

**CHOOSE THE WORLD  
YOU WANT**



## **Ecumenical Service of Worship Fairtrade Fortnight 2021**

### **Call to worship**

*Ps 113 & 115 various verses*

The Psalmist exhorts us(113) to praise the name of the Lord from the rising to the setting of the sun, while calling us to witness how God raises the poor and needy from the dust! Do not trust in the idols of silver and gold, says the Psalmist(115), but trust in God alone.

### **Welcome**

Welcome to this ecumenical service in Fairtrade Fortnight. Whoever you are, wherever you are, and no matter where you find yourself on this glorious journey into God's reality, you are welcome and loved. What a blessing that all of us taking part today are wonderfully diverse in terms of religion, gender and identity.

Today, we gather to worship the God who shows a preferential option for the widow, for the enslaved, for the oppressed, and for those stuck in prisons of debt.

And so, we come with faith and with determination, setting aside all fear, all anxiety, and even demands to solve the world's problems on our own: we come expecting to meet the Living God, in the person of Jesus through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as we sing together our opening hymn, *I Dream of a Church*.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Hymn *I Dream of a Church* (tune: *Bard of Armagh*)**

1. I dream of a church that awakens God's vision,  
of a people who live without counting the cost:  
that trust in the Spirit of Christ Jesus' mission,  
to uplift the oppressed with Good News for the lost.
2. I pray for a church that joins in with God's prancing,  
in a swirling star-skirt made from light cosmic sky:  
like prophets of old who lead people by dancing,  
unafraid of the pharaohs enthroned up on high.
3. We sing in a church that cracks up with God's laughter,  
that rejoices in justice, and shares all for free:  
turns over the tables of monied disasters,  
an abundance of mirth in a new Jubilee.
4. We work for a church that connects through Christ's caring,  
as she shelters and loves the unloved refugee:  
a church that shines light on corruption, then daring,  
to forgive and embrace them in God's family.

5. Dear God, would you make us a people like Jesus,  
with his trust in your Kingdom of unfailing grace:  
a travelling band of peculiar people,  
on the journey t'wards joy and true life in this place.

*Lyrics: K Snyman CC 4.0 attribution*

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Micah 6 various vv.**

<sup>1</sup> Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice...

<sup>3</sup> 'O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup> For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery. I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>6</sup> 'With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before The Most High?  
Shall I come before The Lord with burnt-offerings...?

<sup>8</sup> Has not The Most High told you, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you?  
Surely that is to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God! "

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Matthew 5: 43-48**

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'

<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

<sup>45</sup> that you may be children of our Creator in heaven. God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

<sup>48</sup> Be whole, therefore, as your heavenly Father is whole.

**Prayer**

Creator God, we look around our world; we can see our homes in the city or in the country; in them and around them we can marvel at the beauty of your creation, if we just open our eyes. Through the wonders of digital technology, we can see the wonders far from us too, and the eco systems living in it.

Yet we are also the ones who have caused chaos and harm to these beautiful places and to flora and fauna within them. Give us eyes that see beyond the beauty.

You have given us enough land to feed our populations, yet many go hungry. You have given us wealth, yet we are often slow to share. You have given us the ability to look outwards and to see where others need help, but often we only look at our own lives.

Forgive us Lord, when we do not open our eyes, and when, as a Parent, we make your heart sad at our selfish nature. Touch our eyes afresh today and enable us to see what you have created. Help us nurture and care for all that lives on this beautiful planet we call home. Help us to seek always for justice and fairness for places and people and to make this world a better place. Amen.

*Carol Finlay*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hymn: God the Maker of the Heavens (tune: What a Friend we have in Jesus)**

God the Maker of the Heavens  
And the planet that we share  
Show us how to live like Jesus  
Lives in gratitude and care  
Make us mindful of the footprints  
From the lives that we pursue  
Make us partners in your mission  
You are making all things new



God the Gardener of Eden  
Teach us how to tend this earth  
Learning from the changing seasons  
Times of fallow and new birth  
Lord have mercy when we're careless  
Rich resources we misuse  
Use our hands to heal creation  
You are making all things new

God of labour and vocation  
Lord of science trade and art  
Take our efforts and our passions  
Make them mirrors of your heart  
Every habitat and creature  
Loved and valued God by you  
May our lives reveal your kingdom

(You are making all things new... All things renewed...)  
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**Sermon: DOING Justice** Revd Dr Kevin Snyman, Programme Officer for the URC Global and Intercultural Ministries and Commitment for Life

It's so good to be sharing in this ecumenical service of worship with you, and wherever you are in the world, and indeed wherever you are on life's journey, you are so very welcome in this virtual space. The African wild or bushveld is incredibly special. It gets into your soul and those of you who've been will know what I mean. One can marvel at the evening chorus of guinea fowl; be dazzled by the flight of lilac-breasted rollers; sit in quiet contemplation at the waterhole, while waiting for majestic elephants to come down and drink; and watch how the bustling wildebeest jostle one another to get the best spot for a cooling drink.

If you have any heart as a Christian, then like me you may have sleepless nights over the threat posed by climate disruption not only for the wild spaces of the earth, but on the lives of workers and farmers in vulnerable regions of the world like Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua not to mention Bangladesh, and Zimbabwe.

We know that these farmers and their families have contributed least to the climate emergency but are forced to face some of the worst effects of the crisis. The rise of COVID has torn aside our comforting illusion that the global economic system can be made to work for the poorest. If anything, inequality has grown infinitely worse. Ethiopian doctor Tedros (World Health Organisation) is right to warn of the enormous moral failure as rich countries get to vaccinate their people long before our sisters and brothers in let's not call them traditionally poor countries, let's call them they really are, the traditionally exploited countries. We in the global north are behaving no better than those bullying wildebeest shoving weaker ones aside to get down to the water first. So yes, while we do love mercy, and we may even want to believe that we walk humbly, the question is: are we doing justice?

Fairtrade is an attempt to do justice, we know that. But why are farmers still struggling? Why is our trading system still balanced in favour of the powerful few? Why do many remain silent at the obvious injustice of a global economic system that is absolutely designed to one thing - and that is to push wealth up?

Farmers are finding the rate of climate change far greater than their ability to mitigate its effects or to adapt. And yet even as we beg companies and consumers to pay a little bit more for their favourite foods and drink in order to help farmers escape poverty and to adapt to environmental shocks, still the strongest are enabled indeed encouraged by the system to push their way to the front.

The irony is of course that many indigenous farmers know their lands; their techniques are often deeply eco-aware. But somehow our economics forces people to ignore indigenous knowledge in pursuit of profits for large corporations. Fairtrade is one of the very few pushbacks against this system. It is one small attempt to bring about some equity in what is a unrelentingly unequal, economic environment. But we need so much more: using the lone toothpick of Fairtrade will not in itself hold back the avalanche of systemic injustice.



So, how do we do justice? As Christians we want to start with Jesus, but, perhaps the way we have often been taught the Gospel is a problem. Certainly, many of us were to read the Bible in line with David Livingstone's three c's: *Civilisation*, *Commerce* and *Christianity*. But, as African womanist theologian Isabel Phiri reminds us, Africans by and large experienced the Gospel as a tool of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and exclusivism.

The author of "*The Colour Purple*" Alice Walker tells us: "When I was 13, I stopped going to church because I felt like they had taken this huge, amazing, incredible Godness and whittled it down to this tiny little thing that they stuck in the church every Sunday when people were too tired really to listen, and fell asleep because they were exhausted from still being slaves."

Many European Christians are beginning to grapple with the growing realisation of the deep and largely unconscious nature of White Privilege. They are discovering that they are still deeply complicit in the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade. Wealthy people benefit from the way economic systems are arranged, precisely because they still reflect the inequalities of those awful times. You do know that the net flow of wealth to this day is out of the global South and into the impossibly deep and gaping pockets of the wealthy nations.

One of the very few ways then that we have at our disposal is to address these wrongs is to choose Fairtrade. That is how, in the short term at any rate, we can work to improve the livelihoods of farmer and producers. We also know also that buying Fairtrade can assist farmers in their environmental adaptation. Fairtrade tries to provide farmers with a decent standard of living - enough to cover all their cocoa farming costs and enough to cover their basic human rights, like a nutritious diet, children's education and healthcare.

But the environmental crisis is not going away. And so, we need change at a far deeper level or rather, at multiple levels, if we are to truly do justice. We need a transformation of the global economic architecture away from interest bearing debt; we need to change the story of our human purpose in the universe; we need to reconnect to our place within the earth's ecosystems – and by the way that's not at the top; and then at our core we must allow for a deep transformation at the spiritual level. Jesus was pointing out a similar need for transformation in his hearers: why do you only pray for those you love? It is not enough to be concerned only for those who are like you or who like you: you must pray and act for those who are outside your group, even if they persecute you.

Erna Kim Hackett warns about the way people who grew up reading the Bible like me: what she provocatively calls Disney Princess theology.

Why is it, she asks that (many) Christians see themselves as the princess in every story? "They are Esther, never Xerxes or Haman. They are Peter, but never Judas. They are the woman anointing Jesus, never the Pharisees. They are the [slaves escaping Egypt, never Pharaoh]." "And it means that people in power," she goes on, "have no lens for locating themselves rightly in Scripture or society - and it has made them blind and utterly ill equipped to engage issues of power and injustice."

We are challenged then to work for justice at more than one level at a time: as an immediate action, we want to support Fairtrade. we want to make sure that the wealthiest pay (more than?) their fair share. we work for immediate and substantial debt relief for the poor. we also work for an economics of life that overturns the tables of a debt-based economic system in which the wildebeest are free to hoard all the water.

But at a much deeper level, we must be praying for the breaking in of the Kingdom, where things like Fairtrade will no longer be required because we will have learned that abundance and sharing are better than artificial scarcity, competition and hoarding. we pray for that fundamental transformation of the heart that both heals the planet *and* orders those rowdy wildebeest. Will you pray and work to share the waterhole with all equally? Amen.

## Silent Reflection...

### Intercessory Prayers

*Gweddiwn* – Let us pray

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

*Gweddiwn dros deuluoedd a phlant sy'n gweld eu cnydau'n methu ynghanol stormydd a llifogydd a sychder ac sy'n byw o ddydd i ddydd heb wybod o le y mae eu pryd bwyd nesaf yn dod.*

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

We pray for world leaders and scientists – having seen how politicians are able to respond to emergencies like Covid-19 with substantial funding and support – we pray that they will also respond to the climate emergency with the same level of speed, commitment and investment to enable countries to recover from the pandemic sustainably, cleanly and fairly.

*Gweddiwn dros bob mudiad sy'n gweithio ar lawr gwlad mewn cymunedau tlawd i ganfod a hybu dulliau amgen o amaethu i warchod y ddaear ac amddiffyn yr amgylchedd ac i sicrhau ffyniant y bobl.*

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.

*Gweddiwn dros y mudiad Masnach Deg – dros bawb sy'n ymgyrchu ac yn lledaenu'r neges. Boed i'n cariad at ein gilydd ac at dy greadigaeth ddyfnhau ein hymrwymiad a'n penderfyniad er mwyn i'n lleisiau gynyddu ac i rym ein hymgyrchu barhau i dyfu.*

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 and that the impact of our campaigning will increase.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

*Anna Jane Evans*

### Final Hymn: *I love the Sun*

I love the sun  
It shines on me  
God made the sun  
And God made me

I love the stars  
They twinkle on me  
God made the stars  
And God made me

I love the rain  
It splashes on me  
God made the rain  
And God made me

I love the wind  
It blows round me  
God made the wind  
And God made me

I love the birds  
They sing to me  
God made the birds  
And God made me

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## Benediction

Let us bless one another as we say together:

May the road rise to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
And the rains fall gentle upon the earth  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you in the palm of God's hand. Amen

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*This service has been curated by Revd Dr Kevin Snyman, URC Commitment for Life, with contributions and support from Meg Read, Nina Tweddle, Leila Bousbaa, Isaac Harvey, Phoebe Parkin, Carol Finlay, Anna Jane Evans, Roo Stewart, and Christchurch URC Petts Wood choir.*

We can watch the service here: [https://youtu.be/0aHL9xi3f\\_Y](https://youtu.be/0aHL9xi3f_Y)

