



Fair trade – a Christian response to poverty

Imagine if every time you enjoyed a cup of tea or coffee, bit into a biscuit or indulged in some chocolate it could make a difference to the lives of others. If you choose fairly traded products then that's exactly what you do – whether you are serving them at a church event or in your own home.

Each one of us can make a difference. By choosing fair trade we know that our purchase is helping to provide decent livelihoods for the people who grow the ingredients or make the products.

To make a lasting difference to producers and their families, people need to be encouraged and reminded about the benefits of buying fair trade all year round. Many churches see running a Traidcraft stall as part of their Christian response to poverty.

Traidcraft, the Christian-based fair trade organisation, was formed by a group of people concerned about issues of Christian witness through trade. Christians are called to love the poor – but also to ask questions as to why they are poor.

Fair trade is not about charity, it's about giving people the dignity of working their way out of poverty, providing opportunity and hope for the future. It's about developing a different way of buying things, whether we're choosing coffee or cards, tea or t-shirts.

Unjust trading systems are not new. Proverbs 13:23 says A poor man's field may produce abundant food but injustice sweeps it away. But in 1 John 3:18 we are told My children, our love is not just to be words or mere talk, but something real and active.

Miguel is a coffee farmer who benefits from fair trade as his crop supplies cafedirect and Traidcraft. If it had not been for the fair trade buyers it is likely that we would have had to give up this business altogether, he said. Those of us small farmers who have survived are very grateful to those who have participated in fair trade and we hope these links will continue.

We can all do something - and it can start with something as simple as a cup of coffee.