

## Reflection to accompany *Fairtrade Matters* film

by Canon John Kiddle, Director of Mission, Diocese of St Albans

“Pop round for a cup of tea, anytime; the door is always open”. It’s the sort of thing that neighbours say and it means a great deal. Opening a door, welcoming someone into your home, sharing a cup of tea is a simple but great way to grow a connection and to make a friendship. A cup of tea builds bridges.

“And who is my neighbour?” asked a man of Jesus, when discussing the second great commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. Jesus replied by telling a story; we know it as the parable of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10.25-37). The point of the story is that the true neighbour is the foreigner who saw someone in need, did not walk by on the other side but crossed the road and took action to help.

*The brilliant thing about Fairtrade is that it offers us a chance to be true neighbours. When we pause in the supermarket aisle, see the Fairtrade logo and reach for the bananas, the sugar or the packet of tea we are choosing to be a neighbour. We are choosing to cross the road and do something to help.*

The new short film created for the Fairtrade Foundation (see <http://fortnight.fairtrade.org.uk/>) by Will Robson-Scott provides a glimpse into the lives of two tea growers in Malawi. He says, “I tried to convey the day-to-day of the tea growers, and to touch upon points of the universal life: children going to school, people getting clean water, going to work, simply living their lives.”

It’s a film that invites us to know the tea growers as neighbours, as if we are sitting down with them over a cup of tea, talking together about our lives. It’s a film which says behind the cup of tea with which you welcome a new day, or enjoy an afternoon break, are people with stories to tell. Those who grow, pick and supply the tea you enjoy are, as Jesus would remind us, your neighbours – to love as you love yourself.

Will Robson-Scott says, “The worries Edson and Tsala have are exactly the same as worries you and I have. The difference is that lots more people live on the edge out there. If the crop goes wrong or it rains for too long, how will they feed their kids? People in the UK have services to rely on, in Malawi, if something goes wrong, the people have nothing. So their worries are the same as ours, but realistically they face a lot more obstacles that are not present in the Western world.”

Tea growers in Malawi like Edson and Tsala are our neighbours. They need our prayers, they need our love and they need our action. Fairtrade is a great way to do something that makes a difference. In Malawi the Sukumbizi Association Trust works with more than 8,000 local farmers and the small Fairtrade premium of US\$0.50 per kilo has made a massive difference to the community raising some \$650,000 transforming many aspects of life, including transport, health and education. For more information see [www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/farmers-and-workers/tea/sukumbizi-association-trust](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/farmers-and-workers/tea/sukumbizi-association-trust).

*Supporting people like Edson and Tsala through your choice to buy a Fairtrade product is so much more than charity. It's a choice to love a neighbour. It's a choice to make a difference. It's a choice to cross over the road and do something.*

This moving Fairtrade film is a gift. Make a cup of tea and sit down to watch the film (and it's well worth watching the longer version). Why not watch it with friends or neighbours, or a group from church. Use the gentle pace of the film to help you reflect on the lives of Edson and Tsala. Make connections with your own life, with your concerns, your day to day activities, your friends, church and community.

Edson and Tsala, your neighbours, are inviting you round for a cup of tea. And as neighbours, they might have one or two things to share with you. What might they want to say through the film about your life? It's a shared conversation. Take a bit of time to let them speak to you.

For example, Will Robson-Scott says this about the place of the church in the community, "The church is hugely important to these people, both spiritually and socially. It is an inseparable part of their lives, as the community is based around the church, more than in the Western culture. If there wasn't for a church, I don't know where they would socialise."

So have a cup of tea with Edson and Tsala; watch the film, have a conversation. Discover what it is to be neighbours and let that connection make a difference in their lives and yours.