

'Be the Change' - Celebrating 30 years of Fair Trade

Opening Music: "Eternal Love" Andean Flutes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWVXH2dMZpg>

Welcome Good morning & welcome, whether you are here in person, joining us on Zoom or watching the online recording. You are welcome, whether a regular attender, and especially so if you are a newcomer. Whatever you bring in your heart: whether you come in sadness, joy or out of curiosity, whatever your faith or none, you are welcome! Today's Service marks Fairtrade Fortnight which began last Monday and runs until 22nd September. 2024 sees the 30th Anniversary of FairTrade, and this year's theme is '**Be the Change**'. The Fairtrade Foundation encourages us to help our neighbours, many of them women, around the world by buying their Fair Trade goods. This simple act makes a huge difference to the lives of farmers and workers in the developing world, who grow and make FT products, to give them a fairer deal. Some personal experiences of FT growers will be included in our Service today. Our opening music was from South America, where Fair Trade Coffee and Bananas are grown. Before we start, please turn to your neighbour, and introduce yourself, and Zoomers, I'm sorry you have to be muted, but I think you already greeted each other before the service started.

Opening words:

A few words from Leviticus 19:13 and 25:14,17 New International Version - UK

"Do not defraud or rob your neighbour...."Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight...."If you sell land to any of your own people or buy land from them, do not take advantage of each other. ... but fear your God."

Chalice Lighting: We begin as is our custom, by lighting our Chalice as a symbol of our free religious faith. Those who are with us on Zoom may like to light a candle now:

"We light this candle to remind ourselves of the light of conscience that exists in every man and woman, leaving us without excuse for ignoring the plight of those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

May our worship enlighten us about humanity's needs, and may we become inspired To Be the Change, to give light to the dark corners of our world. *Amen*"

As mentioned a few minutes ago, tomorrow is the start of this year's Fairtrade Fortnight. Why are we talking about Fairtrade in church? This will become clear when we hear about some Fairtrade growers, and the challenges they face, and discover our role in enabling them to deal with these and to have a better life.

1st Hymn: Purple Book. 128 "Our World is one world"

Our world is one world:
what touches one affects us all –
the seas that wash us round about,
the clouds that cover us,
the rains that fall.

Our world is one world:
the thoughts we think affect us all –
the way we build our attitudes,
with love or hate, we make
a bridge or wall.

Our world is one world:
its ways of wealth affect us all –
the way we spend, the way we share,
who are the rich or poor,
who stand or fall?

Our world is one world,
just like a ship that bears us all –
where fear and greed make many holes,
but where our hearts can hear
a different call.

Prayers: Let us turn to a time of Prayer and reflection.

Our first prayer is one, slightly adapted, by retired Unitarian Minister, Cliff Reed:

1stPrayer: Let us hold in our thoughts and prayers, all in our church community, all our families and friends, and our neighbours known or unknown to us, in the wider community, especially those in need of solace.

For the sick, may there be healing and strength.

For the distressed may there be peace and tranquility of spirit.

For the embittered may there be reconciliation and a new beginning.

For the despairing, may there be faith and rekindled joy

For the fearful, may there be courage and unquenchable hope

For the poor and oppressed, may there be better times ahead

With trembling hands we reach out to all our neighbours, those near by or afar,
who are suffering in any way.

May love and life flow out through us to restore, to relieve and to re-create ...AMEN

2nd Prayer, adapted from one by Anna Jane Evans, from FairTrade Website

Creator Spirit,

We pray for farmers and producers across the world who are living with the ravages and fear of deforestation and climate change, which threaten their livelihoods and income.

We pray for families and children who see their crops fail because of storms, floods and drought, who live from day to day not knowing how their next meal will come.

We pray for world leaders and scientists. We pray that they will respond to these emergencies with the speed and commitment to enable countries to deal with Climate Change sustainably, cleanly and fairly.

We pray for organisations working in poor communities to find and promote new ways of farming to protect the environment and to enable the sustainable development of community life.

We pray for ourselves – that our commitment to justice may bear fruit in our lives, in the choices we make and in the priorities we set ourselves.

We pray for the Fairtrade movement – for all who campaign and spread the message. May our love to each other and to your creation deepen our commitment and determination, so that our voices will be heard more loudly. May the impact of our campaigning increase: May we be the change needed to make a difference for the better... Amen.

Story: Foncho's story

Fairtrade banana farmer, Albeiro Alfonso Cantillo, or 'Foncho', as his friends know him, grows bananas in Coobafrio co-operative, Magdalena, Colombia. Magdalena in northern Colombia is famous for its bananas. It is also an area affected by many years of struggle with armed conflict. The COVID-19 pandemic also put pressure on farmers as their bananas devalued in price.

Foncho farms land that was passed from generation to generation, from father to son. He's been learning his trade since he was a child. But now they are facing a new challenge: the climate.

Foncho says 'This farm means everything to us, especially for me and my family.' But the climate has definitely changed, today we can't predict the climate as we used to before, like our elders did.'

Foncho, however, believes that, today with Fairtrade, farmers have 'the tools to fight the effects of climate change'. He's currently part of a programme that he says 'has brought great benefits to our farms' and sustained them during the pandemic. It helps them to manage the dreaded Tropical Race 4 and black rust diseases, reduce their carbon and water footprint and improve their fruit by using bio-fertilisers.

They have reduced the use of chemicals, including herbicides and insecticides. This was vital during the pandemic when they couldn't have bought them anyway. They've saved money, reduced water use and improved soil health.

Foncho says: 'Every peso this programme benefits me with has an impact in my family. Today, more than the financial part, the main benefit is to recuperate our soil.'

Support on environmental sustainability is not all the Fairtrade system has brought to Foncho and his community.

Using the extra Fairtrade Premium, people have been able to improve their standard of living, from fixing leaky roofs to providing opportunities for the next generation. The stability of the Fairtrade Minimum Price helped them manage through the pandemic, and beyond. 'Those two dollars we get above the cost of each box of bananas make a difference for us, so we could be able to sustain ourselves as a family and to save.'

Foncho credits Fairtrade with advancing his community's education. His own children were educated through scholarships funded by the Fairtrade Premium, and after his daughter got a good education she brought these skills back to the community.

As Foncho says: 'Thank God and thanks to the Premium, my oldest daughter is a public accountant and she's now working with us. That means her knowledge was brought back to the organisation.'

1st Reading: (a) Good news (Luke 4 verses 16-19) New International version

"So Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went to synagogue on the Sabbath day as he regularly did. He stood up to read the lesson and was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the scroll and found the passage which says:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me;
He has sent me to announce good news to the poor,
to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind;
to let the broken victims go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"

There are more references in the Bible to responding to the poor than about prayer, atonement, or Jesus' resurrection. And it is the poorest people in the world who are suffering most at the hands of unfair trade. So what might 'good news' mean for them? The verse goes on to talk about liberation of captives, protecting the weak, and the coming of justice so that all can be included in God's Kingdom. Fairtrade has this aim at its heart – a just system which frees producers from exploitation, enabling them to lift themselves out of poverty."

From Fairtrade 2012 worship resources pack

Video about Fair Trade

<https://youtu.be/0xQP6tVlcxg?si=47i5fOd4CK9RoF8o>

2nd Reading: 'Just a moment'

From Fairtrade 2024 worship resources pack

It starts with a change
So outwardly insignificant
That no one would notice
Except the person
Behind you in the aisle.

Just a moment
When instead of seeing
Rows of labels
On a supermarket shelf
You imagine the people
Behind them,
Tilling the earth,
Sowing the seed,
Gathering the crops.

And you pause,
Wondering,
What their names are,
Where they live,
What difference it will make
If your hand picks up
This box instead of that,

Wondering: how do I
Love these neighbours?
Can I help change
This child's long journey for water,
Her mother's lack of healthcare,
The prospect her father faces
Of another year unable
To feed his family well?

Just a moment.
And the person behind you,
Her impatient baby
Squirming in the trolley,
May never realise
That in that brief hesitation,
A life hung in the balance.

2nd Hymn: Green Book No. 42 'A Dream of Widening Love'

We rest awhile in quietness,
The world not to forget,
But rather shape the silence
And words and thoughts we've met
To nobler ways of living,
To hope-filled truth, above
Our narrow selves, to seek one
Great dream of widening love.

We share a world where sorrow
And poverty and greed
Live side by side with privilege
Of wealth beyond true need;
All ways of humankind,
We ask a strength within us
To right the wrongs we find.

We know that strength is weakened
By narrow truths and fears,
That still we claim true knowledge,
Deny the changing years:
Yet here, within the silence,
We question what we know,
That through more honest persons
All humankind may grow.

To find Eternal meaning
Deep in each passing hour,
To seek beyond the confines
Of our small powers, one Power.
Strength deep within our being,
Arise as hope and will:
Come silent living Spirit,
With peace our spirits fill.

Tune 'Cruger' Words Frank R. Clapburn used by permission

Spoken Meditation: 'On Tea' In the 'Fair Trade at 30' Service Resources pack, Peter Graystone suggests this contemplation on tea. "Hold in your hands, the Fair Trade tea bag you were handed as you came into church. For those on Zoom, I hope you all had the message about this in the chat and have a tea bag to hand.

Hold your tea bag..... smell the aroma of the tea think with gratitude and pray for all who have grown, picked, processed and transported the tea so that we might enjoy a refreshing brew whenever we wish. And pray for justice in the tea trade wherever it was grown and for all growers and producers of the many Fair Trade products we enjoy."

Silence followed by

Reflective Music: 'Beautiful African Song'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hq_PG9XW7c8

ADDRESS Fair Trade at 30**(‘Be the Change’)**

Can you remember what you did about 30 minutes ago? I hope so! Right at the start of our worship this morning, we each said 'hello' to our neighbour, the person sitting right next to us, here, in this church, or for our zoomers, the people they can see in their gallery view. The words of our first hymn reminded us that "our world is one world, what touches one affects us all" and in our prayers, we expressed our concerns for our families, and friends, those in the wider community, and around the world.... Now cast your mind further back - Can you remember how your life was 30 *years* ago? What were you doing then, and how different were things for you in 1994 as compared with today? What has changed?

For each one of us sitting here today, the answer is likely to be ‘An awful lot!’ Change affects us all, in many ways. That’s also true for millions of farmers, growers and associated workers, especially in the global south, where the changes have often been huge. These have affected us too, for they are our far off neighbours, half a world away.

So, what happened in 1994 which had such an impact on so many lives? In that year, a chocolate bar, ‘Maya Gold’ made by Green & Blacks, went on sale. It was the first Fairtrade certified product to appear in UK shops. There was a little symbol on the wrapper, of two interlocking capital ‘F’s, in I think it was, black and yellow. The chocolate was closely followed by ‘Café Direct’ and ‘Percol’ coffees and ‘Clipper’ Tea, all with the interlocking ‘F’s on the packaging. The lives of the cocoa, coffee and tea growers whose crops were awarded those first Fairtrade certificates changed for the better. They were guaranteed a set price for their produce, whatever the markets were doing, so if there was a crash, they would still be paid the set price. In the intervening 30 years, their numbers have swelled to 2 million, and the number of Fairtrade items to over 5,000. Some change! How did all this come about?

The concept of a fair price for goods has been around for a long time, though not always in favour of the growers. In 18th century England, farmers were not allowed withhold their crops to create shortages, so that prices went up. Middlemen were restricted, so that the poor could buy staple foods in small amounts. Fairly trading back then revolved around the consumer, rather than producer.

The roots of Modern Fair trading can be traced to 1946 USA, when Edna Ruth Byler, a volunteer for Mennonite Central Committee, a Christian group, visited one of their sewing classes in Puerto Rico. She saw that despite creating beautiful lace, the women lived in extreme poverty because they weren’t paid fairly. She took some samples back to the United States to sell and returned the money directly to the women’s group, bypassing any middlemen. Ruth’s work led to ‘Ten Thousand Villages’ scheme, which opened its first fair trade shop in 1958 and is now the largest fair trade retailer in North America. In 1949, Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation and Vocation (Serrv) began helping refugees in Europe recover from World War II. Today, they support artisans in more than 35 countries. So the principles already existed.

Fast forward now to late 1980s, when world coffee prices collapsed, leaving small scale Mexican coffee farmers struggling to make a living. A Dutch development agency, ‘Solidat’, wanting them to be paid a fair price, introduced the first Fairtrade label. The first ‘Fairtrade’ coffee from Mexico was sold in Dutch supermarkets in 1989. It was branded ‘Max Havelaar’

after a fictional Dutch character who opposed the exploitation of coffee pickers in Dutch colonies.

The Fairtrade Foundation, the UK arm of the Fairtrade movement, was established in 1992. This was also response to demands for fairer trade by small-scale coffee farmers. The UK Fairtrade Foundation was founded by Faith communities and other bodies wanting more ethical standards in trade: CAFOD Catholic international development agency, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Traidcraft, the World Development Movement, and the Women's Institutes. This led to 400,000 producers, growers and associated workers becoming the first to be certified as Fair Trade and the 1st Fair Trade items went on sale in 1994.

Fairtrade sets social, economic and environmental standards for both the companies and farmers and workers. For farmers and workers, this includes preventing child labour, protecting workers' rights, and the environment.

Companies must pay the Fairtrade Minimum Price for any commodity, plus the additional Fairtrade Premium, to the farming co-operatives. The members of these co-operatives, the growers and other workers, decide which on essential projects the Premium is spent.

Over the next few years, many more items became Fairtrade: Bananas in 2000, and the list now includes fresh and dried fruit, vegetables, juices, cereals, nuts, oils herbs and spices, honey, confectionery, cotton goods, footballs, even gold (which is used in mobile phone chips) .. In 2002 the FAIRTRADE Mark was changed to the current one: it represents the optimism of farmers and workers. It symbolises the blue sky of potential and the green of growth, with the producer raising an arm to celebrate determination in overcoming all odds.

The odds include poor soil, flooding, drought and Climate Change. Fairtrade offers training on how to cope with them, often funded by the Premium.

Fairtrade cocoa farmer, Sadick Abanga farms nine acres of land for cocoa in Kumasi co-operative, Ghana says

'I didn't know I was punishing the land. Now because of this project I've seen the benefits, there are more nutrients in the soil.' Now 39, he's been doing this for 18 years. It's getting increasingly difficult due to the climate crisis, but he is working with Fairtrade to farm differently, interplanting his cocoa crop with trees for shade, and using juice from banana stems for moisture. Working as part of a team, with Fairtrade behind them, means they are able to access the support they need to keep on farming the cocoa we love. They are learning to make these necessary changes. We can help them Be the Change by buying FT Chocolate.

Patrick Kaberia, a Fair Trade farmer from Kenya has been visiting UK this FairTrade Fortnight , to speak to many FT groups. At FT 30 conference in Exeter, he told us his story. He and his family live on Michimikuru tea farm, high up, in sight of MT Kenya. Patrick has many roles: Husband, father, farmer, trainer at the factory, advisor on conservation and now an ambassador for FT! The farm was originally owned by Brits, and passed to Kenyans at independence in 1960's. It has been FT for many years. Patrick explained that they are learning how to cope with Climate Change by planting 'living fences' of trees and hedges. These provide shade and also a habitat for wildlife which would otherwise become pests to the tea bushes. He showed slides of a hilly terrain, with tea fields and treed areas. He explained that where the trees are, is water. Its vital to protect this. They work with their Government to prevent other people from planting alien species like eucalyptus, which is a

water hungry plant. These are removed and replaced with indigenous trees to restore the balance, and replace trees felled for firewood. He said up to 10,000 trees planted every year, a communal activity. He described this as enabling 'walking water' to gently reach the rivers, rather than 'running water, which runs over the surface in torrents, destroying fields and roads. A Fairtrade grant in 2007 enabled farmers to diversify, to grow vegetables on part of the land, so they are self sufficient and don't have to spend at the market. They can save to pay for medical care (No NHS) and their children's education. A Women's group meets and has input in all decision making, its all very democratic. FairTrade premium has paid for an orphan to train as a mechanic to work on the lorries which transport the crops to the factory, and for a dispensary. Patrick proudly showed a short film made by his eldest daughter who is now studying at University. This lovely young woman described FairTrade as 'Beautiful' being good for her parents and family, paying them well so they can afford her University fees, and good for the environment. Patrick said how grateful he is to FairTrade and thanked **us** all for playing our part by buying FairTrade tea. I came away with a small packet of tea from his farm, thinking he could teach us some valuable lessons, and determined to can help him to carry on 'Being the Change', by buying FairTrade Tea.

In another session, we were told how Coffee farmers in Rwenzari, a region near the borders with Uganda and Congo Republic, are rejuvenating damaged trees by careful pruning. They are also preventing trees from being felled for firewood by making coffee and cocoa waste into brickettes which can be burnt instead. This has turned into a small industry in itself. If we buy their FairTrade Coffee and coca. We help them 'Be the Change.'

We've heard of just a few examples of how buying FairTrade can help us **all** 'Be the Change.' Some words from Gill's reading come to mind:

'Just a moment

When instead of seeing rows of labels on a supermarket shelf, you imagine the people behind them, tilling the earth, sowing the seed, gathering the crops. And you pause, wondering, what their names are, where they live, what difference it will make, If your hand picks up this box instead of that'

So well after the end of this FairTrade Fortnight, please buy FairTrade and 'Be the change' for the sake of us all and for our Planet! *AMEN*

Final Hymn Purple Book no. 84 'Justice for persons and for different nations'

Justice for persons and for different nations,
respect the diverse species in our care,
community of life on earth sustaining,
love for this planet which we all must share.

Compassion is the strength of love and sympathy
letting us share another being's pain;
creature or human, loving friend or stranger,
love for each other is the whole world's gain.

Wisdom is insight clear, precise and thoughtful,
searching for truth and human law refined;
guidance from past, made ready for the future
by the best reasoning of the human mind.

Integrity, with honour and uprightness:

these are the qualities which form and make
women and men, the people for tomorrow,
those who serve others for another's sake.

Justice, compassion, wisdom and integrity,
these are the virtues which our poor world needs.

They'll flower tomorrow, fruit in glorious splendour,
if we today go out and plant the seeds.

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Closing words:

Our Service is not over: it has only just begun! We cannot solve all of the world's problems, but may we be more aware of suffering, poverty and injustice and each do what we can, however small, to 'Be the Change' which brings a better life to those who work so hard to produce those goods which bring a better life to us. *AMEN*

Extinguish Chalice

Closing Video: Traditional Colombian dance

<https://youtu.be/FV9DWMBVsDA?si=6vGv1DhHKB32jsGO>