



**FAIR TRADE  
CAMPAIGNS**

# Fair Trade Congregations

## *Case Studies and Tips*

### *Our Lady of the Assumption (OLA) a Catholic Parish - Claremont, CA*

1. We had to have the endorsement of the Parish Council to officially move ahead on the path to becoming a Fair Trade Congregation. We suspect that this will be the case in most, if not all, Catholic parishes.

Here we found it valuable to till the soil before the busy council met and found this proposal on the usually packed agenda. We wrote a one page summary of a proposal to become a Fair Trade Congregation and sent this to a few friends who were on the council. We received their feedback and were able to craft a proposal that anticipated the questions and obstacles that might arise. This also meant that several Council members understood the meaning of Fair Trade and Fair Trade Congregations before going into the meeting and were on board as supporters.

2. Here are some options for the “Incorporate Fair Trade into your Social Teachings” badge. As our church does not have a school, we used the following as ways to meet this goal:

**Sunday Bulletin:** The parish bulletin is given to everyone and can be a powerful tool for education. Fair Trade can be the major focus of the Sunday bulletin, with one or two full pages devoted to the connection between Fair Trade and the major tenants of our faith. Along the same lines the education should be ongoing (keep a spot light on Fair Trade and Faith) with occasional handouts and short bulletin announcements.

**Organizations:** Presentations to mainstay organizations in a faith community, such as Peace and Justice Groups, the Knights of Columbus and the St Vincent de Paul Society in the Catholic parish, have a better chance of happening than a sermon on Fair Trade. And because there is an opportunity for Q and A and dialogue, these talks are likely to be more effective than 10-15 minutes of preaching.

**Where to Buy Fair Trade:** Finally, knowing about Fair Trade is not enough. Busy parishioners need help in taking action. Every educational effort in the parish should include a handout that includes Fair Trade Principles, Fair Trade logos and a list of local merchants with the Fair Trade product(s) each carries.

## ***First Congregational U.C.C. Church - Mankato, MN***

We are First Congregational U.C.C. church Mankato with around 100 members. When we started this campaign, we already were serving Fair Trade coffee but most of the congregation knew nothing about Fair Trade. The person who ordered the coffee was the one aware. The campaign took about 2 years of me doing pretty much all activities by myself. But after 2 years of announcing events and selling products at church, I asked the people that came to buy products often and came to events if they would like to form a Fair Trade committee. I rallied 4 people to form the committee.

Our greatest success has been putting on Fair Trade plays and having the children sing Fair Trade songs during the service. We do that on World Fair Trade Day in May. The reason that has been successful in raising awareness is because we ask people who don't know much about Fair Trade to participate in the plays and their children to sing the songs so they learn about Fair Trade and are actively participating in Fair Trade. They begin to own the concept when they make a time commitment in front of the congregation. One of our committee members writes the plays after we decide what our focus will be. She also writes the songs. The first one was on Bus Stop Wine and bananas. The second one was about Fair Trade coffee and the third was about Fair Trade chocolate. We also did the children's play about animals visiting a Fair Trade farm. You can see them on Youtube under Mankato First Congregational U.C.C. Fair Trade video. The songs are available now for anyone who would like them. Our Fair Trade curriculum which our education group, developed from longer lesson plans we saw on line, are also available for anyone to use. There are 7 lesson plans, each about 20 to 25 minutes long. I have used parts of them in Sunday school with success. They are geared for kindergarten through 6th grade.

## ***St. Paul's Lutheran Church - Teaneck, NJ***

Even before we ever heard the term "Fair Trade," our church woman's group had held occasional craft fairs with products from SERRV which followed a similar model, and made the SERRV catalog available at congregational events. Our congregation began promoting Fair Trade as a justice issue in earnest well over a dozen years ago, when Women of the ELCA (our national church women's group) challenged ELCA congregations across the country to purchase a certain number of tons of Fair Trade coffee through Lutheran World Relief's partnership with Equal Exchange. When our hospitality committee said it could not afford to serve Fair Trade coffee at our refreshment times and in our church office, Justice Committee members paid for the first order, and sold bags of Fair Trade coffee beans to congregation members at a slight increase of price to pay for the coffee used at the church. Before long we were doing the same thing with Fair Trade tea and chocolate and eventually sugar. Sometimes we also sold Fair Trade oil and snacks, and every few years we continue the tradition of holding a fair trade crafts fair. We also announced these sales in news releases to the local paper, explaining the concept of Fair Trade.

We first promoted how Fair Trade ties into the core values of our faith through Lutheran World Relief literature and announcements, usually followed by a comment by our pastor that working for justice in daily life like this is integral to our religion. We also promoted this at statewide conferences of our denomination. After several years, we showed a very light animated video on Fair Trade coffee that we had borrowed from the state office of our church, and were surprised by how much more congregation members had learned from a talking coffee bean than from our own announcements of the very same

points. This opened our eyes that we have to make this more fun! Through a simple Google-search, we found several skits featuring a talking coffee bean, and one of our members created a coffee bean costume. The congregation enjoyed our performances during worship services throughout the year.

Our congregation is part of our town wide Fair Trade Teaneck Steering Committee and plays a leadership role in Fair Trade Teaneck Sabbath – encouraging all congregations in town to focus on Fair Trade on a Sabbath day during October (Fair Trade Month). News releases to the local press are an important part of this effort. We have celebrated Fair Trade Teaneck Sabbath in our own congregation through guest speakers, quizzes, an interactive demonstration highlighting the many “middlemen” Fair Trade eliminates, and using Fair Trade wine during communion. We hope to be able to afford to add fair trade altar flowers this October. Our pastor also speaks highly of Fair Trade’s principles, and throughout the year usually includes Fair Trade whenever he lists examples of working for God’s justice in our world. We were also able to recruit another congregation that uses our worship space to celebrate Fair Trade Teaneck Sabbath last year, introducing a whole new faith community to the concept. We recruited a guest speaker who had participated in the Fair Trade visit to Mexico, to speak during their worship service. Their congregation and pastor showed great interest and asked great questions. We continue to follow up with them.

Our congregation was honored to host a Sunday afternoon visit of the Fair Trade speaker tour, including a representative of a Fair Trade Guatemalan coffee co-op. We sent invitations to all congregations in town, and announced it at an Ecumenical Bible Study. As part of the presentation, our pastor and a local rabbi each spoke of how Fair Trade fits in with basic values of our faith traditions.

As Fair Trade options became available in local grocery stores, several local shops and on-line, we have shifted our focus from selling Fair Trade items to encouraging Fair Trade choices when shopping. We found the biggest need is to acquaint members with the various Fair Trade logos, and to demonstrate how tiny these often appear on food products. As purchases of Fair Trade coffee through the church have decreased, we have had to announce we can no longer cover the price of the Fair Trade coffee the church uses through sales to congregation members. But now that church members are educated on the justice benefits of Fair Trade, there was no question at all that money must be found somewhere in the budget to cover this cost.