glorified through our business activities.

Business people are being challenged to look anew at their business activities as an expression of their calling and service to God. They are being affirmed in their vocation as business people and used as instruments for extending God’s kingdom. God has led a growing number of business people to think strategically about how they can integrate their skills and experience in business with the task of world mission. God is calling many more business people, from all nations to go to all nations, in this new paradigm of mission.

“God has gifted some with the resources of mind and spirit to be businessmen and women. Business as mission seeks to support and encourage those who are gifted by God in this way. It aims to stimulate interest in, and commitment to, doing business as unto the Lord. Its desire is to assist business people to see the opportunities that exist, to use their skills and talents to bless those in the poorest and most needy parts of the world, and to provide in those contexts credible opportunities to demonstrate and proclaim Christ.”

Harry Goodhew, Retired Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Australia

One term being used for this new mission movement is ‘business as mission’. Business in and of itself is the ministry and instrument of mission. It is about releasing the entrepreneurs and business professionals within the church in order to transform the world through their business activities.
The implication of ‘the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world’ includes affirming and mobilising the business people in the Body of Christ. It means releasing them to use their gifting in business to lift the oppression of the poor through business, to transform their own communities and nations through business, and to carry the good news to the ‘ends of the earth’ through business.

**Breaking New Ground**

Kingdom focused business has been called a strategy of choice for the 21st century mission. In many countries where the name of Christ is least often heard or understood, Christians are better welcomed as business people, not “missionaries”. Business is about relationships in the context of everyday life and provides numerous ways to bless individuals, communities and nations.

This blessing is already a growing reality in places like Asia and can be illustrated by these two examples:

1) A Christian in Central Asia tried to witness to his people, a Muslim community with very few believers. But he was seen as a “professional Christian”, not real to them and probably paid by Westerners to proselytise. He experienced open hostility and alienation. Later he started a small cattle business. His lifestyle became understandable and natural to them. Even though they knew he was still a follower of Isa/Jesus, he was now acceptable. He was one of them, perceived as dealing with real life issues and meeting real needs. He has since been invited to sit on the council of elders for his community.

2) An IT-company exists in India among a major unreached people with the intention to make Christ known among these people. Through the many natural opportunities that business provides, the founder can share his faith in word and deed. The company’s strategic plan reads: “Our purpose is to serve:

1. Our **Customers** with creative, innovative, reliable, top-quality solutions;
2. Our **Employees** with meaningful and challenging work, stability, good salaries, development and a pleasant work-environment;
3. Our other **Stakeholders** by providing attractive returns on their investments;
4. The **Country** by creating knowledge and wealth and contributing to local concerns;
5. **Society** by showing that success and high moral standards can co-exist; and
6. **Ultimately God** by being faithful and good stewards.”

After centuries of Christian work among unemployed Muslims & among poor Buddhists and Hindus, we have seen only limited progress. The Church should recognise the need for renewed thinking and application of being and doing church and missions; as more of the same thing will not result in a better harvest.

Breaking new ground in the task of global evangelisation requires new methods and strategies. There is a growing need to provide models for mission that are financially sustainable and will strengthen local churches and national missionary movements. Business as mission is one response. It is crucial that Christian business people are equipped and supported to take up their key role in transforming their own nation and beyond.

At a meeting of Christian leaders from Eastern European countries, leader after leader from different denominations echoed, “Do not send us money, it only creates division, send us business people who can create jobs for us, that we can build ourselves up. A leader from Croatia went so far to say, "Sending us
missionaries is good, but we'd prefer that you send us godly businessmen, who can teach us and help us to start businesses and create jobs in a Christ-like way."

A Christian businesswoman from Central Asia said: "There are many seminars and teachings on how to start a business. There are business schools with local and foreign teachers. But there are few resources to get practical help in starting a real business not just hearing about how to start a business."

Our desire is to acknowledge the ways that business can and does glorify God. Business can be used for good and to help grow His kingdom. There are unique and wonderful opportunities that God is calling us to through business, businesses that help restore human dignity and hope as well as provide a context for sharing the gospel of the Kingdom. We dream of seeing the Church, as the whole Body of Christ, taking the whole Gospel to the whole world. Our prayer is that God's kingdom would come in all spheres of society within every nation. Our goal is to see people and communities transformed by the power of the gospel. Business as mission is about affirming, mobilising, equipping and deploying business people to this end.

The business of ‘Business as mission’ is to reveal Christ through business. When this is done effectively, the outcome is transformational.

To the greater Glory of God!

† Extract from an unpublished newsletter by Patrick Lai.
Part I: Setting the Scene

1. WHAT IS BUSINESS AS MISSION?
   Clarifying Terms

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to briefly clarify a few key terms and expressions. The descriptions used here are simply to aid us to communicate clearly and consistently. It is not our aim to create a ‘Business as mission orthodoxy’ or terminology, or to exclude groups or initiatives that prefer other terms and definitions. Other expressions commonly used in the movement include ‘transformational business’, ‘great commission companies’ and ‘kingdom business’. The authors recognise that in some contexts ‘Business as mission’ is not the most helpful or preferred term. The expression ‘Business as mission’ itself can be considered a fairly broad term that encompasses various areas where business and missions connect.

Our terms here are further limited both culturally and linguistically, since this paper was prepared in English. We expect alternative expressions to be developed which communicate meaningfully in other languages, and other religious, political and cultural settings. The parameters outlined in this document should be considered as a ‘dotted line’ that allows for future change and for anomalies which will force us to reconsider and revise according to the situation and its specific needs.

Business as mission is based on the principle of...HOLISTIC MISSION

Holistic mission attempts to bring all aspects of life and godliness into an organic biblical whole. This includes God's concerns for such business related issues as economic development, employment and unemployment, economic justice and the use and distribution of natural and creative resources among the human family. These are aspects of God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ and the Church.

Evangelism and social concerns are often still addressed as though they were separate and unrelated from each other. This assumes a divide between what we consider ‘sacred’ or ‘spiritual’ and what we consider ‘secular’ or ‘physical’. The biblical worldview rather is one that promotes an integrated and seamless holistic view of life. Ministry should not be compartmentalised or fragmented into the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘physical’. Business as mission is an expression of this truly holistic paradigm.

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Business is a mission, a calling, a ministry in its own right. Human activity reflects our divine origin, having been created to be creative, to create good things by good processes, for us to enjoy – with others.

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Business as mission has a Kingdom of God perspective...KINGDOM BUSINESS

Kingdom businesses start from the theological premise that all Christians have a calling to love and serve God with all of their heart, soul, strength and mind, as well as to love and serve their neighbours. God calls people to work for His kingdom in business just as certainly as He calls people to work in other kinds of ministry or mission ventures.

In this paper, we will often use the term ‘kingdom business’ rather than ‘Business as mission-business’. We recognise the importance of extending God’s kingdom through business in any context. However, we want to highlight the biblical mandate to serve the poor and oppressed, in particular in those areas where the gospel has yet to be received. This will lead us to a focus on cross-cultural activity and should draw our attention to areas of endemic poverty and/or unevangelised communities. We acknowledge that this does not automatically suppose the crossing
of international boarders and will be necessary within culturally ‘near’ communities as well.

A function of Business as mission is to act as a catalyst, to inspire and encourage people to get into business and to stay in business, especially in the developing world.

**Business as mission is different from but related to...WORKPLACE MINISTRIES**

Workplace Ministries are primarily focused on taking the gospel to people where they work, preferably through the witness of co-workers and professional colleagues. These ministries encourage the integration of biblical principles into every aspect of business practice, to the glory of God. Business as mission naturally includes these elements of workplace ministry.

When a workplace ministry is initiated in a business owned by believers to intentionally advance the kingdom of God, there will be substantial overlap. Workplace ministry can choose to limit its focus solely "within" the business context itself. Business as mission is focused both "within" and "through" the business. It seeks to harness the power and resource of business for intentional mission impact in the community or nation at large. Workplace ministry may occur in any setting. However, Business as mission is intentional about the "to all peoples" mandate, and seeks out areas with the greatest spiritual and physical needs.

**Business as mission is different from but related to...TENTMAKING**

"Tentmaking" refers principally to the practice of Christian professionals, who support themselves financially by working as employees or by engaging in business. In this way they are able to conduct their ministries without depending upon donors and without burdening the people they serve. Tentmaking infers the integration of work and witness, with an emphasis on encouraging evangelism by lay Christians rather than clergy and ministry professionals.

Where tentmakers are part of business ventures that facilitate their mission goals, there is substantial overlap with Business as mission. However, although a tentmaker might be a part of a business, the business itself might not be an integral part of the ministry as it is with Business as mission. Business as mission sees business both as the medium and the message. Business as mission most often involves ‘job-making’ as an integral part of its mission. Tentmaking may involve this, but is more often simply about ‘job-taking’ – taking up employment somewhere in order to facilitate ministry.

**Business as mission is different from...BUSINESS FOR MISSIONS**

Profits from business can be donated to support missions and ministries. This is different from Business as mission. One might call this business for missions, using business ventures to fund other kinds of ministry. We recognise that profit from a business can be used to support “missions” and that this is good and valid. Likewise employees can use some of their salary to give to charitable causes. While this should be encouraged, none of us would like to be operated on by a surgeon whose only ambition is to make money to give to the church! Instead we expect he has the right skills and drive to operate with excellence, doing his job with full professional integrity. Likewise a Business as mission-business must produce more than goods and services in order to generate new wealth. It seeks to fulfil God’s kingdom purposes and values through every aspect of its operations. A 'business for mission' concept can limit business and business people to a role of funding the ‘real ministry’. While funding is an important function, Business as mission is about for-profit businesses that have a kingdom focus.

**Business as mission does not condone...NON-BUSINESSES AND NON-MISSIONS**
Two approaches to business that do not come within the scope of ‘Business as mission’ by any definition are: (1) Fake businesses that are not actually functioning businesses, but exist solely to provide visas for missionaries to enter countries otherwise closed to them. (2) Businesses that purport to have Christian motivations but which operate only for private economic advantage and not for the kingdom of God. Neither do we mean businesses run by Christians with no clear and defined kingdom strategy in place.

**Business as mission pursues...PROFIT**

Business must be financially sustainable, producing goods or services that people are willing to pay for. Sustainability implies that the activity is profitable. Profits are an essential element of all businesses, in all cultures. Without profit the business cannot survive and fulfil its purpose. Accordingly, Business as mission - businesses are real business that genuinely exist to generate wealth and profits. Business as mission does not view profits as inherently evil, bad or unbiblical. Quite the contrary, profits are good, desired and beneficial to God and His purposes, as long as they are not oppressive, or derived from gouging customers or selling products and service that do no honour Christ and His gospel.

Temporary subsidies may be utilised to establish a Business as mission initiative. Permanent subsidies or financial support without expectation of ultimate profitability are closer to charitable or donor-based ministries than Business as mission based ministries.

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The business of business is business. And the business of Business as mission is business with a kingdom of God purpose and perspective.

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**Business as mission comes in all...SHAPES AND SIZES**

The methodologies, as well as the business and ministry strategies used, will be creatively diverse, just as God created us in infinite variety. Does the size of the business matter? Yes and No! Christian micro-enterprise programmes exist that help provide necessary income for families and individuals resulting in community development, churches being planted and discipleship taking place. In short, Christian micro-enterprise development has been well accepted and is highly effective for the kingdom. A significant body of work already exists dedicated to it. It has a legitimate place in the broader definition and practice of Business as mission.

However, our focus will be on larger scale business, where there has been a comparative lack of attention. If we are to tackle the enormity of the challenge before us we need to think and act bigger, beyond micro to small, medium and large size businesses.

**Business as mission is not about...JOBS AND MONEY – PER SE**

The Russian Mafia also creates jobs and gives people a chance to earn money. Creating jobs and earning money is not an end in itself. Work and business are ordained by God. Work is a human and divine activity providing a means to support our families and to contribute to the positive development of our communities and countries. However, Business as mission is not a Christianised job creation scheme. The goal is not simply about making people materially better off. Business as mission is actively praying and incarnating Jesus’ prayer: “May your kingdom come, may your will be done” even in the marketplace.

The real bottom line of Business as mission is “ad maiorem Dei gloriam”, for the greater glory of God.