

Fair trade and investment



Scripture and work justice

In the Gospel of Luke 1:53 in Christian Scripture, Mary, the mother (Theotokos) of Jesus, states that God fills the hungry with good things. Central to the Christian message is that God prioritises the needs of the poor. Near the end of the Christian Scriptures, the Letter of James defends the rights of workers to a just wage (James 5:4).

Theology and trade, employment and creation

God, the Holy Trinity, created the world out of love and is sustaining and redeeming it towards a new creation. This Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are equal in deity and united in an intimate communion of love. Christians seek to image such a relationship in their lives, with the acknowledgement that it is a vision which only God can fully bring about – it is a future hope, not to be fully identified with any present political, social or economic arrangements. Nevertheless, God requires humankind to work with God towards that end, by letting that vision shape the way we live now as individuals, as local communities and as a nation. This responsibility extends to the way people live and conduct themselves in relation to trade, employment and creation.

Christian history and beyond

In the early history of Christianity, seminal writers exhorted the faithful to treat the slaves of their day with high respect. In the 18th Century Christians in Britain and France led the movement for the abolition of slavery. In the 19th Century, Pope Leo XIII condemned unjust and forceful workplace practices perpetrated by employers or contractors during the period. Today, many Christians are involved in assisting vulnerable Australian workers, in such industries as cleaning and clothing, to be afforded their basic legal entitlements. Christian communities also celebrated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 2007. The Salvation Army is conducting a campaign to end exploitation of labour in the production of chocolate, calling on chocolate manufacturers to act ethically.

Our work

Holy Hardware – ethical production of Christian devotional items The Justice and International Mission Unit, Uniting Church in Australia has been working for a number of years on the issue of gross exploitation and suffering inflicted on workers in Australian and overseas factories making shoes and clothes, so it has come as no surprise that these problems apply to Christian speciality items. The Justice and International Mission Unit, with now the help of JustAct members, are beginning an investigation, working with Christian speciality stores in Australia, to try and ensure that the items being sold from China are not made under exploitative conditions.

FairWear

Also, the Justice and International Mission Unit supports the work of the FairWear campaign to end exploitation of home workers here and overseas. We also support the No Sweat Shop label.

Ethical Investment

The Justice and International Mission Unit assists UCA Funds Management (the financial arm of the Uniting Church in Australia, Victoria and Tasmania) from time to time in such areas as monitoring investments so that important issues such care for our creation and human rights (including labour justice) are taken into full account.