COME ON IN...

... AND OPEN MORE DOORS TO FAIRTRADE

‘There were times when my children didn’t have enough to eat. Thanks to Coobana and Fairtrade, there’s a better future for my grandchildren.’

Florentina Beitia, Fairtrade banana producer, Coobana, Panama

Across the globe, millions of producers like Florentina are unravelling a legacy of exploitation with Fairtrade, working hard to get a fair deal so that they can transform their communities.

Together we are stronger, and more people choosing, sharing and talking about Fairtrade in the UK means more power to producers like Florentina to break the stranglehold of poverty prices.

Invite your church community to come on in to Fairtrade this Fairtrade Fortnight to see the life-changing difference that choosing Fairtrade makes.

Visit fairtrade.org.uk/fortnight for more activity ideas and resources to get involved in Fairtrade Fortnight. You’ll find a PDF presentation to accompany this pack, ideas to create your own unique door in to Fairtrade to help welcome people in, and links to order a free event pack, posters, leaflets and more from our online shop.
ALL AGE WORSHIP

Suggested Bible readings if not using the lectionary:


Romans 13:8-10 – Love for One Another

Introductory note for leaders

This year, the theme of Fairtrade Fortnight is “Come on in to Fairtrade” and meet your neighbours – the farmers who grow and produce the food we eat each day. For churches, this theme gives the opportunity to celebrate God’s welcome for all, and helps us consider how as Christians we can be good neighbours to others. We have based the all age worship and study group resources on suggested readings which link well to this theme, as well as providing additional sermon notes for churches using the lectionary.

The calls to love our neighbour and to love God sit in profound relationship at the heart of both the Old and New Testament. The verses from Leviticus make the love of neighbour very practical, legislating for fair treatment of others in trade, business and employment in unambiguous language. St Paul in Romans emphasises that the spirit of the law is love, and that “love does no wrong to a neighbour”. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus radically expands our understanding of our neighbour is to include anyone and everyone that we are in relationship with, including our “enemies”.

We live in very close relationship to millions of farmers and workers who live in developing countries all around the world – farmers who are often very poor – they grow the food on which we depend, and they depend on the income from trading with us. But many live in poverty, struggle to provide for their families, or experience serious human rights abuses. They are our neighbours, our sisters and our brothers, equally loved by God. How can we all be better neighbours?

All age church presentation:

Please feel free to adapt these suggestions as appropriate for your own church setting and age groups

Leader:

Today we are being asked to “Come on in” and meet your Fairtrade neighbours. Neighbours are important people for Christians. How do we know? We know that neighbours are important because all the way through the Bible we are asked to love our neighbours and treat them fairly.
• The laws Moses wrote down tell us to love our neighbours, and not to treat them unfairly.
• Very early Christians like St Paul told us that “Love does no wrong to a neighbour”
• And of course, Jesus told us to love our neighbours, even if we don’t like them!

But it is very hard to love our neighbour, or treat them fairly, if we’ve not met them! So today we are going to meet the neighbours.

First of all, I’d like you to meet the neighbours near you in church this morning. Please turn around to the two or three people next to you and do two things:

• Say hello and tell them what your name is.
• Tell them how many people in your street, or in your apartment block you know the names of.

[Leader’s note: give people time to chat; then ask a few questions with a roving microphone – for example:

Did you know the name of the person sitting next to you before?

Were you surprised at the number of people in your street / apartment block you knew/didn’t know the name of?]

Our neighbours who live next to us are very important. But people who live a long way off may also be our neighbours. I wonder if we can meet the neighbours who live far away?

(Leader’s note: At this point, show the story of Florentina, a Fairtrade Banana farmer from Panama. Either use an overhead projector and slides, or interview a church member “in role” as Florentina. For a shorter presentation, just use the words in bold type.

Florentina’s words here are extracts from a longer interview which took place with Fairtrade Foundation staff in 2017; words shown in square brackets are rephrased from the original to help convey Florentina’s meaning clearly to a UK audience and anonymise some details)

SLIDE 1 – Come on in...

Leader: It is time to “come on in” and meet one of our Fairtrade neighbours – Florentina, a banana farmer from the Bocas Del Toro region of Panama.

Slide 2 – Meet Florentina, our Fairtrade Neighbour

Florentina: My name is Florentina Beitia, and I am a member of Coobana, a Fairtrade Co-operative in Panama producing bananas that are sold in UK supermarkets. Coobana is made up of approximately 550 members and workers who work cooperatively [together].

I have 4 children and 3 grandchildren – 2 of my children and 2 grandchildren live with me.
I’ve been working here on the banana farms since 1983. Back then [before we formed Coobana] we were part of a state-owned company growing bananas to sell on to a large multi-national company.

**Slide 3 – Why are you our neighbour if you live in Panama?**

*Florentina:* At Coobana we produce 4,000 boxes of bananas per week which are sold in The Coop, Waitrose and Sainsbury’s in the UK.

Bananas have been growing here for over 100 years because the hot tropical climate is ideal for them to grow. Growing bananas is the main economic activity for the region, and many livelihoods depend on them.

Working on a banana farm is hard, hard work. There are no machines that can grow and harvest bananas so each stage of the process relies on human labour.

It takes 9 months for a banana plant to grow, and produce a bunch of 80-120 bananas. We care for each banana plant for those 9 months, weeding, protecting the fruits from insects and extreme weather like hurricanes, before harvesting and packaging them with care so that high quality fruit arrives in perfect condition on UK supermarket shelves.

**Slide 4 – What was life like before Fairtrade**

*Florentina:* Before joining Fairtrade the situation was very difficult. As there was only one company we could sell our bananas too, we had no say over the price, and it wasn’t enough to cover our costs.

It was very difficult with my children. I did not earn enough to be able to give them everything that was necessary. There were times when the truth was that we did not have enough to eat.

I will always remember, and I think that I will never forget, that there was one day when my eldest son said to me, “Mama, there’s nothing more to eat.” It hurt me so much because there wasn’t anything.

The biggest problem we had then was communal toilets that 4-5 families would have to share and we wanted to get rid of. They would all share one basic toilet and bathroom. We also had an unreliable water source. The children especially suffered a lot from diarrhoea and from illnesses because of it.

For 17 years the price didn’t change, and our costs kept going up.

[Then] we were introduced to [a UK supermarket working with Fairtrade]. Three of us came to the UK to meet with [the supermarket]. It was honestly unimaginable because we had never been out to a meeting, never before had we known where our fruit went to or who was going to buy it.
They agreed to buy our bananas and we were finally able to sell our first bananas as Fairtrade in 2011.

_Slide 5 – What difference does Fairtrade make?_

_Florentina:_ If it weren’t for Fairtrade, [our farmer’s organisation] Coobana wouldn’t have survived. It would be very difficult.

As soon as we started selling as Fairtrade the price improved to $9.75 per box, and we received an extra dollar [the Fairtrade Premium] per box too, which has enabled us to achieve a lot.

The majority of the houses here were small, cramped and lacked privacy and security. Many families would share one room to sleep, cook and live in, and had to share toilets outside.

From then till now things changed. We give grants to workers and Co-op members to build new homes or improve what they have. Hundreds of families now have a new, safe and more comfortable home with privacy. I have improved and extended my home, adding a kitchen and bathroom so that we no longer need to use the communal latrine.

The better price we receive now through Fairtrade also means that we are in a better position to plan our business and provide secure employment to all our workers. The Fairtrade premium has also been invested in our farms and business. This is very important to maintain our competitiveness as a small, independent producer.

Last year was a successful year. And this year, if God allows it, we are also going to do many more things.

_Slide 6 – What are your hopes for the future?_

_Florentina:_ I would ask people in the UK to carry on buying Fairtrade fruit. Because there are a lot of people, men and women, who work very hard in the hope that over there, the market buys our fruit.

[The Fairtrade Premium] which we receive has enabled us to achieve a lot. Especially in education for the children, because if there’s no money, there’s no education. Education here is very expensive. We provide grants to children of Coobana members to attend school and university, as well as investing in projects, like vegetable patches and chicken coops at schools so that pupils can eat a decent meal at school as well as learn about where food comes from.
Many thanks to Coobana I have been able to educate my children. The youngest one is now a policeman, my daughter is also a graduate and this is what I want for my granddaughter.

We are working, fighting for [our children] to have a better future so that they can they can have a different life to what I had and to how I suffered. Because working on a banana farm is hard. And they can have an opportunity to do something else and to have a better life, and to not have the problems which I had but instead to have their children in good housing, eating well, but we need the support.

Conclusion:

Leader: We started by thinking about our neighbours here in church, and near our homes. Meeting Florentina today helps me understand that we are also very close neighbours to people right around the world who are growing and making the things we eat and use, every day.

I also understand more about why loving your neighbour matters. For example, because we are choosing to buy Fairtrade, we our treating our neighbour Florentina more fairly. It has helped her and her family and farmers like her to have a better life.

We can all choose is to be a good neighbour at home. And we can choose to be a good neighbour to Florentina and those like her:

- We can buy Fairtrade so that she and her family get a fair price for their bananas.
- We can speak out about unfair trade, to say that we want business that is fair.
- And we can pray, to ask that God will “come on in” and help us make a fairer world.

What will you do to be a good neighbour today?
SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY (SUNDAY BEFORE FORTNIGHT – LENT 2)

- Genesis 17:15-16
- Psalm 22:23-31
- Romans 4:13-25
- Mark 8:31-38

The readings today offer the opportunity to reflect on the universality of God’s promises to the whole of humanity, and explore what it means to be in relationship with people all around the world who are equally loved by God. These themes have strong resonance with this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight call to “Come on in and meet the neighbours”. How do we respond to the challenge of a call from God to a life which seems risky, foolish, or both, and yet is the way to become fully human?

Genesis and Romans focus on the story of Abram and Sarai (to become Abraham and Sarah). God tells them that they will become the parents of “a multitude of nations”. In an “everlasting covenant”, the pledge made is “to be God to you and to your offspring after you”. The promise of God is for all nations and peoples. Our neighbours in God’s sight are not just those who live nearby, or share our values – or even our faith – but anyone at all. The theme is reinforced by today’s Psalm, which says that “all the families of the nations shall worship before him.”

If God’s promise is for the whole of humanity, what are our promises to each other? A shared humanity should inspire care and compassion for all we are in relationship with. In pivotal verses the Psalmist brings social justice and worship together: God’s vision is both that “the poor shall eat and be satisfied” and “those who seek him shall praise the Lord”. In Fairtrade Fortnight, we are reminded that we are in very close relationship to farmers who live in developing countries all around the world – farmers who are often very poor – they grow us food on which we depend, and they depend on the income from trading with us. They are our neighbours, our brothers and our sisters, equally loved by God.

Why does the fair and just world we long for seem so far away? A world where our shared humanity is recognised and all are valued and treated fairly, in the way that God intended?

Perhaps God’s vision seems too outrageous and unachievable? St Paul in Romans reflects on the astonishing nature of God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah (in Sarah’s case, she found it literally laughable) – that they would become parents and the ancestors of many nations. Responding in trust to God’s promise was not a “no brainer”, or as Paul notes, something achievable through legalism. To trust was an act of faith which appeared to run counter to common sense.
Or perhaps God’s vision seems too costly? The Gospel reading is very challenging, with blunt words from Jesus about the cost of discipleship. Do we harbour secret fears of people who are different to ourselves, or whose lives we do not understand? In the context of Fairtrade Fortnight, do we even worry that choosing fairer trade could mean being taken advantage of? Again, God’s call could appear to run counter to common sense.

Be it “costly”, or be it “foolish”, following God’s call means taking big risks. God’s call is to overcome our instinct for self-preservation and reach out for true life: to risk being open to God and to risk being a true neighbour to all. The promise from Jesus is that he will honour the steps of faith we take towards relationship with God, towards our neighbours and towards a better world.

**SUNDAY 4 MARCH 2018 (MIDDLE SUNDAY OF FORTNIGHT – LENT 3)**

- Exodus 20:1-17
- Psalm 19
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- John 2:13-22

Jesus confronts corrupt practices in the Temple, simultaneously challenging unfair treatment of the poor and barriers to a right relationship with God. His actions provoke the authorities to seek his arrest and lead towards the cross. The cross is foolish and unwise in worldly terms, but is the “power of God to those who are being saved”.

In the context of this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight theme, “Come on in to Fairtrade” and meet your neighbours, the readings also offer the opportunity to reflect on the risks that God may call us to in the service of others. As well as calling for a fairer world for all, we can take practical action – such as choosing Fairtrade - which some will call foolish or unwise, but are powerful catalysts for change.

Have you ever been to a theme park where you need to buy special “theme park money” to pay for the rides? Sometimes you might be left feeling that it’s an unfair trade! There’s a parallel to the set up in the Temple in Jesus’ day – in order to buy animals for sacrifice, money needed to be changed into special temple currency. Commentators suggest different reasons for Jesus’ outrage, but it is likely that he saw the practices both as financially exploitative and as barriers to worship and a right relationship with God. Similarly, in today’s Old Testament reading, the Ten Commandments, commands to treat our neighbour with justice are placed side by side with commandments that uphold integrity in faith and worship.
Jesus physically confronts this meeting point of spiritual and social injustice. He overturns the tables of the moneychangers, and drives out the animals being traded. His action could be seen as foolish, as unlikely to make a difference, with the same traders soon back in business. His action could also be seen as very unwise. Such a challenge to the status quo, in the unstable politics of his day, intensifies the calls for his arrest and execution.

Unwise and foolish – but powerful. His symbolic stand shakes the institutions of the day to their core, and breaks down artificial barriers to relationship with God. And as the story takes us towards the cross, St Paul sees the “power of God” in the “foolishness” that achieves what the “wisdom of the world” could not.

We are all hoping and longing for a better world. But we’re often afraid to rock the boat and look to achieve change through pragmatic, incremental means. Politics is spoken of as “the art of the possible”. Diplomats and charities work behind the scenes to persuade and cajole. Sometimes such strategies can be effective, but at other times practical action is needed to make the difference.

When the Fairtrade Foundation was established more than 20 years ago, its mission was seen by many as foolish and unwise. Surely a small group of charities could not make a difference to big business? Surely no-one would be prepared to pay extra for their coffee or chocolate if there was a cheaper alternative? And yet, millions of people up and down the country chose to vote with their wallets, and took the practical step of choosing Fairtrade. Today Fairtrade sales are calculated in billions of pounds, and our biggest companies have been challenged to behave differently. What looked like an insignificant, symbolic stand, is changing a whole industry for good.

Those who continue to need Fairtrade are our neighbours. Although they may live on other continents, millions of farmers and workers grow produce for our supermarket shelves every day. But many still do not receive enough to feed their families properly, and millions experience human rights abuses. Fairtrade’s experience is that when people are paid a fair price, poverty can be overcome, so twenty years on, the message remains as simple – but as important – as ever.

Today’s Psalm tells us that “the decrees of the Lord the L ORD are sure, making wise the simple”. Seemingly small acts of faith, love and justice can seem simple and insignificant. Sometimes they can seem foolish, unwise, or costly. But they carry the power of God, and through them the world can be transformed.
Loving God, come on in
God of justice and peace -
As plants are watered
and weeds are dug;
As crops are picked
and boxes are packed -
Come on in, loving God!
Come to our hearts and our world

As the boardroom meets
and traders haggle;
As ships are loaded
and bills are paid -
Come on in, loving God!
Come to our hearts and our world

As parliament sits
Across thousands of miles,
through business and trade,
we are joined to each other;
May we be neighbours to all -
Come on in, loving God!
Come to our hearts and our world

A prayer for trade justice
Lord, just as Ruth did not seek charity but
the right to harvest
we do not seek charity for our sisters and
brothers who
grow the world’s food
stitch the world’s clothes
mine the world’s metals
and yet remain poor.

We ask you for the justice of Boaz
in food and farming
in trade and finance
in human rights
in government and law
for women and men
and laws are made;
As rules are set
our voices are raised –
Come on in, loving God!
Come to our hearts and our world

As shelves are stacked
and packets are bought;
As meals are munched
and tums are filled -
Come on in, loving God!
Come to our hearts and our world

Across thousands of miles,
through business and trade,
we are joined to each other;
May we be neighbours to all -
Come on in, loving God!
Come to our hearts and our world

WE ASK FOR YOUR JUSTICE LIVED
OUT WITH JOY.

WE ASK FOR FAIRNESS WRITTEN ON
OUR HEARTS, THAT ALL MAY SEE A
FAIRER WORLD.

AMEN

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Goose Resource Group www.iona.org.uk)
INFORMAL PRAYER

Here is an interactive prayer activity that you could use as part of informal services, small study groups or with children or young people. Adapt according to your context and age of participants.

You will need:

- A table or cloth spread on the floor as a focus for the group. If you wish you can place a lighted candle centrally.
- A basket of Fairtrade produce placed to one side. If you wish you can include other items such as clothes and electronics which are not Fairtrade.

First of all, take some time to sit quietly together.

When you are ready, invite anyone who wishes to pick up an item of produce and place it on the table or cloth, and as they do so to say their own prayer out loud or silently (remember to explain that no-one should feel they must do this). Prayers could mention different areas relevant to Fairtrade, such as issues affecting farmers, decisions taken by consumers, or the role of business and government.

When everyone who wishes has had the chance to place an item on the table, close with one of the other prayers on this sheet, your own prayer, or a prayer the group knows well (such as the Grace).
WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? – IDEAS FOR A SMALL STUDY GROUP


Leaders note: this Bible study asks the question “who is my neighbour?” with particular reference to Fairtrade. After thinking about the social networks we are involved with, and how these are changing, the study looks at people involved in one example of trade – are these people also our neighbours? Bible passages are used to encourage reflection and discussion. Finally, how do we respond in prayer and action? Feel free to adapt the study to your own situation and age group.

Preparing

You will need:

1. A projector and the powerpoint slides of the interview with Florentina, or printouts of the interview.
2. Bibles or printouts of the readings above
3. Several sheets of flipchart paper or similar
4. Marker pens

Icebreaking

To get things started, ask the group some of the following questions:

- How many people do you know the names of in your street or apartment block?
- How do you mainly relate to your friends? Meeting one to one, through social or sports clubs, by letter or email, on social media?
- Do you have close friends or family who live in other countries?

Leaders note: Our relationships with each other are increasingly complex and global; at the same time we may have weaker relationships with those who live near us; social media is a powerful way to stay in touch with people, but does it mean we only hear the views of those we agree with?

Investigating

Now show Florentina’s story using the powerpoint slides, or read it using the printouts.
• What are your thoughts and feelings about different people involved in buying bananas? For example:
  o The farmers and their families
  o The supermarkets and banana trading companies
  o The government and politicians
  o Shoppers in the UK
  o You and your family

• Call out words or short phrases and write them on a piece of flipchart paper to describe your thoughts and feelings (for example – “angry”, “hopeful”, “afraid”, “heard it all before”, “inspired”).

• Which of these people do you see as your neighbour?

Leader’s note: As well as positive responses to people affected by injustice – such as compassion and concern - we can have more challenging responses – such as feeling powerless or bitter. Sometimes people even feel angry at or afraid of people suffering injustice. Keep this brainstorming session fast moving and non-judgemental – write down what is coming to mind, rather than stopping to discuss what “ought” to be said.

Listening

Put the flipchart to one side, and read aloud Luke 10:25-37, Leviticus 19:13 and 25:14

Pause for a few moments to allow the group to reflect on the readings.

• How do these passages define neighbours?
• How do these passages say neighbours should be treated?

Now go back to your flipcharts.

• What do the Bible passages have to say to the different groups of people involved in trading bananas and other products?
• Do you want to change or add anything to what you said before?
• There are many Old Testament laws that Christians do not follow. Are these passages on trading and employment still relevant today?
• In the story of the Good Samaritan, several powerful people did not stop to help. How can people with positions of influence in business and politics be good neighbours?

Leader’s note: the Bible passages can help expand our view of who our neighbour is, and how we should respond to them. A Fairtrade producer can be a “hidden neighbour”, who we depend on every day through trade, but may know very little about. Other people involved in trade – running businesses, or making laws and policies - are our neighbours too. The Bible passages
also make being a neighbour very practical – it comes down to how we treat each other in practice.

Praying

What do you want to say to God about the issues you have been talking about today? Spend some time in prayer together.

Leader’s note: the interactive prayer suggestion could work well here, or pray together in a way the group will be familiar with.

Campaigning

Is there one thing that you want to do as individuals or in your group to be better neighbours?

Leader’s note: Why not consider becoming a Fairtrade church, or signing up to take part in Fairtrade campaigns? When you are shopping, can you make more deliberate ethical choices?