

Justice Peace Links

Justice and Peace Committee – Churchwide Coordinating Team – Presbyterian Women

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Yadira Vallejos explains the process of making Sweat-Free T-shirts. Here she demonstrates the machine used to sew collars onto the shirts.

Photo by Melanie Hardison

Enough for Everyone

A Journey

By Jean Vieten

Background

Many of us in Presbyterian Women have become familiar with the five projects of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Enough for Everyone program: Presbyterian Coffee Project, Sweat-Free Ts, Electric Stewardship, Investing in Hope (with Oikocredit) and the Eco-Palm Project.

Through these projects, individuals, PW groups and congregations can respond to global economic realities from the perspective of Christian faith. A partnership ministry of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Women's Ministries Area and Presbyterian Women, Enough for Everyone also partners with ecumenical organizations such as Equal Exchange, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2006. The

Presbyterian Coffee Project celebrated its fifth anniversary the same year.

Last year PW synod moderators Patsy Gaines and Joan Wilson were part of a delegation of 14 Presbyterians who traveled to Nicaragua to visit coffee cooperatives, meet the women who sew Sweat-Free Ts, and witness Presbyterian investments in Oikocredit in action. Now Patsy and Joan share some of that experience with *Links* readers.

Jean Vieten is a former synod representative on the Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women, from the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii.

Survival Through Faith

By Patsy Gaines

In Nicaragua we saw a people struggling to survive. In addition to the destructiveness of earthquakes, hurricanes, mud slides and, especially, civil war, 74 percent of the people live in poverty. Eighty-two percent live on \$1 a day. The average per capita income is \$430 a year. Without their faith they could not continue the struggle to feed and clothe themselves, nor continue to build a new life for themselves and their children. You and I bolster that faith when we drink Fair Trade coffee.

Coffee is a vital commodity that can be a tool for positive change across the developing world. Over 70 percent of the coffee we drink is grown by small farmers who live in rural regions of some of the poorest countries in the world. Isolated from markets, the farmers are usually forced to sell their coffee to local middlemen. The coffee market is unstable and coffee farmers rarely know what they will get for their beans. A small independent coffee farmer may receive as little as one fourth of the world market price for their coffee. Affordable credit is very difficult for small farmers to obtain. They often get loans from middlemen at exorbitant rates (16–30%). Many times they use their land as collateral, and if they default on a loan they lose their means of livelihood.

Resources

The Enough for Everyone Web site, www.pcusa.org/enough, has a great deal of information, ideas and resources. A tabletop display, PowerPoint presentation and overhead transparencies are available on loan by calling 888/728-7228, ext. 5626.

Web sites for the various Enough for Everyone programs are as follows:

- www.pcusa.org/coffee
- www.pcusa.org/energy
- www.pcusa.org/sweatfree
- www.pcusa.org/oikocredit
- www.pcusa.org/palms

Some resources are available in Spanish and Korean as well as English.

Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development. A policy document of the PC(USA) approved by the 208th General Assembly (1996). Order from Presbyterian Distribution Services, 800/524-2612, or www.pcusa.org/enough/policy. PDS item number OGA96013.

Equal Exchange, our interfaith partner and the oldest and largest Fair Trade company in the United States, works with cooperatives that are owned by the farmers themselves. Fair Trade helps farmers stay on their land and support their families. Fair Trade also provides funds for co-op services such as training, health care and education. As a Fair Trade company, Equal Exchange guarantees the farm cooperatives a minimum price of \$1.26 per pound of coffee and \$1.41 for organic, shade-grown coffee, no matter how low the market falls. (It was as low as 44 cents per pound in 2001). In 2003 alone, Equal Exchange provided its farmer partners with over \$2 million in above-market premiums. Equal Exchange also provides farmers with funds between harvests—money for farm improvements, seedlings and school costs for their children. (Education is not free in Nicaragua.) Over \$1 million in pre-harvest credit was facilitated.

When we buy Fair Trade products (coffee, tea, chocolate, sugar) we help build pride, independence and community empowerment for struggling people in the developing world.

Journey to Nicaragua

By Joan Wilson

The Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua, based in Managua, hosted us on our journey. Its wonderful group of employees and mission workers housed us at the Council's guest house/conference center in Managua where the staff and mission workers led our orientation.

We traveled to the mountains of Nicaragua where we learned about coffee-growing and picked coffee at a small farm. The farmers and their wives and children welcomed us with open arms and a party, with food, dancing and mariachi bands. The farmers shared their stories of being coffee growers. They explained how being part of a cooperative enables them to receive fair prices and thus to improve their lives, their communities and their schools. These Christian people shared joyously what little they have with those of us who have so much, even providing home stays for the delegation.

On our return to Managua, we studied working conditions in sweatshops. The people endure much in order to have work. There is only one sweat-free shop in Managua. We were privileged to visit its 55 workers and hear their stories. One of the women in our delegation asked a young woman what is the best and the worst thing about working in this shop. Her answer—the best thing is that the workers are treated fairly and with respect. The worst thing is that they could use more work, since they have time to fill more orders for garments. We saw a beautiful, well-lit, clean and happy working environment. PC(USA) and Presbyterian Women are among the biggest supporters of the shop by continuing to place large orders, including T-shirts and tote bags for Presbyterian Women's 2006 and 2009 Churchwide Gatherings.

Biblical/Theological Dimensions

The call to justice is evident throughout the scriptures, as in *Luke 4:18–19* where Jesus quotes from the book of Isaiah to announce the work he has come to do. “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 to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

PC(USA) Position

Enough for Everyone is guided by *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development*, a policy document adopted by the 208th General Assembly (1996). The document says, “God seeks to show us what it means now to have justice and community and sustainability as the priorities of social witness and action.” The 213th General Assembly (2001) subsequently endorsed the Presbyterian Coffee Project.

What Can Presbyterian Women Do?

- Adopt at least one Enough for Everyone project in your PW group or congregation.
- Educate members of your congregation on these issues through Sunday School, Bible study, speakers and special events.
- Consider investing personal or church funds in Oikocredit, which provides credit to low-income communities, enabling them to become self-supporting.
- Sponsor a Fair Trade bazaar. Offer Equal Exchange coffee, tea, chocolate and sugar for sale at a holiday fundraiser, or put together holiday gift baskets using Fair Trade products.
- Support the building of a new sweat-free spinning plant in Nicaragua by donating to Extra Commitment Opportunity account EO53750 (www.pcusa.org/sweatfree/spinningplant.htm).
- Order an Enough for Everyone packet from Presbyterian Distribution Service (800/524-2612); ask for item 74360-02-328.
- Consider becoming an Electric Steward Congregation.
- Purchase responsibly harvested palm branches for Palm Sunday. Find out more at www.pcusa.org/palms.
- Subscribe the Enough for Everyone’s electronic newsletter at www.pcusa.org/enough/newsletter.