

Press Release 26 September 2003

"Pray for stockbrokers and accountants," churches urged

Accountants, stockbrokers and bankers are not getting their fair share of church prayers according to a new campaign launched by the Industrial Christian Fellowship (ICF).

The ICF, a historic Christian think tank, today urged congregations to broaden their Sunday service prayer slots by including prayers for people in the financial service and manufacturing sectors.

The call came after a report found churches focus almost entirely on the clergy and the "caring" professions - teachers, nurses, social workers - when they pray for workers in their intercessions.

ICF Executive member John Raymond, said: "There is a feeling that these professions are too worldly - almost not good enough - for prayers. There is a feeling that you can not mix God and Mammon.

"But I think that is exactly the opposite of how Jesus would see it.

"We need an increased awareness and acceptance by clergy and laity that work is part of God's creation and Christians need to be supported and equipped to live out their faith in their lives. Once you include accounting or fund-managing in intercessions, it underlines the fact that these careers are all part of God's world.

"Also, if people in these jobs do not hear these prayers, how are they going to make a connection and apply their faith to their work? People can express their faith at work in a number of ways from the simple way of how they behave to basing strategic business initiatives on Christian values of truth, integrity and stewardship."

He cited the growing popularity of Fair Trade coffee and the Jubilee 2000 campaign on Third World debt as examples of faith and finance mixing to good effect.

The ICF has already prepared a number of work-related prayers, designed for use across the denominations. It plans to distribute them online, through its website www.icf-online.org, under the overall heading: "When did you last prayer for your stockbroker?"

The prayers will be released online in the build up to the ICF's annual meeting in November.

Next year the ICF will continue its campaign by encouraging congregations to get back into the habit of celebrating Industrial Sunday - alongside more traditional events like Harvest Festival.

In the survey of 200 lay people, none felt that the church was adequately supporting or

equipping them to live out their faith in the office or on the factory floor.

SAMPLE PRAYER

Father God, we ask your blessing on our economic world: Bless those in governments and banks, especially in poorer countries. Give them an understanding of economic forces and the mechanics of wealth creation; that they may produce laws and regulations which give freedom for people to create wealth.

Bless entrepreneurs, those in business, investors and those responsible for pension funds, that they may play a part, Lord, in creating and using processes and structures which release and channel people's creativity, in ways which enhance human dignity, serve the common good and benefit in particular the poor, vulnerable and marginalized.

To your glory, Lord. Amen

[More will be released through www.icf-online.org over the next few weeks.]

NOTE TO EDITORS

The ICF was founded in 1877. It is a cross-church Christian think-tank focused on finding ways to deepen understanding of God's purpose in the world of work. Membership is open to any Christian, lay or ordained, who is interested in faith and work.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, agreed to become President of the Industrial Christian Fellowship earlier this year. Other ICF council members include: the Rt Hon The Lord Weatherill (Chairman); Frank Field MP; Rt Rev Nick Baines, Bishop of Croydon; Dr Andrew Bradstock, Secretary to the URC Church and Society Committee; Canon Geoff Smith, Director of Toc H and Rt Revd Martin Wharton, Bishop of Newcastle.

The ICF's most famous member to date was Woodbine Willy (The Rev Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy), an Army Chaplain who earned his nickname by handing out Woodbine cigarettes to soldiers in the trenches of World War 1.