

An Opportunity for the Church

I recently communicated with a PhD student regarding his research into Fairtrade and the Church, enquiring if from his research he had any tips on how parishes could help with Fairtrade, and was surprised by his reply that rather than parishes helping Fairtrade he sees Fairtrade as an opportunity for the Church!

So, this Fairtrade Fortnight (26th Feb – 11th March) the Justice peace and social responsibility team thought it might be time to look again at something familiar in a new way. How can supporting Fairtrade help us in our mission is to bring people to Jesus through his Church?

To encourage new people in to the Church, to evangelise them, we need people to see what it means to be part of the Church both for their personal benefit (salvation) but also for the transformation of all. As a church we have a particular vocation to care for the poor and the earth, to work towards the kingdom. Following the example of St Francis then action before words. We are the witnesses of Christ in our communities so the choices we make are seen both by those within and outside of the church as signs of what it means to be a Christian.

So what can the simple act of serving Fairtrade tea and coffee in our parishes witness too:

We believe in the dignity of every person: The vision of the Fairtrade to help through trade not charity-offering independence and dignity; in working and trading across the world through Fairtrade more farmers and workers receive fair payment for the work they've do.

We believe in solidarity: Fairtrade works with many of the world's very poorest farmers encouraging them to work collaboratively in cooperatives, encouraging participation of women and men equally- in our buying choices we with stand with them.

We believe in working for The Common Good: It is to the benefit of everyone that farmers make a decent living and support their families for it builds stable communities, we all benefit from the goods produced and farming is maintained as a viable way of life.

We believe in the preferential option for the poor that is putting needs of the poor first, the majority of farmers in the world are very poor subsistence farmers, the help with training to improved quality and production which is as part of the Fairtrade commitment gives these people the possibility to feed themselves and educate their children.

We believe we need to work towards Peace: Dignity of work helps build communities supporting peace and has a role in supporting vulnerable people from exploitation particularly in the modern slave trade. Children are supported to go to school

We believe we need to care for Creation: All Fairtrade products are required to employ sustainable methods of farming and mining and training is offered to improve diversity and adapt with climate change where possible.

We believe in the dignity of work and participation: Obviously in committing to buy goods from farmers offers then dignity of work but also Fairtrade offers the added bonus of the premium, a financial commitment made to Fairtrade communities, farmers decide for themselves how to spend this money for the benefit of whole community.

Suddenly its not just coffee it “an opportunity” to share messages from the heart of the Gospel

So, we would like to encourage every parish to become a Fairtrade Church – serving Fairtrade tea and coffee at functions – it might cost a little more you might need a few tries at finding a tea or coffee customers like but it’s important.

Maybe look at even more opportunities for other products too there are over 5000 available. Think about miners, there is now Fairtrade certified gold – a great gesture for a wedding ring. Take opportunities to invite people into your Church for a Fairtrade events coffee morning, supper or even wine tasting.

Remember to pray for farmers and fairness in world trade in your worship

We can all do this, more information from Fairtrade Foundation, CAFOD or contact JPSR team jpsr@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk