

ACTION AREA:

Spending power



In this Action Area, we explore the spending decisions we make, and the impact these choices can have.

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

Start a conversation

What does your church spend money on? The businesses we buy from help shape the world around us, through how they treat their workers to their environmental impact. What questions do you ask before deciding what to buy or which supplier to choose? How can we start to form habits with our spending that help us love our neighbour and the earth?

Sharing stories: Trinity Church, Lewes

Trinity Church has developed an Ethical Purchasing Policy, inspired by the church's engagement with Eco Church. The policy explains that "we are stewards of the money given to us by our church family and we are accountable to God for the way we use it." It gives guidance on what the church will and will not purchase, to ensure the ethical treatment of people, animals and the wider world. The church recognises that this policy will affect the cost of some of the things they do, but the PCC agreed that they would accept this extra cost as a fair price to avoid exploitation.

1. Suppliers

Think about your energy, insurance, phone and broadband providers. Are the suppliers you buy

from building fair relationships between people, and between people and creation – or are they causing harm? It can be tricky to work out the most ethical options – but certification schemes can help. Does the company **pay the right amount of tax**? Does it pay the **Living Wage**? Is it taking action on climate change?

Resources and ideas for action

- The **Good Shopping Guide** and **Ethical Consumer** give ethical rankings for a range of suppliers which are useful for decision making.
- Choose to move to one of the many 100% renewable energy suppliers. This forms part of the **Eco Church award** criteria.

2. Ethical purchasing

Many churches have made the switch to ethically sourced tea and coffee, but have you considered all the things you buy? This could include food, cleaning supplies, paper, single-use plastic etc.

Resources and ideas for action

- Agree a policy that helps people make ethical choices when buying items on behalf of the church. If some things are more expensive, can you see this as part of your giving?
- Learn about different certification schemes. Where there is not an obvious ethical option ask companies about their supply chains and environmental policies.
- Green Christian's **Loaf Campaign** encourages you to consider 4 principles when buying food: Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly, Fairly traded.
- Take a step back and reduce waste. Could you cut down on your use of something or repair items rather than buying new? Local sell and swap groups can be a good source of furniture, kitchen equipment, children's toys and much more. **Repair cafes** are taking off too!

3. Celebrating good business

In your local community you'll find cooperatives, social enterprises and other ethical businesses working for a better world. They will be creating jobs and helping build a fairer, more inclusive economy.

Resources and ideas for action

- Which businesses in your local area are working for the common good? Celebrate and encourage them by adding them to your prayer list or offering them use of your church hall or facilities.
- Encourage local Christian business leaders to make connections between their faith and responsible, sustainable business practices. [Christian Aid's Salt Network](#) is a useful tool for this.
- Work with your children and young people to create a map or plan a prayer walk between different businesses in your area e.g. cafés that sell Fairtrade items.
- Credit unions are not-for-profit co-operatives that serve their members not shareholders. They can be a welcome alternative to unjust payday loans or loan sharks. Invite [a local Credit union](#) to give a presentation to your congregation or link to a local Credit union on your website.

4. Fairtrade

Choosing to buy products with the Fairtrade mark is a simple way to love your neighbour. It means that farmers and workers around the world get a better deal and decent working conditions.

Resources and ideas for action

- Become a [Fairtrade Church](#) (committed to serving Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar), get campaigning, celebrate Fairtrade Fortnight and raise awareness of Fairtrade throughout the year. There are lots of ideas on the [Fairtrade website](#).
- Have fun while fundraising – what about a Fairtrade coffee morning, breakfast, Easter Egg hunt or cake sale?
- Encourage local workplaces and businesses to serve Fairtrade tea and coffee.

Did you know? 50% of the food we buy in our supermarkets comes from abroad, with between 10-15% from developing countries, grown by smallholder farmers and farm workers, supplying global food and clothing supply chains.

Source: Fairtrade Foundation, 2020

5. Discipleship

Do you encourage people to think through their spending choices as part of their discipleship? Do you offer an alternative to the pressure in society to consume more and more?

Resources and ideas for action

- Use the Consumer Power section of our [workshop resource](#) to explore this topic with a small group.
- If you have switched to an ethical provider (e.g. for gas and electricity) as a church, could you encourage individuals to switch too?
- Ask someone to share their testimony of a change in spending habits, and what inspired them.
- Explore issues around consumerism at particular times in the year e.g. Advent/Christmas or Lent.

