



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Justice and International Mission Unit

BECOME A FAIR TRADE CHURCH OR FAITH COMMUNITY

This sheet is to help you consider if your church or faith community might be willing to commit to being a fair-trade church or faith community.



Rev Jameson Mabviko (left) is a member of Kasinthula Cane Growers (KCG) in Malawi, a democratic smallholders' organisation whose members are now benefitting from Fairtrade terms.

"I want many things for my life. I want to finish building my house - I want a good house. I want seats to sit on. I want to make a good future for my family. My son Onesema wants to learn how to drive so he can get a job, but this costs too much. My daughter Hannah wants to learn how to use a computer."

PEOPLE AND TRADE IN SCRIPTURE

The prophetic tradition demonstrates a continual attack on the disregard of the legitimate claims of the poor. Amos attacked taxes and suffocating tithes as well as fraudulent trade¹. Micah spoke out about the seizure of land². Ezekiel and Zechariah spoke of the perverting of justice³. The prophet Jeremiah was unmistakable in his outrage against the abuse of workers: 'Woe to him who builds his home by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbour serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages'⁴.

In the New Testament, trade is regarded as a matter of course as much as in the Old Testament. The New Testament's appeal to change our ways means turning towards God and to the justice of God's kingdom. It is in this *spiritual* perspective – in the sense of a perspective that oriented towards God and thus towards fellow human beings in a new manner – that Jesus' casting out of the money-changers from the Temple, which is reported in all four gospels⁵, may well have to be seen. In this manner, Jesus directs trade back to its justified but also limited position on the way towards liberation and salvation.

Once the view of God and God's kingdom of justice are no longer obstructed by the merchants' tables, trade can again be an instrument in the service of justice. The *prophetic* call for fair trade is renewed in the Epistle of James: "Listen! The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out. [...] You have condemned and murdered the righteous one⁶". Then again, trade is always seen in the *eschatological* perspective – i.e. the perspective that takes into account the final things – of the coming Kingdom of God. The parable of the money placed in trust until the return of the king makes this appeal⁷: "Do business with these until I come back."

The natural activities of this world are supposed to be continued, yet not in one's self-interest but in the service of God. This eschatological perspective casts doubt on putting one's trust in possessions (which are the result of trade) and so makes relative the importance of trade for a life full of meaning and hope. Thus the Epistle of James warns: "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money." Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring⁸." In the *individualised* view of the virtues catalogued in the New Testament, the

¹ Amos 4:5, 5:11-12, 8:4-5

² Micah 2:1-2

³ Ezek. 16:49, 18: 12-13, Zech. 7: 10

⁴ Jer. 22:13-16

⁵ Matt. 21.12 par

⁶ James 5.4-6

⁷ Luke 19.11-27

⁸ James 4, 13f

"sanctification of life" does not only extend to relations with the family, with husband or wife, but also to professional ethics, for instance "that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister"⁹. In Revelations, there is a drastic description of the merchants' despair and the futility of the magnificent trade ships as a result of the decline of Babylon¹⁰.

FAIRTRADE LABELLING

The FAIRTRADE label on products guarantees that producers in developing countries get a better deal. These producers get a minimum price that covers the cost of sustainable production and an extra premium that is invested in social and economic development projects. For a product to display the FAIRTRADE label it must meet international fair-trade standards and be subject to regular inspections. The Fairtrade system benefits approximately one million workers and farmers in 58 developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The Fairtrade labelling system began in The Netherlands in 1989, and currently operates in 20 countries. It was introduced in Australia and New Zealand in 2003.

Globally in 2005 Fairtrade products amounted to approximately \$1.8 billion worldwide and in Australia \$5.4 million Fairtrade products were sold in the 2005-2006 financial year, an increase of 157% over the previous financial year.

BECOMING A 'FAIRTRADE' CONGREGATION

Australian churches have been slow to support the fair trade movement in comparison to their counterparts in the UK, where over 4,000 churches have pledged to be FAIRTRADE Churches. Fair Trade Faith Groups in Australia and New Zealand have two simple goals:

1. Use Fairtrade certified products within your church
2. Promote fair trade within your church (this has a flow on effect for the broader community).

If your congregation would like to know what FAIRTRADE products are available in your area, or become a fair trade church, contact the Justice and International Mission Unit on (03) 9251 5286 or e-mail: antony.mcmullen@victas.uca.org.au

PRAYER: (from *For FAIRTRADE Fortnight* <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk>)

Tilt the scales, O God of the mustard seed: That the poor shall see justice. Share the feast, O God of Eden's abundant garden: That each crop may fetch a fair price. Upset the tables, O God of the upside-down Kingdom: That the least can benefit from their trade.	Open our eyes, O God of life in all its fullness: That we may learn to walk the way of your son tilting, sharing, upsetting this world Not satisfied until the products we bring to our table Give a better deal, to all who hunger for one. In His name, Amen.
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WORSHIP RESOURCES! (UK sites)

- FAIRTRADE UK - http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved_ideas_for_churches.htm
- Dramatise - incorporate the theme of FAIRTRADE in a church service by asking volunteers to act out a play. Go to <http://www.fairplaydrama.co.uk> or <http://www.fairtradewales.com> for script ideas.
- Also check out CAFOD <http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/worship/trade>

More Resources:

- **Present!** PowerPoint presentation by Kristen Hobby on Fairtrade: http://www.ncca.org.au/_data/page/2933/Fairtrade_20aug_KH.ppt (from previous Fair Trade week)
- **Theology!** *Fair Trade, Some theological perspectives*, Denham Grierson (commissioned by us) and *When Trade Serves God's Justice... Biblical and ethical flashlights and suggestions*, Prof. Dr. Christoph Stückelberger, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance – for electronic copies email antony.mcmullen@victas.uca.org.au (these papers inform the section here on Scripture)
- **See the flip-side!** Get your youth group involved in FAIRTRADE by asking them to visit <http://www.seetheflipside.co.uk> (UK site)

'Before you've finished your breakfast this morning you'll have relied on half the world', Rev Dr Martin Luther King

⁹ I. Thess. 4, 6
¹⁰ Rev. 18, 9-19