

# UnitingWorld

## Imagine

Imagine a Uniting Church-wide movement in which every Uniting Church congregation, presbytery, synod, school, theological college, hospital and relevant agency is deeply engaged with one or more of the Uniting Church's overseas partners.

Imagine such broad and effective Uniting Church global connections that people outside the Uniting Church know it as a world church to which they can turn to help alleviate poverty, address climate change and respectfully relate to people beyond our nation.

Imagine Uniting Church partners knowing us as people who relate to them at deep life-changing levels, listening carefully for God's Word in them, working with them as fellow-disciples and generously, instinctively and boldly supporting each other in times of need.

UnitingWorld works toward this vision that encompasses the whole of the Uniting Church with its partners.

## Signs on the way

There are signs on the way to this vision being realised:

- Growing numbers of people offering to serve overseas
- New engagement by Uniting Church schools
- Lent Event, a congregation-led movement that offers discipleship resources incorporating global connections, spreading into four synod areas
- Gradual growth in giving
- New linking of congregations and overseas partner communities

## The way ahead

UnitingWorld has a strategic plan for 2009-2011. The key elements of that plan are:

UnitingWorld Mission: Connecting church communities and people worldwide to partner in God's mission

UnitingWorld Vision:

- We see:
  - Transformed communities where peace and justice reign and poverty is alleviated, pointing people to hope and life in Jesus Christ
- Partners see:
  - Trusted friends for the long run who are committed to understanding and serving them
  - Australian church communities with global radars, educated and

rejuvenated through meaningful and reciprocal engagement

The key strategic areas involve UnitingWorld:

1. Partnering overseas churches and agencies in transforming their local communities
2. Empowering Australian church communities to be effective global partners
3. Being recognised and trusted as a leading mission and development agency
4. Being resourced and positioned to realise our vision

A fresh emphasis is connecting the breadth of the Uniting Church, including congregations, with partners.

In formulating the plan there was consultation across the country. A result of the consultation was our proposal to change the name of the organisation from Uniting International Mission and Uniting Church Overseas Aid to UnitingWorld. This proposal was approved by the Assembly Standing Committee and was effective from March 2009.

## A theological corrective

Over the last fifty years there have been significant changes to how the Church understands itself in the mission of God. Mission became seen as primarily an attribute of God rather than primarily of the church. It was recognised that mission did not originate in the church and it ceased to be seen as predominantly foreign mission. As mission was integral, it was seen as erroneous to devolve or delegate mission to mission organisations. The church no longer had a mission but existed within the mission of God. Healthy correctives saw missions (plural) become mission (singular) with emphasis on the local.

It is time to make another correction. In the face of powerlessness and persecution, local communities in the early church had every reason to focus on their survival and protection. Instead, driven by their experience of the sending God, they had a strong sense of being global. That balance of global and local needs further restoration in the councils of the Uniting Church. Mission is not primarily local, just as it is not primarily global. Mission is one and is incomplete without both local and global dimensions. Both contribute to Christian identity. UnitingWorld exists to help the Church and people baptised into the Church live out their global identity. That identity, lived in relationship with people beyond Australia, requires development of Australian lifestyles that are environmentally responsible, economically equitable and culturally respectful.

## General Issues

The global financial crisis is having a significant impact on our partners and their communities, and on us. The crisis impacts partners by feeding political instability where governments must make unpopular decisions and there is unrest about major income disparity. The crisis is exacerbating the situation of people who are poor who are the first to lose jobs or suffer income decline. It is deepening

competitive tendencies for limited resources and shifting attention from significant issues like climate change and poverty. In relation to our finances, investment income is predicted to decline by 25%, giving from existing donors may be affected and exchange rates are unfavourable with some partners.

Synod sourced income to UnitingWorld is steadily reducing at the rate of \$50,000 per year. Together with loss of investment income, that means we must enlist new donors and significantly improve our profile if we are to assist partners in line with our vision.

Over the last three years there have been staff changes. Kerry Enright commenced as National Director in February 2007 and approximately half of the staff are new from 2008.

#### **Four Program Areas**

##### **Church Solidarity Programs**

UnitingWorld plans to maintain strong relationships with key church leaders in over thirty partner churches and to keep finding ways of acting together with them. That solidarity flows both ways. In the times of the Northern Territory Intervention and the 2009 Bush Fires, partner churches expressed their solidarity with the Uniting Church, prayed with us and were generous in their practical support and advocacy.

##### **Pacific themes**

The Uniting Church has the most extensive network of Pacific partner churches of any church in Australia.

We interact with country partners and also the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), the ecumenical body of Pacific churches. The Conference has highlighted the issues of climate change and trade justice as being of importance to the region.

Climate change is significantly impacting Pacific nations. A number have experienced severe flooding, following a combination of tropical rain depressions, king tides and storm surges. Rising water tables lead to flooding in the middle of small islands. Crops suffer the consequences of salination. In some places, rain is less common and fish resources are depleted. Coastal barriers are washing away. People have been displaced from the Carteret Islands in Papua New Guinea and there are expectations that much of Tuvalu, Kiribati and Tokelau will be uninhabitable within a generation.

Under the auspices of the PCC we have met with Pacific leaders, especially with those from Kiribati and Tuvalu, to plan action to encourage governments in the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand to address these issues. UnitingWorld has joined in representations to the Australian government to ensure attention to the situation of displaced persons. UnitingJustice Australia is the lead Assembly agency on climate change issues.

We have also taken up the second priority theme of trade justice. Australia and New Zealand are to begin a further round of trade negotiations with Pacific nations called "Pacerplus". In preparation for those negotiations both larger countries are investing resources in persuading Pacific officials and governments of the advantages of their approach. They are funding training sessions and free trade evangelists. It appears that only civil society groups, including the Church, are presenting alternative views.

The Australian and New Zealand approaches were of concern to Pacific churches. The imposition of an ideology that commodifies services and people has potential to undermine the gospel understanding of humankind and contribute significantly to the secularizing of Pacific thinking. UnitingWorld supports economic development but it needs to have its place within the wider Pacific Christian cultural context, not undermining it.

In response to the PCC prioritizing, UnitingWorld developed a policy paper on trade justice for submission to the Assembly. It was adopted in the interim by the Assembly Standing Committee. That paper is provided as an appendix to this report and will be subject to a separate proposal requesting that the Assembly adopt this paper as the basis for representations and advocacy. It has already led to advocacy with the Australian government in collaboration with the ACTU and other organizations. In 2008 we helped host the General Secretary of the PCC, Fei Tevi, who met with political leaders and officials, trade unionists and churches in raising these issues.

UnitingWorld is also working with partner churches in addressing the impact of growing urbanisation in Pacific nations, with consequential growth in unemployment, violence and alienation. That trend was most graphically expressed in September 2006, when the centre of Tonga's capital, Nukualofa, was destroyed by fire following riots.

In most parts of the Pacific, the church remains the most influential non-governmental body and the most effective infrastructure for education, networking and service delivery.

##### **Fiji**

In December 2006, the Fiji military led by Commodore Frank Bainimarama, overthrew the elected government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase. The President was replaced and Mr Bainimarama was appointed Prime Minister. Elections promised by March 2008 did not eventuate. In response to pressure from the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, the latest statements by Prime Minister Bainimarama are for elections in five to ten years. If elections are not held within the limit set by the Forum Leaders, Fiji may be the first nation suspended from the Forum and may suffer further sanctions.

The Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma was the only major Fijian church that spoke out in strong opposition to the coup. It also declined to participate in the consultations that have occurred in

relation to a new peoples' charter aimed at providing a foundation for a fresh constitution.

The President of the Uniting Church, Gregor Henderson, and the National Director of UnitingWorld made a solidarity visit to Fiji in December 2007 and there has been other frequent interaction. The Methodist Church wishes to do what is right for Fiji and especially those who are poor. With a succession of coups and a growing military force, Fiji is becoming increasingly militarised. UnitingWorld seeks to support the Church in responding to a very challenging situation.

#### Other Pacific items

Items of note include:

- Facilitating communication between synods, presbyteries, National Conferences and partner church leadership, where the partner has a presence in Australia
- A new partnership agreement with Ekalesia Kerisiano Niue
- Support for and involvement in the national stakeholder body for the Pacific Seasonal Worker Scheme, linking with sending partner churches and resourcing presbyteries and congregations in relation to the Scheme
- The exploring of possible Uniting Church membership of the Pacific Conference of Churches
- Annual meetings of the Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific on issues such as HIV / AIDs and Church / State relationships
- Mr Bruce Mullan began as Associate Director (Pacific) on 1 March 2009.

#### Asia

East Asia has experienced phenomenal economic growth over the past 30 years. However, the region is now vulnerable to the world economic recession with the threat of large social dislocation. The Korean peninsula remains divided and Pyongyang seems prepared to use its nuclear capacity as a bargaining chip in the region. Meanwhile serious questions remain regarding North Korea's ability to feed its population. UnitingWorld has a presence there in the work of Mr and Mrs Hong who run an orphanage and computer training centre. We want to expand the work there and open a tuberculosis clinic.

In South Korea, 2009 marks 120 years since the first Australian Presbyterians arrived in Busan. In collaboration with our partners including in Australia, we will be celebrating a substantial and lasting relationship. The re-election of the Kuomintang in Taiwan has led to some compromises with China and consequent fears that the island will lose its identity. The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan was generous in its gift for the Bushfire Appeal.

India has also experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth. However the

country remains essentially a nation of rural villages. Dalits (untouchables) and Adivasi (tribals) continue to live as a poverty stricken underclass.

Trafficking of women and children in the Eastern Himalayas is a major focus for the Church of North India while religious violence in Orissa, where Christian minorities are being targeted, highlights the fanaticism of some Hindu nationalists. UnitingWorld together with the Justice and International Mission Unit (Victoria-Tasmania) are involved in advocacy on these issues. In the India's north-west, the Diocese of Amritsar places a strong emphasis on effective interfaith engagement and we are working with Bishop Samanataroy to provide opportunities for Australians to participate in this important activity.

Peace and reconciliation also remains a major focus as the Church of North India appeals to the nation "to unite for peace". This comes in response to the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008. These attacks have left much of India in deep shock. A Young Ambassadors for Peace program operates in North East India.

Our partner, the Jaffna Diocese, Church of South India, suffers as the war comes to height in the Vanni region of Sri Lanka. The civilian population is under siege while tens of thousands of people have been displaced. UnitingWorld, together with Justice and International Mission (Victoria-Tasmania), have appealed for assistance to support internally displaced people. We are also appealing for a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement to the 26 year old civil war.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008 a UnitingWorld India Office was dedicated. This is a new initiative and the office will manage UnitingWorld programs in India, offering amore "hands on" approach.

In Southeast Asia we have offered encouragement to our Thai partner in the wake of social unrest responding to corruption in the ruling government. The formation of a new coalition government in Bangkok has eased tensions. However there is potential for more unrest.

In the Philippines abductions, torture and the murder of human rights campaigners, including church leaders, continues. We are supporting campaigns to offer assistance to victims while the Synod of Victoria-Tasmania and the Synod of South Australia are each committed to specific programs in South Luzon and North Luzon.

Timor Leste continues to live with the consequences of years of brutal military occupation. The Prime Minister, Jose Ramos-Horta was seriously wounded in an attempted assassination in February 2008. A similar plot was planned for the President, Xanana Gusmao. This violence occurred in the wake of earlier upheaval in 2006 as internal factions attacked one another and some 70,000 people were forced out of their homes.

UnitingWorld is encouraging our partner, the Protestant Church in Timor Lorosa'e (IPTL) to address the many internal divisions that

characterise Timor Leste. UnitingWorld funds programs through the IPTL relief agency, FUSONA.

Indonesia continues to move through a remarkable period of reform with legislative elections taking place in April 2009 and presidential elections taking place in July 2009. With the world's largest Muslim population, relations between Islam and Indonesia's 20 million Christians are a critical priority. We are encouraging the Indonesian Communion of Churches in their dialogue with Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah while we have participated with the Indonesian Christian Church in their conversations with the Wahid Institute. Our focus is also on supporting local interfaith initiatives taking place all over the country.

Sadly, the impact of reform is not universally experienced across the Indonesian archipelago with serious breaches taking place in West Papua. Local people are subjected to human rights abuses, disappearances, mysterious deaths and ongoing harassment from intelligence agencies. Papuans accused of "subversion" are often imprisoned for many years while military "sweeping" in mountain villages often leave people dead and homes destroyed. Cholera outbreaks go unchecked while 40% of all Indonesia's documented HIV / AIDS cases are in West Papua (while West Papua forms just 2% of Indonesia's total population).

UnitingWorld is involved in regular advocacy to government regarding West Papua and we are planning to work more closely with the Faith-Based Network on West Papua (based in The Hague). Support is being offered for education and English teaching while we are working with the Synods of South Australia and Western Australia on the provision of healthcare and clean water. In such a way we are following through on the Eleventh Assembly resolution asking us "to offer maximum support to the Evangelical Christian Church in the Land of Papua through prayer, advocacy with the Australian Government and the people of Australia, and in such other ways as are appropriate."

UnitingWorld helped organise the national Minister's conference in Bali in July 2008. Church workers encountered different faith traditions and reflected cross-culturally. They visited remote rural villages in Timor or dialogued with Muslim communities in Central Java. We are contemplating holding similar conferences in the future.

### **Africa**

The Uniting Church has partners in Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### **Zimbabwe**

UnitingWorld has expressed the solidarity of the Uniting Church to the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa as they seek to respond to that nation's deteriorating political, economic and social situation.

Zimbabwe churches have been intimidated by the Mugabe regime but have found opportunity more recently to be outspoken in their condemnation of

human rights abuses and the need for major change. At time of writing it was too early to predict what change will occur with the inclusion of the Movement for Democratic Change in the cabinet. Our Church and government needs to keep Zimbabwe before us for prayer and action. We will continue to express the strong support of the Uniting Church for our partners there.

### **International Human Rights**

UnitingWorld continues to press issues of international human rights with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, embassies and governments such as in relation to:

- People displaced through climate change, especially in Kiribati and Tuvalu
- Trade Justice, especially in relation to Australia's negotiations with Pacific nations
- Philippines – the continuing abduction and intimidation of church, union and community leaders
- North East India – the internal displacement of over 60,000 Christians and continuing attacks on Christians in Orissa
- Zimbabwe – major political, social and economic issues including the intimidation of the Church
- West Papua – increased presence of Indonesian military, human rights abuses and insufficient implementation of the agreed special autonomy status
- Sri Lanka – the Sri Lanka government is determined to remove the Tamil Tigers although, even if they are successful, underlying issues will still need resolution. 250,000 civilians are trapped in the conflict zone.

Advocacy is becoming such an important part of supporting our partners that we plan to establish a position and elicit donations to fund our continued support of these issues.

### **Experience Programs (formerly People in Mission)**

Our experience programs enable Uniting Church people to serve with partner churches short or long-term, and to visit in groups for short periods. An indication of the size of the program is that at time of writing, 16 people are serving overseas and a further 25 are due to take up placement. We advertised 70 Partner church positions (some need to be filled with more than one person) and had nearly 100 serious enquiries or offers in response.

The programs are supported by a thorough process of assessment, preparation, orientation, in-place support and debriefing in collaboration with Synods.

The continuing growth of interest in this program is such that we are planning to raise further funds to employ a further person to support the numbers involved. Mrs Kathy Pereira began as Coordinator in February 2008.

## Relief and Development Programs (formerly Uniting Church Overseas Aid)

UnitingWorld provides direct support for approximately 30,000 beneficiaries and indirectly for 200,000. An example is in West Timor.

West Timor is the poorest part of Indonesia. Villagers live on less than \$1 per day. In one village, for example, there is frequent flooding and consequent loss of crops. UnitingWorld partners a micro-credit agency of the Protestant Church in West Timor. That agency purchases cows in the local market, vaccinates and prepares the cows and lends them to the villagers. The villagers feed and care for the cows and receive most of the profit on their sale. That simple scheme, carefully managed, has enabled families to receive more income than they would otherwise have received in a whole year. For the first time they do not struggle for food and their children are able to attend school. A simple process makes an enormous difference.

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) research<sup>1</sup> into Non Governmental Organisation effectiveness found that:

[Australian] NGO effectiveness can only be understood as a combination of [several] factors. These include what NGOs do, their field and program work and their advocacy and other influencing work. It also includes who they are, their values and principles and their approaches to engaging and working with people and other organizations. The research concluded that the more synergistic all these features, the more effective the overall outcomes of the agency for poor people and communities.

### Developments

In December 2006, Uniting Church Overseas Aid received full AusAID accreditation. Gaining that accreditation required considerable work and represents strong endorsement for the organisation's accountability, transparency and processes. A distinct governance structure was developed and endorsed by the Assembly Standing Committee, and policies adopted. The National Committee meets quarterly and oversees the work. It adopted a strategic plan for the next three years as a sub-set of the overall UnitingWorld plan.

In consultations across the country it became clear that having two names for the global relationships of the Uniting Church was confusing. It was decided therefore, as part of the strategic review, to have one name only. Relief and development programs continue to be distinct and are tax deductible.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Chapman, R & L Kelly, (2007): "Why Understanding Organisational Values and Relationships is Important for Assessing Aid Effectiveness - An NGO Perspective", Australasian Evaluation Society Conference, Melbourne September 2007.

The Papua New Guinea Church Partnership Program involves collaboration among seven Australian agencies and their church partners in Papua New Guinea. The program is effective and innovative and cited as good practice. It has led to increased cooperation with the United Church of Papua New Guinea including the development of a relief and development unit there with 26 employees.

A new area of work involves growing collaboration with Uniting Church Schools. We want to help students gain a sense of the global nature of the Uniting Church, connect with our partners and develop a cultural humility towards other countries. Schools have made visits and are developing relationships with particular regions.

Over the last year, Young Ambassadors for Peace, a peace-making program of UnitingWorld was brought into Uniting Church Overseas Aid as it falls within the scope of relief and development. This has led to growing collaboration that enables development projects to proceed where peace has been established.

UnitingWorld has continued to work appreciatively and collaboratively with Lent Event, a discipleship program of West Epping Uniting Church in Sydney. Lent Event provides good quality resources that help embed global sensitivity into daily disciplines.

### Challenges and opportunities

Australia was a signatory to the Millennium Declaration in 2000 in which the international community pledged to "spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty" and halve world poverty by 2015.

The 2008 United Nations report states that "we have made important progress towards all eight goals, but we are not on track to fulfil our commitments." The achievement of the goals is now affected by the global economic slowdown and food security crisis together with global warming. As the report states, the economic slowdown will diminish the incomes of people who are poor; the food crisis will raise the number of hungry people in the world and climate change will have a disproportionate impact on poor communities.

The eradication of extreme poverty remains achievable but extra resolve, resources and focus are required where targets are in danger. The proportion of people in sub-Saharan Africa living on less than \$1 per day is unlikely to be reduced by the target of one-half; About one quarter of all children in developing countries are considered to be underweight and are at risk of having a future blighted by the long-term effects of undernourishment; Of the 113 countries that failed to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary school enrolment by the target date of 2005, only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015; Almost two thirds of employed women in the developing world are in vulnerable jobs as own-account or unpaid family workers; More than 500,000 prospective mothers in developing countries die annually in childbirth or of

complications from pregnancy; Some 2.5 billion people, almost half the developing world's population, live without improved sanitation; More than one third of the growing urban population in developing countries live in slum conditions; Developed countries' foreign aid expenditures declined for the second consecutive year in 2007 and risk falling short of the commitments made in 2005.

The Australian government is to be commended for its commitment to increasing the proportion of government expenditure for aid and development to .5% of Gross National Income by 2015.

There are signs of progress in some areas. Deaths from measles fell from over 750,000 in 2000 to less than 250,000 in 2006, and about 80 per cent of children in developing countries now receive a measles vaccine; Malaria prevention is expanding, with widespread increases in insecticide-treated net use among children under five in sub-Saharan Africa: in 16 out of 20 countries, use has at least tripled since around 2000; the incidence of tuberculosis is expected to be halted and begin to decline before the target date of 2015; some 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water since 1990.

Poverty is multifaceted and must be addressed systemically. What are called cross-cutting issues, such as gender equity, are major dynamics in the relief and development programs of UnitingWorld. Much of our work is with partners in rural areas, which are furthest from achieving several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The hardship of rural life is encouraging migration to towns and cities, with the result that approximately half the world's population is now living in urban areas. In 2005, for example, slightly more than one third of the urban population in developing regions lived in slum conditions, with the associated problems of inadequate water and sanitation facilities, and lack of social infrastructure, including for health and education.

UnitingWorld seeks to address these issues by working holistically with partner churches, building their capacity to provide relief and development as part of their participation in the mission of God. Many churches have limited capacity in these areas so it requires sustained, patient and respectful collaboration with them. No two churches are alike. Progress in the United Church of Papua New Guinea is evident, whereas the journey with the neighbouring United Church of Solomon Islands is just beginning.

The nature and history of our partnerships means we are uniquely placed to tackle the MDGs through working with our partners who are spread through the grassroots of their communities.

### **Next three years**

UnitingWorld will work with partners to address complex global issues that are having a local impact such as climate change, gender equity, peace-making, HIV / AIDS and poverty alleviation, recognising our steps will be small.

We will move our present projects towards a more integrated, programmatic approach that takes account of cross-cutting issues. We will have new programs in China, West Papua and the Philippines. We will develop country strategies that incorporate relief and development alongside experience, peacemaking and solidarity programs. We will engage more Uniting Church bodies, including congregations, in our relief and development work.

We are planning towards the AusAID review of our agency in about 2011 with a view to full reaccreditation.

We will have a substantially new relief and development team. In early 2010, the Reverend Laurie Fitzgerald retires after working for Uniting International Mission for fourteen years, the last eight as Associate Director responsible for relief and development. Laurie was significantly responsible for the establishment and early years of Uniting Church Overseas Aid. He has exhibited a strong faithful and personal commitment to working with partners to alleviate poverty and has travelled extensively to establish, support and evaluate projects. He has ensured that the projects have been well publicised so that support for the work has steadily grown and he has developed a profile for the Uniting Church in the development sector. This has involved many meetings, reports and visits. We are deeply grateful for the foundation he has established and for the way in which he has facilitated succession.

### **Peacemaking Programs (Young Ambassadors for Peace)**

Our peacemaking programs continue to be effective in building peace from eight centres in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka.

The model is simple. Working with partners, people from local communities participate in an initial workshop. Those sufficiently motivated form a Young Ambassadors for Peace group. That group promotes peace principles and networks to enlist more people to commit to peace-making. Further workshops extend awareness, deepen understanding and facilitate reconciliation among conflicted individuals, clans, tribes and communities. Over time more and more people experience the personally and communally transformational process. They continue to promote its worth until eventually key community leaders become convinced and then more formal peace-making processes occur.

As an example, in 2008 in the southern highlands of Papua New Guinea, 32 clans were involved in 16 mediations. They had been warring for 8 generations. They laid down their weapons, exchanged gifts and signed agreements committing themselves to peaceful resolutions of conflicts. As a result, UnitingWorld can now work with the United Church there to start development projects, hitherto impossible because of the level of violence.

Over the next three years, we will appoint a support worker for Joy Balazo who has run the program

since its inception. We will elicit more donations to enable the program to expand in places of conflict where the Church is asking for help. We will also integrate the program with the other peacemaking work of the Uniting Church so that the wider church can learn from the experience of Young Ambassadors for Peace.

#### **Referrals from the Eleventh Assembly 2006**

The Eleventh Assembly made decisions requiring action by UnitingWorld. Action relating to those not elsewhere reported on is described below.

Uniting Church involvement in inter-faith dialogue goes back as far as the Australian Church's first engagements overseas, particularly in Asia. The Assembly requested Uniting International Mission to develop a process to make available to the Uniting Church insights from the extensive inter-religious and especially Christian-Muslim dialogues of partners. Although a process was not developed, insights were communicated through UnitingWorld publications. The Ministers' Conference held in Bali had a significant inter-faith element. Over the next three years UnitingWorld will engage with the Relations with Other Faiths Committee to plan how insights can be shared more thoroughly.

The Assembly decided "to support the ministry of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), as it defends the rights of the poor, deprived and oppressed communities; as it calls for a proper investigation into death threats and murders; and as it addresses the underlying issues that lead to violence and injustice throughout the Philippines." A solidarity visit in 2008 strengthened relationships and was followed by the development of a plan shared by the National Assembly, the Filipino National Conference and the Synods of South Australia and Victoria/Tasmania. A young leader from the UCCP was key speaker at the 2009 National Christian Youth Convention. Advocacy regarding the situation in the Philippines continues with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. While murders have diminished in number, extra-judicial activity including abductions, torture, vexatious prosecutions and intimidation by the Philippine military forces continue.

**Rev Dr Kerry Enright**  
**National Director**

**Rev Stuart Cameron**  
**Chairperson**  
**Reference Committee**

**Mr Malcolm Gledhill**  
**Chairperson**  
**National Committee, Overseas Aid and Development**





# Trade Justice: A Uniting Church View

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# Trade Justice: A Uniting Church View

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. *Why a Uniting Church paper on trade justice?*

*“Before you’ve finished your breakfast this morning, you’ll have relied on half the world.” - Martin Luther King Jr*

Whether we are conscious of it or not, now more than ever we are dependent upon distant others in the ordinary course of our daily lives.

Globalisation has transformed relations between states and between people. The exponential increase in the movement of goods, capital and knowledge across the globe has resulted in an unprecedented level of economic interdependence. Trade is a significant factor in this increased interdependence. Although international trade has existed for centuries, the volume and value of trade has grown at a staggering pace in the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> Globalisation has not only seen a rise in the volume of trade, it has transformed the nature of trade itself. The production, distribution and marketing of goods and services are increasingly global.

The result is a complex picture of economic integration in which countries increasingly depend on each other for their prosperity. It also means that ordinary people – as consumers and producers – are deeply connected through and affected by international trade.

However, the benefits and burdens of this increased interdependence have not been equally shared. Globalisation has had uneven effects: while some have enjoyed increased prosperity, the poorest are often left behind. Our partner churches in developing countries have expressed concern that their communities are being harmed by globalisation and marginalised in the international trade system.<sup>3</sup>

All of this means that trade is an issue with which the church must grapple. The purpose of this paper is to encourage a full and informed discussion amongst congregations and agencies of the Uniting Church about trade and its implications for who we are and how we respond to the world around us.

This paper is set out as follows:

- Part 1 provides a brief introduction to free trade;
- Part 2 discusses the theological underpinnings for the church’s response to trade, and
- Part 3 discusses possible responses for the Uniting Church.

This discussion paper recognises and seeks to build upon the existing work of the Uniting Church relating to this issue, particularly:

- *Economic Justice – The Equitable Distribution of Genuine Wealth* (1988) Discussion paper prepared by Assembly Social Responsibility and Justice Committee (commended by the National Assembly in 1988)
- Dr Ann Wansbrough, *A Call to Justice Concerning Employment* (1994) Assembly Social Responsibility and Justice Committee
- Dr Ann Wansbrough, *Trade (Not Globalisation)* (2001) Election 2001 Briefing Note
- Submissions by UnitingCare NSW-ACT to Treaties Committee inquiries into the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and Australia’s relationship with the World Trade Organisation, and submissions to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade public consultations in 2000 and 2001.
- Denham Grierson, *Fair Trade: Some Theological Perspectives* (2006) commissioned by the Justice and International Mission Unit, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

This paper also acknowledges the responses of ecumenical bodies and other churches to economic globalisation, including the Pacific Conference of Churches,<sup>4</sup> the World Council of Churches,<sup>5</sup> the

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<sup>2</sup> Between 1990 and 1999, the annual growth of world exports was 6%, which was slightly more than double the growth of global GDP in the same period. (Kevin Watkins and Penny Fowler, *Rigged Rules and Double Standards*, Oxfam, 2002, p35)

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Pacific Conference of Churches, “The Island of Hope: The Pacific Churches Response to Economic Globalization”, August 2001. This paper comes in direct response to the requests of our partner churches, particularly through the Pacific Conference of Churches, to support them in responding to the impact of international trade on their communities.

<sup>4</sup> Pacific Conference of Churches, “The Island of Hope: The Pacific Churches’ Response to Economic Globalization”, August 2001.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches,<sup>6</sup> the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance,<sup>7</sup> the Presbyterian Church of the USA<sup>8</sup> and the Lutheran World Federation.<sup>9</sup>

## I. INTERNATIONAL TRADE: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

### 2. Free trade and neo-liberalism

Free trade doctrine states that when artificial barriers to trade are eliminated, the market works to create the most efficient allocation of resources.<sup>10</sup> Barriers to trade include policies such as tariffs,<sup>11</sup> subsidies to local production and non-tariff barriers, such as product standards. The greatest sin under this doctrine is protectionism: the use by a government of policies or regulations to assist local industries or promote exports. Protectionism is seen to distort prices, increase inefficiency and undermine the free working of market forces.

However, the application of this theoretical doctrine to policy prescription has been controversial because in reality no economy is entirely unregulated – each country's economy sits somewhere on a spectrum between autarky<sup>12</sup> (ie. self-sufficiency) and free trade.<sup>13</sup>

The idea that unfettered trade is *always* welfare enhancing has been largely discredited amongst academic economists, who recognise that the theoretical assumptions underpinning free trade theory are rarely present in the real world.<sup>14</sup> Yet international financial institutions and many rich country governments continue to embrace an ideology of neo-liberalism or 'market fundamentalism' – the belief that markets by themselves lead to economic efficiency and that intervention in markets is always to be discouraged.

In the 1990s this approach was enshrined in the Washington Consensus – a package of neo-liberal prescriptions created by international financial institutions to reform developing country economies. These reforms include:

- *trade liberalisation* (lowering of barriers to trade);
- *deregulation* (abolishing regulations that impede market entry or restrict competition), and
- *privatisation* (the provision of public services through the private sector).

This was touted as a formula for economic growth that would benefit the poor – as the saying goes, a rising tide lifts all boats.

However the present global financial crisis is a demonstration of the volatility and vulnerability of the neo-liberal economic system. In providing funds to 'bail out' corporations facing closure, governments in the developed world have exposed the contradictions of a *free market* economic model founded on minimal state intervention. The impact the present economic crisis will have in the long term is unknown, however it is the vulnerable that are the most adversely affected in situations such as those being experienced.

What the present crisis highlights is the flaws of this economic doctrine that have been noted for some time in the failure of neo-liberalism to lift the poor out of poverty.<sup>15</sup> Liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation are not simply dry economic prescriptions, but processes which can have an enormous impact on ordinary peoples' lives, and particularly on the poorest. Despite its claims to objectivity, neo-liberalism is as much a political agenda as an economic one – an agenda which produces winners and losers.

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<sup>5</sup> World Council of Churches, "Alternative Globalization: Addressing Peoples and Earth", ("the AGAPE document"), Geneva 2005.

<sup>6</sup> World Alliance of Reformed Churches, "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth", Accra 2004.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.e-alliance.ch/trade.jsp>.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.pcusa.org/trade/>.

<sup>9</sup> Karen L Bloomquist, "Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion", Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, May 2001, p19.

<sup>10</sup> Influential figures in the development of free trade doctrine included Adam Smith, David Hume and David Ricardo. Modern proponents included the Austrian school (eg. Fredrich von Hayek) and the Chicago School (eg. Milton Friedman).

<sup>11</sup> A tariff is a tax imposed on imports.

<sup>12</sup> Autarky is an economy that is self-sufficient (ie. a closed economy) and one that does not take part in - or has extremely limited - international trade (eg. North Korea).

<sup>13</sup> Joseph E Stiglitz and Andrew Charlton, *Fair Trade For All: How Trade Can Promote Development*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, p12., p126.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph E Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, Allen Lane, London, 2006, p xiv.

<sup>15</sup> For an account of the failures of the Washington Consensus, from a former Chief Economist of the World Bank, see Joseph E Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (1<sup>st</sup> ed), WW Norton, New York, 2002.

Over recent years, the neo-liberal doctrine has been challenged by civil society organisations across the world – churches, trade unions and community organisations – which have worked alongside the poorest members of their communities and seen the ill-effects of free market economics. Poor countries have not benefited equally from the expansion of world trade.<sup>16</sup> The international trading system has left the poor behind.

### **3. How the international trading system leaves the poor behind**

#### **a) The myth that liberalisation automatically leads to growth**

In conventional wisdom, trade liberalisation is meant to encourage economic growth, and therefore reduce poverty. However, a number of economists have questioned the evidence behind this claim.<sup>17</sup> In reality, those countries which are lauded as development success stories – such as the ‘tiger’ economies of East Asia – have not done so through conventional neo-liberal trade policies, but through innovative approaches that defy many Washington Consensus prescriptions. As former World Bank Chief Economist, Joseph Stiglitz, notes, “To date, not one successful developing country has pursued a purely free market approach to development.”<sup>18</sup>

Many countries that have followed the Washington Consensus prescriptions have found it bitter medicine. Rapidly opening local industries to foreign competition can be devastating for the poor. Sectors which struggle to compete in open markets may see huge job losses; and where employment is created by liberalisation, it often benefits more educated and skilled workers, who tend not to be the poorest.<sup>19</sup> In agriculture, liberalisation may reinforce pressures on smallholder farmers who have to absorb the impact of lower prices for their produce. By cutting revenue from import and export taxes, liberalisation may also undermine the ability of governments to provide services that can assist the poor to benefit from trade.<sup>20</sup>

Contrary to neo-liberal ideology, trade liberalisation is not synonymous with development. This paper does not argue that trade liberalisation is *never* good for development or that there are not other contextually specific practices that hinder a country's fulfilment of development (e.g. corruption), but that liberalisation should not be pursued at any cost. Trade liberalisation can foster development *if* pursued in a manner that is sensitive to national circumstances, appropriately sequenced and integrated into national poverty alleviation strategies.<sup>21</sup>

However, trade-related development initiatives are not the only or necessarily the best path to development. For some communities, such as those in remote locations, export-oriented development strategies may simply be inappropriate and undesirable. Ultimately, trade liberalisation should only be pursued if and when it is sought by affected communities rather than thrust upon countries as a pre-requisite for ongoing trading relationships.

#### **b) Double standards and the governance gap**

Free trade is said to create a level playing field by reducing barriers to trade and allowing companies to compete on an equal footing. In reality, the field is less than even. According to the International Monetary Fund's Trade Restrictiveness Index, which measures countries' openness to trade, many developing countries are now far more open than industrialised countries.<sup>22</sup> Wealthy countries have long argued for open markets abroad whilst maintaining protection in sectors such as agriculture and textiles and using loopholes in international trade rules to limit access to their own markets.<sup>23</sup> These

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<sup>16</sup> Despite having four-fifths of the world's population, developing countries generate less than a quarter of world exports, while industrialised countries generate three quarters of world exports (Watkins and Fowler, p69).

<sup>17</sup> For a review of these studies, see Watkins and Fowler, p128-130. Economists Francisco Rodriguez and Dani Rodrik write, “[T]he nature of the relationship between trade policy and economic growth remains very much an open question... We are in fact sceptical that there is a general, unambiguous relationship between trade openness and growth waiting to be discovered. We suspect that the relationship is a contingent one, dependent on a host of country and external characteristics.” (*Trade Policy and Economic Growth: A Sceptic's Guide to the Cross National Evidence*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge MA, 1999, p4.)

<sup>18</sup> Stiglitz and Charlton, p17. See also Dani Rodrik, *The Global Governance of Trade as if Development Really Mattered*, UNDP, 2001, p23ff.

<sup>19</sup> Watkins and Fowler, p137-9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p145.

<sup>21</sup> See Stiglitz and Charlton; Watkins and Fowler (especially Chapter 5); Rodrik.

<sup>22</sup> Watkins and Fowler, p125-6.

<sup>23</sup> In agriculture, for example, farm producers in rich countries receive support in excess of \$250 billion. (Jeffrey Sachs, Ernesto Zedillo & Patrick Messerlin, ‘A global breakthrough in trade’ in United Nations Development Programme, *UN Millennium Project*, 2005, p 213).

<<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/MainReportChapter14-lowres.pdf>>

trade barriers hurt people who are poor in particular because they are targeted at the goods that the poor produce.

The major multilateral negotiating forum on international trade is the World Trade Organisation (WTO).<sup>24</sup> The current round of WTO negotiations is based on the Doha Development Agenda (2001).<sup>25</sup> Ministerial meetings have occurred at Cancun (2003), Geneva (2004) and Hong Kong (2005) but as yet an agreement on the Doha Development Agenda remains elusive. The last break-down in meetings occurred in July 2008.<sup>26</sup>

Multilateral trade negotiations have long been dominated by rich country governments and interest groups, with the result that international trade rules are weighted in favour of goods and services produced in wealthy countries.<sup>27</sup> Thus there is a governance gap in which those most affected by international trade rules have the least ability to set the agenda and influence the outcome of trade negotiations.

This governance gap is at the heart of the failures of the international trade regime. It has created a system of "rigged rules and double standards"<sup>28</sup> in which developing countries are expected to open their markets without receiving reciprocal access to the markets of industrialised countries. Until this governance gap is addressed and the playing field is made more genuinely level, the international trade regime will continue to marginalise the poorest.

### c) Primary commodities

Many of the world's poorest people remain heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities for their livelihoods. More than 50 developing countries depend on three or fewer primary commodities for more than half of their export earnings.<sup>29</sup> Yet global commodities markets are marked by instability and extremely low prices. This leaves poor producers and agricultural labourers in a position of extreme vulnerability.

On the whole, prices for primary commodities have been on a downward trend for the last three decades. For example, coffee prices fell by two-thirds between 1988 and 2001.<sup>30</sup> In addition, these prices tend to fluctuate wildly. It is not uncommon for primary commodity prices to fluctuate from below 50% to 150% of the average price on a year-to-year basis.<sup>31</sup> This instability is due to a range of factors.<sup>32</sup> These include structural over-supply due to the emergence of new producers, agricultural subsidies in industrialised countries and the fact that by nature agricultural production is less responsive to price and demand because of the lag between planting and harvesting.<sup>33</sup> Further, producers have limited access to price information which would allow them to adjust their production.

The harshest impacts of these market fluctuations fall on producers and agricultural labourers. Faced with dramatic cuts in income, children are withdrawn from school, health and nutrition deteriorates and households are left more exposed to risks. Women bear a double burden, often being required to find additional work to supplement the family's income, whilst continuing to maintain the household.

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<sup>24</sup> The WTO came into existence in 1995 for the purpose of supervising international trade and reducing trade barriers. It was the outcome of nearly five decades of negotiations around the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which was created in 1947. The purpose of this agreement was the reduction of barriers to international trade especially with the hope of rebuilding war-torn Europe. The aim to create an International Trade Organisation did not succeed until the creation of the WTO in 1995. There are currently 153 member states of the WTO. (WTO, 'The GATT years from Havana to Marrakesh', Understanding the WTO: Basics. [http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/fact4\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/fact4_e.htm)).

<sup>25</sup> World Trade Organisation, Doha Development Agenda [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dda\\_e/dda\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/dda_e.htm).

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Ranald, "Behind the spin on collapse of World Trade Organisation Doha Round", AFTINET, July 29 2008. <http://www.aftinet.org.au>.

<sup>27</sup> Diana Tussie and Ngaire Woods, "Trade, Regionalism and the Threat to Multilateralism", in Woods, Ngaire (ed) *the Political Economy of Globalization*, Macmillan Press, London, 2000, p54-76 at 72.

<sup>28</sup> Watkins and Fowler.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p150.

<sup>30</sup> World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries*, Washington, 2002.

<sup>31</sup> Watkins and Fowler, p153.

<sup>32</sup> The "commodity problem" is an extremely complex one and has been the subject of considerable debate. For a discussion of the debates around commodity trade and development, see Benoit Daviron and Stefano Ponte, *The Coffee Paradox*, Zed Books, London, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures 2008*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2008, p8.

Unless mechanisms are developed to cushion the poorest against the harsh impacts of price volatility, they will continue to be made vulnerable by their exposure to international markets.<sup>34</sup>

Producers of primary commodities often gain only a small share of the final value of their product. This is due in part to trade barriers in industrialised countries, many of which have 'escalating tariffs' that increase according to the degree of processing a commodity has undergone. This means that most processing of raw materials takes place in industrialised countries, depriving developing countries of the opportunity to earn a larger share of the value of their produce.

For a number of commodities, such as cocoa and coffee, market power is concentrated in the hands of a small number of large transnational corporations. Small producers have very little power to negotiate better prices, leaving them in a weak position in the global supply chain. Yet plummeting commodity prices have often not been shared by the consumer, but have resulted in widening profit margins for these large corporations. Unless developing countries are able to gain a larger share of the value of primary commodity exports, and to diversify into other industries, the benefits accruing to them from international trade will be limited.

It should be noted that the pursuit of export-oriented development in agriculture can have negative consequences for the environment and food security. Farmers may shift from mixed subsistence agriculture to cash crops,<sup>35</sup> creating threats to food security as farmers cease producing food for local consumption. As export production tends to require bulk quantities, cash crop production often encourages monoculture farming,<sup>36</sup> increased chemical use and more intensive farming practices. This results in environmental damage, such as soil degradation and reduced biodiversity.

These concerns have underpinned movements to advocate food sovereignty, the right of peoples to determine their own food and agricultural policy without external influence or interference.<sup>37</sup> The movement for food sovereignty critiques trade liberalisation for prioritising the production of agricultural exports over the rights of people for food. Climate change exacerbates these concerns about food security, as changing weather patterns affect food production and make the current reliance on fossil-fuel dependent transport untenable.<sup>38</sup> This may indicate some of the limits of trade-oriented development.

#### **d) Manufacturing and global supply chains**

Globalisation has resulted in a massive expansion of trade in manufactured goods, with the greatest growth concentrated in high-technology products. Developing countries have increased their share of manufacturing exports, but these tend to be low-technology, labour-intensive goods, such as garments and footwear. Where developing countries are involved in production of high-technology goods, it is usually based on low-wage, low-skill assembly work, rather than technological innovation.

This means that the benefits to developing countries of increased trade in manufacturing are mixed. These industries may create employment for the poor, but often under conditions that undermine human development goals and offer limited prospects for long term growth. Manufacturing employment in developing countries is often characterised by extremely low wages, sometimes near the poverty line.<sup>39</sup> Workers may lack basic labour rights, such as safe working conditions and the ability to join a union. There are often serious occupational health and safety risks for workers, who

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<sup>34</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2003, "Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty", Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, p156.

<sup>35</sup> A cash crop is a crop which is grown for money, as distinct from subsistence farming in which crops are grown for consumption by the producer. Coffee, cocoa, sugarcane and cotton are common cash crops.

<sup>36</sup> Monoculture farming is the cultivation of a uniform species of crop, rather than mixed crops. Monoculture is favoured by large agricultural business (or 'agri-businesses') because it allows for greater standardisation and industrialisation of planting and harvesting. However, monoculture has a range of negative environmental consequences and is usually alien to indigenous farming practices. See, eg, Martin Wolfe, "Diversity within crops restrict disease", *New Agriculturalist Online*, <http://www.new-agri.co.uk/01-1/perspect.html>. See also Victor M Toledo 'Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity', paper presented at the Congr s de Biodiversitat, Institut d'Estudis Andorrans, 1999 <http://www.iea.ad/cbd/congres/cima99/toledo.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> "Food Sovereignty" [www.nyeleni2007.org/IMG/pdf/Foodsov\\_triptico\\_english-2-2.pdf](http://www.nyeleni2007.org/IMG/pdf/Foodsov_triptico_english-2-2.pdf). See generally the website of Ny l ni 2007 – Forum for Food Sovereignty (23-27 Feb 2007, S lingu , Mali), [www.nyeleni2007.org/spip.php?rubrique46](http://www.nyeleni2007.org/spip.php?rubrique46). See also the website of La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement [http://viacampesina.org/main\\_en/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=47&Itemid=27](http://viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=47&Itemid=27) and the work of Vandana Shiva, particularly, *Stolen Harvest: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, Zed Books, London, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, "Climate Change and Food Security: A Framework Document", Rome, 2008 <http://www.fao.org/forestry/media/15538/0/0/>.

<sup>39</sup> Watkins and Fowler, p81.



may be exposed to toxic chemicals and dangerous processes in the course of their working life, then left to fare with sub-standard healthcare when they are no longer able to work. This employment is often precarious – on casual, short-term or home-work contracts – with limited access to social protection.

Growth in manufacturing exports has been accompanied by a ‘feminisation’ of labour. Women’s participation in these workforces has dramatically increased, and women now account for about one third of manufacturing workers in developing countries.<sup>40</sup> Women are often employed in the informal sector, such as home-work in the garment industry, which is even more poorly regulated than manufacturing work in the formal sector. While women’s increased employment has created some benefits, in terms of income, women also tend to face lower wages, longer work hours, poorer protection of employment rights and a weaker negotiating position than their male counterparts.<sup>41</sup>

Manufacturing employment in developing countries is often influenced by the activities of large transnational corporations (TNCs). TNC activities in developing countries have rapidly expanded as major retailers and brand owners have become ‘global sourcing companies’, outsourcing the production of goods through international networks of suppliers and producers or ‘global supply chains’. Large sourcing corporations retain enormous power to determine labour conditions for suppliers and producers down the chain. Although manufacturing workers in developing countries may not be directly employed by a TNC, their wages and working conditions may be directly affected by pressure from sourcing companies – and their shareholders – to keep production levels high and costs low.

This means that manufacturing workers in developing countries are often in an extremely poor position to negotiate adequate wages and working conditions. For many workers in the manufacturing sector, and for women in particular, integration into the global economy has created employment, but under conditions that can only be regarded as dehumanising and exploitative.

#### **4. A human development perspective**

The above discussion details the ways in which the current international trade regime often leaves the poor more vulnerable. Trade in and of itself does not necessarily lead to development. However, this is not to suggest that trade can never be good for the poor. Trade *can* be a powerful tool for poverty reduction when linked to appropriate strategies to assist the poor to participate in markets on more equitable terms.

If trade is to realise its potential for contributing to poverty reduction a paradigm shift is required. This paper suggests that there is both a theological and economic basis for the proposition that *trade must not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of enhancing human development*.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped to reinforce the importance of a human-centred approach to development.<sup>42</sup> The MDGs are a set of eight international development goals agreed by 189 states and 23 international organisations as a target to be achieved by the year 2015. The goals are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. Goal 8 Target 12 of the MDGs is to “develop further an open, rule-based predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system”. This is an acknowledgement that the international trading system must be reformed if it is to foster human development.

The concept of human development recognises that there is much more to human flourishing than economic growth. Human development can be understood as the expansion of human freedoms and the creation of an environment in which people are able to realise their potential and to live full and productive lives.<sup>43</sup> When viewed through the lens of human development, trade is desirable only to the extent that it enhances the choices and capabilities of the poorest and fosters the conditions for human flourishing. As discussed in the following section, this resonates with a Christian theological perspective in which abundant life is at the heart of God’s economic order.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p80.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p83-4. See also Kate Raworth, *Trading Away Our Rights: Women Working in Global Supply Chains*, Oxfam, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations Development Programme, p27-8.

<sup>43</sup> See Amartya Sen, *Development As Freedom*, Knopf, New York, 1999. See also the website of the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/>.

## II. THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO TRADE

### 5. Why Christians should care about economics

*"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*(John 10:10)

The Scriptures reveal a God who created the world and pronounced it good,<sup>44</sup> who loves the world and suffers with it, even to the point of dying on the cross. God's willing solidarity with the suffering creation demonstrates that God does not think the world so wretched that it deserves condemnation and destruction, but rather so precious that its redemption is worth dying for.<sup>45</sup> Douglas John Hall writes, "God is as firmly committed to the life of this world as that cross was planted in the ground at Golgotha..."<sup>46</sup>

In the resurrection, we see God's great protest against death and suffering<sup>47</sup> and the announcement of the victory of love over that which undermines life in its fullness – including poverty, injustice, war and environmental destruction. The church then lives in expectant hope of the final fulfilment of this victory in the coming of the promised Kingdom of God. This draws us into engagement with the world, for in looking forward to this hope, the church is compelled to transform the present. As Jürgen Moltmann writes, "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it."<sup>48</sup> This suggests that "genuine faith drives to greater engagement with the life of the world – indeed, that 'discipleship' means, primarily, just such engagement."<sup>49</sup>

The church, then, is called to participate in the liberating mission of God in the world.<sup>50</sup> In this the church must be more than an organisation for humanist activism. We are reminded to be in the world but not of it.<sup>51</sup> "The church is always and at the same time called out of the world and sent into the world",<sup>52</sup> a dual orientation which must ever be held in "redemptive tension".<sup>53</sup> Jürgen Moltmann writes, "Not to be conformed to this world does not mean merely to be transformed in oneself, but to transform in opposition and creative expectation the face of the world in the midst of which one believes, hopes and loves."<sup>54</sup>

Christian mission is about much more than 'saving souls'; it requires the church to engage with the all matters that touch on abundant life. For salvation must be understood as *shalom*.<sup>55</sup> "This does not mean merely salvation of the soul, individual rescue from the evil world, comfort for the troubled conscience, but also the realization of the eschatological *hope of justice*, the *humanizing* of man [sic], the *socializing* of humanity, *peace* for all creation."<sup>56</sup>

Thus questions of economics and the distribution of resources should be of great concern to the church. As Ched Myers notes, "the pre-eminent challenge to the human family in our time is the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth and power, and any theology that refuses to reckon with these realities is both cruel and irrelevant."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Gen 1:31.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context*, p 23-24.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p36.

<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991, p21.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*. Moltmann writes, "In this hope the soul does not soar above our vale of tears to some imagined heavenly bliss, nor does it sever itself from the earth... It sees in the resurrection of Christ not the eternity of heaven but the future of the very earth on which his cross stands. It sees in him the future of the very humanity for which he died. That is why it finds the cross the hope of the earth." (*Theology of Hope*, p21.)

<sup>49</sup> Hall, p183. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote "...I'm still discovering right up to this moment that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith... In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking serious, not our own sufferings but those of God in the world – watching with Christ at Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith... and how one becomes a man [sic] and a Christian." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (enlarged ed.) Macmillan Publishing Co, New York, 1953, p360-1.)

<sup>50</sup> "It is not the church which "undertakes" mission; it is the *missio Dei* [mission of God] which constitutes the church... [M]ission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus..., wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world." (David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1991, p519.)

<sup>51</sup> John 17.

<sup>52</sup> Bosch, p386.

<sup>53</sup> Howard Snyder quoted in Bosch, p386.

<sup>54</sup> Moltmann, p330.

<sup>55</sup> *Shalom* is a Hebrew word meaning peace, wholeness and completeness. It denotes not only the absence of war, but the presence of abundant life.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p329. See also John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) HarperCollins, London, 1999, p27-29.

<sup>57</sup> Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, Bartimeaeus Cooperative Ministries, 2001, p6.



## 6. God's economy: Biblical principles for economic justice

The Biblical principles for economic justice discussed in this section can be summarised as follows:

- God provides abundantly and self-limitation is the appropriate response. Excessive accumulation of wealth and environmental degradation are not a part of God's vision for abundant life.
- The poor have a right to share in the economy and we must undertake practices of redistribution to ensure those rights.
- The economy exists to serve people, not the reverse. The rationale for our economic activity, including trade, is to foster abundant life.

### a) Sabbath: The economy of sufficiency

In the biblical creation story God creates a world of abundant goodness sufficient to sustain life, a world in which God takes great delight. On the seventh day, we find the apex of God's good creation: the Sabbath. God's rest on the Sabbath is a witness to God's *shalom*,<sup>58</sup> a celebration of God's complete and just reign over the earth.<sup>59</sup> Here we find the two principles that underlie God's proper economic order: God provides abundantly, and self-limitation is the appropriate response. These principles are also reflected in the manna story in Exodus 16. After the escape from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites face the challenge of surviving in the wilderness. God provides food in the form of manna, however, the blessing comes with strict instructions.<sup>60</sup> First, each was to gather as much as they needed – no more, no less. Secondly, none was to be kept for the next day. Finally, on the sixth day they were to gather twice as much and on the seventh day they were to rest. Those who tried to hoard more than they needed found that it went bad and could not be eaten and those who tried to gather manna on the Sabbath found that there was none.

In God's economy, God provides abundantly and no one is excluded. God provides to each as they have need – in the manna story, "some gathered more, and some gathered less" but "they all gathered exactly what they needed to eat".<sup>61</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the picture presented by capitalism, which assumes that the natural condition of the world is scarcity and that human needs and wants are unlimited. In contrast to the capitalist ethos, hoarding or accumulation is strictly forbidden. Greedy consumption is not only a direct breach of God's instructions, but an act of disbelief and a rejection of God's commonwealth in which enough is provided to all.<sup>62</sup>

The Sabbath is also intended to provide rest for the natural environment from rapacious human consumption. Under the Torah laws, every seven years is a Sabbath year, in which slaves are set free, debts are forgiven and the land is to lie fallow.<sup>63</sup> God's Sabbath order encompasses rest from exploitation not only for humans, but for the land and livestock. Human flourishing depends upon the flourishing of the earth, not upon relentless exploitation of the natural environment.

The concept of Sabbath is central to a biblical perspective on economics. Sabbath-keeping disrupts our attempts to control nature and to maximise the forces of production.<sup>64</sup> It is an affirmation of the sovereignty of God over the economy. Observing Sabbath "requires a leap of faith, humble confidence that the world will continue to operate benevolently for a day without our labor, that God is willing and able to provide enough for good life."<sup>65</sup>

### b) God's house rules: Practising redistribution

The word economy finds its root in the Greek *oikonomia*,<sup>66</sup> meaning 'law of the household'. *Oikonomia* relates to how a household manages its resources in order to provide for all its members. Thus M Douglas Meeks notes that economy in its ancient sense is about access to what it takes to live and

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<sup>58</sup> See above, n54.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Lowery, "Sabbath, A Little Jubilee", Center for Christian Ethics, Baylor University, 2002, <http://www.baylor.edu/christianethics/SabbatharticleLowery.pdf>, p6.

<sup>60</sup> Ex 16:16-30.

<sup>61</sup> Ex 16:18.

<sup>62</sup> Lowery, p7.

<sup>63</sup> Ex 23:10-12; Lev 25:39-42; Deut 15:1-2, 7-8.

<sup>64</sup> Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, p13.

<sup>65</sup> Lowery, p7.

<sup>66</sup> From the Greek *oikos*, meaning household or family, and *nomos*, meaning rules or law.

live abundantly.<sup>67</sup> In the Torah, God sets out the rules of the house – the standards by which abundant life was to be ensured for the community. Under these standards, the poor have a right to share in the resources of the community and practices of redistribution are required to ensure that all have enough to live.

God's laws included specific instructions for the protection of the poor and vulnerable. The people of God were required to tithe regularly to provide support to the most marginalised in the community: aliens, orphans and widows.<sup>68</sup> The Israelites were not to charge interest to the poor and thus profit from their vulnerability.<sup>69</sup> During the harvest, they were instructed to leave gleanings from the field, so that the poor may have food to gather.<sup>70</sup> In God's economy, the poor share in the harvest – not as a matter of charity but as a matter of justice or rights. As John Wesley noted, what one does not need for life *already belongs to the poor*.<sup>71</sup>

The ultimate expression of the Sabbath ethos was found in the Jubilee.<sup>72</sup> Every 50 years, debts were cancelled, forfeited land was returned to its original owners and slaves were freed. According to Ched Myers, this radical redistribution was intended to remind Israel that the land belongs to God.<sup>73</sup> It was also a symbol of Covenant and a reminder that just as God had liberated them from oppression, so they were to avoid oppressive practices and show compassion to the marginalised in their midst.<sup>74</sup>

Throughout the Old Testament, God strongly condemns those who fail to uphold God's standards of economic justice. God condemns those who exploit the poor, trading on unfair terms and denying their gleaning rights, saying, "We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practise deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling sweepings of the wheat".<sup>75</sup> There are many further examples,<sup>76</sup> but the message is clear: the poor have a right to share in the economy on fair terms and denial of that right is abhorrent to God.

### c) Good news for the poor: The Sabbath is made for humanity

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus places himself firmly within the Jubilee tradition:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me  
Because he has anointed me to bring  
good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release for the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."<sup>77</sup>

Jesus' proclamation of good news for the poor is evident throughout his ministry. He lives in solidarity with the poor and marginalised, proclaiming God's Kingdom of justice and freedom in which the last will be first and the first will be last.<sup>78</sup>

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom brings him into conflict with the keepers of the existing social order. The temple authorities were responsible for administering the redistribution of wealth under the Torah laws so that everyone was provided for, including the most vulnerable. In Jesus' time the temple had come to amass great wealth,<sup>79</sup> yet the temple authorities failed to ensure distributive justice, instead excluding the marginalised through the enforcement of elaborate purity and debt codes.<sup>80</sup> Through the Pharisees' legalism God's 'rules of the house' became a self-serving code

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<sup>67</sup> See M Douglas Meeks, "The Economy of Grace and the Market Logic" [www.pcusa.org/trade/downloads/meeks-paper.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/trade/downloads/meeks-paper.pdf). See also M Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1989.

<sup>68</sup> Deut 15:7ff, Lev 25:35 ff; Deut 14:29; Lev 26:12.

<sup>69</sup> Lev 25:35-38; Ex 22:26-27.

<sup>70</sup> Deut 24:19-21, Lev 19:9.

<sup>71</sup> Meeks, "The Economy of Grace and the Market Logic", p15.

<sup>72</sup> Lev 25.

<sup>73</sup> Ex 25:23.

<sup>74</sup> Ex 22:21-27. Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, p15.

<sup>75</sup> Amos 8:5-6. An ephah was ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure. A shekel was an ancient Hebrew unit of weight.

<sup>76</sup> See for example, Jer 34:13-16, Is 5:8; Mic 2:1-2; Hab 2:6-11.

<sup>77</sup> Luke 4:18-19.

<sup>78</sup> Mark 10:31; Matt 19:30.

<sup>79</sup> See Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1988, p78-80.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p73-80, 433-434.

rather than performing the role for which God intended them: to ensure that all in the community had enough.

When the Pharisees condemn Jesus for breaking the rules against picking grain on the Sabbath, he declares, “The Sabbath was created for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath”.<sup>81</sup> As Ched Myers explains, Jesus’ fraternising with ‘sinners’,<sup>82</sup> his declarations that the last will be first and his apparent subversion of the Sabbath laws<sup>83</sup> demonstrate God’s intention that “cultural systems must enhance and liberate human life, not marginalise it – or to put it in modern parlance, they must function ‘for people, not for profit’”.<sup>84</sup>

Today, neo-liberalism has made the market an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Neo-liberal ideology insists upon its own demands of liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation, even when these result in greater vulnerability for the poor. In so doing, it has subverted God’s proper order, making free markets the ultimate goal rather than ensuring that the economy serves to generate the conditions for abundant life.

#### **d) Trade for people, not people for trade**

By extension, trade is only acceptable to the extent that it enhances abundant life for humanity and all creation. This is consistent with the Old Testament prophecies against the Phoenician city of Tyre.<sup>85</sup> Tyre was a city of great wealth and one of the major trade centres of Old Testament times. In Ezekiel’s prophecy, the sins of Tyre were twofold. First, Tyre was guilty of selfish pride: “Because your heart is proud and you have said, ‘I am a god’”.<sup>86</sup> Secondly, Tyre’s trade was unjust and exploitative: “In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned”.<sup>87</sup>

The prophecy against Tyre is not an injunction against trade itself. God extols the splendour and prosperity of Tyre before it turned to sin: “You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty”.<sup>88</sup> But the trade of Tyre became unacceptable when it defied the sovereignty of God and failed to conform to God’s requirements of justice.

In Isaiah, the prophet looks forward to a time when the trade of Tyre will be dedicated to God and its abundance shared amongst all in the community: “Her merchandise and her wages will be dedicated to the Lord; her profits will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who live in the presence of the Lord”.<sup>89</sup>

#### **e) Summary: Biblical principles for trade justice**

From the above, we can articulate the following biblical standards for acceptable trade:

- Trade is not an end in itself, but must serve the life-giving purposes of God revealed in Jesus.
- Trade is acceptable to God when it promotes abundant life for all in the community and respects the integrity of creation. Trade must promote human development and environmental sustainability.
- The poor and marginalised must not be excluded from the benefits of trade. Trade should not aggregate power and wealth to a few; instead, the profits of trade are to be shared amongst the community.
- The poor have a right to participate in the global economy on terms that guarantee them enough to live.
- Trade must not be oppressive or exploitative. Producers must be granted a fair wage<sup>90</sup> and the rules of trade should not be weighted in favour of the rich but should enable fair dealing.

### **III. HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE? RESPONDING TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE ISSUES**

The church’s response to the issue of international trade can be broken down into three aspects:

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<sup>81</sup> Mark 2:27.

<sup>82</sup> Mark 2:16.

<sup>83</sup> Mark 2:23-27; 3:1-6; Luke 14:1-4. John 7:22ff; 9:14-16.

<sup>84</sup> Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p431.

<sup>85</sup> For further reading see Christoph Stückelberger, “When Trade Services God’s Justice... Biblical and ethical flashlights and suggestions” Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, 2003.

<sup>86</sup> Ezek 28:2.

<sup>87</sup> Ezek 28:16.

<sup>88</sup> Ezek 28:12.

<sup>89</sup> Is 23:18.

<sup>90</sup> See Is 23:3, James 5:4-6.

- To prophetically critique injustices and to proclaim just alternative visions through its corporate life and worship;
- To advocate for change so that political and economic structures promote, rather than undermine, abundant life;
- To live out alternatives as seeds of the Kingdom.

## **7. Prophetic voices: A Christian critique of neo-liberalism**

### **a) Neo-liberalism as idolatry**

If religion is understood as a set of beliefs which teaches us what our world is and what our role is in it, then neo-liberalism – which provides an encompassing worldview and set of values to guide behaviour – can be said to fulfil a religious function for us.<sup>91</sup> In this worldview, society is a collection of rational self-interested individuals in competition with one another, seeking to pursue their own individual preferences through a process of market exchange. The natural environment holds no intrinsic value but is seen merely as the raw material for human production. The (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent) god of the market offers salvation through the promise of ever-increasing economic prosperity, if only we open our economies to the grace of the market's invisible hand.

Today neo-liberalism has assumed the mantle of established truth in most Western countries and in many capitals in the developing world, in spite of the fact that many ordinary people do not bow down before the idol of the market. Neo-liberalism is the accepted orthodoxy on which much contemporary economic policy stands. It is believed that the invisible hand of the market will naturally lead to socially optimal outcomes: the underlying assumption is that market capitalism is a 'natural' system whose 'laws' inevitably work to produce social benefit. Thus we resign ourselves to the fact that the less appealing consequences of capitalism – such as its failure to address economic inequality – are "the inevitable results of an objective system in which... intervention is counterproductive."<sup>92</sup>

As a result, capital has ceased to be a servant and has become our master. "Assuming a separate and independent vitality [capital] claimed the right of a predominant partner to dictate economic organization in accordance with its own exacting requirements."<sup>93</sup> Thus society has undertaken a great transformation: "instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system."<sup>94</sup>

### **b) Engaging the powers: Unseating the god of the Market**

Yet a biblical perspective suggests that no institution or system exists as an end in itself, but instead to enhance the common good. All things are created in and through and for Christ,<sup>95</sup> and must therefore serve the humanising purposes of God revealed in Jesus, in whom "all things hold together" or literally "receive their systemic place".<sup>96</sup> Institutions (or Powers,<sup>97</sup> to draw on Walter Wink) become idolatrous when they pursue a vocation other than that for which God created them, making their own interests the highest good. The task of the church is to unmask this idolatry and to recall the Powers to the purposes for which God created them: to foster life in all its fullness.<sup>98</sup>

The church must thus prophesy against the hubris of neo-liberal ideology. Neo-liberalism is a totalising worldview, which tends to transform everyone and everything into commodities whose value can be determined by the market. Free markets are trusted to determine the best social outcome, yet

<sup>91</sup> David Loy, "Religion and the Market", 1997, <http://www.religiousconsultation.org/loy.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> A Rodney Dobell, "Environmental Degradation and the Religion of the Market", in Harold Coward (ed), *Population, Consumption and the Environment*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995, p232.

<sup>93</sup> RH Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Harcourt, New York, 1926, p31.

<sup>94</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Beacon, Boston, 1957, pp46, 57.

<sup>95</sup> "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Col 1:15-17).

<sup>96</sup> From the Greek *sunistemi*. Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be*, Galilee, New York, 1998, p30, 33.

<sup>97</sup> Walter Wink describes the Powers as "the impersonal spiritual realities at the center of institutional life." (*The Powers That Be*, p28).

<sup>98</sup> Wink, p29-30. Jürgen Moltmann writes that Christian hope will "endeavour to lead our modern institutions away from their own immanent tendency towards stabilization, will make them uncertain, historicize them and open them to that elasticity which is demanded by openness towards the future for which it hopes. In practical opposition to things as they are, and in creative reshaping of them, Christian hope calls them in question and thus serves the things that are to come." (*Theology of Hope*, p330).

as the World Council of Churches states, “[t]here is no divine force that guides markets. To suggest that markets have such saving powers amounts to idolatry.”<sup>99</sup>

Under neo-liberalism, open markets are seen as an end in themselves, rather than a means to an end. Markets must be “freed” from regulation at all costs, even when this disadvantages the most vulnerable and undermines human development. This is an inversion of God’s purposes for the economy: in God’s order, the economy is to serve human life and not the reverse (see section 6). When market imperatives overtake societies’ ability to pursue human development, the Powers have turned from their rightful place and replaced the sovereignty of God with the sovereignty of the market.

### **c) Proclaiming an alternative vision: Life in community**

Against the triumphalist narrative of neo-liberalism, the church is to proclaim the sovereignty of God and the in-breaking of God’s reign. The church must critique the dehumanising tendencies of the existing international trade regime and call into question the image of society as a collection of atomised self-interested individuals that lies at the heart of the neo-liberal worldview. Instead, the church is to proclaim an alternative vision: life in its fullness is found not in individualistic self-realisation but through life in community.

Trinitarian theology presents us with a powerful image of God in community. God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist in *perichoresis* or “being-in-one-another”, entwined in a divine dance. “The Trinitarian persons are precisely not self-enclosed subjects who define themselves in separation from and opposition to others.”<sup>100</sup> Instead, “the three persons of the Trinity have their distinctive identity only in deep and inseparable relationship with each other.”<sup>101</sup> As people made in God’s image<sup>102</sup> we too find our fullest identity not as atomised individuals, but in relationship with one another.

The image of God in community has important implications for the identity of the church and its work in the world. As Daniel Migliore writes, “Just as the persons of the Trinity are not self-contained individuals but have their identity in mutual, free, self-giving relationships, just as the life of the triune persons is life with, for, and in each other, so the church is called to life in communion in which persons flourish in mutually supportive relationships with others.”<sup>103</sup> We are called to live in right relationship with others, acting justly and showing compassion towards those with whom we interact. In a globalised world, the webs of our relationships are not only local but global in scope and include those distant others who are affected by economic systems in which we participate. We must thus show solidarity with and seek justice for those who are marginalised in the global economy.

Communion provides an alternative lens through which to view our relations with distant others – not through the mechanism of market exchange, but through the relational power of the Holy Spirit, who forms us into a ‘holy community’.<sup>104</sup> Christ’s table is a radically inclusive one to which all are invited, especially people who are poor, sick or marginalised.<sup>105</sup> The apostle Paul reminds the Corinthian Church that social and economic inequalities are not to be perpetuated at the Communion table.<sup>106</sup> As we break bread and share wine around this table, we share in the lives of others, together remembering the reconciling activity of God and being strengthened to participate in God’s liberating mission in the world.

God’s vision of abundant life in community infuses the church’s corporate life and worship. We affirm the sovereignty of God, proclaiming God (not the market, nor any other power or principality) as the source of value and life, who cares for creation and provides abundantly to all. We share bread and wine, participating in the inclusive hospitality of God and being sustained to share God’s self-giving love with the world. We pray for the world and for those who are poor and marginalised, remembering our partner churches in the developing world, groaning in solidarity with the suffering creation<sup>107</sup> and

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<sup>99</sup> World Council of Churches, “Alternative Globalization: Addressing Peoples and Earth”.

<sup>100</sup> Daniel L Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 2004, p77.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p79.

<sup>102</sup> Gen 1:27.

<sup>103</sup> Migliore, p262.

<sup>104</sup> Bloomquist, p19. See also Christian Aid, *Trade Justice: A Christian response to global Poverty*, Church House Publishing, London, 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Migliore, p293. Throughout his ministry, Jesus shared table fellowship with “sinners” and poor people (eg Mark 2:15; Luke 15:1-2).

<sup>106</sup> 1 Cor 11:20-22.

<sup>107</sup> Rom 8:19-23.

hoping together for the fulfilment of God's promise of *shalom*.<sup>108</sup> Our prayerful advocacy arises from our participation in the worshipping community and our communion in Christ with people from whom we can be distanced by the powers of the world. Those with whom we trade are sisters and brothers, sitting at the same table.

In celebrating life in community in the midst of an individualist and consumerist culture, the church participates in the triune life of God and provides a glimmer of the imminent reign of God's kingdom of reconciliation, equality and justice.

## **8. Advocating for change**

With our eyes on the promised Kingdom, the church must seek to transform existing institutions to conform to God's hope of abundant life. The church must advocate for reform of the rules and practices of international trade, with a view to ensuring that international trade serves life, and not the reverse.

### **a) Reform of the international trading system**

The Church should:

- **Advocate for a system of international trade that places human development at its centre.** We must oppose the notion that trade maximisation is synonymous with development. Instead, trade should be promoted only to the extent that it advances sustainable human development. Advocating for a focus on the Millennium Development Goals may help to bring abundant life to the centre of the trade and development agenda.
- **Oppose trade liberalisation when it will undermine governments' ability to promote human development.** 'One-size-fits-all' prescriptions for trade policy should be abandoned. Trade liberalisation should only take place in a manner which is sensitive to national circumstances, appropriately sequenced and integrated into national poverty alleviation strategies, and where it is sought by local communities.
- **Oppose double standards in trade liberalisation.** Churches should advocate for the reduction of industrialised countries' barriers to trade, particularly in agriculture and primary commodities.
- **Call for the elimination of 'escalating tariffs'** (ie. Tariffs which increase according to the amount of processing a commodity has undergone). Escalating tariffs undermine developing countries' ability to earn a greater share of the production value of primary commodities.
- **Advocate for the democratisation of the multilateral trade regime.** As long as rich countries and interest groups dominate international trade negotiations, poor communities will continue to be disadvantaged in the international trade regime. The Church should call for greater transparency and accountability in the World Trade Organisation and for measures that enhance the ability of developing countries to participate meaningfully in decision making, such as initiatives to build developing countries' negotiating capacity.
- **Call for measures to mitigate the effects of volatility in primary commodities on the poorest.** The underlying structural problems which leave commodities producers vulnerable in international markets will only be addressed through concerted international cooperation to manage commodity markets and reduce price volatility.<sup>109</sup>
- **Promote 'aid for trade'.** Rich countries and international institutions may assist in smoothing the adjustments relating to economic integration, through 'aid for trade'. Aid may be targeted towards developing essential infrastructure to facilitate trade and boost productivity and helping to meet the costs of adjustment. Churches should advocate for the use of Australia's aid budget to facilitate human-centred trade and to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest in the process of adjusting to economic integration. However, trade-related aid and development should only be promoted where this is desired by the local community.
- **Seek justice for workers.** The Church should advocate for the enactment and enforcement of national employment laws consistent with International Labour Organisation core

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<sup>108</sup> See above, n54.

<sup>109</sup> Watkins and Fowler, p169-174.

standards. The Church should also advocate for the development of trade-related labour standards in World Trade Organisation, which would strengthen the recognition of labour rights as an issue of international trade.<sup>110</sup>

- **Advocate for accountability of transnational corporations for their activities in developing countries.** The Church should call on Australian corporations operating in developing countries to actively commit to upholding human rights and contributing to sustainable development. The Church should call on the Australian government to develop mechanisms for holding Australian corporations accountable for their actions in developing countries.
- **Continue to develop networks and work together with like-minded organizations on both existing and new trade justice efforts.** Organisations with which we have established links include AFTINET, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Australian Council for International Development and Oxfam Australia.

## **b) Solidarity with the poor: Supporting our partners in the Pacific**

The Uniting Church's commitment to trade justice arises not only from a commitment to theological principles of economic justice, but also from its understanding of itself as a part of the body of Christ, living in relationship with partner churches across the world. In the Basis of Union, the Uniting Church "commits itself to seek special relationships with Churches in Asia and the Pacific."<sup>111</sup>

The Uniting Church's partners both in Asia and the Pacific have expressed concern about the ways in which economic globalisation has rendered their communities more vulnerable. The issue of international trade has been raised by our partner churches in the Pacific, where Australia has a particularly large influence.

The negotiation of free trade agreements in the Pacific is of great concern to our Pacific partner churches. A number of agreements are currently under negotiation:

- The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) is an agreement between Australia, New Zealand and members of the Pacific Islands Forum.<sup>112</sup> PACER is a broad umbrella agreement for the integration of Pacific Island countries into the international economy. In June 2007, "PACER-Plus" negotiations began towards the development of a more comprehensive free trade agreement within the PACER framework.<sup>113</sup>
- The Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) was endorsed by Pacific Island Forum heads of government in 2001. It provides for the phased elimination of tariffs for trade in goods between Pacific Island countries, and is now being expanded into trade in services.
- The European Union is negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Thus far, Fiji and PNG have signed interim agreements.<sup>114</sup>

Many Pacific Island countries face particular challenges to development associated with small size and isolation, natural resource constraints, frequent natural disasters and vulnerability to climate change induced sea-level rise. The agreements under negotiation will have significant implications for development in the Pacific. Pacific churches and civil society organisations are concerned that these agreements will curtail their governments' ability to develop policies which are tailored to their particular development needs. In particular, they are concerned that the agreements will:<sup>115</sup>

- Erode government revenue, resulting in cuts in services such as health and education;
- Prevent governments from taking measures to support the development of local industries and service sectors;
- Restrict the ability of governments to ensure essential services are provided to all citizens.

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p206-8.

<sup>111</sup> Basis of Union (1992 ed), par 2.

<sup>112</sup> The members of the Pacific Island Forum are the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

<sup>113</sup> See Jane Kelsey, "A People's Guide to PACER", Pacific Network on Globalisation, August 2004.

[http://www.bilaterals.org/IMG/pdf/A\\_Peoples\\_Guide\\_to\\_PACER.pdf](http://www.bilaterals.org/IMG/pdf/A_Peoples_Guide_to_PACER.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> See Jane Kelsey, "A People's Guide to the Pacific's Economic Partnership Agreement: Negotiations between the Pacific Islands and the European Union Pursuant to the Cotonou Agreement 2000" World Council of Churches Office in the Pacific, March 2005

<http://www.igt.org/page/627/1>.

<sup>115</sup> Joint statement of civil society and private sector organisations from seminar on the Pacific-EU Economic Partnership Agreement, Madang, 30 April 2008 <http://www.pang.org.fj/22.html>.



Pacific Island churches are concerned that the EU, Australia and NZ are bullying Pacific Island governments in trade negotiations and attempting to push them into trade liberalisation on unacceptable terms.<sup>116</sup>

The Uniting Church should show solidarity with its partner churches in the Pacific, by supporting their advocacy efforts and helping to make the voices of Pacific communities heard through:

- Sharing skills and resources to build our partners' capacity in trade negotiations, where appropriate;<sup>117</sup>
- Working with partner churches to bring voices from the Pacific and Asia into Australian debates on trade and economic justice (such as on issues of labour mobility and trade liberalisation), and
- Providing pastoral support to Pacific Island workers in Australia under a seasonal labour mobility scheme.<sup>118</sup>

In particular, the Church should advocate that PACER-Plus negotiations between Australia and Pacific Island countries:

- Should not take place at a pace that Pacific Island governments are not prepared for;
- Should not undermine Pacific Island governments' ability to promote local industries and to ensure that essential services are available to the poor, and
- Should not use the issue of seasonal labour mobility as a 'carrot' in trade negotiations to gain concessions on other issues.<sup>119</sup>

## 9. *Embodying alternatives*

### a) **Harnessing the church's consumer power**

As a prophetic community, the church is called not only to critique unjust systems but to embody an alternative which witnesses to God's Kingdom of justice and freedom. One of the most powerful ways that the Church can do this is through choosing to use its purchasing power to promote trade justice.

The complexities of international trade make it difficult for consumers to make ethical choices about their purchases. However, if the church is to take seriously the idea that it is to foster right relationships, then it must consider the impact of its choices as a purchaser of goods and services. It cannot be doubted that this takes the church into murky terrain. Short of living in complete self-sufficiency, it is impossible for any consumer to guarantee that they make ethical purchases 100 percent of the time. Yet this should not prevent the church from committing to *being intentional about its role as consumer*.

### b) **Fair trade**

In recent years, the fair trade<sup>120</sup> movement has gained a great deal of momentum. Fair trade has been defined in the following way:

"Fair trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers – especially in the South. Fair trade organisations (backed by consumers) are

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<sup>116</sup> Press Release, "Pacific trade ministers slam EU bullying in trade deal", Pacific Network on Globalisation, 30 April 2008, [http://www.pang.org.fj/doc/290408\\_EU-Pacific\\_Seminar\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Joint\\_St.pdf](http://www.pang.org.fj/doc/290408_EU-Pacific_Seminar_Civil_Society_Joint_St.pdf). See also Jane Kelsey, "Big Brothers Behaving Badly: The Implications for the Pacific Island of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations", Pacific Network on Globalisation, April 2004. <http://www.pang.org.fj/doc/040401bigbrothersjanekelsey.pdf>.

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, the work of WWF South Pacific, [http://www.wwf.org.fj/what\\_we\\_do/climate\\_change/neg\\_training/neg\\_training.cfm](http://www.wwf.org.fj/what_we_do/climate_change/neg_training/neg_training.cfm).

<sup>118</sup> See "Uniting Church in Australia welcomes Pacific Islands Seasonal Labour Scheme", August 2008 <http://www.uim.uca.org.au/uim/news/news>.

<sup>119</sup> See Nic Maclellan, "Seasonal Workers for Australia", Australian Policy Online, August 2008 [http://www.apo.org.au/webboard/comment\\_results.shtml?filename\\_num=226327](http://www.apo.org.au/webboard/comment_results.shtml?filename_num=226327). See also Pacific Civil Society Organisations Statement on Trade Justice, Auckland, 12-14 August 2008 [http://www.uim.uca.org.au/\\_data/page/1311/Final\\_Pacific\\_CS\\_Organisations\\_Statement\\_to\\_leaders.doc](http://www.uim.uca.org.au/_data/page/1311/Final_Pacific_CS_Organisations_Statement_to_leaders.doc).

<sup>120</sup> This paper makes a distinction between "fair trade" as a social movement which promotes equity in international trade and "Fairtrade", which refers to Fairtrade labelling through the international Fairtrade certification system.



engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.”<sup>121</sup>

A key element of the fair trade movement has been the promotion of Fairtrade labelling, a certification system designed to assist consumers to identify goods which meet agreed labour and environmental standards.<sup>122</sup> The Fairtrade label indicates that producers receive:



- A fair and stable price, long term trading relations and advance payments for their products
- Investment in local community development
- Support for environmentally sustainable farming methods
- Support in developing skills to operate successfully in the global economy.

Fairtrade has received its share of criticism.<sup>123</sup> It is certainly not a panacea. Fairtrade has succeeded in creating pockets of improved trade conditions within a broader system which continues to marginalise commodity producers. Structural change to the international trade regime is necessary if economic justice is to be afforded to primary commodity producers outside Fairtrade market enclaves. As discussed in section 7, the church must also be engaged in advocacy to this end.

However, the fact that Fairtrade is not in itself a panacea for unjust trade does not remove the need for the church to make a choice between purchasing Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade products. Faced with this choice – and remembering the church’s call as a prophetic community to embody alternatives to unjust trade – there is a strong argument for the church choosing Fairtrade over non-Fairtrade products.

Fairtrade should certainly not be the end of the church’s efforts to promote trade justice, but it might well be a good beginning. Therefore:

- Congregations and agencies of the Uniting Church should be encouraged to purchase Fairtrade products in place of non-Fairtrade products.
- Congregations may be encouraged to become a ‘Fair Trade Congregation’, by committing to purchase Fairtrade and promote trade justice.<sup>124</sup>

### c) Beyond Fairtrade

The Fairtrade label applies only to a small range of products in Australia, but there are many other initiatives to promote ethical trade through consumer power. A number of congregations and agencies of the Uniting Church are already engaged in advocacy efforts and have established networks and partnerships that can be built upon to promote trade justice. The Justice and International Mission Unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania is engaged in promoting justice in the garment industry, supporting initiatives such as the No Sweat Shop label, which certifies that a garment is manufactured in Australia with, as a minimum, Award wage rates and conditions.<sup>125</sup> They are also pursuing trade justice in the manufacture of Christian merchandise, through the IFAT network,<sup>126</sup> a global network of Fair Trade Organisations.<sup>127</sup> These initiatives should be commended, encouraged and built upon as part of a broader movement within the Uniting Church to promote trade justice.

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<sup>121</sup> Definition of fair trade developed by FINE, an informal association of four international fair trade networks: Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International, International Fair Trade Association, Network of European Worldshops and European Fair Trade Association.

<sup>122</sup> For more information, see <http://www.fairtrade.net/>.

<sup>123</sup> For a good introduction see Radio National Background Briefing, “Free Trade vs Fair Trade”, 13 July 2008, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/backgroundbriefing/stories/2008/2297789.htm>.

<sup>124</sup> Resources for becoming a Fair Trade Community can be found at <http://www.fta.org.au/FTAANZ/fairtradecommunities>.

<sup>125</sup> The Fairwear campaign promoting trade justice in the garment industry. See <http://www.fairwear.org.au/engine.php?SID=1000079>. See also the website of the No Sweat Shop label <http://www.nosweatshoplabel.com/>.

<sup>126</sup> The mission of IFAT is to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of disadvantaged producers by linking and promoting Fair Trade Organisations and speaking out for greater justice in world trade. One example of an IFAT organisation is Holy Land Handicrafts, which includes artisans from Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala. See the Holy Land Handicraft website <http://www.holyland-handicraft.org/>.

<sup>127</sup> See the “Holy hardware” campaign [http://www.justact.org.au/?page\\_id=108](http://www.justact.org.au/?page_id=108). In future, further information will be available from <http://www.justholyhardware.org.au>.



## **Churches and the trade justice movement**

After the Second World War, church organisations began to market handicrafts to assist the recovery of war-ravaged communities in Europe. Direct marketing links became central to faith-based solidarity efforts with a number of communities in the developing world. These efforts were the seeds of what was to become the contemporary fair trade movement.

By the 1960s, a number of "World Shops" had been established by Alternative Trade Organisations, which promised a greater share of market price to producers by eliminating intermediaries. Eventually, the movement branched out from handicrafts to a number of food commodities, such as cocoa, tea and coffee.

## **CONCLUSION**

International trade is an issue of enormous consequence. Trade offers opportunities to foster human development, but instead the current international trade system is leaving the poorest and most vulnerable behind. This is a gross economic injustice to which the church must surely respond.

The way in which the church responds to the issue of international trade ultimately reflects our understanding of who we are and where we place our hope. If we are a people who confess the lordship of Christ, then we must expose the idolatry of the prevailing neo-liberal paradigm and affirm the sovereignty of God over all spheres of life, including the economy. If we are a people who believe that the ultimate arbiter of value is not the market but God, then we must pursue God's vision of economic justice, in which the rights of the poorest and the integrity of the environment are respected. If we are a people who are joined by the Holy Spirit into one body with our brothers and sisters in the developing world, then we must stand in solidarity with them in calling for reform of the international trading system to foster human development for the poorest.

If we are to be witnesses to and agents of the coming Kingdom of God, then we must act for change, recognising that we are people of God on the way to the promised hope of justice and abundant life for all.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> cf Basis of Union (1992 ed), par 18.

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## UNITING UNITINGWORLD MANDATE

**Responsible to:** The Assembly

**Reporting Arrangements:** The Assembly and the Standing Committee

**Mission Statement:** In response to God's purpose for the world and its peoples, to focus the vision and utilise the resources of the church through:

- Engaging in God's mission in the world in obedience to the call of Christ (c.f. Basis of Union paragraphs 1 & 2)
- Encouraging and facilitating the church to pray, study and be involved in the mission of God in the world
- Building and strengthening inter-church partnerships in mission and evangelism, particularly in Asia, the Pacific and Africa
- Enabling the church to hear and respond to the needs of all peoples, especially those in greatest need, throughout the world.

**Mandate:**

1. To provide leadership for the church in its calling as part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ among all peoples.
2. To work in partnership with churches, councils of churches and other appropriate agencies, to develop policies and programs in mission and evangelism, justice and peace, human rights and community development.
3. To contribute to the worldwide endeavour of theological discussion and program innovation in the areas of bilateral and multilateral church to church partnerships in mission.
4. To develop, encourage and guide the church's partnership in mission with churches overseas, especially in Asia, the Pacific, and Africa in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
5. To develop relationships and innovative means of working with synods, presbyteries, congregations and groups across the life of the church to facilitate the work of International Mission and the mission of God in the world.
6. To ensure that the international mission of the church is shared with and promoted to all sectors of the church.
7. To emphasise a particular care for and solidarity with communities in greatest need and to work with our partners to reduce poverty, achieve sustainable development, address the causes of poverty, and promote justice, peace and civil society.
8. Through the UnitingWorld – Relief and Development unit to seek to maintain a partnership with AusAID in the AusAID/NGO Co-operation Program (ANCP), the PNG Church Partnership Program and other programs and to maintain membership in the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

**General:**

As a National Assembly Agency UnitingWorld will have the following general responsibilities:

1. Focusing the activities of the agency on the vision of the Assembly as a whole
2. Advising the Assembly and/or the Standing Committee on policy matters within their area of responsibility

3. Making policy decisions where the Assembly or the Standing Committee has delegated authority for certain policy areas, either through the agency mandate or by resolution
4. Implementation of policies determined by the Assembly and/or the Standing Committee through the National Director, other agency staff and volunteers.

**Power to appoint:**

The Reference Group has power to appoint working groups to operate within this mandate. Such working groups will be accountable to the UnitingWorld Reference Group through the National Director.

**Division Committee:**

Due to the special requirements of governance, the UnitingWorld – Relief and Development unit will operate as a separate unit with a special mandate approved by the Assembly Standing Committee. This unit will have a National Committee appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee.

**Membership of the Reference Committee:**

Total of 16 persons (including co-options)

- Chairperson, appointed by the Assembly
- National Director, UnitingWorld
- 10 people with specific interest and expertise, including one person from each Synod
- Up to four co-options, including up to two from partner churches, to maintain appropriate balance in membership.

*Approved by the Assembly Standing Committee November 2008*