



P R E S S R E L E A S E

Flying the Fairtrade Flag

Last Sunday Gillingham Community Church decided to become a Fairtrade Church, with over sixty people signing the pledge.

The Sunday school children learned about how chocolate is produced, played a chocolate game and declared that Fairtrade tastes better than other chocolate. Afterwards, they came back into the service and told the rest of the congregation why they wanted to buy Fairtrade products.

The adults, too, had been hearing about Jesus' mission to loose the fetters of injustice and set free those who are oppressed and were challenged to play their part in this in practical ways.

Being a Fairtrade Church means members will now use Fairtrade tea and coffee for all church meetings, not just Sunday mornings, and that they will move forward on using other Fairtrade products such as biscuits, sugar and fruit. They will also promote the FAIRTRADE Mark at events during Fairtrade Fortnight - and through other activities whenever possible.

The FAIRTRADE Mark is an independent consumer label which appears on products as an independent guarantee that disadvantaged producers in the developing world are getting a better deal.

For a product to display the FAIRTRADE Mark it must meet international Fairtrade standards. These standards are set by the international certification body Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO).

Producer organisations that supply Fairtrade products are inspected and certified by FLO. They receive a minimum price that covers the cost of sustainable production and an extra premium that is invested in social or economic development projects.

The question is, can buying Fairtrade products instead of the usual ones really make a difference?

In 1791, William Fox produced a pamphlet called *Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum*. It called for people to boycott sugar produced on slave-worked plantations. This helped towards the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, and eventually the freeing of all the slaves. So yes, it worked then and it is working now.

There are numerous stories of Fairtrade having a positive effect on the lives of small producers across the world – where once there was despair, now people are making a living and rebuilding their communities. For more information about Fairtrade and over 2,000 products which carry the Fairtrade mark, see the Fairtrade website at www.fairtrade.org.uk

Gillingham Community Church ...*in* the community

ENDS

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