

## Creative prayer idea

### for interceding for supply chains – and our place in them

*During Fairtrade Fortnight 2016, we had a couple of morning worship rhythms devoted to praying for the supply chains between two particular products – chocolate and tea – and considering our role in them. So often, it's easy to forget the people behind the purchase we are making, and the effect that we might be having on them...*

*Both these ideas are very simple, but we found them to be extraordinarily powerful, and to create a lasting visual that our pray-ers could take with them into their shopping too... we hope that sharing these ideas will help small groups and prayer groups enter into a powerful kinaesthetic time of prayer. (You could also use it as an illustration in a church service.)*

#### 1. Remembering the people behind your pot



**You will need:** a large teapot, the means to make a pot of tea, enough mugs for everyone present and up to ten additional mugs, sticky labels and a pen.

- If you would normally have tea together before your meeting as part of your welcome, consider delaying this till you are ready to use this prayer idea, as it increases the impact of what you will be doing. (You might like to consider laying out the pot and all the cups in the centre of the space you are meeting with so people are aware that something different is going to happen.)
- Depending on the context that you are using this idea in, you may want to provide some additional information about the current state of the tea industry:
  - Explain that currently, just 9% of the tea sold in the UK is Fairtrade, yet the difference made through the premium offered is remarkable. Show the following two clips – from the BBC and the Guardian –

which provide a challenging insight into the difference Fairtrade certification makes to the whole experience of life for tea workers living on estates, let alone in ensuring that no one has been trafficked onto the plantations concerned:

- The bitter story behind the UK's national drink – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-34173532>
- Has Fairtrade tea actually helped those who farmed it? – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP423hD1WYc&feature=youtu.be>
- Play a song such as Nmoshka – <http://thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/Nmoshka.mp3> for people to listen to and reflect on, while you make a pot of tea. (*Nmoshka is a traditional Bengali greeting which literally means 'I greet the holy one I see in you' and speaks of the precious value of each individual living in poverty to God'.*)
- Explain that there are lots of people behind our pot... and that many of those at the start of the supply chain don't have access to tea (despite growing it), running water or electricity. For many of us, putting the kettle on is one of the most frequent things we do each day and tea bags one of our most regularly restocked essential groceries.
- Now say that a teapot is a powerful symbol of gathering – of welcome and of community – in the UK and explain that today, you are going to invite the people behind this pot to join us, through prayer.
- Label a mug with each person's name and then as a group, work together to label the other mugs with as many groups of people behind the pot as you can think of. (*Your tea party guests may include some or all of the following: tea farmers and growers, tea pickers, processing companies, buyers and tea tasters, tea company executives, advertisers, packagers, retailers, cafes, consumers, and certification bodies such as the Fairtrade Foundation.*)
- Pour some tea into each mug that belongs to a person present and give it to them. Encourage them to hold it in their hands, feel its warmth, and to thank God for tea, what it means to them, and how it builds community in our country.
- Now invite people to take it in turns to put down their tea cup temporarily and to take one of the mugs representing the people behind the pot who are so often forgotten and to pray for this person. Spend as much time as you want praying for each group.
- Encourage everyone to take up their own mug again and spend time praying together that you would remember the supply chain behind tea every time you are drinking it or deciding which tea product to buy in the supermarket or at a café.
- You could also pray together about the other supply chains you are part of and ask for God's help with finding out more and making more loving purchases.

*This idea could be easily adapted to use with coffee instead. You would simply need a number of cafetieres, coffee and some alternative information about coffee.*

## 2. Unwrapping the truth about who brings us chocolate

*This idea is similar to the one above, but is powerful to use alongside it as well as an alternative, and is simpler to do in any context.*

**You will need:** a flipchart or another similar way of capturing information you brainstorm together so everyone can see it, enough small bars of Fairtrade chocolate (Green & Blacks miniature bars work well) for each person present to have one, sticky labels and pens.

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- Begin by asking those gathered a few questions about chocolate, and capturing their responses on the flip chart or whatever other means you have to gather what is said in a way everyone can see it:
  - When do you typically buy chocolate?
  - Who do you usually buy chocolate for?
  - Which brands do you often buy?
  - What is your own favourite?
- Spend some time as a group chatting about each others responses and then have a time of thanksgiving prayer, celebrating all the good ways in which chocolate is used to bless, comfort and bring people together in our culture.
- Explain that there is a darker side to chocolate. Many of the people involved in growing it have never tasted it and live in extreme poverty – some of them are children who have been trafficked. The Ivory Coast – where most of the UK's chocolate is sourced – is particularly bad for this. But massive change is taking place. Just a couple of years ago, 10% of chocolate bars were certified in the UK... now Fairtrade certification alone is at 34% and many of our biggest chocolate companies have pledged to certify 100% of their cocoa by 2020 – Nestle managed this in 2015\*.
- Encourage the group to brainstorm together as many groups of people as possible that they can think of who are in the supply chain behind their bar of chocolate, and record this list on the flipchart or similar. *(Their list may include some or all of the following: cocoa farmers and plantation workers, processing companies, buyers, company executives, advertisers, packagers, retailers, cafes, consumers, and certification bodies such as the Fairtrade Foundation.)*
- Now invite the group to take part in a time of open prayer for transformation at every stage of the supply chain where it is needed.
- Now give each person a bar of chocolate, a label, a pen and a few minutes to write some of these groups in a list onto their label and then to wrap this round their chocolate bar.
- Lead a time of prayer for yourselves, that you would have open eyes to see this list every time you eat chocolate or buy it and that God would help you to make loving decisions as consumers through your purchases and the power of your voices.
- You could also pray together about the other supply chains you are part of and ask for God's help with finding out more and making more loving purchases.
- Let everyone take their chocolate away as a reminder – and to enjoy.

\* Statistics taken from the Fairtrade Foundation in March 2016.