

Message from Bishop Rachel

10 September 2024



‘Fair’ is an intriguing word when we think about our local communities and beyond to the wider world. It raises questions around discrimination, the difference between equality and equity, and shines a light on justice.

I find myself in recent days, speaking the words justice and injustice with great frequency. Whether it is speaking about criminal (in)justice; the injustice being experienced by Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem; issues of racial justice in our diocese; our unjust treatment of all creation; the treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan... and so much more, both locally and far away.

The next two weeks have been designated as [Fairtrade Fortnight \(9 – 22 September\)](#). Many of you will have Fairtrade products on sale within church buildings or at events, and it’s hard to believe that it is 30 years since Fairtrade products first appeared on the shelves of our shops. Now over 2 million Fairtrade farmers and workers are supported in more than 50 countries to ensure people earn a fair wage.

[Zaytoun](#) products are just one example. They support farmers in the use of the produce from their fields and groves of Palestine. Some of you may be aware of the ongoing situation with the Kisiya family of Al-Makhrou in Bethlehem, whose farm and land has been violently invaded and seized by illegal Israeli settlers. These Christian Palestinians who provided oil and produce to contribute to Zaytoun products would certainly not use the word ‘fair’ to describe life at present.

Yet in my passion for what is going on in the West Bank, I am aware that there are many situations of injustice in our world, and many of you will have different people and places on your hearts through other connections. In this Fairtrade Fortnight there is not only thanksgiving but also lament, as it raises tough questions about our world and the sort of world we want to help shape as we participate in God’s work of reconciliation and transformation.

When we allow ourselves to look at the many people and places experiencing injustice across our world, whether in our local contexts or thousands of miles away, it can all become overwhelming, which is why I personally find it helpful to think of small changes we can each make which will add up to something much larger.

Fairtrade Fortnight has the theme of #BeTheChange and the encouragement is for everyone to buy one product and to consider making one small change to swap to buying a Fairtrade product in place of another product.

Another thing we can do is to try and find out one new fact about the [people and places that Fairtrade supports](#) and thus broaden our international vision rather than allowing only the media headlines to shape our world view.

Finally, do you receive international news from Christian changemakers to inform your world view and your prayer? [Christian Aid](#) is a very good place to start.

These small steps involving our weekly purchases, our hearts and minds, and our prayer can enable change, and resonate strongly with two of our five spotlight areas of [LIFE Together](#), 'Being advocates for flourishing' and 'Nurturing everyday disciples'.

With my thanks and prayers as ever

+ Rachel