

ALL AGE WORSHIP PRESENTATION

Introductory note for leaders

This all-age presentation could work on its own as part of a service or in a small group. These resources are meant as a starting point, not the last word! Please adapt the materials freely for your own church context. It could work well to follow the presentation and discussion with a time of intercessory prayer.

The presentation needs a leader, three “actors/readers” and a reader for the Bible reading. First of all, we hear from two ‘foreigners’ living in land controlled by the tribes of Israel at some point after Moses. The foreigners have the right to be treated fairly, because of the Mosaic law, despite a number of reasons why this might not be expected. Secondly, we hear from a Fairtrade farmer in Cote d’Ivoire. Ebrottié Tanoh Florentin is a real farmer, who Fairtrade interviewed in 2018 (you can watch an extract of the interview [here](#)). Although Ebrottié’s situation is very different, many millions of people like him who grow our food often are not treated fairly today. So God’s consistent call to treat the poor with justice should still challenge us.

Background

We’ve all become much more aware in recent years of just how much trade matters to our daily lives. We’ve become very aware of how many jobs, government policies, the goods we buy and services we enjoy are linked to trade – both here in the UK, and in countries right around the world.

We can think about trade in (at least) two ways.

First, trade is a way for everyone to have better lives. Without trade, we could not eat bananas, or drink coffee, for example. Without trade, many jobs would simply not exist. Trade is cooperation, and partnership that helps us all.

The second point about trade is that it is a tough business. Negotiations are hard fought. No one wants to come out with a bad deal. To “arm wrestle” successfully in trade negotiations, you need big economic and political muscles.

So, when trading with poorer communities around the world, it is right to ask two questions.

- First, who’s got the power? Or, if you like, who’s got the biggest muscles?
- Second, are those we trade with opponents and competitors – or friends and partners?

This year the Fairtrade Foundation puts the spotlight on the Côte d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast), the world’s biggest cocoa producer. Four million people across Cote d’Ivoire grow cocoa, much of which comes to the UK. And yet, shockingly, 60 percent of all cocoa farmers live below the United Nations poverty line of just £1.47 per day.

Who’s got the power in this trading relationship? It isn’t the farmers.

All age church presentation:

Leader: Today is (the start of) Fairtrade Fortnight. Why is Fairtrade something that we are talking about in church? This morning we are going to meet some Fairtrade cocoa farmers and find out more about the challenges they face.

But first, we're going to travel back in time. We're travelling back thousands of years, to the time before Jesus was born. We're going to imagine what it might have been like to be poor at that time. I'd like you to meet Puabi and Ninos, a very poor husband and wife who might have come from Assyria, an ancient country which covered places like Syria, Lebanon and Iraq today.

Puabi: *My name is Puabi. I was born in Assyria, into a very poor family. My husband Ninos and I have never had any land of our own. We've always had to go from place to place, looking for work.*

Ninos: *It's a hard life, ours. You never know from day to day whether you'll be offered work. Even when you are hired for the day, the farmers cheat you as often as not.*

Puabi: *They pay you late or not at all. If we're not paid fairly, we don't have enough to eat. Many a night we've gone to sleep hungry.*

Ninos: *They do understand, but they just don't care!*

Puabi: *But Ninos - it is better since we came to the lands of the tribes of Israel. They've got a law which say we must be paid a fair wage, and paid on time each day.*

Ninos: *That's true Puabi, it is better here. They've got other laws to protect foreigners like us – it is part of their religion, I think. It's strange, my people have fought wars with them over the years. And we follow the god Baal, not the God of Israel. But they still treat us fairly.*

Leader: In the Old Testament, the Bible says that Moses was given a set of rules by God. They cover a lot of different things, including laws to protect poor people and foreigners. Here is one of those laws which could have made a difference to people like Puabi and Ninos:

Reader: ***Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it.***
(Deuteronomy 24:14-15 - NIV)

Leader: This law would have been hard for people to follow. The farmers who had to pay the wages were often very poor themselves. Ninos and Puabi also followed a different religion and many times the tribes of Israel fought wars with neighbouring countries. Although it could have

been hard, the rules that Moses wrote down said that treating everyone fairly, whatever your differences, was an important part of serving God.

Now let's come back to the present day, and meet a farmer called Ebbrottié Tanoh Florentin from a country in Africa called Cote d'Ivoire. Cote d'Ivoire is the biggest grower of cocoa in the world! If you like eating chocolate, you will have probably eaten cocoa grown in Cote D'Ivoire. (These are some extracts from an interview that Ebbrottié gave to the Fairtrade Foundation last year.)

Ebbrottié: *My name is Ebbrottié Tanoh Florentin. I am a cocoa farmer. I am married and I have six children.*

The cocoa prices are disastrous... you end up after costs with around £811 for the year. When a farmer gets up in the morning, he is always worried: how will he be able to feed and take care of his family? How can he send his children to school?

It is going to be difficult to pay for their school and medical care. A child needs protection and rights. Before, this protection did not exist, but now, with Fairtrade, the situation has improved. A child is entitled to have access to education, health, protection and food.

Leader: When Fairtrade spoke to Ebbrottié he was especially worried about climate change.

Ebbrottié: *Before, there were a lot of forests, the rains were regular and the seasons were well divided. It was easier... now we don't know any more when we should plant and when we should stop. Climate change has an impact on crops which results in less money and food available.*

Leader: Let's hear some final words from Ebbrottié,

Ebbrottié: *Now we are in the Fairtrade project, we have access to training. Someone who is trained is someone that can decide. So today, the training that Fairtrade provides gives us knowledge about plant diseases and how to improve our productivity.*

There are 5 million farmers in the Ivory Coast who suffer, who struggle to survive. There is no minimum income. If someone does not have the money to survive, what can he do? If the situation does not change, I think people will stop cocoa farming because the incomes are too low

If the consumers are satisfied but the farmers suffer, the future is very uncertain.

Leader: I wonder what you notice, listening to Ebbrottié? Listening to him, I understand better how hard it is for many farmers who grow food that we eat every day. 60 percent of all cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire live below the United Nations poverty line, which is just £1.47 per day.

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Although it is thousands of years after the Old Testament, it looks like it matters just as much today that we treat the people who grow our food fairly, even though, like Ebrottié, they might live far away in another country.

Did you notice Ebrottié explaining how Fairtrade had been improving things? When we buy Fairtrade chocolate, it means that extra money, called a Fairtrade premium, goes to the farmers. This year Fairtrade will be increasing the prices that are paid to farmers, to make even more of a difference. Fairtrade helps in other ways too, supporting farmers on the ground with training and advice. That all happens when people like you and me choose to buy Fairtrade.

Changing things for cocoa farmers in Cote d'Ivoire is not easy, and will take time and effort. But we can all help. We can think carefully about what we buy, and whether it has been produced fairly. We can share stories of Ebrottié, and other cocoa farmers with our friends and neighbours to encourage them to choose Fairtrade. And we can pray for ourselves and for all the people around the world who grow our food, who make our clothes, or produce other things that we consume.

I hope you've enjoyed meeting Ebrottié this morning, and also our Old Testament friends Puabi and Ninos.

INTERACTIVE OPTION FOR INFORMAL WORSHIP OR SMALL GROUPS

Present the interviews with Puabi, Ninos and Ebrottié (you could use [this short clip](#)), and also the Bible reading, and then discuss some or all of the following questions in small groups (use your own questions if you prefer). You may find it useful to share some of the main Fairtrade Fortnight materials with the group.

- What strikes you about the life that foreigners like Puabi and Ninos might have had in Old Testament times? What difficulties would they have faced? How did the law of Moses help?
- How challenging would this law have been for a farm owner, employing workers like Puabi and Ninos? Why might this have been the case?
- Are there any similarities between the lives of cocoa farmers in developing countries and poor workers in Old Testament times? What is similar and what is different?
- What does the presentation make you think or feel about your own relationship to farmers like Ebrottié who we rely on to grow much of the food we eat?
- What are some of the actions your church already takes to support farmers like Ebrottié? Are you or have you considered becoming a Fairtrade church? What other ideas for action do the Fairtrade Fortnight materials suggest you could take?
- You may want to write some prayers based on these readings and stories as part of your intercessions.